

Exhumation is the removal of remains from a grave with one or more individuals. It is unlawful to disturb any human remains without first obtaining the necessary legal authority. This includes any cremated remains.

Exhumations can occur for a number of reasons, including:

- It maybe that the families make a request for personal reasons
- Removal from the original grave site to a new grave acquired in the same or other cemetery
- Transfer from a public grave to a family grave
- A Coroner's instruction that requires further forensic examination of the deceased
- Removal for cremation
- Removal for burial in another cemetery
- There could be a request for repatriation overseas to be buried in a family vault

LICENCE, PERMITS AND AUTHORISATION

Exhumation of buried human remains and buried cremated remains will normally require a Home Office Licence issued from the Ministry of Justice and a Bishops Faculty. One of these or both will be needed, it depends on where the remains are at present and where they are going to be re-interred.

It is a requirement of a proposed exhumation that all close relatives of the deceased and the owner of the grave plot are contacted and sign to say they agree to the proposed exhumation, before applying for any other licences.

A Home Office Licence

Issued by the Ministry of Justice. You don't have to pay for an exhumation licence, but there may be fees charged by the burial authority and whoever carries out the exhumation (see below)

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-an-exhumation-licence>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-to-exhume-human-remains>

A Bishops Faculty

A Bishops Faculty can be obtained by application to the Church of England Diocese for the area where the deceased is interred. The address can be found in the **Crockford's Clerical Directory**. There may be a charge for the application, which can take 4 to 6 weeks to come through.

Most burial grounds/cemeteries are segregated between **Consecrated** and **Unconsecrated** areas.

Consecration is the term that is given to either all areas of a cemetery or smaller sections that have been 'dedicated to the service of God according to the right of the Church of England'.

The term consecration means to be *"set apart, or separated, for use by the Lord"*.

To make a cemetery or section consecrated a religious service takes place in the cemetery prior to burials taking place, by a Church of England Bishop who administers the area the cemetery is in.

Over the whole of England there are several 'Diocese', they cover many large cities, towns and villages. You need to identify which Diocese your requirement for exhumation falls under.

If the remains are to be removed from a grave in a consecrated section of a cemetery and are to be re-buried into another consecrated section, then only a Bishops Faculty is required.

If the exhumation is from consecrated ground to be re-buried in the same grave or they are to go to an unconsecrated section both a Home Office Licence and Bishops Faculty will be required.

If the exhumation is from unconsecrated ground and the subsequent reburial is in unconsecrated ground, then only a Home Office Licence is needed.

Exhumation of *unknown* remains may require approval from additional organisation bodies.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE EXHUMATION

Our team will carry out the exhumation and supervise all the works. An environmental health officer and cemeteries officer can be present at the exhumation. We will further supervise the event to ensure that:

- The correct grave is opened
- The exhumation commences as early as possible in the morning to ensure maximum privacy
- The plot is screened (if necessary) as appropriate for privacy
- Health and safety of all workers is maintained - protective clothing including masks and gloves, task lights and all other necessary equipment. The exhumation may be done manually or with the additional help of heavy machinery.
- Everyone present shows due respect to the deceased person and to adjoining graves
- The nameplate on the casket corresponds to that on the licence
- The new casket has been approved
- All human remains, and all the pieces of casket are placed in the new casket
- The new casket is properly sealed
- The area of exhumation is properly disinfected
- Satisfactory arrangements are in place for the onward transmission of the remains
- If forensic analysis of the remains is required, the remain are transferred to our laboratory or other agreed (pre-approved) facilities.

Recording of all processes follows all forensic archaeology guidelines, thus producing a paper archive and a photographic record.

If the conditions of the licence cannot be met, or there are public health or decency concerns, the exhumation may not proceed. All exhumation applications and requests are dealt with individually.

COST

Exhumation costs (each case is different, please contact us to discuss your case)

Additional fees may include the following:

- Removal of memorials on all relevant graves
- Exhumation Licence/s
- Bishop Faculty fees
- Funeral directors' charges which will include new coffins or cremated remains caskets
- Cemetery fees and charges
- Re-burial costs