

EXHUMATION

Exhumation is the removal of human remains from their place of interment. The need to exhume is not a common occurrence and is only allowed in exceptional cases. However, when exhumation is required it must be done with the greatest dignity and respect and with all of the necessary legal licences obtained and documentation duly completed.

Reasons why exhumations are required

There are a number of reasons why exhumation may be required. Recent exhumations from the City of Gloucester Cemetery have been for the purpose of repatriation overseas, or where it has been discovered after the burial that the deceased wanted to be cremated.

Licences to exhume

It is an offence to disturb human remains (human remains include cremated remains) without first obtaining the correct lawful permissions.

The lawful permissions to exhume are:

A Licence to Exhume issued by the Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice
Coroners and Burials Division
Civil, Family & Legal Aid Policy Directorate
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ
Telephone: 020 3334 6390

An Ecclesiastical Faculty.

Diocesan Registry
1 The Sanctuary
London

Which licence to use depends on the location of the grave, i.e. whether it is located in a consecrated or non-consecrated area of the cemetery. Under certain circumstances both of the above licences will be required before an exhumation can take place.

How to arrange an exhumation

The first step is to contact us and we will advise what legal documentation is required and what permissions need to be obtained.

Application must normally be made by the next of kin of the deceased, or with the written authority of the next of kin attached to the application. The registered owner of the grave if not the next of kin must also give written permission for the exhumation to take place. If there is more than one registered grave owner then all owners must give written permission.

Once all legal documentation has been obtained, permissions given by the grave owners, and the fee paid (an exhumation fee is provided on application), a time and date will be set by us in liaison with the appointed funeral director.

Use of a Funeral Director

Regardless as to what reason the exhumation is for, i.e. repatriation, reburial in a different grave (in the same cemetery or elsewhere) or for cremation, there is a need for a Funeral Director to be involved. The exhumation is carried out by the City of Gloucester Cemetery staff, once exhumed the coffin / casket becomes the responsibility of the Funeral Director. The Funeral Director is required to be in attendance with the new coffin of sufficient size to accommodate the original coffin removed from the grave. The body is not removed from the original coffin. The coffin and its contents are lifted out of the grave and placed straight into the new 'shell' coffin in readiness for transportation to the final place of rest.

The above procedure will not of course be required when the exhumation is that of cremated remains.

The day of exhumation

Exhumations take place early in the morning before the cemetery is open. This is for the sake of decency and also health and safety.

An Environmental Health Office for the area (Gloucester City) may choose to witness the exhumation. Should this Environmental Health Officer decide that the removal of the coffin / casket will create a health hazard he/she may stop the exhumation.

Exhumation may be witnessed by a personal representative appointed by the next of kin / applicant.

If you have any questions or you require further assistance then please contact the crematorium staff on 01452 396902 between 9.00am and 4.30pm (Monday to Friday) Email: heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk