



> Laura de Wesselow, who runs Belsay Woodland Burials, not far from her family home, Belsay Hall in Northumberland

Finding a perfect resting place at the heart of the countryside

LET children walk with nature, let them see the beautiful blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous inseparable unity, as taught in woods and meadows, plains and mountains and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life."

John Muir, the influential and well-travelled Scottish-American environmental philosopher, understood better than most nature's vital role as the positive conduit between life and death.

His confident assertion that nature, in all of its various forms, could teach

The bereaved have found a perfectly peaceful and wonderfully welcoming resting place for their loved ones thanks to the innovative and environmentally friendly Belsay Woodland Burials. A year on from its inception, **SIMON RUSHWORTH** discovers founder Laura de Wesselow in reflective mood

younger generations that death can be as beautiful as life may not resonate instantly with those still stricken by grief and overwhelmed by loss.

However, a visit to the tranquil Belsay Woodland Burials, on the fringes of the famous Northumberland estate, suggests Muir had a point.

The polar opposite of a regimented cemetery or unfeeling graveyard, the grassy idyll boasts spectacular views of the rolling countryside and offers a reassuring glimpse of the future for those families and friends keen to find the perfect resting place for their much-missed loved ones.

Young trees and bright flowers mark the graves of those recently deceased – 29 burials have taken place during the past 12 months – and meandering paths lead to all four corners of a carefully planned plot, as practical as it is sympathetic.

"What I try to explain to people is

that, in 20 years' time, they will be visiting a woodland," explains the founder of Belsay Woodland Burials, Laura de Wesselow.

"They might know that their granny is buried here but it's not about visiting a grave. It's a memorial woodland. That's the concept and that's what you need to buy into."

Those attracted to an ecologically friendly burial are doing just that. However, the opportunity to benefit the environment is just one of the many positive reasons for choosing Belsay as a final resting place. Like