

Choosing a Coffin – Lastingpost.com

Introduction

The traditional British coffin design is an irregular hexagonal box with sides that taper from the shoulders to the feet.

A coffin differs from a casket which is a rectangular shoe box shaped and often has a split lid for viewing the deceased. The casket is used much more in the US. There can be confusion as the word casket is sometimes also used to describe the small container in which a person's ashes are placed following cremation. For the avoidance of doubt, this small container will always be referred to as an urn.

Coffins are available in many different styles, materials and sizes. The main categories are as follows:

Traditional Coffins

Traditional coffins are made of solid wood usually using oak, elm, mahogany or walnut. A cheaper option is a traditional wood veneered coffin. In either case, the handles will not normally be solid brass but will more likely be brass plated or brass coloured.

Coffins Suitable for Cremation

There are specific restrictions in the type of coffin that is allowed when a person is cremated. The material that the coffin is made from must be an approved standard that will not emit fumes when burned. Even with these restrictions, the burning of 400,000 or so coffins in the UK each year creates thousands of tonnes of unnecessary pollution in the form of dioxins, sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide.

One solution is the recent invention called the Coffin Cover. The outer traditional wood coffin contains a simple internal coffin for cremation or indeed burial. The internal coffin is made of an environmentally friendly material such as cardboard. Only the internal cardboard coffin is cremated or buried. The outer wooden coffin is reused. The Coffin Cover provides all the benefits of a traditional coffin but at a much cheaper price at the same time as being environmentally friendly.

Eco-friendly Coffins

An increasing number of people are opting for a green burial as a way of helping to protect the environment. As part of this, they are choosing an eco friendly coffin made from a biodegradable source. These are usually made from bamboo, willow or cardboard.

Wicker coffins are a good choice for a natural burial and also an attractive alternative to a traditional coffin for a formal burial or cremation. The material used is often willow from sustainable sources usually in the UK or Europe.

Custom Coffins

There are also the beginnings of a trend to use coffins as a medium for personal expression. Increasingly, families want to customise the coffin in order to make a final statement about the loved one embarking on their final journey. A number of companies are catering to this growing part of the coffin market.

An Oxford based company, Colourful coffins produces painted coffins in a wide range of designs including religious, floral, scenic and sports themes. They have a bespoke painted service with previous commissions that include cars, juggernauts, country and Western designs, family pictures and poems.

Vic Fearn & Company in Nottingham will also help with their range of hand painted or hand crafted coffins. Past commissions include an arctic sledge, a cork, narrow boat, a kite, 1913 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost, a hand bell, a skip, a football, an electric guitar and a wooden egg.

Useful Links

For coffins suitable for cremation

www.coffincovers.co.uk

For eco-friendly coffins

The Somerset Willow Company

www.wickerwillowcoffins.co.uk

For custom coffins

Colourful Coffins

www.oxfordcoffins.com

Vic Fearn & Company

www.crazycoffins.co.uk

END

Last updated: 14th July, 2009