

EXHUMATIONS

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are occasions when it is necessary to exhume human remains, however this is a very traumatic event and should only be entered into after giving it every consideration.

Please think carefully about why you wish to exhume, from their burial place, your loved one or relative. Take your time and consult your family, before you make a final decision. All next of kin to the deceased are important in obtaining a licence to exhume a body or cremated remains.

The exhumation from the ground of a body or cremated remains is traumatic for families and the cemetery staff. Arrangements take a long time and it is an upsetting and expensive business.

IT IS ILLEGAL TO EXHUME ANY HUMAN REMAINS WITHOUT FIRST OBTAINING THE LAWFUL AUTHORITIES NECESSARY.

If you decide to proceed, please follow these steps.

STEP 1

Contact the cemetery staff they will advise you on all aspects of the exhumation. Please keep in touch with the Cemetery staff throughout the following process. In addition to the exhumation fee, the following costs must be considered.

1. Cemetery fees for disinterment – including the removal of any memorials
2. Funeral Directors charges including new coffin/casket and removal to new site
3. Bishops Faculty if required

STEP 2

HOME OFFICE LICENCE

Obtain an application form from the Home Office. Complete Part A. Pass the forms to the cemetery staff who will check that the details are correct for example grave numbers etc. They will add a statement to the form if there are any objections to the exhumation for example consent has not been obtained from the next of kin or if other bodies need to be disturbed. You will be advised of this. The form must be signed by the Manager, Bereavement Services and forwarded to the Home office.

- The Home Office do not charge for issuing a licence.
- Complete a separate form for each set of remains.
- It takes approximately eight weeks for a licence to be issued if there are no problems.

Pass the licence to the cemetery staff. A copy of the licence is sent to the Environmental Health Officer, Public Protection Service who must attend the exhumation.

STEP 3

BISHOPS FACULTY

If a body or cremated remains are buried in Consecrated grounds according to the rites of the Church of England you must obtain a Bishops Faculty. The cemetery staff will advise you if the burial was in a consecrated area of the cemetery. If it was not, you **DO NOT NEED** a Bishops Faculty.

Obtain an application form from the Bishops Registrar. Complete it and pass the forms to the cemetery staff with the Registrar's fee and a letter of consent from the Vicar of the Authority where the remains are to be re-interred.

The cemetery staff will add a letter of consent to the application form and a copy of the Home Office Licence. They will forward all these to the Registrar.

The Registrar on your behalf presents a petition to the Bishop.

It takes another eight weeks for a Bishops Faculty to be granted, if there are no problems. When you receive this approval forward it to the cemetery staff.

STEP 4

THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Contact a Funeral Director and make enquiries regarding the fees. Arrange for a coffin to be at the cemetery ready for the transfer of the remains and for Transportation, to where the remains are to be re-interred. You will have contacted that Authority yourself or through the Funeral Director and made the arrangements for burial, after arranging the date of exhumation with the cemetery staff. The funeral director will act on your behalf over any problems when the grave is opened.

STEP 5

THE EXHUMATION

When you have received the Home Office Licence and if necessary the Bishops Faculty arrange with the cemetery staff a suitable date for the exhumation. The Exhumation takes place early in the morning before the cemetery is open. It will be carried out with decency and decorum. YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED to attend the exhumation.

Those present are: -

1. The funeral director - who is your representative.
2. An Environmental Health Officer - who ensures there is no public health threat to the staff carrying out the exhumation and for subsequent visitors to the cemetery. An Environmental Officer does not have to be present for exhumation of cremated remains.
3. The cemetery staff carrying out and supervising the exhumation.

There are conditions attached to the Home Office Licence and Bishops Faculty which must be adhered to. The cemetery staff will explain these to you.

Each exhumation is different, with its own set of circumstances, which often are not known until the day of the exhumation when the grave is opened. Decomposition of a body and coffin depends on a number of factors, including how long the body has been buried and ground conditions.

THESE NOTES ARE FOR YOUR GUIDANCE ONLY AND THE CEMETERY STAFF WILL BE PLEASED TO ASSIST YOU.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES

HOME OFFICE LICENCE

THE HOME OFFICE
ABCU - EXHUMATION APPLICATIONS
ROOM 972
50 QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

TELEPHONE: - 020 7273 3776

BISHOPS FACULTY

REGISTRAR AND LEGAL SECRETARY
BISHOP OF BLACKBURN'S REGISTRY
CHURCH HOUSE
CATHEDRAL CLOSE
BLACKBURN
LANCASHIRE BB1 5AA

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