

What is Natural Burial?

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM), currently celebrating its centenary, represents and provides guidance and training to those working in burial and cremation. They have been asked by their own membership to extend their services to cover Natural Burial. They are launching **The Charter for the Bereaved choosing Natural Burial** on October 1st at their annual Convention. Natural Burial Grounds may adopt the Charter by achieving basic standards of customer care. This sits alongside their existing **Charter for the Bereaved** launched in 1997. In addition there will be the opportunity to train for a BTEC accredited Certificate in Natural Burial Ground management, practical City and Guilds training sessions and a series of one day training events.

The term 'Natural Burial' is used to describe a funeral that has a low environmental impact.

There are many facets to a funeral; many if not all of these can be carried out with consideration for the environment. In 2013 we routinely recycle, lower our emissions and fit solar panels; our ultimate fate is less considered.

Natural Burial may take place in a Natural Burial Ground, in part of a conventional cemetery or on private ground. It may be defined by the resulting landscape; by the materials and practices used or by other environmental considerations such as the type and rate of decomposition. The term Natural Burial encompasses woodland; meadowland; farmland; green; orchard burial etc., but does not define them.

- Natural Burial was started by Ken West MBE in Carlisle Cemetery in 1993.
- There are now more Natural Burial Grounds than crematoria in the UK (265 vs 260).
- The majority are in Municipal cemeteries.
- Our recent survey showed 25% increase in demand in the last 5 years.

Factors widely considered to define Natural Burial include the use of a biodegradable coffin; reduced use of embalming as a procedure; burial clothing made of natural materials; the lack of a conventional memorial and ultimately an enriched and preserved environment. Sustainability is also an issue.

As the Babyboomers become the generation increasingly responsible for making funeral arrangements for others and consequently to think about their own demise; their concern for the environment is bound to become a consideration.

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