

# Alternative Coffins

(Biodegradable)



**Salford City Council**

**For further help and advice contact the  
Cemetery and Crematorium Offices at**

**Agecroft Cemetery  
Langley Road  
Swinton  
M27 2SS  
Tel 0161 736 2512  
Fax 0161 737 5538**

**Peel Green Cemetery  
716, Liverpool Road  
Eccles  
M30 7LW  
Tel 0161 789 1901  
Fax 0161 789 8239**

[www.Salford.gov.uk](http://www.Salford.gov.uk)

## **Introduction**

The coffin is probably the most symbolic item of the funeral proceeding and most families are not aware of the choices of coffins, which are currently available.

It is only right that the family should choose the style of coffin that is most fitting to the deceased person, particularly if the traditional coffin shape is not the family's choice. Traditional 'shaped' coffins, made of hard oak or elm wood have been used to bury people for years. Only since hardwood became expensive to buy, did 'chipboard veneered' coffins become the replacement because of the manufacture costs.

Funeral directors today use chipboard coffins finished with handles, nameplates and ornaments, which resemble brass but are generally made of plastic materials.

## **Environmental Issues**

Veneered coffins, when used for cremation, give off pollutants into the atmosphere and it is understood that formaldehyde is used when making the chipboard, which is also harmful to the environment.

In recent years other coffin options have been developed and there is now a choice of environmentally friendly coffins available to both the public and funeral directors, which meet the beliefs and needs of the bereaved.

## **The cardboard coffin.**



These coffins are rigid, carry well and may be decorated or personalised by the family, using water based paints.

Alternatively the coffin may be draped with a flag, which are usually available from a funeral director for a nominal cost, or a cover/quilt could be used or even made by the family. Bereavement Services can supply a purple velvet pall cover, trimmed with gold, for use during the service to cover the coffin, at no additional cost to the family.

These coffins can be used for burial and cremation and they offer lower pollution rates when used for cremation, making them an environmentally friendly option.

They are also biodegradable and are a good option for families who believe in protecting the environment.

### **The bamboo coffin**



The bamboo coffins are all woven by hand which gives them their distinctive hand crafted appeal.

They are supplied with a bamboo head rest and a liner made from heavy duty unbleached cotton, which has a tight, weave so as to make it waterproof.

They are also suitable for both burial and cremation.

### **The willow coffin**



This is a wicker coffin that is strong and very attractive to the eye.

They are hand woven but tend to be slightly more expensive in comparison to the bamboo coffin. They are suitable for burial or cremation.

There are a number of different styles and types of coffins available, which range from the American 'casket' type to carefully sculpted unique designs, which can be made by craftsmen for the funeral.

Obviously, these coffins will cost a large amount of money to purchase, but are available if requested.

## **Instructions to make your own coffin**

The coffin should be made, using exact measurements for the deceased person, so that the coffin is not oversized, because this would cause problems for the burial or cremation authority. An accurately sized coffin will also be easier to handle and manoeuvre.

The coffin must be suitably made and constructed to ensure that it will bear the weight of the deceased person.

The coffin must not be varnished but the use of water-based paint can be used to decorate the coffin if desired.

The use of plastic, zinc and pitch must be avoided in the lining and construction of the coffin. Cotton sheets should be used to line the coffin to prevent any seepages.

The deceased should be dressed in their own clothes, which must be made of cotton polyester or linen. Leather or rubber soled shoes, jackets or wool clothing and any type of plastic must not be used to dress the deceased.

Please also ensure that no inflammable items are placed within the coffin, which could cause an explosion during the cremation cycle. This also includes aerosol cans, batteries, bottles and coconuts, which, upon cremation, can cause severe damage to the cremator brickwork !

You must also ensure that if the deceased was fitted with a pacemaker or any other type of implants, that they have been removed by either the funeral director or the hospital.

These restrictions are applied to mainly coffins which are constructed for cremation, because serious damage to the environment would be caused otherwise.

### **Materials Required**

**Top:-** quarter- inch plywood. (cut to size)

**Sides, ends and bottom:-** three- quarter inch plywood. (cut to size)

Two x three-quarter inch thick reinforcing battens, lengths as long as the coffin.

Screws Gauge 8, one and a quarter inch long.

Wood glue.

Four chest handles with two screws for each end or rope handles.

### **Method**

Attach reinforcing battens to the top of each side piece flush with edge and end so that the lid rests on these and is tacked to them.

Attach the side-pieces to the bottom.

Attach the ends to the bottom and to the side strips.

Attach the handles or make holes for the rope handles to go through and tie off inside.

The lid will then tack or screw down to the reinforcing battens.

A nameplate of carved wood or card is needed. Alternatively you may simply write the name on the lid.

This coffin is simple to make and very effective to look at and may be decorated on the lid with flowers which you may choose to pick from your garden.

Useful contacts these suppliers would send you a brochure upon request.

**Gillman & Son Funeral Service**

SUPPLIERS OF:- cardboard coffins.

(Price at June 2003, £80)

971 Garratt Lane,

Tooting,

SW17 0LW

Tel: 020 8672 1557

**The Purple Funeral Company Ltd.**

SUPPLIERS OF:-

cardboard, bamboo, wicker, & chipboard coffins

15 High Street,

Bishop's Castle,

Shropshire,

SY9 5BE

Tel: 01588 638444

**Greenfield Coffins Ltd.**

SUPPLIERS OF: cardboard coffins.

Unit 6-7 Lake Road,

Aintree,

Essex, CM7 3SS

Tel: 01376 327074

**Green Undertakings Ltd.**

Suppliers of: cardboard coffins, and bamboo coffins

“Hampden House”,

Rosliston Road,

Burton on Trent,

Staffordshire, DE15 9RA

Tel: 01283 540009