INSTITUTE OF CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM MANAGEMENT

Minutes of the South Wales and South Western Branch meeting held at The Memorial Woodlands, Earthcott Green, Aleston, Bristol, BS35 3TA on Tuesday 20th February 2008

1. Present:

David McCarthy, President ICCM
Peter Linsell, Technical Services Manager, ICCM
Ron Dunn, Director of Training, ICCM
Joanna Hamilton; Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee
Tracey Weaver; Barnstaple Town Council
Geraint Rees; Cardiff City Council
Vivien Curtis; City of Bristol
Andrew Rowlands; Barry Town Council
Councillor N C Hodges; Barry Town Council
John Gibbon; Herefordshire County Council
Lyndon Elsey; Swansea City Council
Noel Evans; Swansea City Council
Lorraine Horton; Bath and North East Somerset Council
Tracey Mock; Bath and North East Somerset Council
Mike Headington; Caerphilly County Borough Council
Robert Napper; Caerphilly County Borough Council
Kelly James; North Devon District Council
George Lovering; North Devon District Council
John O’Callaghan; Exeter City Council
Ian Quance; Exeter City Council

2. Welcome:

John O’Callaghan, Bereavement Services Manager, Exeter City Council opened the meeting and welcomed members and guests to the Memorial Woodlands.

3. Apologies for absence

Clare Docherty; Llwydcoed Crematorium
David Edwards; Totnes Town Council
Graham Bailey; North Devon Crematorium
Clive Lewis; Llwydcoed Crematorium
Julie Dunk; Bournemouth Borough Council

4. New Members

None were in attendance, all will be reported at the next meeting.

5. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held at the School of Anatomy, Cardiff on 13th March 2007 were read and agreed.
6. Presidential Address

David McCarthy gave the following address as President of the ICCM:

Presidential Address

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

I am delighted to be here with you today at the **South Wales & Western Branch** meeting. I had the pleasure of visiting you several years ago while I was Chairman; that was when Johanna Hamilton successfully reintroduced your Branch meetings. That meeting was, if I remember correctly held at Coychurch. You certainly have some wonderful places to hold your Branch meetings, somewhat different to the London locations that I am more used to. It is also nice to be here today when Johanna hands over the reigns to a new Branch Secretary, Ian Quance who I have known for many years now, and who I am sure will make an excellent Branch Secretary for you, though you have a hard act to follow Ian.

It is with a degree of both pride and sadness that I address you today at your Branch Meeting. Pride because I have been elected to represent you as President of the Institute and after my many years of working for the good of the membership in my roles as member, Branch Secretary, Director and Chairman I can assure you that I was very proud the day that the election results were counted and I was duly elected to the position of Deputy President.

I said I have a degree of sadness also and that sadness is that I am unable to complete my full year as your President. Towards the end of last year I took a step that in reality I never thought I would take and applied for one of the new positions with the Institute as Technical Services Manager. I had thought about working for the Institute in the past, but was firmly entrenched at the City of London Cemetery & Crematorium. However, circumstances this time seemed right and I duly made application for one of the new posts being advertised.

I had hoped that I would be able to continue in the elected position of President of the Institute for the remainder for my term of office, though not attending Board meetings as this could prove to be too much of a conflict of interest. Regrettably this proved not to be an option and it was a condition of employment that I step down for the remainder of my Presidency.

Looking at this situation on a long term basis I had to consider whether the remaining months of my Presidency outweighed the years of service that I can offer the Institute and you the members. Looked at from this point of view there really was only one choice that I could possibly make. I will however be continuing my Presidential duties up until 31st March after which I will become an Officer of the Institute and Martin Birch in his position of Deputy President will stand in for me at remaining official functions.

**Branches**
I stated at the beginning of my year as President that my theme for the year would be the Branches and this is something that is very dear to me as I started off my own association with the Institute as a Branch Secretary.

We have a number of very successful Branches in the Institute, though some need help and assistance to offer a good service to their members. To discuss the subject of Branches and to find out what we can do to assist what is the lifeblood of the Institute I have invited all Branch Secretaries to a meeting in May to discuss issues and to find ways of assisting the Branches and the hard working Branch Secretaries. Though I will not be able to pursue this initiative much longer as President I will still be involved with it on an Officer basis. I have spoken to Martin Birch and he will take onboard this initiative and continue it during his year of President as from September 2008.

An interesting and significant new Branch will be starting up this year in the Republic of Ireland. I have been speaking to friends and colleagues from Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin and they are going to join the Institute and start a Branch over there – our first Branch outside of the United Kingdom. That has a nice international ring to it I’m sure you will agree! With my own Irish ancestry I am very pleased to have been involved in the formation of this new Branch.

Our history

The Institute is now in its 95th year and it is fair to say that it has changed a great deal since its inaugural meeting way back in 1913 when a group of cemetery managers got together and formed what they called the United Kingdom Association of Cemetery Superintendents with the primary objectives stated as:-

“to promote knowledge of work appertaining to the management of cemeteries – to provide facilities, and foster exchange of ideas and thoughts amongst its members, and further to safeguard, maintain and improve the status and promote advancement of the Cemetery Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Curator, Registrar, Secretary and Manager of any Burial Authority”.

Many of these statements are as true today as they were back in 1913.

Over the years the United Kingdom Association of Cemetery Superintendents changed its name to reflect changing aspects of our profession and of course nowadays we are known as the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management with a remit that includes a Corporate arm. That is quite a change in itself!

The Institute has always moved with the times, which is essential for any organisation if it intends to stay at the forefront of the profession. It MUST move with the changing times and that is what the Institute has done, be it a name change to reflect a changing world and changing profession, the introduction of a Corporate arm, or with the employment of additional staff to supply the best service possible for the membership.

Our Officers under the guidance of the Board of Directors are dedicated to taking the Institute forwards for the benefit not only of the professional members but also our
Corporate members – with everyone involved working towards providing the best service possible for the most important people – the bereaved.

**Working with other organisations**

One of my sadness’s during my time on the Board of Directors is that we haven’t been able to get agreement for “One Organisation”, even though this is something the membership clearly wants. Sadly the meeting we asked for with the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities didn’t bring us any closer to working together.

However, we haven’t given up hope and we continue to hold out the welcoming hand to Organisations that would be interested in joining with us to supply that important ‘One Voice’ for the Industry. Our current Chairman, Ian Hussein is really pushing to work with other Organisations and he, the Board of Directors and our Officers are working hard to make it happen.

If it doesn’t happen, then it will not be for want of trying.

**Conference**

The same goes for our annual Conference. We came away from the old Joint Conference structure because it had become a stale and stifling format and we wanted to move forwards and have a worthwhile learning experience, which we now feel that we have. Our Conference gets bigger and better with each new year, with grateful thanks to the hardworking team of Julie Dunk and Blue.

Speaking of Conference, this year our Conference will be held slightly earlier than usual and will take place on 29th September to 1st October and will be in Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth, Warwickshire. Harrogate has served us well with two years at the Harrogate Motehouse Hotel and a further two at the Cairns Hotel. We were however in need of a change of venue and this was reflected in feedback that we received from our members and the exhibitors.

I made it known to our Conference Organisers that as President I wanted to see Conference down South in my Presidential year. As I am having to stand down as President half way through my term of office I somehow think Julie Dunk may have taken things just a little bit too literally – and only moved the Conference half way down the Country! I must have words with her about that!

Conference 2008 is shaping up to be the biggest yet and it is hoped that there will be input from other Organisations giving the whole event a broader scope than ever before. Considering the short time scale before this year’s Conference it is hardly surprising that many Organisations had already made plans and simply couldn’t join us, but we have received notice of interest from a number of the Organisations that we have approached, so it bodes well for next year. Proof if any were needed that your Institute is eager and willing to work with other Organisations.

**The Institute, an expanding resource**
The Institute must have suitable staff available to provide a top service to the membership and in my time on the Board of Directors we have taken on new staff as the Institute continued to grow in size and more demands were put upon it.

It was in 2001 when we took on our first full time Officer, Tim Morris and then another year before it was considered necessary to take on a second Officer, Ron Dunn. Both of those appointments were before my time on the Board but I was very much a part of the Board of Directors in late 2002 and therefore part of the decision to take on first Julie Callender to work in the National Office, and then a short time later Peter Linsell as Technical Services Manager to work alongside Tim and Ron.

For those of you that haven’t heard yet, Peter Linsell has made the decision to leave the Institute as from the end of March when he will be taking the bold step of going out on his own. This decision to leave the Institute was very amicable and I would like to take this opportunity to wish Peter on behalf of the Institute, and also as a friend and colleague over the years, every luck for the future.

The Board of Directors with an eye to building up reserves has always acted cautiously in the past with regards to taking on new staff. Can we take the risk – will there be enough work to justify another Officer – what if? And yet every time we have employed someone new the work has been such that their time was immediately taken up and we were back to square one.

Last October the Board looked carefully at the money we had in our reserve funds and decided that the time was right to expand and take on more staff, as the Officers were working to full capacity.

So with the need for new Officers obvious, it was decided to take the bull by the horns and fully address the situation, not just cautiously take on one new person to help ease the pressure. We had enough money not only to take on new staff but also to ensure that we had adequate time to build up additional consultancy and training that is the work of the Institute and to bring in additional revenue.

An opportunity presented itself for us to take on as permanent members of staff Quentin Bowser and Martin Clark from the Berkshire College. This was an opportunity that we really couldn’t pass up, and so we took both of these guys on as fulltime members of staff. Quentin and Martin hardly had time to catch their breaths before we had them out on the road delivering COTS courses round the country. Now that we are able to offer this training with two dedicated experts delivering the course I understand that they are fully booked up for the next six months.

We are proud that our COTS Excavator Operators Course has been accredited to National Proficiency Test Council standards (NPTC), and we are working towards and looking forward to obtaining this accreditation for all of our COTS Courses.

Training to a nationally recognised standard is plainly what is wanted by our membership – both Corporate and Professional.

So that was our first two new members of staff, but what about education, conference, seminars, training, consultancy etc, this was still the areas of work being done totally
by Tim, Ron and Peter with Julie Dunk on a part time basis organising our Conference for us. Another big swallow and the Board took the decision to engage three new Technical Services Managers.

Five new members of staff taken on within 6 months – unheard of for the Institute – but very, VERY necessary.

With the new staff the Institute will now be in an even stronger position to deliver consultancy and training – not only to deliver, but to develop new training as and when required. No doubt you will hear a lot more about this during the course of the coming months.

So who are the new Officers swelling the ranks of the Institute staff? Well I have already told you that I am one of them – the other two are Angela Dunn, Julie Dunk.

Every profession has its share of cynics and we are no exception, and there are some who will possibly criticise the employment of three people that are all well known, have all served on the Board of Directors and are also all Past President’s of the Institute. But is that really so surprising?

All three have worked for years for the Institute in various capacities. All have given up time and energy for the good of the Institute over those years, which is probably why we were all voted by you the members to the highest honour the Institute can bestow, that of being elected as your President. It is just a coincidence that we all made the separate decision this year to go that one step further and put ourselves forward to work full time for the Institute i.e. YOU.

As you are all aware, the profession is constantly changing, unlike it was back in the days when the fledgling Institute was first formed. At that time the most important change that had taken place just a few short years earlier was the introduction of laws that allowed for cremations to take place. Clearly cremation was not looked on with such a degree of importance at the time the Institute was first formed and no mention of cremation was put into the original title – cremation still had a long way to go before it would draw level with burials, let alone surpass them.

Nowadays we are confronted with constant change, the laws of cremation are changing, mercury abatement is upon us, cremation itself may well change as new ways of disposing of the dead are investigated – the latest being water resomation, and even good old burials are now facing major change with the law to allow for full grave reuse having been passed after many years of lobbying. Many, many years behind the continent on this of course, but we are finally catching up.

Your Institute is at the forefront when it comes to changes and that is where we intend to stay, working for the good of our membership and the profession.

Bereavement Services Portal

For those of you that use the Internet, you will hopefully have noticed that the Institute now owns the Bereavement Services Portal. The Portal started life as an online facility that expanded on the CBA Directory of Cemeteries and Crematoria in
the UK – since then it developed a life of its own. We thought it about time to bring it back under the Institute banner and started negotiations to do just that last October. The Portal now has our banner and will continue to grow to supply a facility not only for professionals and organisations working in bereavement care, but also a facility for the general public to make use of.

**The Institute – working for its members**

To sum up, the ICCM continues to work towards the highest possible standards for its members:

Our Diploma course is accredited to BTEC HNC standard - Our COTS Excavator Operators course now has National Proficiency Test Council (NPTC) accreditation, with NPTC accreditation being sought for ALL COTS courses. On site training is also available in all aspects of the burial process, grounds maintenance and memorial inspections – and our CTTS course is also BTEC accredited.

**John O’Callaghan**

Just before I close, there is one rather special person that I would like to mention before I finish and that is John O’Callaghan. I understand that this will be John’s last meeting and although he has stated that he doesn’t want any fuss made it would be wrong not to say something about him today. John has been very much involved with the ICCM for many years now and I have had the pleasure of serving with him on the Board of Directors. I am sure that his colleagues will be saying their own goodbyes to John – but I would just like to add my own thanks to him for being such a good supporter of the ICCM and also from a personal point of view a good and supportive colleague.

**Close**

I have enjoyed my time as your President albeit for a shorter time than I would have liked, however I intend going out in style and getting to as many of the Branches as possible to meet the membership. I have two more Branch meetings to attend before the end of March, the SAIF AGM and Banquet and lastly the Educational Seminar at Cranfield.

I now look forward to an even greater involvement with the Institute as Technical Services Manager which I am sure will bring me into contact with many of you.

**7. ICCM Update, Ron Dunn, ICCM Director of Training and Development**

Ron described the roles of new personnel at the ICCM; Quentin Bowser and Martin Clark have transferred from Berkshire College to the ICCM and will continue to provide and develop the COTS courses. Angela Dunn will run a northern office, handling administrative matters and providing a helpline service. Julie Dunk and David McCarthy will provide training and consultancy.

Existing and new staff will continue to expand the range of guidance and advice available, in particular the Cemetery Manager’s handbook; the Parish and Town
Clerk’s handbook; the guide to the law and the Crematorium Manager’s handbook, all of which are in production.

BRAMM have organised a seminar in the south west in April, for stonemasons and local authorities.

The ICCM is pursuing MPTC certification for training.

More authorities’ BVAP returns will be validated.

NAFD and SAIF have agreed to work with the ICCM in the long term aim of pulling all industry bodies together.

A change in the structure of Corporate Membership of the ICCM means that each authority will have two ‘free’ professional memberships.

8. Branch Secretary

JOC thanked Joanna for her sterling work as branch secretary; no other nominations being forthcoming, Ian Quance was declared Joanna’s successor.

9. Any other business

   a. The ICCM board meeting held on February 19\textsuperscript{th} reserved a place on the Member Review Panel for a delegate from the branch. Noel Evans was proposed by Joanna Hamilton and seconded by Ian Quance and duly delegated to represent the branch on the committee.

   b. Ian Quance explained that he would like the theme of his secretaryship (?) to be that of outreach to colleagues working for small authorities. He asked for volunteers from each county to act as a focus for that area. Ron Dunn offered the help and support of the ICCM for this initiative.

10. Closing remarks

JOC closed the meeting with thanks to Chris and Wayne from the Memorial Woodlands for a memorable day at their exceptional site.