

Albany

Funerals

Independent
Forward Thinking
Affordable
Award Winning

Recommended by

the
good
funeral
guide.

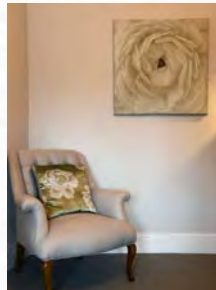
2023



Our Locations

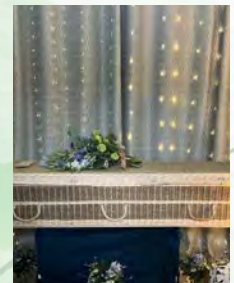
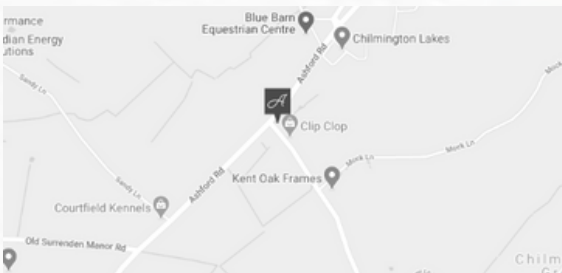
Albany Maidstone

Address:
669 Loose Road
Maidstone
ME15 9UX
Tel: 01622 746688



Albany Ashford

Address:
1, New Street Farm
Chilmington Green Road
Great Chart
Ashford
TN23 3DL
Tel: 01233 650746



About us

Over the last decade we have created a place to come that feels like home, where you can take all the time you need and where you won't be forced into making choices that are not your own. It is our privilege to help people celebrate the life of family and friends in a way which honours them and helps those attending who are grieving.



We will take care of every aspect of the funeral in a personal and ethical way, helping you to arrange an occasion that you and your loved one would want. Our support doesn't end then; we host friendly meet-ups throughout the year and charity fundraising events which many people attend.

Albany Funerals is an independent funeral business committed to caring for and supporting families when they need it the most. We are passionate that people going through the hardest of times have a funeral that is meaningful, personal and affordable.

Please don't hesitate to call us if you have any questions or need our support, on 01622 746688 or 01233 650746.

Why choose Albany?

We have grown significantly in the last few years as more and more families across Kent recommend how we work to others. Our recommendation in the Good Funeral Guide and national awards are testament to the quality, integrity and compassion we bring to every family, demonstrated in the kind recommendations and 'thank you's' which we receive.

There is such a thing as a 'good' funeral and celebration of someone's life, but sadly too few people experience it. Thankfully today we aren't limited in our choices by having to use our nearest Funeral Director. At a time when it's extremely hard to think clearly, our expertise is in helping you to understand all the options available to you, so that the funeral is the very best it can be.

What to think about when arranging a funeral

- What type of funeral would you prefer? Burial, natural burial, cremation, direct cremation? (see page on types of funerals for more details)
- Would you prefer something traditional or a less formal service?
- Would you prefer a religious or non-religious service? Or perhaps a mixture of the two? We can arrange for a minister or a celebrant (someone who can create a person-centred ceremony) for you, or of course you could use your own.
- Do you have a venue in mind? Church, crematorium or would you prefer an alternative venue? We can help to find a suitable venue or you can hold small ceremonies at our premises.



Service details

- Do you know how many people are likely to attend the service? When would you like the funeral to take place? Sometimes there are dates that families wish to avoid. The usual required time for arranging a funeral is around 10 days to 2 weeks.



- Would you like to publish the funeral details in an obituary notice in a newspaper? We can organise this in the local and national press.
- Do any close relatives or friends want to be involved in the funeral arrangements? Would any of them like to participate in the service in any way? For example, the eulogy, readings, poems, other tributes, music...

- Are there any pieces of music that are meaningful to you? Most services have a piece of music to enter to, perhaps a hymn or two, or a piece for reflection in the middle and a last piece to exit, but there is no set rule. We are here to guide you through all of this so don't worry if you don't know.



- If you are singing hymns - would you like to have an organist to play the music? At the crematorium you could also have recorded organ music (with or without singing) at no extra cost.

- Would you like any photos displayed at the funeral? Most crematoria also now provide facilities for visual tribute slideshows.



- Would you like the service live streamed?

- Would you like a condolence book?

- Would you like printed order of service booklets for the funeral? We can get them printed for you with photos of your choice. The booklets make good keepsakes and can also be sent to those who can't attend.

- Would you like friends and family to send flowers or would you prefer them to donate to a charity of your choice? We can organise an on-line tribute page and/or provide a donation box at the funeral.

- Would you like help organising flowers for the funeral? We work closely with local florists who we trust, or whoever you choose.



Care of the person who has died



- Do you want to choose some clothes to dress the person who has died? Or, we can provide a cotton gown or shroud. You might prefer to bring in a favourite fabric, blanket or covers to gently wrap the person in, instead of clothes. We can also line the coffin with a familiar duvet cover or blanket.
- Do any family members want to help with washing and dressing the person who has died?
- Do you want to come and see the person who has died in our chapel of rest? We can arrange this with you by appointment.
- Do you want to have the person who has died brought home or into church before the funeral?

Should I visit the body?

This can be such a difficult decision. No one relishes the thought of seeing a dead body, particularly when it's someone we love. However, spending time with the person who has died in a serene environment can be a very healing part of the process. Everyone is different, and it isn't necessarily appropriate for all of us, but in general people tell us that it helps them.



Seeing the person in a coffin can be very upsetting, so we give you the choice of visiting your loved one lying on a bed, or in the coffin if preferred.

Visits to our chapel of rest are made by appointment, and we can work with you to find the best way of doing this for you personally. As this is an optional item, the cost is not included in our professional fee, and there is therefore a small extra charge for this.

Types of funerals

Traditional cremation service

We can help you choose a suitable Crematorium and advise you on ways to personalise the ceremony there. For example, you can opt for an extended service which gives you a bit more time and avoids the feeling of being steered through one door and out the other. You can also opt to display a visual tribute slideshow, play recorded or live music, and hold dove releases after the service etc.



You can choose whether you would prefer to meet the funeral cortege at the crematorium, follow the cortege in your own cars, or be part of the funeral cortege in a limousine. We can put you in contact with a local minister if you would like religious content, or with a celebrant should you prefer the service to be non-religious. Most celebrants will agree to include hymns and prayers in the service too.

Some people opt for the main funeral service to take place in a Church, followed by the crematorium or cemetery for the committal part only. You can choose to include a more intimate gathering at the crematorium, or include everyone that was present in the Church. The committal can take place before or after the main service and can be adapted together with the Minister to suit your needs.

There are no time restraints in a Church, and it can be comforting if you have ties with the local clergy. The cost will be slightly higher than a service held solely at the crematorium.



Traditional burials

We can organise burials in a churchyard or cemetery on request. The service can take place in a church or at another venue before or after the burial. This usually costs a little more than a traditional cremation but can allow a bit more time and space for the ceremony. As space is running low in a lot of churchyards, the person being buried must have been living in the Parish. Cemeteries run by the council are less stringent, but do apply extra fees for those not living in the area. In most cases, you can request a single or a double depth grave.



Natural burials



A natural burial allows someone to be buried amongst landscapes like woodland, meadows or orchards in a way that preserves the existing habitat. The use of chemicals or any plastic is prohibited throughout the whole process. Natural biodegradable materials must be used for the coffin, flowers and clothes that the person is buried in so that the area maintains its natural flora and fauna which contributes to the sustainability of the habitat for wildlife.

Graves are hand-dug and are shallower than conventional ones which reduces the amount of methane the body will produce. We can arrange burials at local natural burial grounds, and those further afield if needed.

Stonemasonry

A headstone cannot be placed on a grave until several months after the burial to allow the ground to settle. However, you can start planning and looking at designs at any stage as the process is generally quite long.

Churchyards have more stringent rules on what is allowed than council run cemeteries. Natural Burial Grounds don't usually allow permanent memorials, focusing more on tree planting.



Direct cremation

During the pandemic, funerals were severely restricted and we had to think more creatively to continue to hold meaningful and inclusive ceremonies. People realised that a funeral can take many forms - and could even be a 'virtual' event. This made a big impact and since then, the popularity of 'direct cremations' has soared.

A direct cremation means that the coffin is taken to the crematorium solely for the purpose of the cremation, and no service is held there. This reduces the cremation fees dramatically, but doesn't mean that a service cannot be held elsewhere, or follow a different format, before or after the cremation has taken place.



Not everyone feels comfortable at the crematorium, and there is no law that states that funerals must be held there. Some people find it much easier to hold a celebration of someone's life without the presence of a coffin, and opt to have the ashes there instead. If you would like to know more, we would be very happy to explore choices with you to help you plan a ceremony that fits your needs.

For our direct cremations, we offer the same care of the body and support for family and friends as with our traditional services. If you are tempted by companies advertising attractive prices on TV, please do your homework beforehand. Here are some helpful questions to ask:

- Where will the body of the person be kept?
- How will the body be stored and transported?
- Can I come and spend time with my relative in your chapel of rest?
- What type of coffin will be used?
- Where and when will the cremation take place?
- How will the ashes be returned to me?

Some people choose a direct cremation because they don't want a funeral at all, for many different reasons such as difficult family tensions, or financial reasons perhaps. This doesn't stop you having some kind of 'get together' to celebrate the life of your loved one. This could be in a favourite place such as a local pub, restaurant or park, or even at home. This can still count as a 'funeral', there is no law that says that a funeral has to be a certain way.

Alternative venues

Up until recently, funerals in the UK have very much been aligned to Victorian traditions, and although some of these rituals can be comforting, they don't always reflect the times we live in today.

If you are part of a church community, it makes perfect sense to hold a funeral there, particularly if the person who has died was known personally to the clergy. A crematorium is obviously specifically set up for funerals and can be a very practical option.

However, more and more people are now preferring the funeral to be a celebration of the person's life. We use beautiful venues for other important life events, so why not for funerals? Over the years we have worked hard to build up relationships with local venues willing to accommodate funeral services and they provide a warmer backdrop, often surrounded by nature.



These venues do not set time restraints and therefore allow a more relaxed atmosphere. Proceedings don't have to be timed, or orchestrated, the pace can slow down and having more space can also make a big difference. More often than not, the wake part can be at the same venue and can even become part of the service.

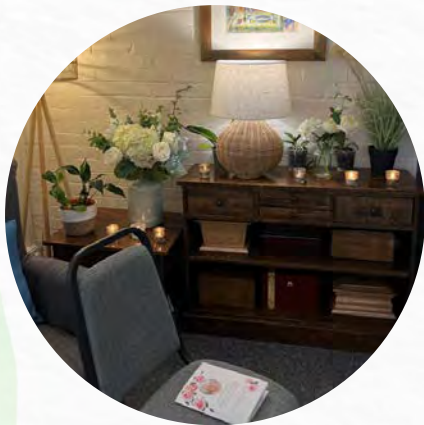
This type of option is not for everyone, there is usually a bit more to organise, and it does cost a little more, but we are here to help and guide you through the whole process. The feedback that we have had to date is that it is worth it.

Because we don't want to make this sort of funeral inaccessible, we feel that it's important to keep the cost down. We have therefore negotiated good rates with venues which are often not busy mid-week so the cost usually ends up being on a par with a funeral at a crematorium with an extended slot.



Simple ceremony at our premises

We can also offer the use of our premises for smaller, more intimate ceremonies. Our Maidstone branch can cater for up to ten people, and the Ashford branch up to about twenty. The chapel or sitting room can be set up formally or informally and the coffin can be present or not. The price includes all our fees, cremation fees, a cardboard coffin (which can be upgraded if desired), and celebrant fees.



A simple ceremony is also much more affordable than a service at the crematorium and does suit some families, or circumstances better. The cremation usually then takes place the next day unattended. Some families choose to go to the crematorium the next day to watch the coffin being carried in to the chapel.

Ceremonies without the coffin present

Not everyone wants the coffin at the funeral, which opens up a whole range of options of locations to hold the service. This can be done after the cremation with the ashes present, before, or even during the unattended cremation. We can advise you on venues.



Coffin choices

These days, there are so many different types of coffins on the market, from the most simple cardboard ones to decorated, glitter, natural or even American caskets. It's not something most of us relish sitting down and choosing, but we will try and make it as easy as possible and will not push you into options you don't feel comfortable with.

Traditional style coffins

The traditional shaped coffin is still what we see at most funerals, and is usually made from chipboard with plastic handles. However, more and more people are choosing options which are kinder to the environment such as cardboard or coffins made from natural fibres.

These traditional coffins can also be painted in different colours, or even glitter sprayed, decorated with images, or can also be made out of solid wood. The cost varies depending on the choice of coffin.



Coffins made from natural fibres

If you want a more eco-friendly option, or if you just prefer the softness of a natural coffin, you can choose one made from natural materials such as bamboo, wicker or seagrass which are completely biodegradable. The materials used are carefully chosen for their sustainability as well as their low impact during harvesting and are usually Fair Trade, helping local populations to overcome poverty.



Willow coffins are often made in the UK, but they can be a little more expensive.

Cardboard coffins

Cardboard coffins are becoming more and more popular as an option. They are mostly made from recycled paper and wood pulp obtained from sustainable sources and are completely biodegradable. The carbon emissions of a cardboard coffin are 90% lower than a standard chipboard coffin when cremated. They also cost less and can be easily decorated and personalised by families. This can range from simply inviting people to write messages on the coffin, or sticking pictures on it, right through to artists' original masterpieces.



This kind of involvement can be extremely therapeutic and also familiarises family members with the coffin, so that seeing it will not feel as distressing on the day of the funeral. It is also a good way to involve children in the funeral arrangements, particularly if they enjoy drawing, painting or crafting. The decorating or writing on the coffin can form part of the actual ceremony, or be done before the funeral, as a way of coming together and doing something positive.



Our fleet

Our Jaguar hearse



The use of our hearse is included in our professional fee.

Our Jaguar limousine



If you would like family members to be transported to the funeral in our limousine, this is an extra cost. The driver will take you to the funeral venue and wait to take you on to the wake venue afterwards.

Our private ambulance



We use our private ambulance to transport the body of a person who has died into our care, and it can also be used instead of the hearse if preferred at the time of the funeral.

Other options

You can use our vehicles, or if you want something a little different, we can arrange other types of transport for you. These alternatives to our traditional hearse can all be arranged through us. They are sourced via external companies so there is an extra cost. Prices are on request.



Horse-drawn carriage



Rainbow hearse



Campervan hearse



Pink hearse



Leopard print hearse



Daimler hearse



Union Jack hearse



Gold hearse

Children at funerals

People often ask our advice about including children in the funeral service. Obviously, every child is different, but generally, we feel that it is a positive thing to do so. Of course, the decision requires careful consideration and we are very happy to talk this through with you if helpful.



It's natural to worry about upsetting children, and for some kids, attending the funeral might not be at all appropriate, but we generally find that children also need rituals during the grieving process, and that coming together and including them in some way can be hugely beneficial for both children and adults.

Our first advice is to always ask the child. Explain what a funeral is, and what will happen (without going into too much detail) to set their expectations. Giving them the choice will help them to feel more included and if they find the idea too upsetting - at least you will know that it is probably best that they do not attend. Perhaps in this case, they could attend the gathering afterwards so that they are still part of the day.



You know your child better than anyone. If you decide that they should attend, you could offer them a small role in the proceedings, such as giving out orders of service, or seed packets at the end.

If you decide that they shouldn't attend the service, there are still different ways of including them in the funeral arrangements so that they do not feel excluded from a major life event.

Decorating the coffin in some way will involve children, and make the coffin look less scary if they attend the funeral. Or if this is a bit too much, they could write poems or draw pictures for their relative which can be placed with them in the coffin.

If you are concerned about the crematorium being a scary place to take them, perhaps you could consider going to a different venue? (see previous page).



What to do with the ashes?

After a cremation, the cremated remains, or 'ashes' are returned to the family. We can collect them from the crematorium on your behalf and hold them until you are ready to receive them. Some people want the ashes back immediately, but usually we keep them for a while until the family are ready, however long it takes. With all the stress of funeral arrangements, we advise people to wait a while before deciding what to do with the ashes. Ashes can be kept together, or divided up amongst family members.



Keeping ashes at home



Some people choose to keep the ashes at home, sometimes temporarily. They can be proudly on show, or hidden in a cupboard, and there are many types of containers - scattertubes, caskets, urns, keepsakes. You can find a selection on our website, but we are happy to place the ashes into any container that you have made or purchased elsewhere.

Jewellery

You might want to have a piece of jewellery made containing a small amount of the ashes of your loved one. Some people find this extremely comforting. We work with some excellent companies who make beautiful pieces in silver or gold and we can manage the process for you from start to finish.



Scattering ashes

The law on scattering ashes in the UK is fairly relaxed and they can be scattered over land or water, with the landowner's permission. Certain parks, sporting grounds, historic sites and beauty spots do not allow this practice however, so it is best to seek advice before assuming it is permitted.

If you are going to scatter ashes, the easiest way to do this is to have them put into a scattertube (as in the adjacent photo). Some crematoria use these tubes as standard containers to return ashes, so they might already be in one, if not we can put them into one for you.



Crematoria and some natural burial grounds also have designated areas where ashes can be scattered.

Interring ashes

If you prefer the ashes to be buried in a grave, this can be arranged at a cemetery, churchyard or natural burial ground. We can assist with this. You can then choose a suitable memorial stone or marker.

The ashes can also be kept in a vault, or Columbarium.

Keepsakes

For those who want to keep a small amount of ashes of the person they have lost, there are many different little containers that can be used. From wooden hearts to paperweights and mini metal urns, a selection of which can be found on our website. Alternatively, you can buy something and bring it in and we will fill it with the ashes for you.



Funeral Myths

Because we don't feel comfortable talking about death, particularly in this country, we are often underprepared and underinformed when we are faced with a bereavement. Here are some funeral myths we've debunked as a starting point.

"I really should purchase a funeral plan."

We are bombarded with adverts urging us to buy funeral plans and they can make us feel we are not doing the right thing for our family if we don't have one. The truth is that the most important thing is to discuss with each other what kind of funeral we would prefer, not pay large sums of money up front into a scheme which exists to benefit the plan providers. If you want to make provision for a funeral, choose a secure way of saving or investing your money which will give your family more freedom and much better value for than a funeral plan.

"You have to use your nearest Funeral Director"

Thankfully today we aren't limited in our choices by simply having to go to the nearest Funeral Director. The most important thing is to find someone who has values and a way of working that will help you to arrange the funeral that is right for your situation. As with anything you require, make sure you go somewhere recommended and trustworthy for a funeral, choose a secure way of saving or making financial provisions which will give your family more freedom and better value than a funeral plan.



"A funeral is just a necessary step, not a helpful one"

There is such a thing as a 'good funeral' and celebration of someone's life. Sadly, too few people experience it. When a funeral is personal and authentic and specific needs or requests are included, it can be a very helpful step in the difficult grieving process.

"A funeral has to be in a church or crematorium"

It can be if you want if to, but more and more we are helping families to choose a location that is right for them. We have held funerals outdoors, in hotels and pubs and in village halls. These can be a great choice if you want more space and time for the event, or to have something specific aimed towards celebrating their life. For those who do not want a religious service, you can find many alternative venues. One funeral we provided last year was held on an outside decking area of a beautiful country pub that was special for the lady who had died, a location that made a big difference for those who attended.

"There has to be a funeral"

These days more and more people are taking complete control of their funerals - and some, like David Bowie, decide that they do not want a funeral at all! One of the services that we offer is a 'Direct Cremation' - which means that there is no funeral at the crematorium, but the ashes are returned to the family in an urn or casket. This then enables families to have their own get together in a way that suits them and costs much less too. A more structured event could also be held anywhere, as there is no coffin. Often people find it easier to remember someone's life without the presence of the coffin.

"Funeral Directors are all strange"

We've heard this many times! Yes, there are some funeral directors that channel the Addams Family, but most of us are normal people who are following their desire to help those who are grieving.



Many of us here have experienced our own loss which inspires us to serve others who are grieving because we know how important it is. We have built a great team of compassionate and dedicated individuals who simply care about helping those who have lost someone.



What the Good Funeral Guide says about choosing a Funeral Director

Finding the right person to help you organise a funeral is really worth taking time over – if you have a brilliant funeral director working with you, then there's every chance that the funeral you create together will be exactly what you need it to be, and do exactly what you need it to do. There are lots of amazing funeral directors out there. It's just not always easy to find them.

Every company we list as Recommended has undertaken our stringent accreditation process. We have scrutinised their completed self-assessment form, we've spent time with the owner and their key colleagues, we've been shown around the premises and we've asked lots of questions.

We have satisfied ourselves that we would trust these people and these companies to look after a member of our own family, and we have written about them in detail in our reviews.

Our Good Funeral Guide Recommendation

Specific Gravity

Jo will arrange exactly the funeral that you want. Albany are unique in the area in being perfectly able to provide either a completely traditional funeral, or a totally bespoke one. If it's a traditional funeral that you want, you can be reassured that the turnout is as smart as it gets. And if you want a very personal, individual event then Jo will be able to offer you as many suggestions as you feel comfortable with. You'll never be overwhelmed though, she's exceptionally good at listening to people and understanding what they need from her.

Whatever type of funeral you want, it will probably be conducted by Matthew, or possibly Tim Holloway. You'll get to know whoever is conducting your funeral well before the day. If you want Albany's bearers to carry the coffin, they only choose ones who look nice (you can choose your own, of course).

If you want a less formal funeral, Jo will talk you through the options and, of course, everyone will dress accordingly.

What's Important?

Jo is very much aware that people's expectations of a funeral are changing. She recognises that there is a growing demand for funerals which reflect the personality and values of the person who died. She recognises that no two funerals are the same, so she is aware of the vital importance of listening very carefully to you and making sure the funeral you arrange is exactly as you want it. What makes her especially well qualified to do this is her intelligence and her humanity.

What's Different?

Jo had a life outside before coming in to funeral directing, so she looks at everything with fresh eyes. This makes her unusually flexible and open-minded. She is not a radical in any sense of the word, but she is very good at interpreting her clients' needs and wishes, and she is very well informed. When it comes to discussing the range of choices available to you, you will find her full of suggestions and absolutely up to date. If you want to make financial provision for your own funeral, she will guide you through the options.

We are a dementia friendly business



We are part of a network of local organisations working together to make the community more dementia friendly. All our staff have been trained as dementia friends and have undertaken the Virtual Dementia Tour.



Remember!

A funeral can be held anywhere, particularly if you choose to not have the coffin present. It doesn't have to conform to anyone else's wishes, or expectations, and can follow any format you feel comfortable with.

Sadly, each and every one of us will have to arrange a funeral one day for someone we love. Having an idea of the sort of the thing that the person would have wanted, or even knowing what they definitely wouldn't want will really help you when the time comes. You will feel more empowered, not have to second guess and could avoid family clashes too. You do not need a funeral plan for this, please do not feel pushed into buying one if you are not sure about it.

It's not wrong or morbid to get information before you need it - it's so much easier to sift through all of this when you haven't just lost someone you love. Do a bit of research, then put it to one side.



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