

**If I want to know more about cremation and perhaps inspect the crematorium, how should I go about it?**

Telephone or write to the Crematorium, where the staff will be pleased to answer your queries or arrange an appointment. Local organisations and schools can also arrange to visit Sandwell Valley or Rowley Regis Crematorium. We will also show around private individuals, wherever possible.

**What are the gardens of remembrance at Sandwell Valley Crematorium?**

The Gardens consist of areas set aside for the disposal of cremated remains. They are intended as peaceful and attractive areas, where relatives can subsequently visit and remember loved ones. Cremated remains may be strewn in the 12 monthly gardens provided. There are options available to have some form of memorial in remembrance of a loved one.

**What memorials are possible at the crematorium?**

There are a wide range of options available. Please contact a Memorial Advisor on 0121 569 6791 / 6793.

If you require further information, please contact Sandwell Valley Crematorium, where the staff will be pleased to assist you.

**Sandwell Bereavement Services**

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**Cremation,  
your questions  
answered**

Many people have questions and fears about cremation, how to make arrangements after a death, and what options are open to them. Crematorium staff have compiled a list of answers to people's most frequent questions.

### How many people use cremation today in Great Britain?

In Sandwell, the split is around 74% cremations, 26% burials. Nationally, cremation accounts for about 72%. Many people, however, choose to have cremated remains buried after the funeral, which are not included in these figures.

### Are there any religious groups which forbid cremation?

Yes, it is forbidden by Orthodox Jews and Muslims. Today all Christian denominations allow cremation and it is the normal method for Sikhs, Hindus, Parsees and Buddhists.

### Is cremation more expensive than burial?

No. The cost of cremation is considerably cheaper than burial. Memorialisation costs are also significantly less. Clarification of Crematorium charges can always be obtained from Sandwell Valley Crematorium.

### What religious ceremony can I have with cremation?

A full religious service may be conducted at the Crematorium within the time required for each funeral. Alternatively, a service may take place in a place of worship, followed by a brief 'committal' ceremony at the Crematorium. Families can arrange for their own Minister to conduct the service or, when required, Funeral Directors may secure the services of a suitable Minister on behalf of the family.

### What do the prepared remains consist of?

The remains are totally bone ash and usually weigh between four and eight pounds. They are in a state which will permit them to be strewn. In the case of an infant, it is not possible to guarantee any tangible remains due to the cartilaginous nature of the body.

### What training do the staff have to undergo?

Staff who operate the cremators undergo a specific training programme in the use of the cremators; normally this will take in the region of 6 months to complete, and covers all aspects of the use and maintenance of the cremators. When ready, staff undertake an independent examination by the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management on all aspects of the cremation process and associated duties. Only after successfully completing this stage are staff allowed to cremate unsupervised.

### How can I ensure that I am cremated when I die?

Clear instructions in writing should be given to the person who will be responsible for your funeral when you die. Such instructions are not binding in law, so the person instructed should be someone who is likely to carry out your wishes. The final decision will rest with your Executors.

### What are 'do it yourself' funerals?

Many people have asked crematorium staff about 'do it yourself' funerals. An information leaflet has been prepared entitled "**A Guide to an Independent Cremation in Sandwell**". To request a copy or if you require further information, please contact a member of staff who will be pleased to assist you.

## Is more than one coffin cremated at a time in a cremator?

**Absolutely not.** Only one coffin is cremated at a time, which is vital to ensure remains are kept separate; each cremator is carefully raked out before re-use. The only exception can be where, for example, a mother and small child are to be cremated together, when a single coffin is used.

## How do I know I will get the right cremated remains?

Each coffin is identified and the name plate thoroughly checked on arrival. The Order for Cremation form follows the coffin until the coffin is placed into the cremator; the card is then placed on the outside of the cremator and is not removed until the cremated remains are removed from the cremator into a cooling tray, where the form is again placed with the remains.

Once the remains have been cooled they are placed into a machine called a cremulator, which reduces them to a fine ash, again the form is placed onto the machine. Once the remains are ready they are transferred into a suitable labelled container stating name, age and cremation number with the Order for Cremation form, and transferred into a storage room. At no time during the cremation process does the Order for Cremation leave the remains.

As each cremator will only accept one coffin at a time and the remains have to be moved to a separate cooling area within the cremator before another coffin is accepted, cremated remains do not become 'mixed' at any stage during the cremation process. Utmost care is taken by all staff to ensure this process is carried out. Sandwell Valley Crematorium and Rowley Regis Crematorium cremates strictly in accordance with the Federation of British Cremation Authorities Code of Cremation Practice.

## Must there be a religious ceremony with cremation?

No. A civil ceremony can be conducted or there may be none at all, by arrangement with the Minister concerned. A Memorial Service is also held, for those who wish a few moments of quiet remembrance of their loved ones.

## How long does a service last?

A full service, where often there has not been a Church service prior, is usually 30 minutes, which includes 5 minutes entry to the chapel, 20 minutes service and 5 minutes for leaving, this can be extended for an additional charge. Where a committal ceremony only is required, the full Chapel allocation time must still be booked.

Advice is available from your Funeral Director or Sandwell Valley Crematorium.

## How is a cremation arranged?

A number of arrangements need to be made following a death and it is wise to approach a Funeral Director immediately a death occurs and advise them that you wish to arrange a cremation. Discuss with them how soon (if possible) you wish the cremation to take place, the type of Service you desire and whom you wish to officiate at the service. The Funeral Director will then make all necessary arrangements, including family requirements and assist in completing necessary forms to be signed by the Applicant to the cremation. The death will have to be registered and your Funeral Director will advise how to do this.

### Do I have to sign anything else at this stage?

You should be asked how you wish to dispose of the cremated remains. If you know what you want at this stage you will be asked, as the Applicant to the cremation, to sign an authority for the Crematorium to carry out your wishes. If you are undecided, **DO NOT** sign any authority. The Crematorium will write to you after the cremation has taken place, enclosing a leaflet describing the options available to you, and asking for confirmation of your wishes. The Crematorium allows a period of 4 weeks for you to make a decision; if necessary, you may ask for this period to be extended, if you are still undecided.

### What happens at the crematorium on the day of the funeral?

The mourners will normally gather at the Crematorium a few minutes before the appointed time of the funeral service. When the principal mourners are ready to proceed, the coffin will be conveyed into the Chapel by the Funeral Director, unless family bearers are used by request. The coffin is placed on the catafalque at the front of the Chapel and mourners will be directed to their seats. During the service, curtains close around the coffin and it is lowered into the crematory once the mourners have left the Chapel. If you prefer, the curtains can be left open throughout the funeral service. At the end of the Service the mourners leave the Chapel and may then view the floral tributes before leaving the Crematorium.

### Does the cremation take place immediately, or are the coffins stored up until a number are ready to be cremated?

The name plate on the coffin is first checked with the Order for Cremation form to ensure correct identity and other details.

Where possible the cremation will follow immediately after the service; if this is not possible the coffin is stored for a short time until a cremator is available (all cremations must take place within 24 hours of receipt of the coffin at the crematorium in accordance with the Code of Practice).

### Is the coffin cremated with the body?

**Yes. Under no circumstances** is the coffin opened once received at the Crematorium. **Once a cortege has entered the gates it is the responsibility of the officer appointed by the Council.** The coffin is placed in the cremator just as it is received at the Crematorium. Cremation regulations require that the coffin and all its fitting and furnishings be made from materials suitable for cremation. The Environmental Protection Act, 1990 requires Cremation Authorities to ensure that the process is completed under controlled conditions, which minimises the impact on the environment.

Any item included in the coffin for presentation or viewing purposes **must be removed by the Funeral Director before the coffin arrives at the Crematorium.**

### Should jewellery be removed from the coffin before arrival at the crematorium?

**Yes.** All items of jewelry must be removed before the coffin leaves for the Crematorium. The funeral director should be advised of your wishes when funeral arrangements are being discussed. **It is not possible to recover jewelry after the coffin has been received by the Crematorium.**