

WELCOME to the spring edition of the BRAMM Newsletter. Now that the spring bulbs are coming up and the worst of the bad weather is behind us, we can look forward to a good year ahead. It really is amazing how the darkness of winter is suddenly broken by the appearance of the first flowers in our gardens, and of course in our churchyards and cemeteries. These little plants really are quite heroic! Despite frozen ground, cold winds and general darkness they dare to brave the weather and thrive. And in doing so, they stand proud and herald the start of a new season of growth and good times ahead, giving us renewed hope for a brighter future!

In much the same way as these delicate little flowers can only emerge by having strong bulbs deep under ground, its the unseen people behind BRAMM who are the energy source and driving force.

Since BRAMM first started, many hard working individuals have committed themselves to bring BRAMM into being, despite the hard ground and often frosty weather! As we welcome new faces to the team and say goodbye to others, we'd like to say a BIG THANK YOU for the time, energy and dedication of all those who have contributed to the success of BRAMM.

GROWTH STATS

Registered Companies 599
Licensed Fixers 781
Registered Operators 151

The new BRAMM website is proving a powerful tool to help achieve our mission and promote memorial masons. We're averaging **500+ visits per month**, so if you haven't already, it's really worth signing up for a business page!



PUSHED UP THROUGH FROZEN GROUND

Bringing BRAMM to life has certainly had it's moments! There's been some hard ground to break through over the last decade, with mixed views for and against and, despite the obvious benefits, some real adversity from a small minority.

Paradoxically, change is the only real constant in life, but rather than embracing it, change often meets a cold reception. During the frostiest days, back in 2009, Ian Hale (pictured below – left) who sat on the BRAMM board to represent independent memorial masons, stepped in as Acting Chairman. He has played a vital role to bring BRAMM through frozen ground and to emergence into the light, and beginning to bloom. Having achieved this goal, Ian now steps down from the lead role. He will remain active on the board, continuing to promote BRAMM and all that it stands for.



A UK network of nationally accredited businesses and registered fixers – all working to a recognised uniform standard of workmanship and business practice.

The promotion of education within the industry and a closer working relationship between Memorial Masons and Burial Authorities – leading to safer burial grounds.

Brian Morgan (right), a former president of NAMM, and active BRAMM board member since 2009 now takes to the chair. We wish him every success in this role.

TRAINING DATES

The following BRAMM Fixer Licence (BFL) Test Days are in progress in South Wales:

Written: City of Cardiff 13 March 2013
 Practical: Port Talbot 13 March 2013

COMPLETED

Up-coming Continuous Professional Development (Ongoing Training):

Leeds: (Date to be confirmed)
 Manchester: 26 March 2013

Always keep an eye on the new website for updates. To book your place, call:

**01823
448259**



NEW BRAMM OFFICE TELEPHONE NUMBER



A couple of years ago the BRAMM office moved from Rugby in Warwickshire to Taunton in Somerset. Ever since, we've had the old telephone line on 'forward' – this explains why our telephone and fax number area codes are not consistent! Now that we're well settled in the new office, we thought it about time we introduced our new telephone number. Please remember to update your records. It's also worth pointing out that if, when you call, you are connected with our answerphone, do leave a message with your contact number and we will get back to you.

01823 448259

Monday to Friday: Between 9am and 1pm



BRAMM FIXER LICENCE SUCCESS

David Briggs, one of the stonemasons at BRAMM registered memorial masons Highworth Memorials near Swindon, has achieved his BRAMM Fixer Certificate and Fixer Licence via the NVQ Diploma in Memorial Masonry route. David worked towards the Diploma with his NVQ Assessor over a period of many months providing rigorous evidence of job knowledge and the practical skills required to achieve the nationally recognised qualification. David said, "I found the whole process worthwhile and I'm very pleased to have my BRAMM Fixer Licence".



The picture shows David, on the left, being presented with his BRAMM Certificate and Fixer Licence by Highworth Memorials manager Roy Bacon.

BRAMM FIXER LICENCE ACCREDITED BY THE OCN

We are extremely pleased that the BRAMM Fixer Licence (BFL) has now been accredited by the Open College Network (OCN) – an organisation that supports learning and widens opportunity by recognising achievement through credit-based courses and qualifications.

The OCN strives to be at the forefront of a comprehensive national Credit Accumulation and Transfer system, and is recognised for promoting social inclusion, wider participation and community transformation.

But why is this important and what does it mean for you? Well... when a mason/fixer achieves their BFL, the award is recorded on their 'unique learning number' – part of a national system for logging qualifications and achievements.

This process is designed to help employers by preventing job applicants from claiming to have qualifications that they don't. No longer can a person just write down any old qualification on their CV and assume they'll get away with it. Unique Learning Numbers allow employers to check a person's qualifications and confirm authenticity quickly and easily before making an offer of employment.

ON-GOING TRAINING IN-HOUSE

Retaining your BRAMM Fixer Licence requires an amount of On-going Training or what's often called CPD (Continuous Personal Development). If you're running a sizable business with many masons/fixers, then one convenient and affordable way of doing this is to provide in-house training, so everyone can do it together without the need for travel etc.

There's a wide range of options that are appropriate for in-house training including:

- First Aid (Appointed Person)
- Manual Handling
- Health & Safety – A Construction Skills Certification Scheme
- Kerb Fixing
- Plaque Fixing
- Cleaning Lawn Headstone Granite/Stone
- Cleaning Kerbset Granite/Stone
- Re-Fix Lawn Headstone
- Re-Fix Kerbset
- Fix Monolith
- Fix Bookset
- Height Work
- Inspection and Testing of Memorials
- Working below ground and in confined spaces
- CPD Courses

THE CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH BS 8415

It is thankfully rare that a mason is found to have fixed a memorial in a way that may cause harm to the public or cemetery staff, but I thought that I would outline the sort of procedures BRAMM employs in these instances. Most of what follows is based on a real incident but we should be aware that circumstances and BRAMM's approach may vary from case to case.

In this instance a lawn memorial was re-fixed after an additional inscription had been added. The memorial was re-fixed on a Saturday, which is not permitted by the burial authority in question, and it is this type of behaviour that often raises the alarm. "Why would a mason fix to BS 8415 requirements when he can't even comply with the cemetery regulations?" is the sort of thought that would go through the mind of the cemetery manager. No permit had been applied for either and the memorial was not fixed to a high standard; obviously questions began to be asked.

The burial authority, in this case, asked a BRAMM assessor to dismantle and inspect the memorial, with the permission of the grave owner. The memorial was found to have no ground anchor fitted, the dowels were not stainless steel and dowel holes were the wrong diameter. The foundation did not comply with cemetery regulations either so, in short, it was not compliant with British Standard 8415. I could go on to detail the hours wasted in telephone conversations that often follow these discoveries. The fact is the memorial speaks very clearly for itself and no amount of excuses will rectify matters.

In this case there were reasons why BRAMM had to act quickly and so

the mason concerned was immediately removed from the BRAMM register and all the burial authorities in his area were informed of that fact. Ordinarily the mason would have a Right of Appeal and there is a process in place to enable this. However, on this particular occasion, the mason had to accept his culpability as the evidence was overwhelming.

The grave owner was able to have the memorial properly fixed, back in the cemetery and in compliance with the British Standard 8415 using a mason of their choice.

Now we realise that being removed from the BRAMM register is a major blow for a company. It means that all fixing activities must stop whilst re-training or whatever action deemed necessary by BRAMM and the burial authority is carried out. The BRAMM board does not take this action lightly and it is always a matter of regret.

The BRAMM board is equally represented by masons and burial authorities; all concerned give their time freely in order to promote standards in our industry.

In this case a meeting was convened at the burial authority's offices between the registered fixers and owner of the company under suspension, the cemetery manager, a BRAMM assessor and a BRAMM board member. At this meeting the mason was reminded of his responsibilities to comply with British Standard 8415 and cemetery regulations.

The registered fixers were then required to re-take the BRAMM fixer licence accredited qualification before being, hopefully, reinstated onto the register. This as you can imagine took time and

during this period the mason was prevented from fixing. It is also worth noting here that although BRAMM will reinstate the mason after re-training that does not mean that the cemetery manager concerned will take the same action, indeed he or she may decide to impose a very much longer ban.

The ideal is that all of the above procedure is carried out confidentially because we at BRAMM know how harmful stories like these can be to a firm. Unfortunately, in this case, I did hear reports that news had leaked out. I immediately contacted the local burial authorities and reminded them that this is confidential information that could damage a business and asked them to treat such information as privileged in future. BRAMM are not at all interested in harming the reputations of memorial masons, we are here to promote basic minimum standards of fixing.

There is every reason to expect that having served a suspension and re-trained, this type of behaviour is unlikely to re-occur as it is obviously not in the interests of the mason, but the local burial authorities will naturally take a closer interest in the fixing of any mason who has fallen short of the required standards. Masons can expect that controls placed on them by these authorities will be increased, at least until the authority is happy that standards of compliance have risen.

I hope that this gives some idea of the role BRAMM plays in cases like this and if anyone has any questions at all, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the BRAMM office.

Nick Thomas 06 March 2013
BRAMM Development Officer

NEW FACES IN THE BRAMM TEAM

There are new faces at BRAMM who are playing an active role. We'd like to welcome the following:



NICK THOMAS

Nick takes over from David Quinn as our new Development Officer taking on new initiatives to help fulfil the BRAMM mission.



COLIN DEACONS

Colin replaces Phil Myatt as our new A1 Assessor and will be heavily involved with masons who seek a BRAMM Fixer Licence.



KATE DAY

Kate is the new representative from FBCA (The Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities) and sits on the BRAMM board.



WINDOW / VEHICLE STICKERS

Are you using your 'BRAMM Accredited Company' stickers on your showroom windows/doors and on your vehicles? Displaying the logo adds to your credibility and professionalism, helps to increase public awareness of the BRAMM scheme and makes more of your investment as a BRAMM Accredited Company. If you require more stickers (perhaps you have new vehicles or have moved premises), call the office and we'll send you some. There is a small production/postage charge.



Vehicle Sticker = 150 x 55mm (sticky on back)



Window Sticker = 230 x 85mm (sticky on front)



ITS ALL ONLINE... TAKE ADVANTAGE!

Are you making the most of the new website?

MASONS: If you're a BRAMM registered mason, then you'll automatically have an account on the site. If you don't yet have your password, then get in touch with Sam in the office (01823 448259). On the website you have FREE access to the BRAMM Blue Book, which indicates how to fix to the BS8415 standard. You can also download the Guarantee of Conformity. In addition, you'll have a basic business listing, allowing members of the public who come looking for a registered mason to find you. For a small fee, you can upgrade this listing to a Promotional Business Page and really make the most of this online presence. Further benefits come from keeping up-to-date with training dates and other current news.

BURIAL AUTHORITIES: We trust you are making full use of the website. Just login to check the registration documentation etc. of fixer masons working in your burial grounds. Everything you need to know, 24 hours a day, at the click of a button!



LOCAL AUTHORITY INTEREST

UP-TO-DATE EMAIL ADDRESSES

If you receive a printed copy of this newsletter, but have internet access, please ensure we have your up-to-date email address, so we can send you the next edition electronically.

CAN YOU SUPPORT MASONS BY PROVIDING A TRAINING VENUE?

BRAMM wish to provide free CPD training to registered masons in your area. Is your authority able to support us, and in turn local masons, by providing a suitable venue for the training to take place. If so, please call Sam in the office on 01823 448259.

WHOLESALERS

ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

If you're an industry wholesaler and want to reach memorial masons or burial authorities, then advertising on the BRAMM website and within this newsletter is of obvious benefit.

It's win, win, win. You can regularly promote yourself to approx. 600 businesses and 150 Authorities. Masons and Authorities gain awareness of what you're selling and can take advantage of any promotions, offers or discounts available and we are able to raise funds to help provide free training for masons and help improve standards in the industry.

If this sounds like an opportunity not to be missed, then call Sam in the BRAMM office, Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm on our new telephone number 01823 448259.

www.bramm-uk.org