

RECYCLING OF METALS FOLLOWING CREMATION

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Peterborough Crematorium

If your loved one had to have an orthopaedic implant during their lifetime you may wonder what happens to it after cremation.

Until recently it was accepted practice to take the implant from the remains and place it with other implants until there was a sufficient amount of metal to dispose of it all in the grounds of the crematorium.

This has become less acceptable on environmental grounds over the years and on the Continent the recycling of metals that are in the cremated remains, following the cremation, have been recycled for a number of years.

The metals used for implants are special medical grade stainless steel, titanium and cobalt chrome all produced from non renewable resources. Over time these resources will be depleted and such metals will become less available for such operations in the future.

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) has identified a means of collecting metals from participating crematoria throughout the UK and Peterborough Bereavement Services have decided to look to the future and the protection of our environment.

In future metals will be collected by the ICCM and recycled. Any monies that they may collect in this process will then be donated to bereavement related charities.

We hope you agree that this not only protects the environment, but provides potential benefits for the living.

Peterborough Bereavement Services will not do this without your permission. We have amended our 'Authority for the Disposal of Cremated Remains' form to allow you to opt out of the scheme for recycling metals.

If you do not wish the metals to be recycled then we are happy to return them to you, or leave them in the cremated remains. If they are left in the remains, however, the remains will need to be buried in a grave rather than scattered in the grounds.

Other metals may also be collected at the same time including ferrous metals, mainly from the nails in the coffin, and some very small granules of precious metals. These precious metals usually vaporise in the cremator, but there are sometimes very small granules that may be left. Most of these will end up in the remains but some may be left behind in the cremation equipment.

Some questions and answers have been included that may help in your decision. However, if you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Bereavement Services Office.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can I have the metals buried?

A. Only if you leave the metals in the remains and have them all buried together.

Q. Why can't you just continue the way it was?

A. The law now says that if we continue then there may have to be extensive changes to how the metals are buried. The environmental benefits mean it is time for a change.

Q. Can I have any gold or silver that is reclaimed?

A. Unfortunately not. These metals will melt and combine with ash and could be dispersed widely within the cremation equipment and remains. We recommend all gold and silver is removed prior to the cremation.

Q. Do the implants get re-used for other patients?

A. Unfortunately they are too badly damaged for re-use to be allowed. They are smelted down into granules before being reused in other industries.

Q. Can I have the implant back?

A. Yes, just let your funeral director know and arrangements will be made.

Q. Why the sudden change in policy?

A. Recycling is environmentally friendly and has provided real benefits to charities on the Continent. This can now happen here. It allows us to consult the bereaved and allow you to make the choice.