

Can cremated remains be strewn on the top of a grave?

Yes. When the grave is full.

How much does a burial cost?

People who are not residents (who have not paid Council Tax to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council) have to pay a higher fee than a resident. This is simply because cemeteries cost a great deal of money to develop and maintain, which the authority has to pay from the Council Tax contributions of its residents. People who have paid their Council Tax to other authorities have therefore not contributed towards these costs.

The fee for the Right of Burial also includes the purchase of the right to erect a memorial on the grave.

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

Sandwell Bereavement Services

Sandwell Valley Crematorium
Newton Road
West Bromwich
West Midlands
B71 3SX

Tel: 0121 569 6700

Email: bereavement_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Burials

Your Questions Answered

Sandwell Bereavement Services

Leaflet 5

Do I own the grave?

No. You purchase the Right of Burial to the grave space, which means that only you or a person of your choice can be buried within the grave. The actual grave belongs to the Burial Authority, as do the Cemetery grounds.

Can I reserve a grave for use in the future?

No, currently we do not offer the option to reserve a grave.

How many people can be buried in a grave?

New graves for two are dug to a depth of 6 feet, allowing for two full interments plus numerous cremated remains caskets. In some of the cemeteries, where land is suitable, graves can be dug to a depth of 7 feet 6 inches, which will allow three full interments.

Which way are coffins buried?

Today, in all new graves the head of the coffin is at the end where a memorial can be erected. In older parts of some cemeteries, the coffins were lowered facing in an easterly direction, although this did cause problems in that the memorial could then be situated on the foot of some graves. As people refer to the memorial as a 'headstone' they assumed that it would be on the head of the grave; this is what happens with new graves today.

How soon after a burial can a memorial be erected?

Where the grave is situated on a concrete raft, the memorial can be erected immediately. In the older parts of the cemeteries, where there is no concrete raft, it is very much dependent on the ground conditions. Usually approximately 13 weeks is sufficient for the ground to settle. A permit must be obtained before any memorial can be erected.

How is a grave dug?

Most new graves are dug by a JCB or mini digger, where the grave can be accessed without driving over graves that are already buried in. Re-opened graves are usually dug by hand, some graves may be dug by mini-digger but only where we can ensure there will be no disturbance of the coffin already buried in the grave. Grave purchasers are advised that adjacent graves may be opened in the event of an interment, and that this might preclude access to your grave.

Is it true that bodies can be removed from graves?

Yes, this is known as an exhumation. An exhumation can be arranged by Bereavement Services if a family chooses to do this. Due to the nature of such a request, an exhumation is only granted for a full earth burial. Before Bereavement Services agree to an application, the family is given a full explanation of the exhumation process. Dependent on the religious denomination of the ground, either an exhumation licence issued by the Ministry of Justice or a Church Faculty has to be applied for, and the exhumation can only take place if one of these is granted. Furthermore, only the owner of the Right of Burial can request an exhumation. Senior staff from Bereavement Service are present to supervise the exhumation, along with the gravediggers, Environmental Health Officer and in some cases the Police. This process is very costly.

Do I have to pay for the ongoing maintenance of the grave (excluding the memorial)?

No. The cost of maintaining the Cemetery grounds, and your grave, is included in the fees you pay at the time of a burial. The Council will probably have to maintain your grave for many generations to come, for the fee you pay at the time of the burial.