

Green Burials

It is common knowledge that traditional burials are becoming increasingly environmentally harmful. Toxic chemicals used in embalming, lacquered wooden caskets buried beneath the ground, polished stone, and marble tombstones permanently altering the landscape are all things that cause extensive and lasting damage to surrounding ecosystems.

But there are alternatives. Natural, or green burial, which seeks to mitigate the environmental impact of death, has recently been growing in popularity.

Green Burial (Driffield Cemetery)

An area of Driffield Cemetery, Bridlington Road, Driffield is used for green burials.

This eco-friendly burial practice involves an area having a natural appearance with no memorials marking individual graves.

The identified area is secluded and separated from the rest of the cemetery by a stand of trees. These will remain in place. At a later date the area beneath the trees will be planted with bluebells as a form of memorial available to families.

What Are Green Burials

Green Burials are a sustainable burial option with a minimal environmental impact.

There are two different types of Green Burials Meadow and Woodland. Meadow sites, like the one in Driffield Cemetery, are left as semi-fallow land, allowing for self-seeded plants and creating a haven for wildlife. Woodland sites allow for a tree to be planted over each grave.

The Green Burial site in Driffield Cemetery will be a scenic place of reflection, filled with local plants and wildlife.

History of Green Burials

The first UK Green Burial site was opened in Carlisle Cemetery, Carlisle in 1994. This is a Woodland site and will become a red squirrel reserve once full. There are now over 200 Green Burial sites across the UK.

The Green Burial site in Driffield Cemetery is the first such site in the East Riding of Yorkshire. For further information on Green Burials visit www.naturaldeath.org.uk

Arranging a Green Burial

Green burials can be arranged in the same way as formal burials, either through a Funeral Director or directly with the Burial Authority.

A plot in the green burial section can be pre-purchased. For operational reasons, the pre-purchased plot will be the next one in sequence.

Green burial plots are for one interment only.

Coffins

Coffins for Green Burials should be made of easily bio-degradable substances. This can be, untreated wood, wicker, bamboo, papier mâché, or cardboard. Funeral Directors offer a selection of coffin types. Homemade coffins of a suitable material are also allowed. All coffins should be agreed by the

Cemeteries Administration office prior to burial.

To reduce the environmental impact even further, embalming should not take place. Metal fittings should also be replaced with bio-degradable ones (such as rope handles).

Memorabilia

Green Burials do not allow for headstones or memorials to be placed on an individual grave. An acceptable memorial tree and memorial plaque at the head of the grave would be permitted.

Memorial benches can also be purchased and located as near to the green burial area as possible, a memorial plaque could also be fitted onto the memorial bench.

Further information on memorial trees, benches and plaque placement can be obtained from the cemeteries office.

How Can the Family Be Involved

As with any funeral, family can be involved as much or as little as they wish.

The paperwork involved can seem daunting to those not familiar with it. Medical staff, Funeral Directors and Registrars can advise on the required forms to be completed.

With regard to the actual committal service, a Funeral Director does not have to be involved. Occasionally, the family themselves choose to arrange as much of the burial as possible and Cemeteries staff will ensure clear guidance on procedures is provided.

The family are allowed a token participation in the filling of the grave, but, for health and safety reasons, the majority of this process is performed by cemetery staff after the family have left the grave side.

What are the Environmental Benefits of a Green Burial

Formal cemeteries have a single use. Over time a full cemetery is visited by less and less people and can fall into disrepair.

Green burials allow for cemeteries to have other uses than that of a burial ground. They encourage wildlife and provide a peaceful public space for reflection.

Green burials do not allow for bodies to be embalmed or for non-biodegradable components on coffins. This means the actual environmental impact of the burial is kept to a minimum. Items such as handles and plaques should be made of string or wood and not metal.

Purchasing a Green Burial Grave

Please contact: Cemeteries Administration

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Viking Close

Willerby HU10 6DZ

Tel: 01482 395 880

Email: cemeteriesadmin@eastriding.gov.uk