



green fuse help sheet 5

10 things you may not know about funerals

1. You can hold a funeral anywhere that will allow it – e.g. in a function room, village or community hall, at home, in a marquee, by the graveside.
2. No minister or official need be present – family and friends can hold the ceremony, perhaps with the help of an independent funeral celebrant.
3. Most crematoria allow a wide range of coffins, including those made from wicker, bamboo, banana leaf and cardboard. The standard chipboard veneer coffin contains formaldehyde in the chipboard and is not allowed by most natural and woodland burial sites.
4. A shroud can be used instead of a coffin for burial. A body must not be visible out in public, but can just be wrapped in material. It would be best to place some thick cotton wadding on the body before wrapping it to cover the outline.
5. You can decorate a cardboard or untreated pine coffin yourself with water based paints or photographic transfers, or decorate a drape to cover it to give it a more personal feel.
6. You don't have to have a set religious or humanist ceremony – you can devise whatever ceremony you want, to reflect the views, character and beliefs of the person who has died.
7. You can transport the coffin to the funeral in your own or a hired vehicle if you like. Or you can ask the funeral director if they can use a less formal vehicle if you don't want the big black hearse.
8. You could bring the person who has died home the night before the funeral, for a vigil with the coffin either open or closed. This can be a wonderful experience, a time to really say farewell and to share stories, laughter and tears with others. It often makes the funeral itself a better experience.
9. Burial can be made at natural and woodland burial site or on private land. There are now over 200 natural and woodland burial sites across the UK, where burials are made on land which is returned to nature as woodland or meadowland. Headstones are not usually allowed.
10. There are around 550,000 funerals a year, possibly attended by over 11 million people, that's nearly 20% of the total population going to a funeral each year. Over 70% of people who die are cremated.

You can find more information and ideas like this in our book *We Need To Talk About The Funeral - 101 Practical Ways To Commemorate And Celebrate A Life*, by Jane Morrell and Simon Smith, available at bookshops and Amazon or download from www.greenfuse.co.uk/funeralbook.htm for £14.99.

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