

Green Burials



Natural Cemeteries

There is a growing awareness, that when our loved ones are laid to rest we would prefer not to add to the amount of timber felled or energy used. Whether we choose burial or cremation, both inevitably have their effect upon the environment. Crematoria, like other combustion systems have improved their emission levels quite considerably and in the future will face even stricter requirements. Currently, 450,000 wooden coffins are burnt each year in the UK thus releasing dioxins, hydrochloric acid, sulphuric acid, and carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Although many churchyards and cemeteries are full and burial is becoming rarer – cities and larger urban areas do re-use graves, and are increasingly likely to do so now that land is at such a premium. Burial harmlessly locks carbon underground, where its contribution to the Greenhouse Effect is much less than that of cremation.

In response to public demand, several green burial sites have become available, and more are being considered. Some are on private ground and others are in sections of Local Authority cemeteries, usually as single shallow graves, with a native species of tree instead of a headstone, eventually forming a woodland environment. Regulations are becoming more flexible to accommodate alternatives to the standard wooden coffin e.g. a cardboard one.

Because provision and regulations differ between Local Authorities, it is essential to check that what you have in mind is permitted or available locally. East Devon and also Teignbridge have their own leaflets. Contact your own District Council for further details or for a list of sites. See www.igreens.org.uk/uk_green_burial_by_county.htm

Sustainable Funerals

We encourage all Christians in the South West to consider the green options available when discussing arrangements with a Funeral Director. Do not be afraid of making it clear what it is you want, and do not be put off if the Funeral Director tries to dissuade you away from a green burial towards a 'traditional' one. In the end you may decide that the firm, which may have looked after your family for several generations, is not sympathetic to your requirements, and choose another Funeral Director more willing to carry out your instructions.

Rather than leaving the funeral service to be arranged between the minister and the Funeral Director, we also suggest that where possible the members of the community of believers be invited to assist with the organising of the service and welcoming people who have come to pay their last respects.

DIY funerals are not always recommended as good intentions can be very difficult to cope with during the complexities of bereavement and funeral arrangements. We would suggest using professionals to sort out the problems for you.

Some options can be requested when making funeral arrangements, though local regulations must be complied with:

- 1 Earth friendly coffins from recycled timber or cardboard, natural fibre shrouds and wicker stretchers are all available these days.
- 2 Although ashes may be scattered at a favourite location in the countryside, there is less freedom for burials, however natural sites are becoming more common as outlined overleaf.

For those wishing for a totally DIY funeral, you will need to be well prepared but forms of assistance are available. Further information on arrangements for a green funeral can be obtained from your local funeral director or the Independent Funerals Advisory Service.

Publications

How to direct your own funeral (£10.00 incl. p & p) and free advice obtainable only from: Independent Funerals Advisory Service, Belmont, Brendon Road, Watchet, Somerset, TA23 0AX. Tel/Fax: 01984 632285

Information pack (send 6 x 1st class stamps)

issued by: Natural Death Centre, 20 Heber Road, London, NW2 6AA. Tel: 0208 208 2853
www.globalideasbank.org/naturaldeath.html

The full text of *The New Natural Death*

Handbook and a full list of existing and proposed green burial grounds are available on this site.

Also available from both of these organisations:
The New Natural Death Handbook (pp 320, £15.50 incl. p & p).

A Charter for the Bereaved is available from the Old Deanery address below.

Website links

ICCM Branch: <http://swswiccm.wordpress.com>

Natural Death Centre: <http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk>

Natural Burial Grounds:

<http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk/index.php>

www.bereavementpractitioners.org/Society

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