

— FIELD GUIDE · POST-ASH

Solidified Remains vs. Memorial Diamonds

Two ways to transform ashes into a keepsake. One is simple and complete. The other we cover with caveats.

Cremated remains are not what most people expect. Not the fine, soft powder the word “ashes” implies, but coarse, gritty, grey-white fragments of processed bone, dense and heavy for their volume, and vaguely unsettling to handle. They sit in a plastic bag inside a box or urn.

For many families the experience is dissonant. You spent a lifetime with a person who was warm, solid, recognisable, and what you get back bears no physical relationship to them. Some find peace in scattering, in tree urns, in an urn on a shelf. But a growing number want something else: a transformation, an object you can hold, carry, display, or wear, made with intention rather than resembling medical waste. Two very different processes offer this.

Solidified Remains

This process converts the entirety of a person’s cremated remains into smooth, solid stones. It works in a few steps: the ashes are returned by mail, then purified to remove metals, staples, and other contaminants — a step cremation facilities do only partially. The purified material is formed into solid, stone-like pieces that resemble smooth river pebbles, ranging from white to warm tan to grey depending on the person’s mineral composition. A typical adult yields dozens of stones, each unique.

Families choose it because the stones are nothing like ashes. They feel like stones — warm, smooth, pleasant to hold — and they are shareable in a way ashes are not: give one to each family member, carry one in a pocket, set one on a shelf, plant one with a tree. The shift from

“a bag of gritty fragments I don’t know what to do with” to “dozens of beautiful stones I can give to everyone who knew this person” is the whole value.

The honest assessment: this is one of the most emotionally intelligent products in deathcare. It solves a real problem, uses one hundred percent of the remains, and creates objects that help grieving and sharing in ways ashes and urns do not, at a modest cost. The transformation is verifiable and complete — the stones are exactly what they appear to be.

Memorial Diamonds

This process extracts carbon from cremated remains and grows it into a lab-grown diamond — the same technology used for lab diamonds in the jewellery market — then cuts, polishes, and optionally sets it. Cremated remains contain a small amount of carbon; it is extracted and purified, then placed in a growth chamber with a tiny diamond seed. Under extreme pressure and heat, the carbon crystallises onto the seed over weeks to months. The rough diamond is cut and polished and can be set in a ring or pendant. Only a small portion of the remains is used.

The reputational question. The memorial-diamond industry has a complicated reputation, and it is worth being direct. The amount of carbon recoverable from ashes is very small, since most of the body’s carbon leaves as gas during cremation, and critics have questioned whether a full diamond can be grown from ash-derived carbon alone or whether supplementary carbon is used; independent verification is difficult. There is also a price-to-value gap: a comparable lab-grown diamond sells for a small fraction of a memorial diamond’s price on the open market. The premium is for the memorial service and the claimed origin of the carbon, and whether that premium is worth it is a personal judgment. The meaning is in the story, not the stone.

The Comparison

FEATURE	SOLIDIFIED REMAINS	MEMORIAL DIAMOND
Process	solidification	lab diamond growth
Uses how much ash	100%	a small portion
What you get	dozens of stones	one diamond
Shareable	yes	no
Wearable	pocket stone, not jewellery	yes

Provenance verifiable

yes

difficult

The Environmental Note

Neither solidified stones nor memorial diamonds are ecological acts. Both are energy-intensive transformations of ashes into keepsakes, and both give nothing back to the living world — no soil, no tree, no habitat, no land. We grade them honestly: beautiful and meaningful, but not green. Where they can contribute to an ecological outcome is indirect: if a keepsake makes a family more willing to choose cremation or aquamation over a conventional casketed, vaulted burial, the overall decision can still be a net improvement. The keepsake is not the ecological act; the disposition choice it enables might be.

A NOTE ON THIS GUIDE

This guide is for general information and reflects conditions as of 2026. Legal status, availability, and costs change over time; confirm current details before making arrangements. Nothing here is legal, medical, or financial advice.