Winter issue:
The Nature of Death
South Ayrshire in the Spotlight
The ICCM Natural Burial Charter
Side by Side in War and at Peace

The Winter Plantsman
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editorial

Despite the addition of a number of extra pages in this issue, to do justice to our outstanding Learning Convention and Exhibition, there was still insufficient space for a review of the Natural Death Handbook (5th edition). This is a pity since it would have dovetailed nicely with the Institute’s initiative to draw up a Natural Burial Charter – see pp 22/23. Your feedback is sought for the completion of this important piece of work and you can give it via the ‘ICCM Proposal’ weblink.

The ‘Handbook’, published by the Natural Death Centre is in fact three books – one containing a directory of natural burial grounds; the proliferation of which shows no signs of abating anytime soon. And, as if to demonstrate the enthusiasm and funds that exist for them one need look no further than the recent competition held by Alne Wood Park, Nr Alcester for the design of a non-denominational reception building to provide commemorative services for its green burial site, with a project budget of £600,000. It will occupy the footprint of [or possibly adapt] an existing agricultural building [circa 550m2 in area and 10m tall]. There will be a preference to source materials locally for its construction.

The selection process is being carried out on behalf of Warwickshire landowner Felix Dennis by The Royal Institute of British Architects. Mr. Dennis is working in partnership with a registered charity, The Heart of England Forest Ltd., to plant and preserve a large native broadleaf forest adjacent to his home.

Alne Wood seeks to complement this vision via a development that will provide a reliable source of income, increase rural employment, bio-diversity and public engagement with the landscape. The green burial project aims to provide a peaceful resting place for people seeking a non-denominational, environmentally-friendly alternative to existing cemeteries.

A series of green spaces [to include grassland, a memorial garden and wild meadow areas] will be created where people can be laid to rest in caskets made of cardboard or willow, or their ashes scattered. Traditional memorial stones will not be erected, with friends and relatives encouraged to plant trees to commemorate their loved ones’ passing.

In the introduction to the Natural Burial Charter on page 22 Ken West is referred to as the ‘godfather’ of natural burial – the foregoing should make him feel very proud indeed.

Bob Coates

on board

Whilst the Learning Convention and Exhibition is fully reported on in this issue of the Journal I can’t help but mention it myself. The warm and friendly atmosphere that was generated by all in attendance and the interesting, informative papers and workshops were well received, judging by the feedback. Plans are now being made for the Institute’s centenary year.

The Institute has this year diverted resources to new initiatives. The creation of a Natural Burial committee to take forward a specific Charter for the Bereaved, the drafting of an accredited Diploma unit for this service area and modifying our training programmes are current priorities. The survey conducted by the committee gave a clear remit from members and others to pursue these important items. The addition of the new Diploma unit will effectively create a second Diploma in the Management of Natural Burial Grounds thus enabling members to gain a second accredited qualification.

The overall intention of the Natural Burial Grounds committee is to promote this service as an equal and valid choice alongside traditional burial and cremation. The Board had considered that all members had availability to accredited education and training however the results of the survey proved this additional need. Further news on this and the Charter will be forthcoming.

The phased assimilation of members of the Association of Burial Authorities (ABA) into the Institute commenced in September.

At the date of writing this report the first fifty new members had been registered from the first phase. The majority of ABA members are town and parish councils therefore with this new partnership and our existing training partnership with the Society of Local Council Clerks we will be able to present a stronger and united voice on issues that affect the smaller local authorities.

Members will have noted the letters sent to the Minister concerning the reuse of graves and cremated remains buried at shallow depth. The responses again showed reluctance on the part of Government to make changes for the better in respect of these issues however the Institute will continue to campaign for change.

As the total surplus to date for the metals recycling scheme nears £1 million could I suggest to those scheme members the importance of nominating a local charity for receipt of funds. Just go to the recycling page of the website and the pages of this Journal to see how much good is being done at a local level. If your authority is not in membership of the scheme why not consider joining and hence securing vital funding for your local charities?

Martin Birch, FICCM (Dip)
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presidential address to the ICCM 
learning convention and exhibition 1st October 2012

Good afternoon and welcome to the second ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition. I hope you all like the new venue and the facilities it offers. Following the highly successful format of the Learning Convention and Exhibition last year the Board has decided to continue with the same format this year with the exception that awards will be made at the Gala Dinner tomorrow and not at the AGM giving recipients the opportunity to enjoy themselves away from the formal business of the Institute.

At the start of my presidential year I stated that my theme would be “support”. For me this is what the Institute is all about. It supports its members with knowledge, advice and education. It also works tirelessly to make sure that best practice is followed, legislators are aware of problems within the industry and offers practical workable solutions to these problems.

Part of this support is the Diploma. The quality of students studying the Diploma qualification never ceases to amaze me. Teaching on the course myself I find that students always put 100% effort into what they are doing. Many of the assignments are used within a work situation to solve everyday problems and Marc Gisbourne and Sue Gull (Stratford Business School) along with all the other tutors encourage students not only to pass, but to pass with a Distinction. The Education Seminar, latterly held at Cranfield University, has given students the opportunity to share experiences. I know that I found it invaluable when undertaking my studies. I made friends from all over the country. The only down side is that I don’t often get to go as a tutor. I understand the bar takings are considerably down now that Ian Quance and myself no longer attend!

The Institute’s partnership with the Society of Local Council Clerks continues and through this we are able to advise parish clerks in the operation of their burial facilities. Feedback from this has been very positive.

This year the Institute worked in partnership with the Association of Burial Authorities where ultimately it was agreed that its membership should be assimilated into the Institute. A phased assimilation is underway. For many years the ABA has worked with town and parish councils and offered them support and guidance in relation to burial matters. That support will continue through the ICCM and it will make both our organisations richer in experience for doing so. I remember the first seminar I ever attended was organised by the ABA. It was at Highgate Cemetery. The subject was cemetery safety and it was the time when inspections were just starting. The debate was rather lively and following this was a tour of the cemetery. I, along with my cemetery safety technician, didn’t hear the bell that signalled the cemetery was about to be locked. Unfortunately we were locked in. Climbing out of the cemetery proved to be a challenge, however we managed it after an hour or so. A cemetery manager locked in a cemetery; my staff have never let me forget it.

During my presidential year I was invited along with Tim Morris our Chief Executive, to Glasnevin Cemetery on the outskirts of Dublin. Our purpose was to help the four crematoria operators agree a code of ethics and operational standards. Much has been done by the crematoria themselves but they asked us to lend them our expertise. Showing our support for our Irish colleagues has enabled them to develop their own code of ethics. A small piece of work in practice but a large step for them given the absence of cremation regulations in the Republic.

It is with some disappointment that the government have decided to shelve the reuse agenda. The Institute has worked hard on your behalf on this matter but has unfortunately hit the proverbial brick wall. Despite this, we will continue to push for a reassessment of this important subject. I often wonder what it will take for ministers to wake up to some of our pressing concerns. I guess a crisis in burial space. With that in mind the Institute is arranging a series of seminars on this subject the first being in London on the 14th of November at the City of London Cemetery followed by another in the north.

I have visited several of the Branches this year. I have to say that they were all very entertaining and it was a chance to catch up with colleagues who I don’t often see, a bit like this convention. I am struck with the fact that members give up their own time to attend events. Their dedication and desire to learn new things is a fantastic example of how things should be done not only for their own enrichment but the people we serve, the bereaved.
At the Northern Branch Forum it was decided to hold the next meeting in the south, in Yorkshire, a dangerous thing to say to a Yorkshireman. I suppose that pretty much everything is south to them though. The South Eastern Branch was treated to some fantastic Yorkshire weather that had followed me down the M1 motorway. It poured down for 2 days, who says Yorkshire has nothing to offer!!!!!!

I have been treated very well this past year by our kindred associations. The NAFD Conference in Stratford was one of the most memorable highlights as I was dressed as a medieval cardinal for one of the evenings and was dined at Warwick Castle. I have to stress this isn’t something I usually do, despite the rumours, although my wife, dressed as Princess Rose, keenly eyed the décor and has suggested some home improvements, starting with the purchase of a castle.

The recycling scheme continues to be extremely successful. [More on pages 72, 74 and 75.] This scheme supports the bereaved at a very local and personal level through the crematorium nominated charities. To date well in excess of £750,000 has been donated, a fantastic achievement I am sure you will agree.

Please, please, if you are not a member do consider joining. The scheme not only raises the profile of your services but allows charities to provide a fantastic service to the bereaved.

Finally, as I hand over the chain of office, I would like to wish Natasha Bradshaw good luck for the coming year. Enjoy yourself in what will be our centenary year but make sure you buy clothes a size too big as the gala dinners are a killer.

Anthony Devonport FICCM (Dip)

introducing president 2012/13 Natasha Bradshaw....

It is a great honour to be the President of the ICCM, especially as our centenary year approaches. I was talking to my colleague at work about our childhood and what we thought we would be when we were older.

From the age of six I wanted to be a teacher. I did go to teacher training college, but disillusioned by the fighting parents in the playground I gave up on that idea.

I flitted from job to job and travelled a bit then aged twenty-four I saw a job advertised for an administration officer in a local cemetery, was very fortunate to get it, and worked with our very own Tim Morris. He encouraged me to join the Institute, attend meetings and start the Diploma.

So for nearly twenty years I have been involved with the ICCM, and through it have gained a level of awareness and information sharing opportunities that I would have struggled to access otherwise. It is this experience that has influenced my theme for my presidential year – knowledge.

I have gained knowledge from the ICCM in many different ways. Training courses, diploma courses, conferences, journals, egroups, portals, suppliers, benchmarking and discussions with other Members. For me it is important to do a job to the best of my ability. I can only do this with knowledge.

The ICCM core value is to raise standards of services to the bereaved by providing professionals, authorities and companies with Policy and Best Practice Guidance, and Educational and Training programmes.

I will always be grateful to the ICCM for the knowledge and support it has given me over the years, and will continue to strive to give back some of what the Institute has given me and be worthy of this honour.
My bereavement service career began almost 14 years ago on the 31st of December 1998 as a crematorium technician at Clydebank Crematorium just west of Glasgow. I was very keen to learn about bereavement services and so I decided to “fast track” my endeavours by calling none other than Tim Morris, Chief Executive of the ICCM.

Tim had no idea who this inexperienced person from Glasgow with the grandiose plans was, yet he listened patiently for a few minutes before explaining that “fast tracking” was not an option within the profession. He went on to say that the ICCM could provide me with the tools however, only hard work, study and dedication could advance my career.

It was a conversation that brought me back down to earth with a bump and yet it was one of the most singularly important pieces of advice that I have ever received and I will be forever grateful to Tim for that. Consequently I passed the Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme in 2001, under the tutelage of Duncan MacCallum and have since completed and passed the ICCM Diploma modules in Crematorium Management, Cemetery Management and the Law of Burial, Cremation and Exhumation. I’m currently studying the Managing Activities Module.

After ten and a half very happy years at Clydebank, which included the cremation services of some high profile Scottish personalities including Scotland’s “first” First Minister, the Rt Hon Donald Dewar MSP, I decided that it was time for a fresh challenge and applied successfully for the job of Bereavement Service Manager with Dacorum Borough Council in Hertfordshire. I have been with Dacorum for over 3 years now and have been fortunate enough to achieve some degree of success with regard to specific projects and also in promoting the development, profile and perception of the service as a whole.

Through my association with the ICCM I have had the good fortune to meet various people within the Institute who have advised, encouraged and inspired me enormously with their dedication and endless knowledge and it means a great deal to me personally to be given this opportunity to repay some of the faith that the Institute has shown in me over the years.
learning convention & exhibition 2012

On Monday 1st October I made a three hour trip up the M1 to the Forest Pines Hotel in North Lincolnshire for my first visit to the ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition – my journey passed quickly with thoughts of ‘what to expect’. The receptionists greeted me with smiles and directed me through the plush interior to the ICCM venue. Greeted by Julie Dunk, Julie Callender and Natasha Bradshaw, it was good to catch up with them over a ‘banquet’ lunch after which I felt settled for the opening of Convention in the hotel’s Event Centre.

This year the themes were ‘Ensuring excellent service delivery to all sections of the community’ and ‘The letter of the law - common misconceptions and pitfalls’.

President, Anthony Devonport, opened with his ‘last duties’ presidential address [see page 5] and welcomed everyone to the second year of the new format of the Convention. His theme for the year had been ‘Support’ and he spoke encouragingly about the promotion of this through best working practices, studying for the ICCM Diploma and the importance of the annual Education Seminar. He spoke about the disappointment of the shelving of the re-use of graves and confirmed that the ICCM will continue to put pressure on the Ministry of Justice for a much needed change in regulation. I was most impressed to hear that the recycling of metals scheme had raised over £750,000 and this was collectively welcomed by delegates.

Anthony then handed over the chain of presidential office to Natasha Bradshaw who explained that her theme for the year is ‘Knowledge’ and we all wished Natasha good luck in her role. Roddy McGinley was presented with the Deputy President’s ribbon [more about them on pages 6 and 7] before Anthony chaired the first session.

The first paper ‘Supporting Natural Burial’ presented jointly by Nicky Whichelow from GreenAcres Woodland Burials and ICCM Past President Ian Quance from Exeter City Council, was an interesting insight; what types of coffin?, shroud burial, grave location, sustainability, funeral directors opinions – to name a few of the subjects that were discussed. Nicky talked about the increase in popularity in the past 10 years of natural burial and also the possibility of a future module on natural burial that could be included in the Diploma. [More on page 22.]

Kevin Spurgeon then spoke about ‘Bridging the Gap’ with the introduction of his Dignity Pet Crematorium facility (no association with Dignity Caring Funeral Services). The company was started in the 1980s by his parents and Kevin explained how it has grown in popularity, with pet crematoria moving ever closer to human crematoria. Despite there being no regulations on pet cremation, with the exception of the cremator equipment, Kevin follows a code of practice in line with the ICCM. The use of coffins for pets, having an individual celebrant service, keeping cremation records, ash scattering choices and even the recycling of metal implants via OrthoMetals [see page 75] were all discussed.

I took the opportunity during the next interval to get my ICCM folder and room key card and finally settled into my accommodation. Lots of space, big bed and plenty of free biscuits instantly made me rate the room with top marks!

I returned to the Exhibition for a good look round. All the stands were well presented and it was great to see such a variety of products and services on show. I was very impressed with The Columbaria Company stand displaying the new ‘Barbican’ circular granite memorials. It was most enjoyable to talk to Karon Smith and Peter Roper about their new product range.

The second session chair, ICCM Chief Executive Tim Morris, introduced Kate Dimmock to present her paper on ‘Dealing with Challenging Funerals’. This was an excellent presentation about how Kate, who works for Dunstable Town Council, personally deals with various large scale burials of all denominations. We heard how travellers funerals can run into many hundreds of mourners and how communication with all parties involved is the only answer for a successful, smooth running service; traffic arrangements, American caskets, brick graves, walkie talkies, pedestrian access, many flowers and everyone wanting to backfill made us all think about the problems that can be faced.
Mohamed Omer then presented ‘Muslim Burials’. This was a most informative paper presented with the utmost enthusiasm. Mohamed opened the Gardens Of Peace Muslim Cemetery in Essex as the first truly dedicated Muslim-designed cemetery in Europe. This very forward-thinking facility makes use of solar panels and even has its own borehole for water supply. We were talked through all of the Muslim requirements before burial. In the Gardens Of Peace only shroud burial is permitted. It was also interesting to hear of the cultural variances that Mohamed stated are not necessarily religious rules.

Whilst the 1st Networking Session (Theme 1 – Ensuring excellent service delivery to all sections of the community) was taking place I returned to the Exhibition to explore some more, take in all the information on offer and speak to as many suppliers as I could. All of the exhibitors were very welcoming.

The meal was magnificent and then it was time for the quiz hosted by Martin Birch, right, and Blue Donnebaer. On my team were, Pete Griffith, Adam Bartoszewski, Rob Hainsworth, Sharon McCloy, Keith Butterfield, Kate Dimmock, Nick French, Ann Collings and Gerard McCabe. We called ourselves ‘And In First Place’ which was quite apt as we managed to win! (Although we nearly claimed third place by mistake!!)

Thanks must be expressed to the sponsors of the quiz, BlueAV, and the exhibitors for all the lovely prizes. It really was great fun.

My Tuesday started with an excellent breakfast in the lovely company of Natasha Bradshaw, after which everyone returned to the Event Centre for an excellent presentation, ‘Space And Time For Bereaved Families’. This was presented by Keith Butterfield and Pete Griffiths.

Keith and Pete both work for the Sand Rose Project, a charity founded in 2004, which utilises three cottages near St. Michaels Mount in Cornwall. These are available to bereaved families who financially could not possibly afford a holiday. The project allows them a holiday break at no cost to themselves. I found this paper quite moving as Pete had lost two daughters at a young age to Batten Disease. He had joined Sand Rose Project in recent times to help the charity move forward; they hope more properties can be obtained throughout the UK for the bereaved to use. We all wished them well for the future.
The second presentation that morning was ‘Mediation in the Workplace’ presented by Chris Bowring of Bowring Professional Services detailing why and how dispute resolution has had to evolve in order to keep pace in an ever-changing world thus saving time, money and emotional fall-out to arrive at a better quality, longer-lasting solution when resolving a dispute.

‘Radioactive Implants and Cremation’ was another very interesting paper regarding what precautions we should all be aware of when dealing with implants in our day-to-day duties. Andrew Doggart, a radiotherapy physicist at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading, told us of the existence of radiation in most things around us; in particular prostate brachytherapy implants and how this could effect remains in cremators and ashes. It made us all aware of health and safety precautions. Tim Morris suggested that this could be put into the death certification review.

Charles Ward then took to the rostrum with ‘Energising your roof - investing in solar panels’ and how this could earn a profit return from the Feed In Tariff. This used to be 43p per kwh but we were informed it is now down to 16p per kwh. With the cost of equipment constantly dropping in price it still makes it a worthwhile consideration. Lower carbon emissions and cheaper electricity makes the scheme very attractive. We were informed that Chesterfield Crematorium have savings of over £800 per year.

Some delegates attended Parallel Workshop 1 whilst the two aforementioned presentations took place; David McCarthy, the ICCM Technical Services and Guidance Manager, discussed particularly difficult cases re Exclusive Rights of Burial, and how to solve them.

Before lunch in the Exhibition area, Simon Cox from Sun Life Direct presented ‘Affording a Funeral’. The company wanted to investigate whether the Social Fund Funeral Payment, available in some cases from the state, is fit for purpose so they commissioned the Centre for Death and Society at the University of Bath to conduct qualitative research. Their report can be viewed online at www.sunlifedirect.co.uk/About-Sun-Life-Direct/Press-Office/Research/Social-Fund-Funeral-Payments/

Another return to the exhibition and I met up with Adam Bartoszewski of Reading Borough Council, with whom I attended the Education Seminar at Cranfield. It was good to discuss how we were both getting on with our Diplomas!

After lunch I attended the 2nd Parallel Workshop where Julie Dunk, ICCM Technical Services and Events Manager, spoke about ‘Public Health Act Funerals’. It was interesting to hear that numbers, in general, for these funerals are rising steadily and that it is the local authority of the area where the death occurs – rather than the place of a person’s registered address – who is responsible for the costs. This was a joint presentation with Hoopers International Probate Genealogists who explained that if their type of service were used then it could help local authorities save costs. Performing a next of kin search with a team of trained professionals would take minimal time whereas a local authority could waste lots of resources without the knowledge of how to approach the search.

Whilst I was at the Workshop Professor Stuart Moy from the University of Southampton spoke to delegates in the main Convention room about the recent updating of BS8415 – ‘Why, how and so what?’ – and what effect it will have on the memorial industry before Felicia Smith from Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust and John Troyer from the University of Bath’s Centre for Death and Society pictured left presented ‘Building a Future Cemetery’. This is part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s REACT Heritage Sandbox programme which is developing multi-media audience experiences to engage heritage site cemetery visitors. [More on page 60.]

The second Networking session ‘Theme 2 – The letter of the law - common misconceptions and pitfalls’ followed before Jenny Barsby-Robinson, founder of Tendagrave, a free service for people who cannot, for whatever reason, tend a family or friend’s grave. They will put you in touch with other people in a similar situation. You then offer to tend a grave in your local area and, in return, your loved one’s grave will also be looked after. The idea is that no money changes hands.
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pictures. Joint runners up were The Friends of Barnsley Cemetery and Ian Quance, with a well deserved first place going to Nikki Hewitt whose image was reproduced on the cover of the last issue of The Journal.

The BlueAV award for the best exhibition stand went to The Columbaria Company, an excellent win. Peter Roper thanked Roy Bennett and team for his display stand. Blue explained you must always be the ‘best you can be’ – proven by a wonderful presentation by the man himself of the Maori Haka!

The Blue Donnebaer ‘special award’ went to Peter Roper for being a ‘loyal and diligent server to his company and industry’ and most importantly it was his 60th birthday!

Dinner on my table was helped down with the Mega Quiz liquid won the night before(!), followed by a disco.

Delegates were delighted to greet ‘fraternals’ from fellow organisations; above from left to right with Natasha Bradshaw are Steve Pearce - NAFD, Phil Hogarth - BIE, Aaron Brudenell - SAIF, Clive Kirk - BiFD and Brian Taylor - CFSMA. Linda Butcher from the SLCC (above left) is pictured alongside Isabel Mattick - FBCA.

The first paper on our last morning, Wednesday, was ‘The Impact of Changes to Death Certification’ presented by Tim Morris. I found how graves are maintained in Germany very interesting, with re-use already a widespread practice. Tim mentioned about how grave re-use was stopped in this country in the 1850s and, although much work has been done, The Ministry of Justice has shelved current plans for the re-use of graves as we are ‘Not considered to be at crisis’. Time will definitely prove otherwise.

More refreshments, then I listened to Poppy Mardall, Director of Poppy’s Funerals – ‘Simple Cremation & Choice’. She offers simple funeral services from Hemel Hempstead in the north, to Reigate in the south; from Dartford in the east, to Windsor in the west, Greater London and sometimes beyond. The deceased is placed in a simple wooden coffin without any invasive procedures such as embalming, or the use of a hearse. Ashes are returned to the applicant, giving them the freedom to hold a funeral, memorial or celebration of life wherever, whenever and however they choose.

Next up was Mike Grimwood of Ipswich Borough Council with a paper on ‘Non-standard Green Coffins’. This was a subject I felt very connected with. As a technician at Cheltenham Crematorium I frequently have to charge all manner of very volatile ‘Eco’ coffins. Mike discussed the problems with these types of coffin and that new ICCM Guidance Notes on non-standard coffins have been drafted [see page 36]. We all got to read a copy and hope that these notes will soon be in place to maintain health and safety for all involved.

The annual awards ceremony started at 7pm and President Natasha Bradshaw opened the evening. Anthony Devonport received a Fellowship and Deborah Powton an Honorary Vice Presidency. Four members – Iain Perrins (Bradford), Ian Ramsay (Durham), Tracey Ramster (Stafford) and Tracy Lawrence (Cambridge) gained their ICCM Diplomas – with Honours awarded to Tracy Lawrence and Michael Nottage (Barnet) who were in attendance to collect them personally. I appreciate all the hard work they have put in as I’ve just completed my Law module with a long way still to go!

There were three Wesley Music awards this year. Anthony Devonport received them from Alan Jeffrey on behalf The Glasnevin Trust, Mount Jerome Crematorium and The Island Crematorium – all in Eire. The ICCM Photographic Competition had a wonderful selection of
Angie McLachlan gave us a very interesting paper on ‘Buying Time For The Family’. Angie is a fully trained embalmer and talked us through the different choices for families and their loved ones. Often if the deceased is too big, small, ill or decomposed these choices may not be offered. She said these practices need to change. The pictures of embalmed people standing up and on their motorbike for display were incredible!

Catherine Brew presented the final paper of the Convention ‘Death of the Socially Undesirable’ – which touched on cases of people who have committed heinous crimes and the refusal of funeral directors to be involved with these cases. It was shown that in America, however culturally and ethnically unacceptable a person is, any funeral like this takes place quite normally. Our moral code with this general culture must be questioned.

Finally, Julie Dunk (pictured below with Blue) gave us feedback on the Networking Sessions, and Convention 2012 was coming to a close.

Natasha Bradshaw thanked all the staff at the hotel for the wonderful service and food, BlueAV and Martin Caxton (right) of Clear Skies Software for their sponsorship, Martin Birch, all speakers and session chairs.

She also thanked Patricia McGinley (left) for photography and Julie Dunk and Julie Callender (pictured below) for all their hard work in arranging and organising the Convention and, not least, all the delegates for their support.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first time at the Convention in the Forest Pines Hotel. It is the most wonderful of places. Being able to learn from all the papers and network with like-minded colleagues was fantastic.

I drove back down the M1 in the knowledge that I had attended a great event and accumulated plenty of information to take me forward with my own Diploma.

I must personally thank everyone I met and talked to, especially those on my table who made the evening functions most enjoyable.

I am very grateful to my own Chilterns Crematorium Joint Committee and Superintendent and Registrar Charles Howlett. They made it possible for me to attend the ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition 2012.

If you get the chance to go in 2013, in what will be the Institute’s centenary year, you must. To steal a quote from the Convention, ‘It’s An Education’.

The Institute is almost 100 years young!

Our centenary will be celebrated at the

2013 Learning Convention & Exhibition.

Details will be announced in the Spring Journal and on the ICCM website.

Contact Julie Dunk, Technical Services and Events Manager on 07976 939585 or email julie.dunk@iccm-uk.com to register an interest.
snapshots from
Forest Pines 2012 photo files
learning convention & exhibition 2012 – the organiser’s view

As the organiser of the ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition 2012 it would be very easy for me to claim that it was a major success – I’m hardly likely to say otherwise or there could be questions about my job! So instead of me claiming that it was a success, here are some quotes from the people that matter – the delegates, speakers and exhibitors who attended the event....

......’It really was a great event, and I met some wonderful people. Thank you a million times for inviting me to the convention! I absolutely loved it - a great honour to be invited.’

‘Just wanted to go on the record to say thank you for all your hard work organising and making it run smoothly. Another fantastic event - the best so far - everyone was interacting and energised, the papers were topical, well presented and relevant, and the ‘networking’ opportunities at convention, are, as ever, invaluable.’

'I just wanted to pass on my thanks to you for the really enjoyable and beneficial Learning Convention. I thought the event was excellent, particularly as some of the papers focused on topics that have not previously been included.’

'I just wanted to say a big thank you for organising an amazing convention again this year. It was, as always, informative, interesting and a great opportunity for catching up with everyone involved in the industry.’

These unsolicited quotes prove that the event was a real success, not just me claiming it to be one! As we go to print for this edition of The Journal, feedback forms sent to everyone attending the event are still coming in. We will use these to help us judge what worked, what didn’t, and how we may improve the event for the future.

Although I do the nitty gritty of organising the Learning Convention and Exhibition, it is very much a team effort, and it is this that makes it such a success. The ICCM Officers – Tim, David, Julie C and Trevor – work tirelessly at the event and much of what they do goes unseen. The ICCM Board of Directors are instrumental in setting the themes and suggesting papers for the event, and provide much needed strategic direction and support for the Officers.

This year we were honoured and privileged to attract sponsorship for the event. Our main sponsor was BlueAV, who not only provided sponsorship but also produced and co-presented the ICCM Mega Quiz on the Monday night, sponsored and hosted the BlueAV Best Exhibition Stand Award, and this year presented a Blue Donnebaer Special Award to Peter Roper of the Columbaria Company. Blue described Peter as ‘the second most glamorous man to turn 60 at ICCM event in 2012’. (Blue had the honour of being the first at the ICCM Education Seminar in March!) Blue was also an exhibitor, showcasing his unique DDA compliant rise and fall lectern, and the curtains, sound systems and methods for showing pictures that he installs in cemetery and crematorium chapels. And, of course, Blue provided the audio visual equipment and services for the event, ably assisted by Stuart and Malcolm. Blue also provides much unseen support for me as the organiser, and the ICCM in general, through being my husband – I hope you agree that we make quite a team!

Clear Skies Software sponsored the Tuesday morning Convention session, and thanks go to Martin Caxton for this. Clear Skies produce a comprehensive range of computer systems for the administration of crematoria and cemeteries, and Martin and Chris Lacey demonstrated these systems on their exhibition stand.

The Exhibition is a vital part of the Convention, and this year it certainly had the wow factor! Most of the exhibition stands were accommodated in one room, which was deemed to be an improvement on events where the exhibition is spread over several rooms. We were very pleased to welcome previous suppliers, as well as some news ones from overseas, giving an international aspect to the event. There was certainly a lively atmosphere in the exhibition room, and suppliers have reported receiving much interest, good leads and confirmed orders – proof of the value of attending.

Two exhibitors were in the concourse leading to the exhibition room, and they presented a most impressive entrance for the event. Welters Organisation Worldwide pulled out all the stops to showcase their many talents and the services they provide to authorities and companies to help improve their cemetery and crematorium facilities. Their very impressive stand featured the latest technology alongside man-made and natural products, and Keith and Iain were on hand throughout to give their expert advice to delegates. The Columbaria Company showcased their impressive new range of after-cremation commemorative products. The Barbican memorials come in three sizes featuring 40, 80 or 192 memorial plaques, and can include a bespoke designed top. Both stands in the concourse were beautifully presented, and both scored many votes in the BlueAV Best Exhibition Stand Award, as voted for by the delegates. There could be, however, only one winner, and this year the award went to The Columbaria Company. Peter Roper, on collecting the award, thanked the entire team for their hard work and commitment, especially Roy who had spent many hours putting the stand together (and would spend many more taking it down again!).

The papers this year were universally good, and we were treated to a fascinating range of topics that made us laugh,
The first was during the paper on the Sand Rose charity, presented by Keith Butterfield and Pete Griffith. The Sand Rose charity provides accommodation in Cornwall for bereaved families to have a break from their everyday lives. It seems a very simple idea, but it is extremely effective, as shown by research commissioned by the charity into the therapeutic effects of their work. Pete, who is a Trustee for the Charity, explained how he became involved with them following the deaths of two of his little girls. Pete actually thanked us for giving him the opportunity to talk about his girls and his family, and that’s when my tears started flowing – a very moving moment. The second standout moment was when Andrew Doggart showed a slide of radioactive seeds being inserted into the prostate, and the entire male section of the audience crossed their legs and groaned – a very moving moment for such different reasons.

Despite the economic climate the event attracted a good number of delegates this year. Those that were able to persuade their authorities or companies to fund them to attend will be able to demonstrate that it was money well spent. Nobody could have left the event without learning something, or without making some new contacts, or without discovering some new product or service that can help them provide a better service to bereaved people. This, after all, is what we are about.

To conclude I’m going to steal the words of Peter Roper on receiving his 60th birthday gift at the Gala Dinner on the Tuesday evening and which, I believe, explain the success of the event – ‘it is great to be here – it is like being among family’.

Thank you to all my ‘extended family’ for coming, joining in and helping to create such a success.

Finally, newly elected ICCM Deputy President Roddy McGinley comments;

‘Moving the venue of the Learning Convention from the Chesford Grange Hotel near Warwick to Forest Pines Hotel near Scunthorpe was a difficult change – and worrying for the ICCM as everyone on the Board was apprehensive about how suitable the new venue would be.

‘Gladly, any fears were unfounded as all who attended remarked on the more ‘personal feel’ of Forest Pines.

‘Speaking with exhibitors I found that they enjoyed the new layout as it provided them with a much more ‘even playing field’ as delegates could find them all in one area. The feedback received on sales proved very encouraging which has made it more likely that exhibitors will return in our centenary and my presidential year with added vigour and expectations.

‘All of the delegates I spoke with were delighted with the new set up as it was much easier for them to visit exhibitors, attend papers and workshops without fear of being late and disturbing the flow of a speaker. Many attendees mentioned the main events hall as being appropriate in size and fundamentally ‘fit for purpose’ with regard to the quiz, AGM and subsequent awards ceremony and dinner dance.

‘ Personally, I thought that this year’s venue suited the Learning Convention. Delegates and exhibitors were in much closer proximity to one another producing a much more relaxed atmosphere; a very successful Learning Convention and Exhibition which everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed.’

Julie Dunk, Technical Services & Events Manager
obituaries; Jean Ramsden – 23rd April 1926 - 4th September 2012

A Service and Celebration for the Life of Jean Ramsden was held on Monday 1st October 2012 in the Burton Fleming Methodist Church, near Driffield in East Yorkshire.

The Minister of the Church, the Rev’d Denise Free, welcomed the congregation and lead hymns and prayers. Psalm 23 and Romans 8:35-39 were read by the Rev John McGrath. It was typical of Jean that she had arranged the order of service, hymns and prayers, which were some of her favourites.

The address was given by Rev’d Free. In it she gave a brief description of Jean’s early life attending the Tong Road Methodist Church in Leeds where she took part in various activities and became a Warrant Officer in the Girl's Brigade. Not only was she inducted as a local preacher in 1951 she also served the Methodist Church as an organist, circuit steward and treasurer. Rev’d Free then gave a brief outline of Jean’s working life, how she met Allan and their time together since marrying in 1968.

Following the commendation and committal prayers, and during the last hymn, Jean was taken from the church to the East Yorkshire Crematorium for cremation; it was her last wish that she travelled alone from the church to the crematorium.

Following the Blessing the congregation who consisted of family and friends, members of the church, the former Lord Mayor of the City of Leeds Martin Dodgson, two retired former work colleagues, Richard Good and Tim Wood, and the McMillan nurses and care workers who had look after Jean assembled in the church room to join Allan for refreshments.

Jean was born in the Cemetery Lodge at Old Lane, Wortley, Leeds where her father, the late J Batley, was the Cemetery Superintendent; himself a Life Member of the Institute, secretary of the Yorkshire Branch and, for twenty years, a member of the former National Council.

On leaving education Jean began work at Lawns Wood Cemetery and Crematorium, Leeds in 1943 as a junior secretary and then personal secretary to the late Walter Pearson. She was later appointed to the post of Assistant Superintendent and then, on the death of Walter Pearson, Superintendent and Registrar.

In the late forties and fifties Jean had greatly assisted in the preparation of reports and technical papers for Walter Pearson, a technical advisor to the Institute and the Federation of British Cremation Authorities (FBCA); in particular working in conjunction with the North East Gas Board and Dowson and Mason Engineering in the development of the first Lawns Wood Negas Cremator – built at Lawns Wood.

Following the death of Walter Pearson Jean played an active part for many years in the work of the FBCA as a member of their Executive Committee.

Jean joined the Institute on the 10th May 1952, thereby making history, as previously it was a male dominated organisation. She subsequently became its first lady branch secretary, first lady to be a member of the National Council and secretary, first lady chairman of a Branch, and elected the first lady president of the Institute.

A stalwart of the Yorkshire Branch Jean was its secretary for eight years and chairman on three occasions.

With reorganisation of local government in 1974, Lawns Wood Cemetery and Crematorium was integrated into the Leeds City authority. Jean then moved from Lawns Wood to the administrative offices at the Merion Centre in Leeds city centre.

Within a short period of time she moved back to Lawns Wood as Chief Superintendent for the Leeds City Council, with the responsibility for three crematoria, twenty eight cemeteries and all that this entailed.

At a National Council Meeting in 1971 the professional, newly appointed General Secretary left the Institute in the lurch by not attending the meeting and resigning. Jean being in attendance at the meeting agreed to carry out the duties on a temporary basis. Later she agreed to take the post on a permanent basis, serving the Institute for nine years as General Secretary. For eight years Jean also carried out the work of Joint Conference Secretary for the Institute and Federation arranging very successful and memorable venues.

The greatest privilege and fondest memory for Jean was when the Institute members elected her to the office of Deputy President in September 1975, and subsequently the following September when she was inducted at conference as the Institute’s first lady President. During her presidential year, with Allan as consort, they enjoyed visiting the eight branches, along with representing the Institute at the many fraternal conferences and banquets throughout the British Isles.

For her dedication and work for the Institute Jean was elected a Life Member in 1979.
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- www.tgms.co.uk
Early retirement beckoned and in 1985 Jean and Allan moved to the tranquillity of East Yorkshire – Mill House in Wold Newton – where they immediately settled down and soon became involved in the local community helping out at the village day centre, the Burton Fleming Methodist Church as well as on the local Methodist circuit. Jean preached on many occasions and played the organ; Allan doing the odd maintenance jobs.

Even though retired Jean still took an active part in the Yorkshire Branch activities; the branch had the privilege of holding two meetings at their home in Wold Newton, followed by Jean’s usual special hospitality.

It was a privilege to have known Jean and be a colleague and friend for over forty years and to be able to attend the Service and Celebration of her Life. Unfortunately she had not been in the best of health over many years, even having lost her sight.

I always found it a pleasure to visit her and Allan at Mill House and reminisce about times past, good and not so good. Jean was always one of the most helpful and generous people, she will be sadly missed by all her family and friends.

P.A. Plews
Past President, 1982-1983

Jan Gabriëls – 9th February 1948 - 11th September 2012

On 11 September 2012 the sad news reached us that Jan Gabriëls, who envisioned the recycling of metals remaining after cremation, had passed away at the age of 64.

In 1997 Jan was the founder and co-owner of OrthoMetals, a company working today for more than 125 crematoria in the UK.

He was a well known character to many of the ICCM members either when attending ICCM conferences and conventions or when visiting crematoria for a pick-up of metals. His hard-working attitude, his humour and his skill will be remembered for ever.

Just three months ago Jan became a grandfather for the first time, and when he died was only five months away from retirement. Jan’s family have accepted the challenge of continuing with his life’s work. Our thoughts are with them.

Ruud Verberne

iccm branch secretaries

Northern: Alan José – Email: durhamcrem@btconnect.com T: 0191 384 8677

Sth East: Natasha Bradshaw – Email: Natasha@mortlakecrematorium.org T: 020 8392 6984 or 07889 223505

Sth West and Sth Wales: Ian Quance – Email: ian.quance@exeter.gov.uk T: 01392 265 370 http://swswiccm.wordpress.com/

Scotland and Northern Ireland: Neil Munro – Email: neil@edinburghcrematorium.com T: 0131 554 1500

Nth West & Nth Wales: Steve Jones – Email: steve.jones@knowsley.gov.uk T: 0151 443 5231
On the 1st October, at the Institute's annual Learning Convention and Exhibition, Nicky Whichelow and Ian Quance launched the Charter for Natural Burial. The Institute set up a committee in June of this year to look at the subject after several requests from members. Ken West, MBE, former President of the Institute and seen by many as the ‘godfather’ of natural burial, had challenged the Institute to get involved in his excellent book ‘A Guide to Natural Burial’. The idea of a Charter was subsequently talked about for a year or so and was gaining widespread interest.

At present there are 274 Natural Burial sites in the UK and Ireland with many more at the planning stage; more than there are crematoria. 152 are in the public sector and 104 in the private; the rest being partnerships, charities or having religious affiliations. 77 are Corporate Members of the Institute and 124 have Professional Members involved in their management.

Apart from Ken's book, the Ministry of Justice has issued guidance, ‘Natural Burial Grounds – Guidance for Operators’ and the Association of Natural Burial Grounds, representing around 50, mostly private sites, has a Code of Conduct with which all their members must comply. Many of the Institute's members have Natural Burial areas in their cemeteries; so called ‘hybrid’ sites, these may already be covered by the Charter for the Bereaved.

Demand for Natural Burial is increasing. However, the choices before the public seem unclear. There is wide variation in the types of Natural Burial Grounds (NBG) and similarly in the ethos upon which they operate. The public are rightly confused by all of the issues raised by Natural Burial; even when they think they have an idea their local site may be completely different. There is even some question of 'green washing' at some sites. There are no clearly available and monitored standards across the sector.

There are obviously many issues associated with forming a definition of Natural Burial as there are so many criteria used to define them. Ken West uses a definition where the act of burial is low impact and the result is habitat creation (or preservation). In the United States the definition is strongly biased towards encouraging rapid decomposition of the body.

Questions abound regarding the environmental effect (or otherwise) of formaldehyde used in embalming fluid and in coffin construction. The bereaved still want reassurance that the location of the burial is recorded even when there is no marker; some expect a tree to be planted on every grave or a stone marker. As in every other facet of our work with the bereaved, everyone is different, with differing expectations of our service and usually strong views on what we should be doing.

For ‘conventional’ burial and cremation, the Institute provides a raft of training, guidance and backup so that when the customer comes along with a demand we have experience, training, backup and a wealth of knowledge gleaned from networking which we can fall back on. The same cannot be said for Natural Burial – until now.

The Institute already offers a range of member services which can easily be extended to cover Natural Burial and work upon these is already well underway. A Charter for Natural Burial Ground users was obviously the first to be considered; building on the Charter for the Bereaved and incorporating guidance from the MoJ, a short version of the Charter was introduced at Convention. The full version will be published after a short period of consultation.
Stratford Business School have offered to add an accredited double unit in Natural Burial Ground Management which, with one more unit, will allow the attainment of a Certificate in Natural Burial Ground Management; similar to those already existing for Cemetery and Crematorium Management. By continuing study the full Diploma will be achieved.

The existing Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme (COTS) courses overlap the demands of the NBG operator in some cases, or can easily be amended; other courses can be added for instance in the areas of woodland or meadowland development and management. Similarly, the Manager’s Awareness Course has obvious overlap with the subject. Workshops and one day seminars are being planned as are awareness courses for funeral directors. We are also looking at using online support in a more imaginative fashion, both for operators and for the general public.

The consultation exercise can be found online at http://www.consultationcounts.co.uk

I urge all members to have a look at the proposal and the questionnaire on the site. The committee will sit until Convention next year where it will report back to the membership and the Board with recommendations for future support for the sector.

Please contact the committee at; timiccm@btinternet.com or ian.quance@exeter.gov.uk if you have any questions, recommendations or even if you’d like to get involved in the work we have ahead of us.

Ian Quance

Swanley Town Council invites expressions of interest from suitably experienced companies to explore and develop a crematorium and cemetery (subject to planning) on land within the ‘green belt’ owned by the Town Council close to M25/M20 motorway interchange in Kent.

Expressions of interest to Chris Drake, Assistant Town Clerk,
Civic Offices, St Mary’s Road, Swanley, BR8 7BU by 31st December 2012.
Dickens, the undertakers and burial

This year’s bi-centenary of the birth of Charles Dickens has seen an unprecedented interest in his life and writings. Widely regarded as the greatest novelist of the Victorian period, his books include *David Copperfield*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Bleak House*. The novelist’s rich characterisation and vivid descriptions of London are regarded as important resources for the social historian. Dickens also edited and contributed to two journals, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* and used these to comment on the issues of the period.

Funerals and the undertaking trade were subjects that received attention, with many having a critical dimension. Little, however, has been written about Dickens’ fascination with funerary matters including burial. In attempting to address this oversight, reasons for his interest are suggested followed by a short appraisal of his comments. Finally, some observations are offered on Dickens’ legacy to funeral service.

There are three possible explanations for Dickens’ interest in funerals and undertakers. First, he was an inveterate walker around London and his keen eyes would have observed funeral processions, ostentatious hearses and mutes standing outside houses. In addition he would have glimpsed coffins being constructed in undertakers’ premises; in 1843, around the time he was writing *Martin Chuzzlewit*, there were over 270 undertaking firms in the central area of London (from Marylebone in the west to Bethnal Green in the east).

Acutely aware of the plight of the poor, to know that they were being encouraged by undertakers to spend money on an elaborate funeral rather than on the needs of the living, was a source of scandal to Dickens. For this reason he viewed the occupation with distain. He too would have been mindful that the stigma of a pauper’s funeral meant that the bodies were sometimes abandoned in the street.

His abhorrence at funerary extravagance was behind the request for simplicity at his own funeral, his will stating; ‘I emphatically direct that I be buried in an inexpensive, unostentatious and strictly private manner…and that those who attend my funeral wear no scarf, cloak, black bow, long hatband or other such revolting absurdity.’

It is also not unreasonable to suggest that Dickens would have sensed the odour of putrefaction from overcrowded churchyards, particularly prior to the 1850s when burial legislation prohibited interment in the urban area.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870).

Opened in 1832, Kensal Green Cemetery opened in 1832. Charles Dickens visited on a number of occasions for funerals and also included an article about it in *All The Year Round* (19 September 1863). Of the first royal burial in the cemetery Dickens commented, 'The late Duke of Sussex did a national service when he desired to be laid, in the equality of death, in the cemetery of Kensal Green, and not in the pageantry of a State Funeral in the royal vault at Windsor.'

Opened in 1839, Highgate Cemetery was well-known to Dickens. His parents, John and Elizabeth, his daughter, Dora, and his eldest sister, Fanny, are buried there.

Acutely aware of the plight of the poor, to know that they were being encouraged by undertakers to spend money on an elaborate funeral rather than on the needs of the living, was a source of scandal to Dickens. For this reason he viewed the occupation with distain. He too would have been mindful that the stigma of a pauper’s funeral meant that the bodies were sometimes abandoned in the street.

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It is also not unreasonable to suggest that Dickens would have sensed the odour of putrefaction from overcrowded churchyards, particularly prior to the 1850s when burial legislation prohibited interment in the urban area.
Secondly, Dickens was no stranger to the personal experience of loss and throughout his life had arranged a number of funerals and attended many more. His paternal grandmother died when he was twelve, but he did not attend her burial at St George's burial ground on Bayswater Road. However, whilst working on *Pickwick Papers* in 1837, he was present at the death of the seventeen year old Mary Hogarth, his wife’s sister, of whom he was very fond. She was buried at the newly opened Kensal Green Cemetery. He visited Highgate Cemetery in 1847 for the funeral of John Hall, his one-time publisher, and returned there for the interment of four members of his family, including his parents. Two other children had already died in childbirth. Dickens also organised the funeral for his old friend Frank Stone in 1859 and for Dr William Brown, one of the trustees of his home for fallen women at Shepherd’s Bush. Two years later his brother-in-law, Henry Austin, and also his manager, Arthur Smith, both died. He would have engaged undertakers when making funeral arrangements, but nothing is recorded of the encounters or the firms involved.

The third reason is that in January 1840 Dickens had direct experience of a most unpleasant aspect of mortality through serving on the jury at the inquest for a newborn baby. All jurors had to view the body of the child as it lay on a table in the workhouse mortuary; a post-mortem had taken place and the body had been sewn up. (The requirement for inquest jurors to view the body continued until 1926.) Dickens’ recalled this event when writing his ‘Uncommercial Traveller’ column in *All the Year Round* in May 1863, also revealing that the Middlesex Coroner and founder of *The Lancet*, Dr Thomas Wakley, had private discussions about the post-mortem findings with him after the inquest.

These experiences would have highlighted not only Dickens’ knowledge of the lack of dignity towards the dead, but also emphasised the link between social class and funerary expenditure.

**Dickens on Undertakers and Funerals**

One of his early profiles of an undertaker can be found in *Martin Chuzzlewit* where Dickens describes Mr Mould as:

> A little elderly gentleman, bald, in a suit of black, with a note-book in his hand, a massive gold watch-chain dangling from his fob, and a face in which a queer attempt at melancholy was at odds with a smirk of satisfaction, so that he looked as a man might, who, in the very act of smacking his lips over choice old wine, tried to believe it was physic.

For Mr Omer in *David Copperfield* Dickens shows him to be:

> a fat, short-winded, merry-looking, little old man in black, with rusty little bunches of ribbons at the knees of his breeches, black stockings, and a broad-brimmed hat.

In *Oliver Twist* Dickens gives a description of the interior of Mr Sowerberry’s undertaker’s premises:

> Oliver being left to himself in the Undertaker’s shop gazed timidly about him with a feeling of awe and dread, which many people a good deal older will be at no loss to understand. An unfinished coffin on black trestles which stood in the middle of the shop looked so gloomy and death-like that a cold tremble came over him every time his eyes wandered in the direction of the dismal object from which he almost expected to see some frightful form slowly rear its head to drive him made with terror. Against the wall were arranged in regular array a long row of elm boards cut into the same shape, and looking in the dim light like high-shouldered ghosts with their hands in their breeches-pockets. Coffin plates, elm chips, bright-headed nails, and shreds of black cloth lay scattered on the floor, and the wall behind the counter was ornamented with a lively representation of two mutes in very stiff neck cloths on duty at a large private door, with a hearse drawn by four black steeds, approaching in the distance. The shop was close and hot; and the atmosphere seemed tainted with the smell of coffins. The recess beneath the counter in which his flock mattress was thrust, looked like a grave.'

Few images exist of mid-nineteenth century undertakers’ premises. This one from Punch appeared in 1875, five years after Dickens’ death, and shows a coffin being constructed by the appropriately named Mr Trestles. Note the sign: ‘Parish Coffins…Reduction.’ Humour would have been far from the mind of the young Oliver Twist when engaged in Mr Sowerberry’s undertaking business.
In respect of Dickens’ observations of funerals, John Morley believed they emphasised the ‘sordid and the ludicrous.’ Although Victorian funerals could be impressive (and in the case of Queen Adelaide’s funeral in 1849 which Dickens noted ‘…was conducted with proper absence of conventional absurdity’), it was the lower classes who wished to imitate grandness. This was expressed in Dickens’ article entitled ‘Trading in Death’ that was published in *Household Words*:

The competition among the middle classes for superior gentility in funerals – the gentility being estimated by the amount of ghastly folly in which the undertakers was permitted to run riot – descended even to the very poor; to whom the cost of funeral customs was so ruinous and disproportionate to their means, that they formed clubs among themselves to defray such charges. Many of these Clubs, conducted by designing villains who prey upon the general infirmity, cheated and wronged the poor, most cruelly…

Dickens also went on to criticise the mode of operation employed by some undertakers that resulted in extortionate funeral costs:

That nothing might be wanting to compete the general depravity, hollowness, and falsehood, of this state of things, the absurd fact came to light, that innumerable harpies assumed the titles of furnishers of Funerals, who possessed no Funeral furniture whatever, but who formed a long file of middlemen between the chief mourner and the real tradesman, and who hired out the trappings from one to another – passing them on like water-buckets at a fire – everyone of them charging his enormous percentage on his share of the “black job.”

In this article Dickens took the opportunity to draw attention to the businesses that had capitalised upon the recent funeral for the Duke of Wellington. Offers of seating to watch the procession along with refreshments (including ‘Duke of Wellington Funeral Cake’ and ‘Duke of Wellington Wine’) were advertised in *The Times*. Dickens quoted a number of examples:

LUDGATE HILL. The fittings and arrangements for viewing this grand and solemnly imposing procession are now completed at this establishment, and those who are desirous of obtaining a fine and extensive view, combined with every personal convenience and comfort, will do well to make immediate inspection of the SEATS now remaining on hand.

THE DUKE’S FUNERAL. A first-rate VIEW for 15 persons, also good clean beds and a sitting-room on reasonable terms.

FUNERAL of the late DUKE of WELLINGTON. To be LET, in the best part of the Strand, a SECOND FLOOR, for £10; a Third Floor, £7 10s, containing two windows in each; front seats in shop, at one guinea.

NOTICE TO CLERGYMEN. T.C. Fleet Street, has reserved for clergymen exclusively, upon condition only that they appear in their surplices, FOUR FRONT SEATS, at £1 each; four second tier, at 15s each; four third tier, at 12s 6d; four fourth tier, at 10s; four fifth tier, at 7s 6d; and four sixth tier, at 5s. All the other seats are respectively 40s, 30s, 20s, 15s, 10s.

Dickens also noted the availability of autographs and letters:

WELLINGTON AUTOGRAPHS. TWO consecutive LETTERS of the DUKE’S (1843) highly characteristic and authentic, with the Correspondence, etc., that elicited them, the whole forming quite a literacy curiosity, for £15.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON. A widow, in deep distress, has in her possession an AUTOGRAPH LETTER of his Grace the Duke of WELLINGTON, written in 1830, enclosed and directed in an envelope, and sealed with his ducal coronet, which she would be happy to PART WITH for a trifle.
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Other memento mori was also offered:

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Can be guaranteed. The highest offer will be accepted.

RELICS of the late DUKE of WELLINGTON. For SALE, a WAISTCOAT, in good preservation, worn by his Grace some years back, which can be well authenticated as such.

Of the funeral itself Dickens was scathing, as expressed in this lengthy sentence:

We believe that a State Funeral at this time of day – apart from the mischievously confusing effect it has on the general mind, as to the necessary union of funeral expenses and pomp with funeral respect, and the consequent injury it may do to the cause of a great reform most necessary for the benefit of all classes of society – is, in itself, so plainly a pretence of being what it is not: is so unreal, such a substitution of the form for the substance: is so cut and dried, and stale: is such a palpably got up theatrical trick: that it puts the dread solemnity of death to flight, and encourages these shameless traders in their dealings on the very coffin-lid of departed greatness.11

Dickens was convinced that the undertakers manipulated the poor by encouraging the purchase of pointless accoutrements. The tactic was to embarrass clients by revealing what others of a similar social standing had purchased; Household Words contains the fictional dialogue between a ‘furnishing undertaker’ and his client:

“Hearse and four, Sir?” says he. “No, a pair will be sufficient.” “I beg your pardon, Sir, but when we buried Mr Grundy at number twenty, there were four of ‘em, Sir, I think it right to mention it.” Well, perhaps there had better be four” “Thank you, Sir. Two coaches and four, Sir, shall we say?” “No, coaches and pair.” “You’ll excuse my mentioning it, Sir, but pairs to the coaches and four to the hearse would have a singular appearance to the neighbours…” “Well, say four!” “Thank you, Sir. Feathers of course?” “No. No feathers. They’re absurd.” “Very good, Sir no feathers?” “No.” “Very good Sir. We can do four without feathers, Sir, but it’s what we never do. When we buried Mr Grundy, there was feathers, and – I only throw it out, Sir – Mrs Grundy might think it strange.” “Very well! Feathers!” “Thank you, Sir” – and so on. Is it and so on, or not, through the whole black job of jobs, because of Mrs Grundy and the gen-teel party.12

Mr Mould in Martin Chuzzlewit outlines what money can provide the mourner:

four horses to each vehicle; it can give him velvet trappings; it can give him drivers in cloth cloaks and top-boots; it can give him the plumage of the ostrich, dyed black; it can give him any number of walking attendants, dressed in that first style of funeral fashion, and carrying batons tipped with brass; it can give him a handsome tomb; it can give him a place in Westminster Abbey itself; if he chooses to invest it in such a purchase.

Mr Mould also explains to the midwife and laying-out woman, Mrs Gamp, why people spend more money at a funeral:

Why do people spend more money…upon a death, Mrs Gamp, than upon a birth? It’s because the laying out of money with a well-conducted establishment, where the thing is performed upon the very best scale, binds the broken heart, and sheds balm upon the wounded spirit. Hearts want binding, and spirits wanted blaming when people die; not when people are born.

In short, Dickens was convinced that undertakers made huge amounts of money from funerals, then spent it in public houses such as ‘The Mourning Coach Horse’ and the ‘House of Call for Undertakers’.13

Whilst items such as mourning wear, hatbands and scarves were ridiculed, Dickens reserved his vitriol for other aspects of the nineteenth century funeral. Trays of feathers were provided as Dickens noted in ‘The Raven in the Happy Family’ in Household Words ‘…because there were not feathers enough yet, there was a fellow in the procession carrying a board of ‘em on his head like Italian images’.14
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However, it was the mutes to whom criticism was unequivocally directed. Dickens described these silent creatures as ‘…fellows (all hot and red in the face with eating and drinking) dressed up in scarves and hatbands, and carrying – shut-up fishing rods, I believe’. In explaining the origins of the mute, William Tegg notes that they are a mere caricature of the ancient baronial burials. The mutes who stand at the door, represent the two porters of the castle, with their staves in black, the man who heads the procession carrying a scarf, is the herald-at-arms; the man who carries the plumes of features on his head being an esquire who bears the shield and casque [helmet], with its plume (of feathers); the pall-bearers, with batons, represent the knight companion-at-arms; and the men walking with wands the gentleman ushers with their wands.\(^\text{15}\)

The issue of inebriation was also referred to in *Household Words*:

First of all, two dressed-up fellows came – trying to look sober, but they couldn’t do it – and stuck themselves outside the door. There they stood, for hours, with a couple of crutches covered over with drapery; cutting their jokes on the company as they went in, and breathing such strong rum and water into our establishment over the way…\(^\text{16}\)

*Great Expectations* contains a description of the two provided by Trabb & Co:

Two dismally absurd persons, each ostentatiously exhibiting a crutch done up in a black bandage – as if that instrument could possibly communicate any comfort to anybody – were posted at the front door….

The most devastating attack on the undertaking trade was not in one of Dickens’ novels, but included in *Household Words*. Percival Leigh was a physician turned writer and one time contributor to *Punch*. His ‘Address from an Undertaker to the Trade (strictly confidential)’ was a lengthy essay decrying the fact that proposed funeral reforms would harm the undertakers’ profits.\(^\text{17}\)

The need to justify the expense of funerary ostentation was prompted by the forthcoming ‘Interments Bill’ – the Metropolitan Interments Act 1850. Commencing with an acknowledgement that the public thinks ‘uncharitably’ about undertakers, it then compares the cost of a funeral with spiritual provision or legal redress:

We don’t do anything of the sort, that I see, to a greater extent than other professions which are allowed to be respectable. Political, military, naval, university and clerical parties of great eminence defend abuses in their several lines when profitable.

Leigh then moves to how emotions could be exploited for financial gain:

There is no doubt – between ourselves – that what makes our trade so profitable is the superstition, weakness, and vanity of parties….As undertakers, we must admit that we are no more use on earth than scavengers. All the good we do is to bury people’s dead out of sight. Speaking as a philosopher – which an undertaker surely ought to be – I should say that our business is merely to shoot rubbish.

The rational for the ‘Interment Bill’ was science, which is a:

…most dangerous enemy…as science pokes its nose in everything – even vaults and churchyards. It has explained how grave-water soaks into adjoining well, and has shocked and disgusted people by showing them that they are drinking their dead neighbours.

A remedy was suggested: ‘The only hope for us if these scientific views become general, is, that embalming will be resorted….’ Although the Bill was discouraging, undertakers had one source of hope:

…we have one great comfort still. It has become the fashion to inter bodies with parade and display. Fashion is fashion; and the consequence is that it is considered an insult to memory of deceased parties not to bury them in a certain style; which must be very respectable at the least, and cost, on a very low average, twenty-five or thirty pounds….That is where we have a pull on the widows and children, many of whom…would be only too happy to save their little money, and turn it into food and clothing, instead of funeral furniture.
Concluding with a rallying call to demonstrate against the measure, it asked:

…calculate what our loss would then be; for in the beautiful language of St Demetrius, the silversmith, “Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.”

Of all the material in Dickens’ publications, this was the most damming and cynical view of the occupation.

**Dickens on Other Funerary Matters**

Dickens was also fascinated by other aspects concerning death. He travelled to Paris on a number of occasions and visited the morgue located on the Quai de l’Archevêché, near Notre Dame. Here the anonymous dead, including those from the Seine, were displayed on slabs behind large glass windows in the salle d’Exposition so members of the public could view them and provide an identity. Articles about the Morgue appeared in both *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. The former came after he and his friend Daniel Maclise had taken a trip to Paris, but his companion did not share such enthusiasm for this deathly spectacle. An article by Henry Morley and WH Wills in *Household Words* indicated how funerals were managed in Paris; operated through municipal agents with controlled prices ‘…there is no indecent preying upon grief…’. It was contrasted to the system in England described as ‘…ridiculous and humiliating…’.

In a further article on the sourcing of bodies for dissection from the workhouse he noted the ‘…atrocious jugglery of undertakers…’ and proposed adoption of the French system where ‘The whole swarm of undertakers…would be swept away.’ Comparisons with the systems abroad continued with an appraisal of American cemeteries. Dickens was an early advocate of cremation and believed that it could help reduce funerary expenditure. In ‘Burning, and Burying’ published in 1857, seventeen years before Sir Henry Thompson’s famous paper that led to the founding of the Cremation Society of England, Dickens surmised that, ‘There is nothing irreverent to the dead in cremation.’ An article published nine years after his death traced developments in the cremation movement.

Dickens’ novels in addition to *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* contain a number of references to burial in London. Many date from a period when sanitary matters in general were in a state of transformation. In 1850 the Metropolitan Interments Act gave the Board of Health the power to purchase cemetery companies. However, it did not address the issue of burial in overcrowded churchyards; it would be a further two years before the Burial Act repealed this earlier legislation whilst also prohibiting burial in the metropolis. In ‘City Graves’ contributed by the barrister John Delaware Lewis (1828-1884) that was published in December 1850, the first stanza refers to the ‘half-buried dead’.

I saw the wheezy beadle pause
Panting with gold and lace,
He turned the key in its creaking lock,
With handkerchief over his face.
And pale-faced urchins gambolled round
The “consecrated” place.

I saw from out the earth peep forth
The white and glistening bones,
With jagged ends of coffin-planks,
That e’en the worm disowns;
And once a smooth round skull rolled on,
Like a football, on the stones.
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We have a large team of property professionals within The Co-operative Estates providing a dedicated service across The Co-operative Group’s 4,800 trading properties. This expertise extends from site searches and securing planning consents to construction of new build developments.

Our two year development project at Emstrey Crematorium and surrounding cemeteries is well underway, with refurbishment work completed on the service chapel and visitor waiting areas. With £2.1 million invested so far, new mercury filtration systems have been installed and Emstrey is now fully mercury abated; landscaping of the grounds will continue into 2013. Alongside Emstrey, we have also secured a new build development which will be known as Lichfield & District Crematorium. Working in conjunction with a strategic partner, development plans are in place and work has commenced to provide a new crematorium and gardens of remembrance to the Lichfield area in early 2013. Leading into 2013 we also have two future developments secured and a further three projects under discussion.

The services we provide are underpinned by an experienced senior management team. For more information please contact:

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Moving from the beadle, the work of the sexton is focussed upon in a later contribution to *All the Year Round*:

Sexton am I of Armouth town:
I dig the graves when the sun is down:
I ring the bell on the Sabbath morn:
I ring the bell when a child is born:
I ring when the poor or the wealthy die:
The herald of good and ill am I.

The third and fourth stanzas reflect recent interments and also the sexton’s own demise:

Last week, on a broad red velvet bed,
The Lord of the Parish lay stiff and dead:
Last week, in a box of boards, there slept
A beggar whom wife nor children wept.
One’s in the chancel: and one below
In the deep damp hole where the nettles grow.

And so I live on, from day to day,
With the dead – for the starving parish pay.
Wherever they go (below or aloft)
It troubles me not, so the ground be soft.
Yet I know there’s a fellow with puckered face,
Who a promise has got of the sexton’s place.
“Some night” (he mutters me hoarse and low)
“I shall put thee to bed where the nettles blow.”

The state of churchyards would have been in Dickens’ mind when he was writing *Bleak House* around 1852-1853. He referred to “…a hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene, where malignant diseases are communicated to the bodies of our brothers and sisters who have not departed…”

Peering through the railings of a locked churchyard, the presence of vermin is highlighted:

“There!” says Jo, pointing, “over yinder, among them pile of bones, and close to that there kitchin winder! They put him very nigh the top. They was obliged to stamp upon it to git it in. I could unkiver it for you with my broom, if the gate was open. That’s why they locks it I s’pose,” giving it a shake. “It’s always locked. Look at the rat!” cries Jo, excited. “Hi! Look! There he goes! Ho! Into the ground!”

By the 1860s, urban interments had ceased hence Dickens referring to churchyards as ‘forgotten’ when writing in *The Uncommercial Traveller*:

Such strange churchyards hide in the City of London; churchyards sometimes so entirely pressed upon by houses, so small, so rank, so silent, so forgotten except by the few people who ever look down into them from their smoky windows. As I stand peeping in through the iron gate and rails, I can peel the rusty metal off, like bark from an old tree. The illegible tombstones are all lopsided, the gravemounds lost their shape in the rains of a hundred years ago, the Lombardy Poplar or Plane-Tree that was once a drysalters daughter and several common-councilmen, has withered like those worthies, and its departed leaves are dust beneath it. Contagion of slow ruin overhangs the place…

Similarly by the mid-1860s when Dickens was writing *Our Mutual Friend*, his focus was the leaning memorials:

The court brought them, to a churchyard; a paved court, with a raise bank of earth about breast high, in the middle, enclosed by iron rails. Here, conveniently and healthfully elevated above the levels of the living, and the dead, were the tombstones, some of the latter drooping inclined from the perpendicular, as if they were ashamed of the lies they told.
Dickens' unfortunate legacy for undertakers

There is no doubt that Dickens' characterisation of the nineteenth century undertaker has left a lasting impression on the public's perception of funeral service. Portrayed as an obsequious and manipulative individual whose sole concern is to exploit the bereaved, it's a stigma that has been perpetuated by the media. Just as the labelling of Mrs Gamp in *Martin Chuzzlewit* as ‘...incompetent, drunken, [and] snuff-taking...’ has saddled the nursing profession with an inaccurate representation, so too have funeral directors been tarnished by the likes of Mr Mould. When Edward Brooks was installed as NAFD president in 1938 he expressed regret at the seventy-year-old descriptions:

I wish a man called Dickens had never existed. Charles Dickens lowered our calling more than anyone else and there are people who are stupid enough to read his books and believe that the undertaker he depicted is the funeral director of today.

However, through the work of the British Undertakers' Association and NAFD, education of its members, the code of practice, the greater presence of women in the occupation and the increasing complexity of funerals, the contemporary funeral director bears no relation to the mid-nineteenth forebears despite the legacy inherited from Charles Dickens.

**Dr Brian Parsons**

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green/environmental coffins – initial guidance

Recently, a number of interested organisations and experienced crematorium professionals convened a meeting to discuss the problems that can be encountered when charging some green/environmental coffins into a cremator. The main objective of the group was to formulate initial guidance that would help ensure safe, dignified and respectful cremations where green/environmental coffins are used. The group also wished that the initial guidance will assist in ensuring that the bereaved continue to have access to the widest choice of coffins possible.

Introduction
In order to protect the reputation of cremation authorities, funeral directors and coffin manufacturers and suppliers, and to continue to allow the bereaved to have access to the widest range of coffins as possible, this initial guidance was formulated at a meeting between those representing the Institute, the Local Government Association, a major funeral directing company, a leading manufacturer of cardboard coffins and a number of experienced crematorium managers.

Following this meeting and joint input and agreement the Institute has produced this guidance document that deals with the cremation of coffins manufactured from cardboard, wicker, bamboo, banana leaf and other natural materials, such as wool, shrouds etc.

Main Objective
The aforementioned organisations and individuals wish to ensure that all cremations where green/environmental coffins are used are conducted and completed in a dignified, respectful and safe manner.

Initial Guidance
All green coffins should have a flat, solid, fixed base with no snags so as to allow free, unobstructed passage over rollers or ball bearing tables. In the event of a non-integral base being fixed to a coffin it should be attached in a manner that will ensure that it cannot become detached during the process of charging into a cremator.

Both ends of the coffin should be of a robust construction sufficient to withstand the pressure of a mechanical charging machine.

In respect of mechanical chargers, the width of the charging plate/head should be greater than the width of the coffin or casket.

Where there is concern that early ignition of the coffin might occur, i.e. major combustion occurring before the charge door can be fully closed, the generic risk assessment contained on page 38 can be adapted/modified to suit local conditions.

Secretary of State’s Guidance note for Crematoria PG5/2(12)
Note should also be made of the Secretary of State’s Guidance note for Crematoria PG5/2(12) and particularly clauses 3.2, 5.20 and 5.27 that recognise/contain the following requirements in respect of coffins:

- The brief “flash” caused by volatilisation of the veneer on the outside of the coffin.
- Cardboard coffins should not contain chlorine in the wet-strength agent (i.e. not using polyamidoamine-epichlorhydrin based resin (PAA-E)).
- Materials to be avoided in coffin or casket construction, furnishings and body preparation/embalming include halogenates, metals (except steel screws and staples), wax and more than a thin layer of water based lacquer on wood’.
- PVC and melamine should not be used in coffin construction and furnishings.
- Coffins containing lead or zinc should not be cremated.
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CDSL have designed and engineered a range of cremation niches and burial chambers.

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CDSL are also growing its cemetery management and operations business, designing, developing and operating private cemeteries as well as offering financial advice and management services to local authorities bereavement services.

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As we continue to grow CDSL have appointed senior executives to the board with established and respected track records in the industry. By investing in people we are investing in a continued commitment to quality and service to you.
Whilst not an issue in respect of charging a coffin into a cremator, the subject of potential leakage from a coffin has been raised. Any leakage into a wicker coffin would manifest itself very quickly whilst leakage into a cardboard coffin might compromise the rigidity of the coffin itself. Members are advised to note the item on this subject within the generic risk assessment. Funeral directors are requested to ensure that the coffin is adequately lined using appropriate material that will prevent leakage.

Members are encouraged to discuss this guidance with their local funeral directors in order to combine to meet with its main objective. In turn funeral directors are encouraged to discuss this guidance with their suppliers.

**Generic Risk Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Harm</th>
<th>Action to reduce risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rapid ignition of fabric of the coffin</td>
<td>Smoke and fume emission into the crematory.</td>
<td>Fumes/smoke inhaled by technician.</td>
<td>Lightly dampen coffin with water spray, or similar alternative, prior to charging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Solvent based coating</td>
<td>Flashback of flames.</td>
<td>Burn injuries to technician. Fumes/smoke inhaled by technician. Damage to equipment/crematory.</td>
<td>Lightly dampen coffin with water spray, or similar alternative, prior to charging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Weak coffin base</td>
<td>Entrapment on rollers/penetration by ball bearings on table causing partial charging giving rise to major fire risk.</td>
<td>Fumes/smoke inhaled by technician. Damage to equipment/crematory. Major fire.</td>
<td>Attempt to manually complete the charging if safe to do so. If not safe use fire blanket and raise the alarm. Evacuate crematory, chapel and adjacent buildings (as per fire policy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Weak ends of coffin</td>
<td>Coffin crumples/distorts under pressure from charging machine causing exposure of the deceased and possible partial charging as 3 above.</td>
<td>As 3 above. Psychological impact on technician. Added distress to the bereaved. Reputational damage to cremation authority, funeral director, coffin manufacturer/supplier</td>
<td>As 3 above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Leakage of fluid</td>
<td>Contact with body fluid. Odour in chapel and crematory.</td>
<td>Whilst risk of infection is low a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of mourners and technicians is possible.</td>
<td>Advise funeral directors to ensure that all coffins are adequately lined with suitable material. Cremate as soon as possible on same day as funeral service. Do not hold over where leakage is evident. Clean any contaminated areas with an appropriate disinfectant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Crematorium managers must ensure that appropriate personal protective equipment including heat resistant gloves, face shields, fire resistant overalls and fire blankets are made available and maintained.
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ICCM in touch

The ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition 2012 held at the beginning of October proved to be a resounding success judging by the feedback received from both delegates and exhibitors. The inclusion of all with the lack of unnecessary formality made for a friendly feel reminiscent of that generated at the CBA Seminars of several years ago.

The atmosphere certainly helped generate much discussion on the papers delivered and in particular that given by Andrew Doggart of the Department of Nuclear Medicine at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Andrew certainly allayed our fears concerning the risks relating to radioactive implants and put the matter into perspective. Andrew will be providing an article for the next issue of the Journal for those that were unable to attend the convention. More on the Convention can be found on pages 5-17.

Earlier this year The Times sent a reporter, Kaya Burgess, and a photographer to a COTS course being held in Southern Ireland. The newspaper subsequently ran an article in the Life section in October. Whilst initially focusing on our City & Guilds qualifications Kaya learned of the burial space crisis that effects many authorities in the UK and through further research was able to relay a balanced view of the problems and issues. The Times article came shortly after the Minister had responded to the Institute’s letter concerning this issue in which they stated that the Government doesn’t consider the problem to be critical at present. Time will tell.

During the summer COTS underwent usual scrutiny by City & Guilds NPTC. Firstly, all Institute officers underwent technical verification, which involves a City & Guilds officer attending at an assessment session and observing the process to ensure that standards of assessment are being maintained. A City & Guilds assessor qualification is not for life and requires renewal via these periodic verifications. Also, an assessor can only assess qualifications which he/she is qualified to undertake.

Recently, an audit of our training centre was carried out. This involves a City & Guilds auditor visiting our office to look at procedures and processes and ‘chase’ documentation relating to a number of candidates drawn at random through the system.

I am please to report that our systems were described as ‘immaculate’ thanks to Julie Callender. At this audit we were able to discuss quality assurance and were assisted greatly by the auditor in refining our own internal audit processes.

Whilst verification and audit take up time and resources it is felt that this is vital in ensuring that candidates and their employers receive quality training and assessment and that the qualifications gained have true value.

Not surprisingly, Edexcel operates a similar auditing system therefore CTTS and the Diploma come under similar external scrutiny.

Tim Morris, ICCM Chief Executive

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Further details, help or advice from Julie Callender at the ICCM National Office on 020 8989 4661 or email julie.callender@iccm-uk.com ‘constructed by the institute for the industry’
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Pet crematoria differ from human ones in that they normally operate as the funeral director and crematorium all rolled into one. So we have to handle dealing with the clients, the transportation of the pet, the cremation and the delivery of the ashes. This emphasises the fact that a cremation is more than just the disposal of the body by fire – it is the whole process, and that is something we have built into our Code of Conduct.

However, there are a number of different methods of cremation in use for pets some of which brings into question whether they meet the pet owners’ expectations of a cremation service – possibly perceived by their sometimes limited or imagined knowledge of what happens at human crematoria.

There are no regulations for the pet cremation service apart from the sale of the service under the Consumer Protection Regulations. The licensing (which is carried out by Defra’s Animal Health Veterinary Laboratory) is only concerned with the operation of an incinerator for the disposal of animal remains and simply tells you the establishment is allowed to carry out cremations. It says nothing about whether the cremations are carried out properly or not.

Many of the pet cremation systems in use have grown out of the operation of disposal plants for veterinary surgeries and have developed from a need to compete on price for veterinary work, not from the need to provide a cremation service the pet owner wants.

Our Association of Private Pet Cemeteries and Crematoria (APPCC) established its Code of Conduct from the requirements of the pet owner and from what they have a right to expect a cremation service to be. In truth, this often puts our members at a disadvantage when it comes to getting clients from veterinary surgeries as it is very difficult to compete with a ‘pile ’em high, cremate ’em cheap’ policy if you want to supply a genuine service to the pet owner. Probably very few pet owners would want that service. Unfortunately the vast majority get it.

So our policy is to be an association of establishments that carry out genuine cremations with proper procedures and ensure pets are treated with care, respect and dignity. This includes the handling of the pet from pick up to the return of the ashes.

However, it must never be forgotten that the service is for the pet owner and any system that falls within the disposal regulations is acceptable as long as it is agreed with the client at a time they are able to make a rational decision. Unfortunately most decisions are taken at the time the pet dies and are actually distress purchases. Sadly, often the owner has no idea what they have agreed to.

At a basic level, for a process to be a cremation it must encompass:

- the sympathetic handling of the pet at all times and
- the cremation carried out in accordance with any regulations

Our training modules have been based on the ICCM course and we are grateful for its help in this. We are currently revising the regulation part of our modules to reflect any recent changes.
Here at my site Chestnut Lodge we have ‘Four Golden Rules’ that govern our work:

- Always imagine the owner of the pet is standing behind you and watching your every action. That way you will always carry out the service with care and dignity.
- Always make sure the identification label stays with the pet, is attached to the machine when cremating and stays with the ashes. Never separate the label from the pet.
- Always make sure the cremation chamber and ashes processors are cleaned thoroughly to collect all the remains before the next cremation or ashes preparation begins. There must be no mixing of remains.
- Always work as if it is your first cremation and pay the same attention as you did then. There are no second chances – it has to be right first time.

Golden rules that should apply to all crematoria.

We were delighted to have recently been recognised as the first pet crematorium in Sussex to be officially recognised for its commitment to fair trading and quality customer service under the West Sussex County Council ‘Buy With Confidence’ scheme, managed by the Trading Standards department.

The accolade means that customers can be confident that Chestnut Lodge Pet Crematorium has passed a series of stringent checks to satisfy trading standards chiefs that its staff are competent and well-trained, that its previous customers are satisfied with the service they have received and that it complies with the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

The ‘Buy With Confidence’ scheme really fits well with everything we have devoted our lives to. We supplied Trading Standards with all our detailed procedures and we explained the practical side of what we do. Our website and brochures all give exact details of the services we carry out so pet owners can be in no doubt about the service they are getting.

Pet owners can complain under consumer protection regulations if, for example, their pets are mass cremated when they have paid for an individual service – but often everything is carried out behind closed doors so people are unlikely to learn if they have been misled. Some rogue traders have been found out when pet ashes have been analysed and it has been proved that they are not the remains of one pet – or in some cases not properly-cremated animal remains at all.

But our doors are always open to anyone who wants to see what we do and as I’ve said our first golden rule is that we always work as if the pet owner is standing behind us.

Unlike many of the commercial veterinary services we do not have one standard for people coming to us direct and another for collections from vets. Everyone is the same to us. That is what fair trading is all about and why we are so pleased that trading standards are now taking an interest.

I hope people will see that together the APPCC Code of Conduct and the ‘Buy With Confidence’ scheme provides unprecedented protection for pet owners. We always give ample opportunity for clients to provide feedback on our services and this will now be enhanced by Trading Standards’ own comments card which people will be able to send direct to their office.

We believe there is scope for cooperation between human and pet crematoria, hence our gratitude for the help and information that the ICCM provides.

Many of your clients have pets and I’m sure would be happy to have advice on what to do when they die – you may even have had enquiries. The Association can supply details of local members and we have a helpline. A referral system could be put into place that could benefit both your and our members both professionally and financially. Why not give us your thoughts on this and any comment you have on our Association, or on pet cremation in general. The website is at www.appcc.org.uk. You can contact the Association at contact@appcc.org.uk or contact me direct at ccdp@clpets.co.uk or on 01342 712976.

Stephen Mayles, Vice-Chairman of the APPCC
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In the Midlands lies the newly commissioned National Arboretum which recognises the British soldiers who have passed away in various wars and conflicts over the years. However what people may not realise is that not a million miles away amongst the trees and shrubland of Cannock Chase lie two war cemeteries one of which can be seen from the main road.

The Commonwealth War Cemetery, on the edge of the chase, contains the 385 graves which are a mixture of British, New Zealand and German war dead from both the First and Second World Wars. The majority of these graves are made up of 285 German soldiers. 256 from World War I and 29 from World War II.

However, down the side of this well manicured resting place runs a driveway which leads to the resting place of nearly 5,000 German (and some Austrian) war dead. The German Military Cemetery is solely for soldiers who lost their lives in both wars, most of whom died in British prisoner of war camps. Others were airmen killed when their airships or aircraft crashed over the UK, or sailors who died at sea and their bodies were washed ashore.

The cemetery was established on 16th October 1959 under an agreement between the governments of the United Kingdom and The Federal Republic of Germany. The agreement provided for the transfer to a central cemetery in the United Kingdom of all graves which were not situated in cemeteries and plots of Commonwealth war graves maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in situ.

Although a few still lie in the cemeteries or graveyards where they were originally buried most of the German war dead buried in Great Britain and Northern Ireland were subsequently transferred to the cemetery which is now managed and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, on an agency basis, on behalf of the VDK. However, according to the VDK there are just over 1,000 German World War II casualties who are buried elsewhere, including 111 at St. Peter Port (Foulon) on Guernsey and others at Brookwood in Surrey. The majority are interred in Commonwealth War Graves Commission administered plots all over the UK, often near to where their bodies were found or where they died.
I was surprised during my visit by how many people were visiting the site and from what I could understand not one of the visitors were German on that day. They may, like myself, have had some German ancestry. The site has a resident caretaker and the grounds, just like the Commonwealth War Cemetery up the lane, are meticulously neat and tidy.

There are two open gateways which reveal a view of two terraces. A granite memorial to the east of the terrace bears the following inscription “Side by side with their comrades. The crews of four zeppelins shot down over England during the first world war here found there eternal resting place. The fallen were brought here from their original burial places at Potters Bar, Great Burstead and Therberton. The members of each crew are buried in caskets in one grave”. Their remains came from Hertfordshire, Essex and Suffolk respectively.

In the centre of the Hall of Honour, resting on a large block of stone, is a bronze sculpture of a fallen warrior, the work of the eminent German sculptor Professor Hans Wimmer.

Like the American War Cemetery in Cambridge this burial ground is a fitting memorial to the dead – and I believe not many people know of its existence. I came across it by chance driving between Stafford and Cannock and vowed to return to learn more about this wonderful site – and sight. I did just that and was not disappointed; it added to my knowledge. Visitors to the cemetery are reminded as they leave “Never Let War Happen Again”.

Keith Wingrove

From the M6, exit at Junction 11 and take the A460 towards Cannock town centre. From Cannock town centre take the A34, Cannock to Stafford road. Follow for approximately 3 miles to roundabout, following signs for Rugeley. Turn right after about 1 mile, then left at crossroads. Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery is signposted on the A34 when travelling from either Cannock or Stafford.
carving out a future at Tixall Road cemetery

Sadly Peter Gater lost his wife, Jan, in July 2011 and a short while later went into Stafford Crematorium to arrange the resting place for her ashes.

Peter chose an above-ground vault but wanted the design on the plaque to be something pretty special. He and his wife enjoyed walking so he had designed a scene through the woods and was very particular about how the design would be realised and wanted to speak with the supplier. Despite being told this was not usual practice we assured him that we would act as a “go between”. Peter became quite agitated and seemed in a way to infer that the crematorium staff were denying him his rights.

At this point I interrupted and explained the supplier was in Hull but I would speak with The Columbaria Company and ask if their designer would talk to him. Columbaria were brilliant and the two quickly got chatting and emails of the design were passed back and forth between the three of us with Mr. Gater subsequently delighted with the finished plaque.

After many conversations Peter told me he enjoyed wood carving and brought into the office some small carvings he had done. These were amazing. I asked him if he would be interested in carving a tree stump in the new children’s section of our Tixall Road Cemetery, to which he agreed. As you can see from this extract from one of his emails, he enjoyed doing it;

“I have now finished once and for all with work on the squirrel. I did put a light coat of Danish Oil on the carving on Saturday but the finish dries to a nice sheen which should protect it from the weather and other damage. You can now take down the protective tape etc. What I will do – if you permit – is take a look at it from time to time and see how the finish is performing as I have never used it in quite this way before and add further coats if/when they become necessary but I will tell you before I do that.

“I do however want to say how grateful I am to you for giving me the opportunity to do the carving. It is an opportunity that carvers rarely get but in this case it has been an opportunity to do something in Jan’s memory and doing it has provided a reason for me to keep going and get up in the morning which has helped me more than perhaps you know. Jan and I were really close and did everything together so for me it has been a very hard 12 months as you can imagine but this work has forced me to do something positive and having done that continue to produce more carved work.”

During March Stafford Borough Council Environmental and Health Services (EHS), of which Bereavement Services is part, held a ‘meet the assessor day’. EHS were going for the Customer Service Excellence Award, the official UK standard for public sector organisations, and the assessor wanted to meet customers from all the relevant service areas so I asked Peter if he would like to attend. He agreed and spent some time with the assessor on the day. I am pleased to say we got the award with flying colours.

As Peter’s squirrel now sits proudly in the children’s section at Tixall Road Cemetery I am pleased that we were able to help ease his grief a little.

Tracey Ramster
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In the old days, the “Knacker” was someone who bought worn-out horses and other animals deemed unfit for human consumption, slaughtered them for their hides and hooves and sold the remaining flesh to be used as dog food and glue. The disposal of animal remains is a complex and long story with what is today, a rather unusual peroration!

In my research for this article I visited The Surrey Pet Cemetery Ltd. in South Godstone and Chestnut Lodge Pet Cemetery and Crematorium in East Grinstead, West Sussex. I was immediately impressed by the professional and caring approach of the staff I met and came away with a sense of admiration for how they approach their work dealing with both grieving people and their dead pets. It was impressive to say the least. I could see that the staff understood that when dealing with pets, they are above all dealing with people and their concern to treat the people who come to them with a high quality service was paramount.

Chilton Pike and Lucy Austin of The Surrey Pet Cemetery (pictured) had attended bereavement training in order to enhance their service to customers and their welcome to me was indicative of their sensitive and accessible attitude.

At Chestnut Lodge, Riann Copper also gave generous time to show me the cemetery and inspect the crematory and the impression I had was of a very serious approach, which is deeply appreciated by the people who use their services. I read cards and other messages expressing deep gratitude from satisfied customers.

The success is down to the respect with which the remains of the animals are treated as well as the manner in which the bereaved people are treated. In fact, it reminded me greatly of the whole human world of cemeteries and crematoria. The similarities were clear and perhaps I should not have been surprised to find this to be the case?

At this point, allow me to reveal that I am not a pet person! My feeling is that pets have taken on a role in the lives of our community in Britain which is perhaps exaggerated in importance? Take dogs, for example. In the past dogs and most other animals, were either feral or had been trained to do work in the interests of the human economy. Contrast that with now when dogs are really pampered. They have food provided at their owner’s expense. They occupy sofas and chairs designed for humans. They are given expensive medical treatment by humans. And the great indignity of all, humans run after them ecstatically ready to pick up their poo all day and every day of the week. The tables have been well and truly reversed. If dogs have a sense of humour they must be laughing their heads off as well as wagging their tails off!

In the past animals all had jobs to do. Food was a reward for doing their job. Guard dogs were sharper and more aggressive when they were hungry. Retrievers were less likely to eat the animals they retrieved if they had already been fed. Cats were there as a deterrent to rodents. Horses were our power for transport as well as a major tool in ploughing and, of course, in warfare. Rabbits were essential food and chickens provided a wonderful source of species theft as well as cooking very nicely. I am sure that you could add to this list.

That now off my chest, as it were, I was interested to hear of the rise and rise of pet burials and cremations. People are increasingly aware of the options for their pet, as are humans of their options, as death approaches. Riann Copper of Chestnut Lodge told me that the cemetery was started in 1969 and took in many burials over the 1970s. With the rise of cremation this has dropped off so that they now carry out one or two burials a month. These will include burials of ashes from individual cremations. They have about 350 plots altogether which is a mixture of ash burials and full burials.
I was surprised to hear that regulation of the business is on a voluntary basis, although the Environment Agency and DEFRA regulate the cremations and carry out inspections for emissions from the cremators. There are two national associations involved. The Association of Private Pet Cemeteries and Crematoria on the one hand and the National Federation of Private Pet Crematoria on the other. I wasn’t sure if the presence of two bodies represented commercial rivalry, but it was good to hear that both these organisations were addressing the issue of how to raise standards.

The devotion to pets given by their owners could be seen everywhere.

It is perhaps obvious, but the words on the headstones speak of just how much included in their “families” these pets must have been. Their deaths are felt with as much pain as any other family death. Whilst I can see how that might happen, I remain sceptical about in what way Honey and Patience have been re-united in their burial. I feel that we are here dealing with an over-reaction, perhaps? The emotions expressed speak of a sense of loss which would worry me if found in a member of my family or a friend. Our human relationships are all doomed to end in death and we will all need to deal with that in due course, but have we enough emotional capital to spend it on dead animals?

Is this an indication that someone needs help? Well, help is at hand! There are two phone helplines, one for children and one for adults, run by the ‘Pet Bereavement Support Service’ and funded by two charities – The Blue Cross and the Society for Companion Animal Studies. The helplines have been operational since 1994.

This headstone from The Surrey Pet Cemetery expresses a relationship in which the human sees herself as the mother of Cobra, whatever animal that was. A darling Cobra may have been, but surely, Mummy can’t really be “forever lost” without Cobra?

I just get the feeling that animals should not become our children but remain what they are, respected for being what they are, and not promoted to a level which is inappropriate in the human-animal relationship. It is extraordinary to me that some humans kiss their animals and even allow them to sleep in their beds with them. It seems like dependency on pets and that is really strange! However, not all owners respond the same way to the death of their pet. Others just bring their dead pet to the cemetery and leave it without a backward glance.

At The Surrey Pet Cemetery, the presence of specifically religious elements was very visible, as in the three crosses pictured below. Those who come with expressions of faith find themselves very much at home here.

Lucy Austin described a special day when people come to the cemetery with their pets to have them blessed. And who will come to bless them? Well, none of the serving local clergy are willing to do it, for reasons as yet unknown to me, so they bring in Jonathan Blake, formerly a Church of England priest and now the Most Reverend Jonathan Blake, Presiding Archbishop of The Open Episcopal Church, a new Christian movement which is not part of any mainstream connections. Lucy described the joy which Jonathan brings to those people who attend, speaking words of blessing and affirmation for the pets and their owners. Pictures of the occasion hang on the wall.

This cemetery has a lot of features seen in human cemeteries, like an angel and even a Madonna and child, whilst at Chestnut Lodge some of the gravestones have Stars of David on them and they have had Buddhists and Hindus witness the cremation. The Surrey Pet Cemetery have recent dealings with both Sikh and Moslem families and in the case of the latter, Islamic grave regulations were adhered to in every way.
The cemetery is very open to people using their land for other purposes. For example, one bereaved family wanted to hold a family game of rounders on the lawn in memory of their pet. They have had champagne picnics, recorded classical music events and even a pagan “hand fasting” ceremony which is akin to getting married. They are very accommodating; one farewell service went on for 5 hours because the mourners were emotionally unable to leave their pet behind. I can’t imagine my local crem being able to accommodate that!

Well, whilst I find aspects of the subject difficult to understand, I know that people who are grieving for their pets need proper care and that respect for dead animals, especially those which have been loved, is a good thing to experience.

I liked the people I met on my visits to pet cemeteries and crematoria and I think that they are doing a good job bringing the service up to a level which will be satisfying and re-assuring for pet owners – as you may have read in the article on page 43.

Prebendary Neil Richardson
Parish of Greenford Magna, Diocese of London

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**chapel refurbishments will help bereaved families**

South Essex Crematorium, laid out on land to the west of Upminster Cemetery, opened in 1957 with one chapel – the South – seating around 90 people. In 1968 the East Chapel opened accommodating 40 mourners and the site was expanded along its western boundary by 1971.

Increased space for mourners has now been created as part of the refurbishments for the site. A balcony has been installed in its South Chapel, increasing the capacity from 90 people to around 120, thus catering for large congregations.

Three power-point presentation screens, one of which can be seen below right, have been installed in the chapel, on which mourners can show family photos, or the words of hymns can be projected. A big screen will be fitted outside for very large congregations.

Families can order as many DVD copies of the service as they like, as well as a CD recording of it. The service can be webcast over the internet for family members who can’t attend in person, for instance if they live or are serving overseas. It is one of the few crematoriums in the UK to offer this service.

Further refurbishments include painting, lighting, electrical work, a new staff area and an upgrade to the computer system. The work was carried out earlier this summer, during which booking times were increased in the East Chapel so funerals were not affected.

Cllr Lesley Kelly, Cabinet Member with responsibility for bereavement services, said: “The refurbishments will benefit everyone who uses the crematorium, as they provide extra space for large groups of mourners and enable people to add that personal touch by displaying things like photos during services. We hope these changes will provide some small comfort to families during what is a very difficult time.

"In this Olympic year, I'm delighted that our bereavement services have achieved gold status in the ICCM's Charter, and we have received a glowing inspection report too. It proves Havering's commitment to providing an excellent service for our bereaved residents."

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- We work in association with bereavement specialists to provide advice and services relating to cemeteries.

Sustainability
- Green burial
- SUDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems)
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plastic recycling scheme update

Twenty-nine crematoria and cemeteries are now using the scheme. There may be more sites who want to recycle but were not in a position to join when it started two years ago; your situation may have changed and with the success of the scheme you may now be keen to get on board.

Charles Howlett, Superintendent and Registrar of the Chiltern Crematorium is very enthusiastic about the scheme. "The main reason for wanting to join was environmental – to reduce the amount of plastic going to landfill – and when I calculated that joining would be more or less cost neutral the decision was, in modern jargon terms, a ‘no brainer’.

"We had been composting a large proportion of floral waste for some time prior to joining the scheme which had reduced the number of waste skips we were using each year. In order to recycle the plastic we would have to separate all the compostable material, including from the more intricate wreaths which hitherto we considered too ‘fiddly’ to strip down and were still throwing whole into the skip.

"I anticipated that the combined effect of removing the remaining organic matter and the plastic would reduce the number of skips still further, with a subsequent saving approximately equal to the cost of paying for the recycling service. This has proved to be the case. I would add though, that in order to achieve this parity it is essential to include every bit of plastic from the site, such as plastic bottles (washed out), plant pots, etc, and even more importantly that it is packed tightly into the recycling bags. Our Grounds Supervisor, Clive, and his staff are fully supportive of the scheme and have become very adept at packing the bags to make the best use of every last inch of the available space. My only disappointment is that more authorities haven’t got involved with the scheme which, if enough joined, would bring down the collection costs – then we might even save a few pennies, which would be a bonus."

Another scheme member, Moyra Galliford, Clerk and Financial Officer for Milford Haven Town Council said, "The Council find the scheme very beneficial and is supportive of any initiative that protects the environment.

"The scheme enables the staff to dispose of any plastic that is left in the Cemetery i.e. wreath holders, pots and containers in an environmentally friendly way."

Edinburgh Crematorium Ltd. have been involved in the scheme since the middle of 2010. Neil Munro, Company Secretary says, "To date, we have sent a total of 192 bags of plastic for recycling – 131 from Warriston Crematorium and 61 from Seafield Cemetery & Crematorium.

"The Superintendents at both sites report that the staff are very enthusiastic about being involved in the initiative. Jane Darby, the Superintendent at Seafield, says that ‘the staff spend about an hour and a half each week separating the plastic, but this has just become a part of their daily routine’. She adds that they are very keen to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

"Melanie Clark, the Head Gardener at Warriston, says that John Duffy, one of the gardening staff, is the man most closely involved in the scheme. ‘It takes John about an hour a day to collect all the funeral flowers and all other refuse and then separate it into soft and hard plastic (to be recycled) and general waste to go into the skip’.

"As far as the financial aspect of the scheme is concerned, the cost of having the plastic collected is around £2,500 per annum. However, this is largely offset by the 20% reduction in the number of skips we fill each year."
All a scheme member needs to do is;

- Separate green material from tributes and recycle this through your authority's own scheme or compost and re-use.
- Remove oasis and dispose of via traditional waste stream. (Compressing oasis to drive out the water will reduce its volume to one tenth; this will mean fewer skips and hence provide significant cost savings for your authority/company.)
- Store plastic trays and containers on site for collection in the cubic metre bags provided.

David Brown of Agriplass Ltd. stated, "We would love to hear from anyone who would be interested in recycling their plastic waste. The cost of joining the scheme has remained constant, £350 + vat for the starter pack and a charge of £24.75 for each bag collected. Collections take place every 8 weeks, we ring first to see if a collection is needed, leaving till the next trip if not. This also helps us to keep in regular contact with everyone. There is little re-sale value in plastic but the more companies/authorities that join the scheme the greater the savings on waste disposal costs through economy of scale. The environmental benefit of the scheme is its primary purpose together with reduced waste disposal costs for scheme members.

"It has been a real pleasure working with everyone and I would love to see more people benefit. We try to provide a very personal service; working with the staff who have been given the job of separating the plastic from the flowers and sorting the 'rubbish' to collect the plastic and giving help and encouragement where needed to help things run smoothly."

If you wish to enquire about or want to join the scheme contact David Brown at Agriplass Ltd., Lane Head Farm, Liverton, Saltburn by the Sea, Cleveland, TS13 4TH, Tel: 01287 640286, Mob: 07773 426 821, Email: david@Agriplass.co.uk

gold and green for SWMC

The South West Middlesex Crematorium Board are celebrating having achieved a Charter for the Bereaved 'Gold' and a Green Flag for the second time.
September 2012 saw London’s second largest private cemetery since 1901 open which will help address the plot crisis that London faces. Located in the Borough of Bromley, Kemnal Park is a fifty-five acre cemetery offering 40,000 burial plots and several gardens for memorialisation coupled with a state-of-the-art, non-denominational chapel offering choice for people of all faiths.

The first phase of the site opened in August – when the first burial took place – accommodating committal services only, with the larger phase 2 (including chapel and memorial garden opening) scheduled for December 2012. Families will be offered a variety of ways to remember their loved ones; including lawn graves, mausoleums, chambers, woodland burials, private gardens and iconic memorials. In addition there will be a separate, dedicated Muslim cemetery within the grounds.

On entering the park a grand memorial marks the burial site for ‘the unknown parishioner of Southwark’. During the recent Thameslink extension project a number of human bones were discovered and disinterred from their early 19th century interment. These remains were carefully moved and reburied on site at Kemnal in the area now appropriately dedicated to ‘the unknown parishioner’.

Tucked away to the southern boundary of the park the chapel, pictured here, will accommodate 180 people comfortably, with additional capacity available for larger crowds and with a sophisticated audio visual capability and the ability to web-stream a memorial service if this is required.

A rose memorial garden, laid out next to a natural brook which runs across the park, will offer burial and scattering options for cremated remains and, situated at the far end of the park, Kemnal offers one of the largest memorial gardens available anywhere in the United Kingdom. The visionary design, shown opposite, will evoke the senses through the use of colour, scents and gentle sounds. A diversity of plants and shrubs will provide the balance of geometry and structure whilst the sound of cascading water, rustling abundance of trees and wildlife will nurture the spirit.

Kemnal Park General Manager, Michael Burke says, ‘This Park has been created as a “place for the living” to allow time for reflection on loved ones who have passed as well as creating moments for visitors to enjoy fond memories of happy times, in a beautifully landscaped environment.

'We set out not only to address the ever-decreasing space issues within the London Boroughs, but also to dramatically transform people’s expectations when it comes to memorialising a loved one. We intend for Kemnal Park to lead the way in quality and service. It is anticipated that over one hundred funeral directors within the surrounding boroughs will welcome this facility as an alternative to the established cemeteries and graveyards that have served the communities of south east London over the years.'

Kemnal Park is located close to Chislehurst, south east London. Planning permission on this new burial site was granted in 2009, as part of the planning for burial space in London review conducted by the London Planning Advisory Committee. Located on a site of natural beauty and within a SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) zone, this cemetery and memorial gardens is located on the same grounds as the former Kemnal Manor and includes ancient woodland which will provide green burial options.

For more information visit www.kemnalpark.org or contact Michael Burke - 0207 592 7027 or michael.burke@kemnalpark.org
Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol has just completed a 6-month experimental research and development project using digital technology to bring new stories to life in the cemetery. The Future Cemetery was a REACT Heritage Sandbox project, funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council.

The collaboration between Arnos Vale Cemetery, the Centre for Death and Society at the University of Bath and Bristol-based production company Calling the Shots had two aims:

1. To develop a model for working effectively with digital technologies to interpret a heritage cemetery; and
2. To gather contemporary attitudes towards remembrance and mortality and explore the varied reasons why people visit cemeteries, and what barriers mean many people don’t.

Local writers were commissioned to produce four beautiful original stories, each of which explore the experiences of bereavement, remembrance and the essence of Arnos Vale, in unique and evocative ways. These were then interpreted to create amazing performance pieces using live theatre, light projection and soundscape, premiered at six public events over the summer.

A total of 550 cemetery visitors were invited to be guinea-pigs in the research, which revealed that audiences were comfortable and interested in exploring end-of-life discussions in the cemetery setting and like unobtrusive use of new technologies! The events also helped us discover what equipment works best in different conditions (and that rain is bad for most things!).

The project results have been made into a series of films which can be viewed online at: http://www.react-hub.org.uk/heritagesandbox/commissions/2012

Postscript from Felicia Smith to readers:
So what’s the future for the Future Cemetery? The Future Cemetery team were delighted to speak at the ICCM Learning Convention and are keen to get feedback from other cemeteries about how useful and replicable this project is for YOU. We are currently exploring whether Arnos Vale might become a “Future Cemetery testing ground” for new technologies and ways of exploring our rich heritage and are undertaking some audience profiling work to get to know Arnos Vale’s visitors better. We also hope to unveil a new augmented reality app for smartphones shortly, so watch this space!

Ultimately, the Future Cemetery hopes that the lessons learned from this project will help other heritage cemeteries to attract people to visit and support them – and so help build a sustainable future for these beautiful places of remembrance. After all, every cemetery will eventually become a heritage cemetery of the future….

Tell us what you think of the Future Cemetery via: Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/thefuturecemetery, Twitter: @FutureCemetery and #futurecemetery or Email: felicia.smith@arnosvale.org.uk
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the nature of death

As a retired professional in the death arena I often assume, perhaps incorrectly, that those of us in this work take a practicable approach to death. Evidence of this would be a higher than average level of will completion and advance funeral directives. After all, we experience the impact of sudden and unprepared death, that failure to prepare those we love, and others, for our inevitable demise.

During my 45 years working in cemeteries and crematoria the ill-prepared human gave me many a smile. This was in retrospect, of course, and not at the time I was talking to these people. You know the sort of thing, as the client exclaims “It was such a shock, his death.” As this is said, you are perusing the cremation forms for a person over 90 years of age. The ability of people to ignore mortality often amazed me. As a consequence, I used to admire those people, the rare ones, who really talked about death. They looked back on a good life, cracked jokes and did not converse in metaphors.

The author A. S. Byatt, interviewed in The Times recently, said that her friend was convinced that we should think about death for half an hour every day. It was obvious that A. S. saw the absurdity in this although she did say that as she became older, death was getting into her writing. She suggested this was grim optimism but she was otherwise vague and gave no indication of what death meant to her. This reminded me of my early days, when I believed that the great authors, those keen and analytical observers of the human condition, possessed the answer. Older and wiser, I now sense that authors rarely focus on fact and as a reader, I had a distorted perspective of death.

For instance, Tolstoy describes his character Ivan dreaming and he sees death outside the door. Ivan tries to rise from his deathbed and close the door, to hold death out, but he cannot, and death gets into the bedroom. It is dramatic but it is also absurd. Death is not an external thing, it is not outside, and neither does it possess form so it cannot come in through the room door. This is another author who chooses to ignore the fact that death is within us; it lurks insidiously inside.

Dickens is far removed from Tolstoy but no better at offering a perspective on death. Little Nell, in The Old Curiosity Shop, is personified as a copy of her mother and as a representation of human innocence. An emotional torrent surrounds her death but it is really about how her loss deprives the other characters of their life force, of their will to continue. Dickens ensures that Nell experiences no pain or discomfort and she is certainly not permitted to see vulgar death forcing open the bedroom door as if to ravish her. In Dickens words, the moment after she died ‘There had been the same mild lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty, after death’. As professionals we now recognise this as the classic pauper death, the exchange of earthly rags for the haute couture in paradise. Dickens could be called mawkish, and Nell’s death is undoubtedly saccharine in that it ignores reality. When he later writes ‘She was dead, and past all help, or need of it’, he chose to ignore the fact that hers would have been the archetypal Victorian pauper funeral. Perhaps we are the only readers who visualise Nell’s body unceremoniously dumped in a pauper grave along with dozens of other unrelated children’s bodies. It would have been in the untidy, least attractive part of the cemetery, and the regulations would prohibit memorials. She might have a good literary death, but the survivors would have experienced the awful funeral, which Dickens deliberately spares us. You and I know that this dread of the pauper funeral haunted most of Victorian society, a dread which still exists today. It is obvious that if we are seeking the true nature of death then Dickens is of no help.

The poets ought to understand the reality of death but even the great Wordsworth shows otherwise. His wonderful and enigmatic ‘Lucy’ poems deal with a young woman’s death but we have no idea who she is. In one of the poems, penned in 1798, he writes ‘I had no human fears: She seemed a thing
that could not feel the touch of earthly years’. So Lucy ends up ‘Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course, with rocks, and stones and trees’. It sounds as if Wordsworth has found the eternal answer to death, a spiritual focus as the body and nature fuse into one being. This was written before the poet married and, sadly, when his children died some years later, especially his elder daughter Dora, he fell apart, never to be the same person or poet. His children were interred in a conventional churchyard under a slab of stone routinely inscribed. The rebellious and spiritual children were interred in a conventional churchyard under a slab of stone routinely inscribed. The rebellious and spiritual focus of heady youth gave way to the kind of funeral that was expected in the small Christian village of Grasmere. This friction, as it were, between beliefs during life and what happens after death is something I want to return to later too later.

Fortunately, the modern poets have given us a way forward, and Christopher Reid must be the current star. His small book seems destined for us as a profession because it is called ‘A Scattering’. The title relates to beautiful prose about elephants finding the bones of their kith and kin, but the book immortalises in verse the death of his wife Lucinda Gane in 2005. She succumbs as he is forced to watch, she locked in her body and him locked out. He writes ‘But, as a wise man said, death is not an event in life. Nor is it a journey’. Yet her body travels to the nearest anatomical research centre. He walks past the building, probably Hammersmith Hospital, and he writes ‘That’s where my dead wife lives. I hope they’re treating her kindly’.

It was Lucinda who willed her body to medical science, which illustrates a certain management of her death as well as the need to be in control before death occurs. The intense humanity and integrity of this story takes me back to my earlier comment about what we believe in life and then what happens at death. Such conflicts occasionally upset me when I experienced them at funerals. I recall an unmarried motorcyclist, in his 40s, who was killed in a road accident in Italy. His elderly Christian parents brought his body back home and gave him a conventional Christian funeral. They ignored the fact that he was secular and so excluded the man’s friends and his charitable work in the motorcycling community. They also ignored his long time female partner. Well over a hundred Hell’s Angels, and his partner, attended a meaningless ceremony. They held their own ceremony, without a body, some time later. Then there was the woman from Eire, who helicoptered in when she was told that her unmarried brother was to have a Mormon funeral in Cumbria. Her sentiment was that she came into the world a Catholic and that he will go out a Catholic, and so he did. Whether it is because I experienced these instances or not, this loss of integrity always troubled me. I want my death and my funeral to reflect the integrity of my life, and my funeral experience in recent decades opens up a new concern. This is the impact of increasing longevity and how this has changed the nature of death and the way we now die. When I managed in Wolverhampton in 1974, our records proved that retirement in that area amounted to five years for a man and seven for a woman. Consequently, in that short period mental decline was rare and Alzheimer’s and dementia was almost unknown. We now have the benefit of a long retirement but the spectre of mental incapacity hangs over us all. I want to retain my integrity to the end and not weaken simply because my brain is dithering and inclined to take me back to the security of childhood. I was a fan of Kenny Everett but his return to the Catholic Church just before his death was nothing less than an abandonment of all his principles, and the principles of his fans.

Death in 1974 was also quick. A person fell ill, took to their deathbed and, within a few days, or weeks at most, died. That suited the storytelling of Tolstoy and Dickens but they would have far more difficulty these days. People no longer take to a sickbed but experience what I call a protracted death, an incremental demise as various parts of the body fail over a long period. The medics keep the heart going, hold back the tumours, thin the blood and only when a combination of factors reaches a critical point, does death occur. The old arguments about clinical death, brain death and even legal death are confounded. Many of the old are clearly brain dead long before the body itself fails. Alternatively, and I experience an instance of this is my own family, the body has failed yet the mind is still in control. It is only since the 1990’s that some old people have told me that they would rather be dead because living was too onerous. Such statements were unknown in the 1970’s.

This protracted death carries many risks and one of these is a loss of identity. In 1974 a person died within a few years of finishing work, and their workmates and associates often attended the funeral and remained part of the deceased’s community. A pattern maker or train driver was that to the very end. Now, with longevity, our work is too distant to define us. I have noted at funerals more recently how the bereaved will often discount the deceased’s recent years as ‘not them’, a period of none being. They will then refer those attending back to their period of consciousness, when they were working, managing a family or following interests. I use the word consciousness deliberately because if, as Wikipedia suggests, life is consciousness, then the definition of life needs to be reconsidered.

The second risk is that to our relationships. In the 1970’s you were either alive, or dead. Now, in this protracted death period, people change out of all recognition. Often a person is ill, confused, difficult and depressed. All this sees friends and work
colleagues fall away as the old relationships lose their essence. Even the partner and family are forced to redefine their relationship. Then there are frequent crisis in which the person becomes very ill, even close to death, then recovers, and this might be repeated many times. The mental toll on partners and family can be exacting and neither they, nor the deceased, have any measure of control. For certain, relationships experience profound changes and any thoughts, desire even, that death might resolve the problem must create a lot of guilt.

Although I find it difficult to put into words I can see that there was an immediacy between life and death, at least up to the 1970’s. You were alive, or dead, and the juxtaposition between the two had a vitality in itself. The protracted death has destroyed that relationship. A limbo now exists between life and death, one that might exist for several decades.

There is much discussion these days about a good death, possibly because so many people are experiencing the consequences of this limbo. Too often, the blame is unfairly directed at the NHS rather than because we British have a widespread disinclination to consider death as well as the fact that we have failed to address the changes I highlight. This abhorrence of mortality forces the doctors into an almost absurd optimism about any life threatening illness. They know that nobody wants to hear the truth and so they avoid it. Many elderly people are declared fit and A1 when their age clearly indicates otherwise. As death is not on the agenda, too much remains unsaid and unprepared prior to that event. So the death, even a protracted one, comes as a complete shock and this motivates the blame game.

None of us have a desire to return to the 1970’s and, overall, this prolonged life is a good thing but that is not to say medicine has not some serious issues to consider. Is a new approach necessary which embraces protracted death? How guilty is the NHS ever promoting a ‘pill’ culture that suggests some sort of immortality? The doctor demands you take a pill because it absolves him or her in this blame culture. Yet all forms of medication have side effects and this would give both Tolstoy and Dickens an insuperable literary challenge. The truth is that Ivan and Little Nell would be experiencing severe constipation, or diarrhoea, or a leaking bladder or falls in the bathroom, and for men at least, a complete loss of libido. Yet the doctor is the expert and so people abrogate their responsibility for personal care and when death occurs many see this as somebody else’s fault.

Compared to the 1970’s, this protracted death also creates more opportunity for conflicts because an extensive medical record is created within which many decisions were taken. Guilt is again high on the list because, in an age of medical miracles, we can all feel that had we done this or that then the person might not have died. As all this happens just before the bereaved use our services, we can imagine it might profoundly influence the funeral arrangements and aftercare and our experience with the bereaved. My conclusion is about what part we have to play in this, both professionally and personally.

What is obvious is that an increasing number of people are concerned about these issues and we are experiencing more calls for a good death. That is ill defined but it clearly recognises that a medical arrogance has developed. The medical demand that we live, no matter what our state, and that when we die it is under medical supervision. This is why people are now using the Dignitas Clinic and the battle for a right to die is intensifying. The good death movement is also concerned with a good funeral so we cannot be professionally isolated from this movement.

On the professional front, perhaps we should also make a plea for death. My analysis here suggests that we are some of the very few who understand that the nature of death has changed. It goes without saying that there is a joy in life. Yet that very thought creates a counterpoint; that death is the opposite state and is therefore joyless. Consequently, our society has re-branded death as an ogre. Yet there is joy in death for those who have a religion and are promised paradise. Even for those without religion, a return to the earth or to trees has a spiritual appeal. For atheists, maybe joy is too strong a word but there is certainly nothing to fear in returning to anonymity, a state of not knowing. We have to die to make room for others; it is our duty. Surely it is part of our professional remit to talk about death, demystify it and also allow those who wish to talk about it, to do so. After all, nobody else will!

At a personal level, I have to hope that I can retain my mental faculties to the very end. The irony is that this requires me to die sooner rather than later, as the odds against dementia reduce with age. What we have at the current time is, historically, the opposite of the Black Death. Instead of dying too soon, we are dying too slowly. The social consequences of this are profound. The Black Death created vacancies and work opportunity and, ultimately, reinvigorated British society. The current situation has precisely the opposite effect. An insane amount is spent on the NHS, much of it directed at protracted death. To pay for extending our lives by weeks or months our political masters have decided to charge fees for youngsters to be educated at university. That is amoral, but at what stage do I take control, refuse medical assistance and create my good death? It might be seen as the ultimate altruistic action, to die sooner and put the medical expenditure back into society. For certain, I have to make that decision because the politicians and society as a whole will not do it for me. I will need physical comfort and pain relief but I am aware that nobody can share death with me or ease the experience; it is mine, alone. Tolstoy recognised this and pictured Ivan finding it distressing to be visited by well people. It might be even worse for me!

Picture it, the tubes up my nose and everywhere else, the visitors sensing a duty to talk to me about the things that fascinated me in life. “Ken, have you heard the latest theory about decomposition?”

Ken West, MBE
Wednesday 17th October dawned cold, wet and miserable but still 30 ICCM members and guests arrived at the Mount Oswald Manor for the Presidential visit to the Northern Branch Forum.

After a welcome cup of tea or coffee it was down to business. Councillor Maria Plews, Chairman of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee welcomed everyone to Durham and said that she hoped that they would enjoy a successful and interesting meeting. Cllr. Plews also invited all present to take the opportunity after lunch to visit the new IFZW cremator and abatement plant at Durham Crematorium which has recently been completed. She especially welcomed our President Natasha Bradshaw (whom she had met two weeks previously at the ICCM Learning Convention) and wished her the very best for her Presidential year.

Natasha gave a most inspiring address, telling her own story of how she came to work in the world of cemeteries and crematoria and of the important role that the ICCM has played in her professional life. The theme for Natasha’s year in office will be ‘knowledge’, we all need knowledge to carry out our work to the highest standards – a branch meeting being a good place to learn.

The President’s next task was quite fitting in the light of her talk, the presentation of an ICCM Diploma to Ian Ramsay, picture right. Ian, who works at Durham Crematorium, has worked hard in his spare time over the past four years juggling work, family and home life. He is delighted with his achievement and was warmly congratulated by Natasha.

Richard Fenwick, RIBA (pictured far right with Alan José, Trevor Robson and Natasha) was the Project Leader for the cremator replacement at Durham Crematorium and gave an interesting overview of the project from conception to completion, a period of some three years from start to finish. The project has produced a new crematory extension, three IFZW cremators each with a dedicated filtration system and a heat exchanger to heat the building from no’2 cremator, as well as a new mess room, cremator control room, shower/wc and cremated remains store in the old crematory area. In addition, a new car park was laid. The work was completed on time and within budget.

Peter Plews, left, gave an interesting account of the late Jean Ramsden’s life which was dedicated, as far as work was concerned, entirely to the burial and cremation profession. A tribute from Peter can be read on page 18.

I presented Natasha with a County Durham calendar to remind her of her first official engagement since taking the presidential chain and closed the meeting before we enjoyed a delicious carvery lunch. We all moved on to Durham Crematorium to inspect the new cremators and abatement equipment.

Danny Hendrich and Annett Markowitz – pictured left with Keith Welters centre – were on hand to explain the system. A good deal of interest was shown and many members were still in the crematory an hour after arrival. A sincere thank you to Danny and IFZW for once again sponsoring the meeting and lunch.
Young children with cancer will benefit from a donation of £8,000 from South Ayrshire Council who presented a cheque for that amount to Malcolm Sargent House – a specialist respite care centre for children with cancer – on the 28th September. A few days later it was announced that the Council had been awarded a Gold ICCM Charter Mark, followed by the war memorial in Monkton Village being crowned a national winner in this year’s Best Kept War Memorial competition.

The charitable donation was raised thanks to the outstanding generosity of dozens of families who had cremated a loved one at Masonhill Crematorium and then allowed metal implants or prosthetics to be recycled raising money for children with cancer. £8,000 is a combined total of the two amounts received during the period when the Malcolm Sargent House was the Council’s nominated charity. Having missed out on publicity when the first cheque was received two amounts of £4,000 were combined into one “big cheque” presentation.

Accepting the cheque on behalf of the charity, Fundraising Manager May Gilchrist commented: “I am absolutely delighted the Council has chosen Malcolm Sargent House to receive a donation of £8,000 from their UK crematoria recycling metals scheme and the amazing generosity of those families involved cannot be overstated.

“This gift will make such a difference to the work we do here at Prestwick offering families who have a child with cancer a brief respite break. Earlier in the year thieves stole lead from the roof over the playroom and it is only in the last few months that we have managed to get the surrounding area back to normal. This donation is very much appreciated by all the children, families, volunteers and staff at Malcolm Sargent House.”

Presenting the cheque, Provost Helen Moonie said: “I am very glad to present the sum of £8,000 to Malcolm Sargent House to help with the fantastic work they do for young people with cancer. Every day 10 families are told their child has cancer and the staff at Malcolm Sargent house offer those children and families a well earned break, helping them to come to terms with what is happening. In making the presentation, I am also mindful of those families and relatives whose kind-hearted generosity made this donation possible.”

On 4th October it was announced that the Council’s Bereavement Service had won the Gold Charter Mark recognising its delivery of extremely high and consistent levels of quality service. In addition to Masonhill Crematorium the Council is responsible for 51 cemeteries and churchyards, some are closed, for example the old churchyard at Kirkoswald (left), famous for its links with Rabbie Burns. Of the 27 operational sites some are seldom used and often in remote locations.

The news delighted Councillor John McDowall, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, who said the Council has worked hard to meet the ICCM’s stringent standards.

“In addition to expanding the range of choice and options available in grave type, cremation services and personalisation of memorials, we further enhanced the service already on offer by clearly setting out the rights of those who have been bereaved, as well as the standards of excellence they should expect to receive from us”, he explained.

“We’ve also worked hard, particularly with our local communities, to make sure we are totally focussed on our customers’ needs, offering a sensitive, dignified and respectful service, taking pride in an open, honest and transparent approach to people, mindful of equalities and diversity. I’d like to congratulate our Bereavement Service – and those employees within it – on offering a first class service, thoroughly deserving of this fantastic national Gold Charter Mark.”
The following day it was announced that the war memorial at Monkton village has been crowned a national winner in this year’s Best Kept War Memorial competition, run by the Royal British Legion (RBL) – with memorials at Troon and Ayr also picking up highly commended accolades. Monkton’s memorial was judged by the RBL as the best in Scotland in the ‘Small Community with Gardens’ category. Troon was highly commended in the ‘Memorial with Gardens’ category and Ayr picked up the same plaudit in the ‘Large Community with Garden’ category.

Councillor John McDowall said, “I’m thrilled South Ayrshire has been recognised for the quality and upkeep of their war memorials. To have two memorials highly commended is good, but to win the RBL’s national award for the memorial at Monkton really is the icing on the cake. War memorials are found in all communities in Scotland and are extremely important as reminders to commemorate the sacrifice of the First World War, but there are many others to wars before and since 1914–1918.

“Our grounds team has worked very hard to make sure the gardens, fabric and stonework on our memorials is in the best possible condition as a fitting tribute to those who went to fight for their country, but sadly never came home to their families and loved ones. Those efforts, in addition to the input and help from local RBL members and volunteers, have been rewarded with this important and fitting accolade and I’d like to congratulate all those who have played a part in this superb triple success.”

Not having been to High Wycombe before I wasn’t aware of the predominance of steep hills in the town. There was a steep hill outside the funeral director, a steep hill to the house and the cemetery is situated on a steep hillside with three internal roads at three very different levels.

As I entered the site I started to climb on road number 2. Halfway up the slope I saw the Rev. Simon Cronk in flowing robes standing on a level area near the summit of that road. As I approached I noticed that the bearers were congregated further up the hill, mid-way between road numbers 1 and 2. Whilst it would have been easier for me to off-load near the Reverend it would mean the bearers would have an horrendous task climbing up a steep staircase. At that point Derek Wingrove, Cemetery and Allotments Officer, approached and pointing towards the sky he said, ‘You need to be up there, I hope your wagon has got a good handbrake!’ Although knowing that I was making life difficult for myself it was the only solution. I put on the handbrake but I also left the old girl in first gear just in case.

The coffin was off-loaded despite the lorry being at a 45 degree angle, with two extra people on the deck to ensure that the coffin stayed on the dolly whilst it was being turned on the deck. It was then moved onto the shoulders of 4 men walking on level ground towards the grave.

When the interment was finished I shared a light hearted moment with the Rev. Simon Cronk. I related the events of the past 15 minutes to an event in the ‘good book’ when a man took an horrendous outcome on himself to make life better for others, and suggested that Simon put it in next week’s sermon. He smiled and said, ‘The Parable of the Lorry Driver, and so it came to pass in the hilly town of High Wycombe….’. I would like to thank Derek and his team for all the help I received on the day.

David Hall
Merton & Sutton Joint Cemetery extension

This cemetery is an independent 'authority' in its own right established under its own Act of Parliament; an Act to constitute a joint board comprising ten elected representatives of the London Boroughs of Merton and Sutton. The cemetery is managed on behalf of the Board by the London Borough of Merton.

The cemetery
The first burial was on 1 April, 1947 when the site was also known as Garth Road Cemetery and has various sections for the different religions; Church of England, Roman Catholic, Non conformist, Jewish, Muslim and Ahmadiyya Muslim. There is approximately a further 40 acres of land set aside for future development which is currently leased to a riding stable. In 2007 a lease had expired on a section of this land at the rear of the existing cemetery of approximately 6 acres.

Sections running out of graves
In 2007 the cemetery was nearing capacity for Muslim burials and with the growing Muslim population in the area a new section was required.

Slow worms and newts were found so, as there was the possibility of Great Crested Newts, the site had to be enclosed with a newt/slow worm fence and traps laid. The trapped newts and slow worms were then relocated to selected sites in the area.

Ground surveys were undertaken which included digging test holes. The results found various types of mixed waste. During the 1960's and 1970's the site was used to dispose of excess material that could not be burnt from a nearby council incinerator. The contract specified that the area where the mixed waste was found was to be dug to a depth of 3 metres to the virgin clay. The extracted soil was then to be "sieved" and the mixed wastes removed from site. The acceptable waste was to be mixed with a cement additive to "glue" the soil. This process would mean there would no need for a settlement period.

The management agent tendered the contract in April 2011 which was awarded to J Browne Construction who moved on site in September 2011.

The process
A management agent was assigned for the project to develop the site with a budget of £2 million and, with the input of the cemeteries team and the Facilities Management team, designed the extension.

An extended phase 1 habitat survey was identified and a number of ecological surveys had to be undertaken. These included a badger survey, reptile survey and Great Crested Newt survey. The Great Crested Newt presence/absence survey was undertaken in accordance with the best practice methodology, as defined by English Nature. Visits were timed to occur between mid-March and mid-June and included all ponds within 500 metres of the site boundary.

A special licence was required to bring the large machinery to the site via the M25 motorway and within a time slot. Ground works commenced at full speed. Items found included; tyres, car bonnets, lamp posts, shoes, numerous lumps of concrete, all types and shapes of metal and asbestos – this had to be hand picked when the earth was being "sieved". The sieved earth was then sorted into different grades which created various "hills" of earth across the site.

The contract specified that the waste was the responsibility of the contractor who would have to dispose of it off site and it soon became apparent that the amount of mixed waste exceeded the original estimation. The contractor provided estimates of £250,000 to take the waste away to specialised landfill sites.
Winter work 2012/2013
The new extension will be planted with native/natural hedging and a selection of trees.

To improve the “kerb” appeal of the cemetery entrance, the car park at the front of the cemetery is going to be turned into landscaped gardens with a curved drive to the main entrance gates.

Section B in the cemetery consists of 1,000 graves. The headstones are fixed to concrete bearer beams which are now breaking up and most of the headstones are leaning forwards. New beams are going to be installed, the project involves; taking off all the headstones, laying them face up on the graves, installing new beams and then refixing the headstone to the new beams.

All parties agreed to keep the waste on site and rebury it. To achieve this, a special licence was required from the Environment Agency which came with restrictions; the waste could not be buried in virgin land.

At the top of the site a large burial section was planned. It was agreed that this area should be used to bury the waste and then capped with top soil; however it couldn’t then be used for burials so one half of the area was to be capped with three foot of top soil to allow for a new cremation remains section. The other half was to be capped at one foot which would allow the cemetery to eventually use it as a memorial garden.

The extension will provide burial space for approximately 20-30 years by which time other local cemeteries will be running out of new burial space. When this new extension is nearing capacity other sections will be developed from the 40 acres of spare land.

Future development
We are also planning to extend our London Road Cemetery in Mitcham into an unused adjoining allotment. The current cemetery has approximately six years of new burial space left. Before any work could start an ecological survey for slow worms and newts had to be undertaken. We are still at the early stages, the design has been completed and the cemetery staff have started clearing the site. It is hoped that this extension will be completed next year providing approximately 20 years of new graves.

Mark Robinson, Cemeteries Manager & Registrar
GreenAcres Woodland Burials is celebrating all three of its burial parks being presented with a Green Flag Award – the national award for public and community parks and green spaces.

GreenAcres Woodland Burials operates three parks at Chiltern in Buckinghamshire, Colney in Norfolk and Epping Forest in Essex, each of which has received the award on its own merit. The GreenAcres Group also has plans to create a nationwide network of 20 woodland cemeteries by 2020.

The Green Flag Award scheme was launched to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country. Awards are given based on criteria such as how welcoming a park is, whether it is clean and maintained, safe and secure, its involvement with the community and managing the sustainability of the park.

Nicky Whichelow, Group Marketing and Sales Manager at GreenAcres, said: “This is a fantastic achievement for GreenAcres Woodland Burials. Receiving recognition across all three of our woodland burial parks shows that our employees across the business all share the same great work ethos and commitment to making the parks a very special place for people to say goodbye, or to come to reflect and relax.”

Paul Todd, Green Flag Award Scheme Manager, said: “We are thrilled to announce yet another record-breaking year for Green Flag Award parks and green spaces. A Green Flag Award provides national recognition for the achievements of all those whose hard work and dedication has helped to create these fantastic places for all to enjoy.”

GreenAcres Woodland Burials is a five-times winner in the Cemetery of the Year Awards and also holds Green Apple, Investors in People and Green Hero accreditation. Open 365 days a year, GreenAcres have helped many families to say goodbye to loved ones in the beautiful and tranquil surroundings of an English woodland.

For more information about GreenAcres visit: www.greenacreswoodlandburials.co.uk
Picture below at the award winning Sedgefield Park are some of the staff responsible for a goodly haul of Green Flags presented to Durham County Council and to both the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee and Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee – a total of 15 Flags.

Durham Crematorium won a Green Flag for the second year and Mountsett Crematorium was awarded a Green Flag for the first time. There was success in several cemeteries too; Castleside Cemetery and Moorside Cemetery in Consett, Ropery Lane Cemetery, Chester le Street, Sacriston Cemetery and South Road Cemetery in Durham.

It’s the first time Stafford Borough Council Bereavement Service has entered this prestigious competition and staff are rightly proud of their achievements at their first attempt.

The award recognises the needs of the community and their involvement with such a valuable asset as the Stafford Crematorium; this includes the regular Open Days and links with the staff and pupils of the local Weston Road Academy. It also highlights the additional redevelopment work undertaken such as the Bereavement Administration Centre and the teashop/flower shop, Hearts & Flowers.

Chief Executive of the borough council, Ian Thompson, said: “Many many residents and visitors come through the doors of our crematorium to say goodbye and pay their respects to loved ones and we want to ensure that everything within our grounds is right for them in what is often a very difficult time. So it is really pleasing to know that an independent, national organisation have told us the way we keep our premises is of such a high standard that it can be awarded a Green Flag. It is also great recognition for all the hard work our staff do in keeping our bereavement services at the very highest level.”

This accolade follows the success of constantly achieving high classification in the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved rankings.
metal recycling scheme helps more local charities

Started in 2003 the ICCM metal recycling scheme has so far raised over three quarters of a million pounds for charity. The latest nationwide collection, helped by rising prices for metal and more refined sorting techniques, made a staggering £204,000. Fifty-one charities each received cheques for £4,000 – some are pictured here.

"Peterborough Crematorium staff have always been supportive of us as an organisation by offering training and ‘behind the scenes’ education to enhance the volunteer’s work with their clients. This latest donation is extremely generous."

"Thank you for coming along with Denise Grant and presenting us with a cheque for £4,000 for the Hospice. We greatly appreciate your continued support from South West Middlesex Crematorium Board and this will help us to make a difference and support patients and families facing end of life care. Many thanks again to the ICCM for organising this very invaluable scheme."

"We strive to prevent metals that are left following a cremation from being unnecessarily buried and posing a threat to the environment. I am certain that bereaved families would be reassured to know that this money is supporting such an important and worthwhile cause that brings comfort and support to so many people in the last months of their lives."

"We are delighted that the ICCM’s metal recycling is helping more local charities. It is reassuring to know that organisations such as ours benefit from the generosity of others."

Pictured left: Alun Davies - Chief Executive St David’s Hospice, Lyn Davies - Street Scene Manager Conwy County Borough Council, Gary Evans - Assistant Manager Colwyn Bay Crematorium, Andy Barlow - Crematorium Technician & Cllr Linda Groom.

Pictured right: Chairman South West Middlesex Crematorium Board - Councillor Denise Grant, Karen Whitehorn - Major Gifts Manager Princess Alice Hospice & Teresa Kearney – Superintendent and Registrar.
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Left: Councillor Mike Smith, pictured right presents a cheque to Anthony Tagent, Honorary Treasurer of Cruse Bereavement Care, Buckinghamshire.

"Those families who have elected to participate in the ICCM recycling scheme can be confident that their support in memory of loved ones is being put to good use for the care of others through Cruse. This makes a massive difference to the charity and the people that use us."

Right: Sian Hooper - Bereavement Services Manager (left) Bridgend County Borough Council, Mr Clive Owen - Regional Chairperson, Cruse Bereavement Care (Morgannwg), Cllr Ella Dodd - Chairperson Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee & Joanna Hamilton - Crematorium Manager and Registrar, Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee.

Left: Marian Curran, Deputy Superintendent and Registrar Mortlake Crematorium, passes the cheque to Fund Raising Manager Simon Pedro who collected it on behalf of the Macmillan South-West London branch.

Below right: Kenneth Taylor, Councillor John Marr, Samantha Taylor & Alan José - Superintendent and Registrar. Samantha receives the cheque on behalf of The If U Care Share Foundation and thanked the ICCM for this generous contribution "which will greatly assist the work of this fairly new charity based in County Durham which offers support and assistance to those bereaved by suicide."

Left: Ruth Harries, Cruse, receives a cheque the from Pembrokeshire County Councillor Ken Rowlands - Cabinet Member for Environmental and Regulatory Services. With them is Crematorium Technician Edwards Taylor (left) and James Allen, Parc Gwyn Superintendent and Registrar. *

"This local branch of a national charity has been boosted thanks to this substantial donation. As with all branches of Cruse, we have to be totally self-sufficient and raise all of our own funding. Your very kind support will help us to continue to offer a service to the bereaved in communities throughout the county."
Dignity Pet Crematorium in Hampshire has become the first pet crematorium in the world to recycle orthopaedic implants from pets to help raise funds for charity.

The scheme was originally set up by the ICCM in the UK to collect and recycle metals left after people had been cremated. Dignity Pet Crematorium have contracted the company OrthoMetals to service their site. Partner Kevin Spurgeon said, “I am so proud that we are the first pet crematorium in the world to enrol in this very worthwhile scheme. It seems crazy that some human crematoriums still dispose of these valuable metals when they can be recycled to benefit charities. So far we have had a very positive reaction from clients, who are pleased that their pet’s implant can benefit others.”

In the past decade veterinary medicine has improved dramatically and surgical procedures have also become more complex. This has led to a large increase in the number of animals that have received orthopaedic implants making the scheme far more relevant for pet crematoria.

The scheme is simple. After individual cremation orthopaedic and other metals that are found in the chamber are separated from the cremated remains and the owners are offered the choice of either having the metals recycled through the scheme or, if they prefer, having them returned along with their pet’s ashes. Periodically, all the metal that is recovered is collected and taken for recycling.

Kevin explains “We have recovered metals like ball & socket joints and pins, plates and screws used by vets to help repair broken bones on all shapes and sizes of pets”.

One of the key principals of the OrthoMetals scheme is to return a substantial part of the profit to charity. Dignity nominated several small pet charities and Home & Abroad Animal Welfare and Friends of the Strays of Greece were chosen by OrthoMetals as the first to benefit from the scheme.

The pet crematorium has chosen to double the amount donated by OrthoMetals meaning that £155.58 will now be split between the two charities. Kevin said, “I am delighted at their choice as we re-homed a Greek dog named Brax from Strays of Greece last year. He is a lovely dog and very much one of the family. Both charities are small but work tirelessly, save countless lives and make a huge difference to the animals with very little money.”
the winter plantsman

Bob Langford visually delighted and informed us with his recent series of articles entitled ‘Four Seasons’. He continues to give us the benefit of his horticultural knowledge in this, the first, of his Q & A columns.

How do I get rid of moss from the lawns?

Although we are in the depths of our winter you need to start as soon as the weather improves. The ideal conditions for moss to flourish are shade, damp, acidic soil and poor drainage. The conditions that deter lawns from being their best are, you’ve guessed, shade, damp, acidic soil and poor drainage.

Shade is difficult as you may not be able to remove whatever is causing the shade, you can however incorporate a grass seed mix formulated to grow in shade. You can also extend borders to include shady areas of the lawn.

Damp ground and poor drainage prevents grass roots from getting the valuable oxygen that is required for healthy growth. Grass roots that are continually waterlogged will rot away causing the grass plant to die. The use of a hollow tine in spring or autumn will assist where ground is wet, compacted and where drastic drainage works are not required. The Hollow Tine removes a core of soil – the small hole that is made can be left open or dressed with course sand.

Grass struggles in acidic soil and this can be easily addressed by a simple soil test. The majority of soil testing kits are very simple and rely on colour rather than a numerical scale. So check the pH of your soil using a kit available at garden centres. The solution turns yellow-orange for acid soil, green for neutral and dark green for alkaline. If your soil is indeed acidic then adjustment can be made by applying a dressing of Garden Lime (calcium carbonate), also available as calcified seaweed and ground chalk.

Use a proprietary spring or summer lawn fertiliser at the manufacturer’s recommended rates in mid-spring (late March to April). Feeding the lawn will increase vigour and help prevent moss and weeds from establishing. Apply fertilisers when the soil is moist, or when rain is expected.

The NPK rating used to label fertiliser is based on the relative content of the commonly used chemical elements nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). These three elements promote plant growth in three different ways. In simple terms, these are:

- N – nitrogen: promotes the growth of leaves and vegetation
- P – phosphorus: promotes root and shoot growth
- K – potassium: promotes flowering, fruiting and general hardiness

Hence a spring/summer feed for grass would have a rating ratio something like 20 (N):10 (P): 10 (K) and an autumn feed would be something like 4:12:12.

Horsetail – HELP!

Paul from London has asked about how to deal with an infestation of horsetail (Equisetum arvense).

The creeping rhizomes of this pernicious plant may go down as deep as 2m (7ft) below the surface, making them hard to remove by digging out, especially if they invade a border.

They often enter gardens by spreading underground from neighbouring properties or land.
Non-chemical controls:
Removing horsetail by hand is difficult. Although rhizomes growing near the surface can be forked out, deeper roots will require a lot of excavation. Shallow, occasional weeding is not effective and can make the problem worse, as the plant can re-grow from any small pieces left behind. However, removing shoots as soon as they appear above the ground can reduce infestation if carried out over a number of years. If horsetail appears in your lawn, it can be kept in check by mowing regularly.

Chemical controls:
On vacant soil, where there are no herbaceous perennials, bulbs or crops, you can use long lasting ‘Ground Clear’ containing glyphosate / flufenacet / metosulam killing off existing growth and to inhibit new shoots.

But I imagine Paul will want to continue to grow things in the same area so the aforementioned will not apply. He can, however, apply a weedkiller containing just glyphosate – e.g. ‘Roundup’, ‘Tumbleweed’ – which can be applied from spring to late summer when growth is strong. A useful trick before using, is to bruise the shoots with a rake to ensure effective penetration.

Lastly, a plea from me; do help birds during the winter months by feeding them, food is often scarce or frozen. A garden is often improved with the sound and sight of birds, they help you the rest of the year in eradicating many pests. A vast array of foods and feeders is available from your local garden centre. You’d be surprise at the variety of birds you can entice into your garden and even more so into your cemeteries or crematoria gardens;

• Don’t put out salty foods. Birds can’t digest salt and it will damage their nervous systems.
• Only leave enough that can be eaten in one day – otherwise you may attract unwanted visitors, such as mice and rats.
• Follow sensible hygiene measures, including washing hands thoroughly after filling and washing feeders.

If you have a question for Bob Langford email rncoates@aol.com. You won’t have to wait three months until the next issue for a response but in order to inform and advise others your question and the answer may be reproduced in a future edition.

ICCM Photographic Competition
Would you like to see an image taken by you on the cover of The Journal?

After the success of last year’s competition, as reported in the Autumn 2012 issue, we now launch the 2013 competition. The photograph must be taken in cemeteries, crematoria or churchyards. The Board of Directors will choose a winning entry and the winner will receive a £50 gift voucher and have their image published on the front cover of an issue of The Journal, seen by over one thousand subscribers.

To enter email ONE unique, generic photograph – which does not identify individuals – to the editor at rncoates@aol.com in high resolution jpeg format DURING THE MONTHS OF MAY AND JUNE 2013.
(Colour images will be converted to black and white for judging.)

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hawks fly in to solve crematorium's problem

Mourners were being constantly disturbed by noisy, swooping seagulls when they attended Eastbourne Crematorium but now the flock has been brought under control using hawks.

Around eight breeding pairs of seagulls had made their home at the crematorium. The birds usually nest between March and September and get particularly aggressive during this period. Eastbourne Borough Council contacted an environmental services company to help resolve the problem.

Cllr Margaret Bannister, portfolio holder for bereavement services, said: “Staff at the crematorium were becoming aware of the problems that the seagulls were causing to people attending services or visiting the grounds.

“It was felt that we had to call in bird control experts as the last thing crematorium visitors want is to have to worry about being attacked by seagulls. The hawk solution has proved very effective, with the benefit that it does not harm the gulls. We believe that by calling in professional experts we have helped to alleviate the problem.”

The hawks are specially trained to scatter and scare the gulls away without harming them.

Paul Bates, Managing Director of Cleankill Environmental Services, explained: “The crematorium complex has a flat roof which provides an ideal nesting site. We decided it would be best to try to reduce the population over a period of time and start a programme of removing nests and the eggs. Alongside this work, we bring in our hawks once a week early on a Thursday morning before the funerals start. The hawks fly at the seagulls and scatter them which makes them uncomfortable. Eventually they decide to find another nesting site.”

In his own words – John Gilbert Shelton

Just to say how much I enjoyed this article in the last issue. I was immediately transported back to Wolverhampton in 1973, and Ray Stew. He fitted Sheltons and was a big pal of John’s. Heavy drinking was typical then and nobody dared accept a lift in Ray Stew’s Jaguar after lunch. Ray was also a big pal of the man who started the Cliffex grave shoring cages. Ray had bought loads of them before I got there so we had no choice but to use them. They were really heavy and pretty useless. Ray went to work as a salesman for Sheltons after he retired in 1973.

It’s sad that we all had to be in a specific cremator camp. I was trained at Shrewsbury and Len Clarke was a Leonard Leslie fan and so Dowson and Mason could not be faulted. Mr. Leslie, as we had to call him, never asked us, as operators, what we thought of his reflux twins, and he simply ignored us on every visit. I always remember watching him light the cremator one day. The torch was lit and extended about 10’ into the cremator, where it waved about near the gas jets at the crown arch. The proper technique was always to keep the eyes on the torch and operate the gas cocks blindly using the left hand.

If Leonard had created those operating instructions then he had forgotten them! I saw his eyes looking outside at the cocks as he turned them full on, the torch was inside the chamber but nowhere near the jets. An interminable time elapsed before the gas exploded! Leonard turned around to sheepishly look at us, aware that it had been a pathetic ignition. He was completely unaware that he had singed both eyebrows and his face was blackened all over. We two operators had to vacate the room because we could not stop laughing.

Ken West, MBE
ICCM board of directors

President
Natasha Bradshaw, AICCM, Mortlake Crematorium Board
Tel: 0208 392 6984, Mob: 07889 223 505, Email: natasha@mortlakecrematorium.org

Deputy President
Roddy McGinley, AICCM, Dacorum Borough Council
Tel: 01442 288 986, Mob: 07770 832 327, Email: Roddrum@live.co.uk

Immediate Past President
Anthony Devonport, FICCM (Dip), Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Tel: 01226 206 053, Mob: 07504 492 036, Email: anthonydevonport@barnsley.gov.uk

Chairman
Martin Birch, FICCM (Dip), Cardiff County Council, Tel: 029 2062 3294
Fax: 029 2069 2904, Mob: 07976 011 848, Email: Mbirch@cardiff.gov.uk

Vice Chairman
Cllr. Alan Till, London Borough of Lewisham, Tel: 020 8699 9878
Fax: 0208 699 2182, Mob: 07930 921 934, Email: Cllr_Alan.till@lewisham.gov.uk

Bill Stanley, FICCM, South Lanarkshire Council, Tel: 01698 717818
Fax: 01698 717 821, Email: william.stanley@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Alan Copeland, FICCM, Email: alan.copeland@tiscali.co.uk

John O’Callaghan FICCM (Dip), South West Cemetery Services
Tel: 01392 421 433, Mob: 07528 726 605, Email: joconsult@hotmail.co.uk

ICCM officers

Chief Executive
Tim Morris, FICCM (Dip), FSBP, ICCM National Office & Jill Rodacan Training Centre,
City of London Cemetery, Aldersbrook Road, Manor Park, London, E12 5DQ.
Tel: 078111 69600, Fax: 0208 989 6112, Email: timiccm@btinternet.com

Technical Services & Guidance Manager
David McCarthy, FICCM (Dip) (Hons), Mob: 07920 131 478
Email: davidiccm@btinternet.com

Technical Services & Events Manager
Julie Dunk, FICCM (Dip), Mob: 07976 939 585
Email: julied.iccm@yahoo.co.uk

COTS Manager
Quentin Bowser, AICCM, Tel: 07748 840 799, Email: quentiniccm@btinternet.com

COTS Instructor
Martin Clark, AICCM, Tel: 07940 032 035

Finance & IT Manager
Trevor Robson, Bsc (Hons) BSIT, AICCM, MAAT Tel: 0191 488 2699
Fax: 0191 488 6216, Email: trevor.robson@iccm-uk.com

Administration Officer
Julie Callender, AICCM, ICCM National Office & Jill Rodacan Training Centre,
City of London Cemetery, Aldersbrook Road, Manor Park, London, E12 5DQ.
Tel: 020 8989 4661, Fax: 020 8989 6112, Email: julie@iccm.fsnet.co.uk

Journal Editor
Bob Coates, FICCM (Dip), Croft Down, West Grimstead, Wiltshire, SP5 3RF
Tel: 01722 710 801, Mob: 07973 963 706, Email: rncoates@aol.com
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- Discharge monitoring
- Automatic plc controls