



The Good Funeral Guide CIC is the UK's only trusted, completely independent, not-for-profit information resource. We are dedicated to supporting, empowering, and representing the interests of dying and bereaved people living in the UK.

www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk



The ICCM was founded in 1913, and since that time has provided policy and best practice guidance to Burial and Cremation authorities. The aim of the ICCM is to raise standards for bereaved people through the promotion of best practice, guidance, accredited training, and education.

www.iccm.com

Cremated Remains

What you need to know



Produced by
the Good Funeral Guide CIC
&

The Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium
Management

Throughout the cremation process, correct identification is an essential element.

Crematoria follow careful procedures to ensure that the identity of each coffin received for cremation is checked, and that all of the cremated remains from each individual cremation are kept separate and collected and placed in one, clearly labelled container.

The commonly used word for cremated remains is 'ashes', which implies a soft, light substance such as when paper is burned or the remnants of a wood fire. This is very misleading when used to describe the substance that you will receive after a person has been cremated.

- Cremated remains are like gritty sand. There may be tiny, fine, dust-like particles, but the bulk of the material will be more like gravel. The colour will range from off-white to grey.
- Cremated remains of an average adult will weigh around 2 – 4 kilos (8 – 4lbs). This is the equivalent of about 2 – 4 bags of sugar. People are frequently surprised by the weight.
- Any metal remaining after the cremation (such as screws or nails from the coffins, or hip joints or metal plates from the body) is removed from the cremated remains. If you have given consent, these metals will be recycled, and the money raised will be given to bereavement charities. You can ask for any metal to be given to you if you prefer but you would need to do this before the cremation takes place.

- Cremated remains don't smell and are safe to touch. If you want to transfer them from one container to another, be aware that there will be dust; you may want to wear a mask to avoid breathing the dust in.
 - Cremated remains will be returned to you in a container. This may be a cardboard box, with the cremated remains in a plastic bag* within the box, or a plastic jar with a screw top, with the cremated remains either loose or in a bag inside. (*Some enlightened crematoria are now using paper bags rather than plastic).
 - There will also be a certificate issued by the crematorium called a Certificate of Cremation. This confirms that the cremation took place and may be needed if you are going to scatter or bury the cremated remains at a crematorium or in a cemetery or a churchyard. If you are going to keep the cremated remains, or scatter or bury them somewhere private, you can either keep or dispose of the certificate.
 - Whatever type of container is used by the crematorium or funeral director, it should have an identification label with the person's name and possibly other details such as a cremation number and a date of cremation. There should be a label on the outside of the container, as well as one on the bag inside, if this is used. Some crematoria place a pottery disc in with the cremation, which is then transferred to the cremated remains so they can be identified.
 - If you have chosen your own container for your person's cremated remains, then either the funeral director or the crematorium will ensure that they are transferred into it. All identification should be available for you to see (the labelled original container and / or the labelled internal bag) and the Certificate of Cremation will accompany your container.
 - When you collect cremated remains from a crematorium, you will be asked to sign to show that you have received them. It's important to note that only certain people will be allowed to collect them; the person who applied for the cremation, or somebody nominated by them, such as the funeral director. You may be asked to provide identification such as a passport or a driving licence, to make sure that you are the right person.
 - If you have asked a funeral director to collect cremated remains for you, you will need to make arrangements with the funeral director directly to have the cremated remains returned to you. All of the documentation and packaging should be as described above.
- If you have any concerns, for instance if the container or labelling seems inadequate, or if no Certificate of Cremation was provided with the cremated remains, contact the crematorium and funeral director involved. Hopefully they will be able to put your mind at rest - issues with the provenance of cremated remains are extremely rare.