

Football-theme coffins add colour to funerals

Bereaved families have more choice than ever - including coffins bearing football club crests, cardboard caskets and bicycle hearses – to give their loved ones fitting tributes and funerals to remember.

Coffins decorated in Premier League club colours or bearing memorable images, and others made of environmentally friendly materials such as bamboo or willow, are becoming increasingly popular as ways of personalising funerals.

West Midlands-based funeral director Ian Hazel reflected on the changing face of the business as his company's office at Great Barr, Birmingham, marked its 10th anniversary.

Ian, owner of Ian Hazel Funerals, said: "There have certainly been a lot of developments and changes within the profession over the last 10 years.

"There has been a sharp rise in the demand for coloured or illustrated coffins. These can range from pictures of the deceased, through to coffins carrying the livery and emblem of a deceased's favorite football club.

"It would even be possible these days to have a coffin produced with the England football emblem on it, for really dedicated fans. This style of coffin is also proving very popular with the eco minded clients as they are produced from recycled timber or cardboard."

Families often wish to personalize a funeral for a loved one by having something different or unique, in addition to using a personalised coffin.

Ian added: "We have seen an increase in the use of horse drawn hearses, particularly in the Great Barr area. We were recently asked by a family who required a very unique send off for their loved one to use an ex-Midland Red double-decker bus so all the mourners could travel together with the uniquely designed coffin.

"The family even produced a special bus stop sign and issued customised tickets for everyone. We also get requests for funeral vehicles that are not black and motor cycle hearses are also an option."

Eco-friendly funerals are becoming increasingly popular. "There is more concern about the environment these days and people often ask how eco-friendly are our coffins. Although our standard range of coffins use recycled timber and hardwood veneers from F.S.C. managed forests, people are now asking for wicker or bamboo coffins in increasing numbers.

"Clients also ask about cardboard coffins. These are available but are not a cheap option as a lot of time and effort has to go into a cardboard coffin to ensure it has the strength and rigidity to carry a deceased person. To reduce the funeral carbon footprint still further, we can now provide a bicycle hearse to deliver the eco-coffin to the cemetery or crematorium."

It was in 2000 that Ian Hazel Funerals opened its second branch office at 2 Beacon Road, Great Barr. The Hazel family has been carrying out funerals in the region for nearly 110 years. Ian's great-grandfather Arthur Hazel started a funeral directing business in Erdington, Birmingham, in 1901. Ian is the fourth generation of the family to enter the profession.

He started his own business in Belwell Lane, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, in 1987, and is very proud to have been able to serve the local community of Great Barr over the last 10 years. Ian added: "I have a wonderful team based at my Great Barr office headed by Tim Bartlett and Kate Bouckley, both fully trained and highly experienced members of the profession with a huge amount of experience between them."

For more information contact Ian Hazel Funerals on **0121 308 2288** or visit **www.ianhazelfunerals.co.uk**.