



Devon's natural burial sites

The first natural site opened in 1994 and there are now around 250 in the UK, most either in woodland or meadowland. The idea originated from the need for additional burial space and for a more environmentally friendly alternative to cremation and traditional burial, whereby the body is returned to nature. From this grew the idea of funerals which were less formal and involving more family participation, although a formal funeral ceremony can still be held elsewhere or by the woodland graveside.

Devon boasts seven natural and woodland burial sites across the north and south of the county. All these sites have gained planning permission to be cemeteries. They all require a biodegradable coffin or shroud (not chipboard veneer, metal or synthetic materials) and that the body should not have been embalmed. The sites are non-denominational and unconsecrated. They do not allow headstones, only small plaques if anything at all, but encourage the planting of trees or native, wildflowers.

Bidwell Woodland Burial, Rattery, Nr Totnes. This site is privately owned. Situated on a peaceful and beautiful hillside, over a brook and amid surrounding woods, this is one of the wilder sites, rich with typical Devon wildflowers and herbs - a perpetual and sustainably managed woodland. Access to the higher graves involves an uphill walk. Cost £500 plus approximately £350 for gravedigging.

Cockington Woodland Burial Site, near Torquay. This site is owned by Torbay Coast And Countryside Trust. Set in Cockington Country Park the site is part of an 18 acre woodland planted in 2005. It enjoys fantastic views over Torbay. Its main disadvantage is its proximity to the main ring road. Each burial is marked with a granite memorial plaque and a tree will be planted nearby. Easy access. Cost £800 plus £235 for gravedigging. Granite memorial plaque £200.

Crossways Woodland Burials, Cheriton Bishop, near Exeter. This site is privately owned. Set on a traditional working family farm and surrounded by fields and woodlands with views across Dartmoor and the rolling hills of Devon. This is a new wood, with native trees, shrubs and wildflowers. No headstones are allowed but a native tree or shrub can be planted on the burial plot. There is a log cabin on the site, which holds 30-40 people. Member of the Association Of Natural Burial Grounds. Easy access. Cost £835 including tree and grave digging.

Exwick Cemetery, Exeter. Owned and run by Exeter City Council, a woodland site has been added to the main cemetery. No conventional memorials or flowers (apart from on the day of the burial) may be placed there. At the appropriate time of year you may, with permission, plant an approved tree to the side of the grave, or wild flowers. Cost £500 for Exeter residents, £1,000 for non-residents.

Great Bradley Cottage Natural Burial Ground, Templeton, near Tiverton. A small and lovely site, which is part of a five-acre hay meadow enclosed by natural, wild hedgerows, primroses, daffodils, foxgloves and honeysuckle. Once the grave has settled bulbs and spring flowers may be planted, and a fruit or

deciduous tree planted in the remembrance area. Member of the Association Of Natural Burial Grounds. Easy access. £450 including gravedigging.

Mole Valley Green Burial Ground. Queens Nympton, near South Molton. Privately owned. Situated on a secluded organic dairy farm, the south facing site adjoins an old wood. Native trees are planted on graves free at the appropriate times of year. No memorial stones. Cost £500 + approximately £250 for gravedigging.

Yealmpton Woodland Burial, near Plymouth. This site is owned by a not-for-profit community organisation. Set on a high hill, with lovely views of Dartmoor and overlooking the estuary of the River Yealm, this is a new woodland planted in 2003 which will be managed as woodland for perpetuity. It also contains a wild flower meadow. Small memorial stones are permitted and a native tree can be planted with each burial (additional cost). Easy access. Member of the Association Of Natural Burial Grounds. Cost £550 plus around £250 for gravedigging.

If you require further information about any of these sites, please do not hesitate to contact us on 01803 840779 or send an email to simon@greenfuse.co.uk