

Sharpham Meadow

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground?

With stunning views of the River Dart and across the South Hams Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground offers an ecological alternative to traditional burial or cremation and is open to all. The Meadow differs in feel and practice from a traditional churchyard or a municipal cemetery. Ashes can be interred here as well as burials. Please familiarise yourself with the Terms & Conditions so that you are aware of the conditions of use for the site, as they do differ greatly from a traditional burial site. The T&Cs also contain useful general information.

Is the burial plot for local people only?

No, the burial site is open to all - regardless of faith or local residency, whether you are using a funeral director or not, having a religious ceremony, a secular ceremony, or no ceremony at all.

Will we need to use a Funeral Director?

Not necessarily, although you may find it easier. The Sharpham Trust cannot offer advice on ceremonies. If you are considering using a Funeral Director, there is a non-exhaustive list on our website. Some will have used the site before and could offer some invaluable advice.

Can I visit the site before I buy a plot?

Yes absolutely. In fact we would recommend that you or a representative do so. Anyone is welcome to visit the site during daylight hours. Please refer to our helpful **Site Visit document** for more details.

Can I book plots for my whole family?

Yes. One plot will only hold one burial so we would ask that you reserve as many plots as you require for a family. Our application forms reflect this and have the fields necessary to add any adjacent plots you wish to reserve. When adjacent plots are purchased with a burial plot then the plots will be allocated at time of purchase. A certificate will be issued for the adjacent plots for your records.

How will my family know where a grave is?

The site has been professionally surveyed. We hold an up-to-date map showing the grave location. If after some time you are unsure where the grave is situated, we hold a central record of burials and give you the information you need to locate the grave. Should a family member wish to contact The Trust to enquire about visiting the Site or the grave location then please invite them to contact us.

Can we choose exactly where on the site the grave should be?

No, each burial will take place in the next available space. Multiple plots can be bought in advance at the time of purchase to ensure you are buried next to your loved ones.

Can I pre-book a plot?

Yes. Within our [Price and Application Forms section of the website](#), we provide you with a pre-booking form to complete and send. For any plot pre-purchase, the Trust will issue you with a Certificate which can be added to your will, if you wish. We also hold records of any pre-purchased plots.

Would we need a cardboard coffin?

All coffins must be biodegradable and without any plastics, chipboard, harmful paints or toxic glues. Shrouds are permitted. Wooden coffins are permitted provided they come from certifiably sustained and renewable sources.

Do we own the plot?

When you buy, you're actually acquiring the Grant of the Right of Burial, (Local Government Act 1972, Section 214[3]) only. Buying a plot does not give you ownership of the land the plot lies on, or any other rights thereof.

Can I do what I want with the grave?

No. There are Terms and Conditions which we invite you to read before purchasing a plot.

How are the graves marked?

A marker stone headstone is available to purchase at the time of the burial or later. For an ashes plot, this is compulsory. The slate is sourced as locally as possible and hand carved by a local artist. The words are restricted to the first name and surname of the deceased, as well as their dates of birth and death. Please note that this slate is not polished and has an uneven natural surface.

What about ashes?

We have an allocated area on the site for the burial of ashes. Ashes can only be buried in a biodegradable casket. Stone tablets will mark the spot. You can also buy multiple ash plots in advance. With prior consent and arrangement with The Trust it is possible to inter ashes in an existing burial plot. Burial fees will apply.

How are the graves dug and prepared?

The digging of graves is managed by The Trust. On the day of the funeral/burial, the grave will be dressed to allow safe access for the family of the deceased.

Can I help dig the grave?

Families may help in the filling in of the grave, as long as they are supervised and by prior arrangement. Families do so at their own risk.

How is the site maintained?

The site is cared for as a hay meadow, hence the grass is allowed to grow long and cut periodically. Only simple flat headstones are permitted and no other memorial items or plantings are allowed.

Is there anywhere that I can hold a gathering before/after the burial?

Yes - in the cob ceremonial building or around the Ancestors' Fire pit (weather depending). The ceremonial building accommodates approximately 40 people when sitting. You are welcome to decorate the shelter yourself.

Do you have disabled access?

This is a natural burial site with no hardstanding paths, hand rails or mobility aids provided. The site 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 with your funeral director when considering a booking or attending a burial.

Can we have music at the site?

We do not have an electricity supply at the grave side for recorded music but you are welcome to provide your own music on a portable device.

Can I have flowers delivered to the site?

As we don't have an office on site, we advise that main flowers arrive with the coffin in the main hearse/car and that any others are brought with the individual guests. Please bear in mind that although floral tributes may be placed on a grave after a burial, we ask that there is no cellophane, plastic wrappings, plastic labels or oasis, just natural foliage. These should be removed after two weeks.

What facilities are there on the site?

There is car parking for approximately 50 cars, a ceremonial shelter, a fire pit and seating area as well as a compost toilet. There are 20 chairs which can be placed in the ceremonial building by prior arrangement. There are no refreshment facilities at the site.

How do I arrange a funeral at the Sharpham Meadow?

You or your chosen Funeral Director should contact The Trust by email at sharphammeadow@sharphamtrust.org to ensure the date you have in mind is available. We can reserve your preferred date provisionally whilst you complete the relevant form and arrange payment.

To download the relevant application form please visit our website [here](#).

Before we can allow a burial, we need to have received one of following: the Registrar's Green Burial Form, the Coroner's Certificate or Crematorium Certificate for ashes interment.

Please ensure that this is delivered to Sharpham Trust Office, Sharpham House, Ashprington, Devon, TQ9 7UT during working hours or handed to a member of Trust staff or their representative at Sharpham Meadow Site immediately prior to the burial.