



Tavistock Town Council
Tavistock Town Council -*Working for the local community*

Plymouth Road Cemetery
Green Burial Meadow Policy

Before municipal cemeteries were introduced it was common practice for burials to take place in woodlands, meadows and on private land. There are many individuals today who are concerned about the potential environmental impacts of modern funerals such as loss of trees, wild flowers and wildlife and wish to return to a natural form of interment.

Aware of the concerns of the community and wishing to support and contribute to an environmentally aware lifestyle Tavistock Town Council have set aside the south eastern corner of the cemetery to create a wild flower meadow where natural or green burials can take place. We have been providing a green burial service since 1999, with the first interment taking place in January that year.

A green burial is an alternative to the traditional church burial of the deceased whereby the deceased returns to earth in the most sustainable manner possible. The ethos behind a green burial is to reduce the environmental impact of interment of the deceased.

The concept of our green burial meadow is to provide a peaceful resting place in a manner which is friendly towards nature, wildlife and the environment.

Our meadow is on a gently sloping ground surrounded on three sides by a variety of mature trees. There are two oak trees which have been planted to mark the entrance to the meadow, and a dry stone wall has been built by Town Council staff, to define the meadow from the main Cemetery.

We are keen to ensure that the burial ground remains true to its ethos and it is important that the meadow can be enjoyed as a place of peace and quiet reflection for the bereaved and future generations.

Our meadow allows for remains to be interred in consecrated land using biodegradable materials such as a cardboard or wicker coffin. The burial is simple and the area is left much as nature intended without headstones or clearly marked out graves. As with all interments the location of the grave is recorded on the cemetery plans, and in the Register of Burials in



Tavistock Town Council

Tavistock Town Council -*Working for the local community*

accordance with the Registration of Burials Act 1864, Births and Deaths Registration Act 1926 and 1953, Registration of Births and Deaths Regulations 1987. Burial records are available to view at the cemetery office on request.

To identify the grave a micro-chip with its own unique serial number is placed by each burial plot. This allows the Cemetery Administrator to update our plan of the area and to enable family and friends to locate where their loved ones are laid to rest.

Those who choose a meadow burial will be contributing towards creating a haven for wildflowers, insects, birds and mammals.

Memorials

To maintain the meadow as natural as possible and to encourage wildlife, wildflowers and trees to thrive certain restrictions will be necessary. Visitors must take care to create as little disturbance as possible to the flora and fauna therefore walking to individual graves is not encouraged as this causes pathways which damage the wildlife.

The placing of flowers and memorials on graves is not permitted. The meadow itself is a natural memorial for all to appreciate.

Fresh flowers may be placed in or on the graves during a funeral service, but please remove cellophane, oasis, ribbon or any other non biodegradable wrappings. Tavistock Town Council reserve the right to remove flowers placed on graves as part of routine care and maintenance. Artificial flowers are not permitted and no vases or containers should be left in the meadow.

There is a Book of Remembrance located in the Cemetery Waiting Room to allow a memorial to be recorded; alternatively, you may like to consider providing a wooden bench with memorial plaque in the Tavistock area to commemorate a loved one (with the agreement of the landowner). If you would like to have a memorial arranged, please contact the Cemetery Administrator.

Maintaining the Meadow

The green burial meadow is managed primarily for the benefit of the wildlife and the natural environment. The grass is managed twice a year as required, in order to encourage and protect the local wildlife and is left



Tavistock Town Council

Tavistock Town Council -*Working for the local community*

as a meadow providing a natural peaceful place to pay your respects. It must therefore be appreciated that the usual neat & tidy appearance of a cemetery will not apply to this burial area.

Visitors are reminded that, in keeping with the natural appearance of the meadow, no litter bins are provided at the burial ground; it is expected that visitors will take their litter home.

Horticultural chemicals will not be used, unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise. In this event only a spot treatment will be used.

Tavistock Town Council will carry out any required maintenance of the green burial meadow.

Families and friends that wish for a burial to take place at our green burial meadow must have in mind the following:

- Tavistock Town Council offers burial plots based on the natural development of the meadow and individual locations cannot be reserved or specified.
- A deed granting Exclusive Right of Burial will be issued for each burial. This applies to graves which previously were not issued a deed but where there will be future interments.
- Interments may take place with or without the services of a funeral director. For those who wish to have a non-religious ceremony, a humanist may be used. The Administrator of the Cemetery must be advised beforehand and approve any ceremony and the person conducting it, on behalf of Tavistock Town Council.
- Prior to each burial, the Cemetery Administrator must be given a copy of the authority to dispose of body (green form). It is illegal for a burial to take place without this.
- To protect the environment, it is requested that bodies should not be embalmed. The Cemetery Administrator should be advised prior to burial if this has taken place.
- Only materials that are bio-degradable and preferably from renewable sources may be used for interments, such as wood. Your funeral director can arrange this for you or the cemetery office can provide information on obtaining a bio-degradable coffin. Tavistock Town Council must be advised prior to burial if for any reason the coffin does not meet these criteria.
- No exhumations will be permitted under any circumstances except by lawful authority.



Tavistock Town Council

Tavistock Town Council -*Working for the local community*

- The scattering of seed and planting of trees and other plants in the burial ground is not permitted and is strictly controlled by Tavistock Town Council.
- No gardening or cultivation whatsoever is permitted.
- No wildlife shall be introduced into the meadow.
- This is a natural burial area with no hard standing paths, hand rails or mobility aids provided and so visitors should recognise that they need to take care on uneven and possibly muddy or slippery ground. The meadow is uneven in places and those with wheelchairs and mobility aids may find it a little difficult to move freely around the burial locations. Please discuss any special requirements that you have with the Cemetery Administrator when considering a booking or attending a burial.
- Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult at all times.

Access to the Meadow

Access to the cemetery and in particular the green burial meadow is 365 days a year from dawn to dusk however but please be aware that at certain times access to individual graves may be restricted, for instance when an adjacent grave is being dug. Any disturbance will be kept to a minimum.

All visitors to the Cemetery must give due consideration and respect to other ceremonies and services that may be taking place at the time of their visit, regardless of the religious or spiritual persuasion concerned.

Tavistock Town Council reserves the right to close all or part of the cemetery at any time and without prior notice if in the interest of public safety.

Tavistock Town Council reserves the right to update and amend the Green Burial Policy as and when deemed appropriate. Significant changes to the policy will be communicated as soon as reasonably practicable.

The Green Burial Policy should be read in conjunction with the Cemetery Rules and Regulations.