

2013

Spring issue:

Article of the Year 2012

Dealing with Challenging Funerals

Holding Coffins Over – energy savings

Children's Memorial Garden – now a reality

Pulpit; it's good to talk

Portal almost 10 years old

New Facilities for Cheshire West and Chester

Replacing, Abating and Refurbishing at Ipswich

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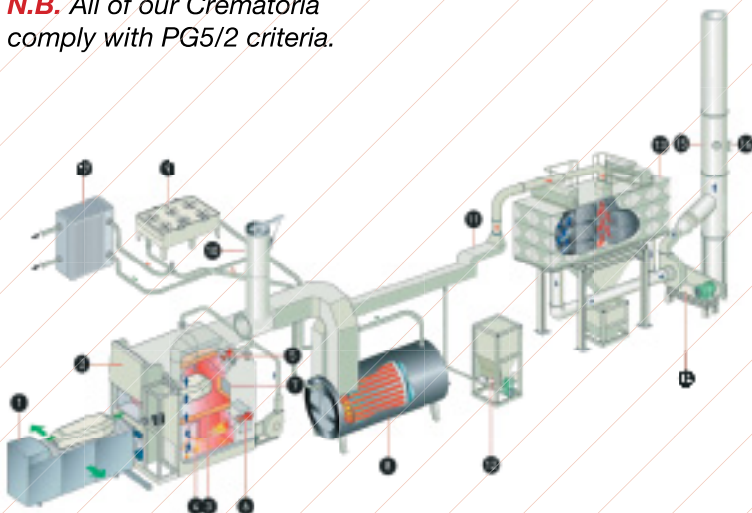
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2013

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editorial

'Death', whilst it might not faze us, is often still referred to as society's last taboo. But with a plethora of events and publications emerging on the subject, most with the benefit of a slick website (indeed a recent edition of our very own *Journal* has now been uploaded for the world to see) this may not be the case for much longer.

For those preferring the written word, *Eulogy* was trumpeted on its launch in July 2010 as 'the world's first magazine to celebrate life and death' but seems to have been short-lived. We now have *Farewell*, profiled in this issue, a quarterly magazine which can be found at the newsagent; this must be a first for the topic to be aired so freely amongst mainstream titles. But when you read that it is the brainchild of someone previously involved in the wedding industry it is an obvious side-step.

Online, and scheduled to be published only twice a year, is *More to Death* courtesy of the Natural Death Centre. Also under their auspices is *Funeral Advisor*, a website designed to 'share and find out about people's experiences of different funeral directors' and the fifth edition of *The Natural Death Handbook*, which is reviewed in this issue.

The Good Funeral Guide is both a book and an online Company whose articles of association include these pledges; 'to maintain a website on which it will make information and ideas available to the dying and the bereaved so that they are better able to make informed choices of merchandise and services and publish a blog which i) debates topical and enduring issues around end-of-life matters and funerals, ii) comments on and contributes to the evolution of secular funeral ceremonies and iii) monitors and comments on the funeral industry'.

We also have *Bereavement Today*, 'the essential magazine and website which has been created to assist, advise and guide those of you left behind, to make better and more informed choices on the many decisions, formalities and arrangements that have to be made. At this most difficult of times Bereavement Today is here to provide you with expert knowledge on every aspect of bereavement; from attaining and completing all the necessary [sic] forms and certificates, arranging a funeral that best suits you and your family, assistance with eulogies, readings and music, the latest products and services, legal and financial matters (probate property and possessions, taxation, estate authority, intestacy, welfare benefits). We also offer expert advice and guidance on how best to cope with your grief at this difficult time'.

Since 2009 the *Dying Matters Coalition*, an organisation set up by the National Council for Palliative Care, has

distributed leaflets, posters and newsletters to those committed to supporting changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviours around death and dying.

As for the spoken word, there are conventions, colloquia, symposia, conferences, seminars and exhibitions in abundance. Notable in the final category was one at the Royal Festival Hall, London last year that attracted a huge attendance and included displays of the most amazing coffin designs. There are also *Death Cafés* where, over a cup of tea and cake, informal discussion of the subject is encouraged.

Meanwhile, the University of Bath are working to engage young people with death by exploring issues related to alternative burial processes. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, using sound recordings, film, graffiti, arts, crafts, rap and poetry, the project will encourage a group from the Park Local Opportunity Centre in Knowle, who are neither in employment, education or training, to express their ideas on and discuss some of the often difficult issues associated with death. They will work with experts from the University of Bath's Centre for Death and Society to develop a range of creative pieces looking at two sites in Bristol; Bedminster Cemetery and the Memorial Woodlands. Their work will result in a public exhibition displaying the outcomes in April.

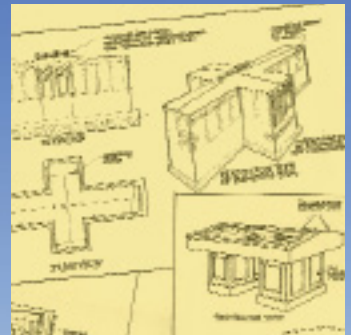
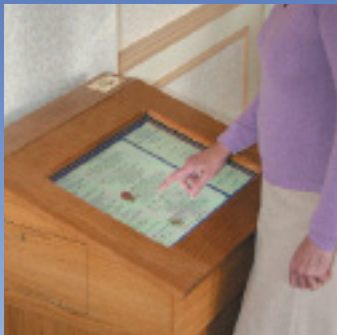
So where does all this public empowerment leave us? Whilst it does not make our job any easier it does make it more interesting. What was once the abnormal has become the normal with respect to funeral ceremonies on our premises and most of us are gearing up for this with extended service times and plasma screens.

Less enamoured, however, may be the funeral director. Some may find the frankness of discussion, particularly over the internet, uncomfortable. Some, the traditionalists, may not welcome what they regard as avant-garde, wacky, eccentric or irreverent send-offs. Perhaps there will be a dwindling demand for their opulent vehicles and, dare we say it, even their services? For them it certainly means that previous attitudes and customs will be routinely challenged and that they will need to adapt to their client's wishes, even if this means, on occasion, leaving the cravat, top-hat and silver-knobbed cane in the wardrobe.

But many are embracing these sweeping changes – some even swapping the family name over the high street window in favour of something rather more imaginative, such as the wonderfully descriptive, 'Divine Departures'.

Bob Coates

Altogether the best



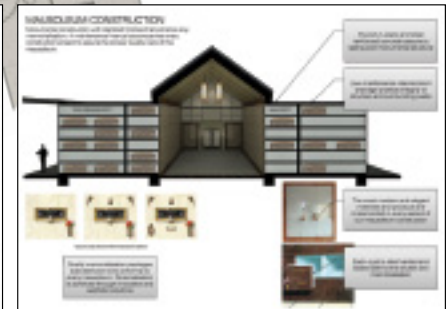
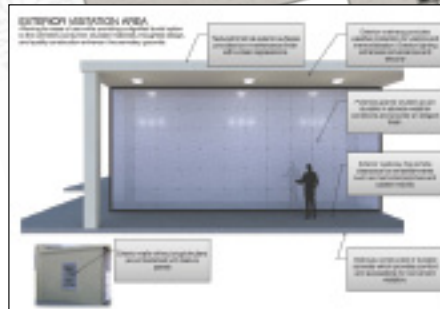
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ICCM in touch

Tarred with the same brush. How often is it that when something goes wrong and hits the press the impression is given that all cemeteries/crematoria might be doing the same thing? Things do go wrong either accidentally or through unenlightened good intention however the instance of a case of malicious intent is very rare in a service that relies on retaining public confidence. When this happens the importance of industry guidance becomes obvious. A piece of Institute guidance can be used in its entirety or just the parts that are appropriate for local conditions.

Most Institute guidance is not mandatory, but it is best practice guidance, and there is an element of safety and security in using it, especially if criticism is thrown at your service. On a national basis, when something goes wrong the media can ask the question of whether 'this happens at all cemeteries and crematoria'. In turn the public, and especially the bereaved, become concerned and telephones start to ring in cemetery and crematorium offices and FOI (Freedom of Information) requests are despatched across the UK. Local media can then become involved – need I say more.

If you have adopted Institute guidance the element of security extends to both the professional and corporate member. The Institute will support such a member (or non member) facing criticism as it must support its own guidance.

A similar situation exists in respect of the Institute's accredited training. In the event of an accident or injury the person investigating, whether this be an HSE inspector or other person, will require sight of training records as competency to carry out the task will always be checked. The fact that accreditation bodies regularly audit registered training centres provides reassurance in respect of quality and consistency of delivery. Assessors are required to firstly hold the qualification that they are assessing and are subsequently and periodically 'technically verified' by the accreditation body. The verifier observes the assessor carrying out an assessment to ensure that standards are being met and hence quality maintained. This clear audit and verification trail that arises from Institute training can be called on in these instances.



A City & Guilds assessor qualification is not a cover-all that can be used in any situation. An assessor can only assess work activities in which he/she has been technically verified and hence qualified. For instance, to be able to assess

candidates grave digging or operating plant and machinery the assessor must hold both qualifications and have been technically verified in both disciplines. The assessor in these circumstances cannot simply go on to assess candidates in say manual handling without holding that qualification, have been technically verified to assess the work activity and so on.

Standards achieved on accredited COTS training



Further reading can be found on page 15 where Charles Ward, company solicitor discusses these same subjects in the context of litigation.

Apart from work activities and accidents the Charter for the Bereaved also provides similar support to those authorities and companies that have adopted it. Again, the assessment process and annual validation of a percentage of Charter members provides support in the verification of standards. Soon natural burial grounds will be offered their own specific Charter, assessment process and Institute support via accredited training.

Tim Morris, ICCM Chief Executive

president's page



My little boy Tommy, aged 6, came home from school recently and was not in the best of moods. He explained that he was not speaking to a friend in his class anymore as he had made fun of him saying that I was not the President. It was quite difficult to explain that I was not in fact the ruler of the 'Free World', but the President of the ICCM. Tommy was most annoyed. He tried again yesterday to understand what I was and said, "You know you said you were not the President, is that what you are?" (pointing to David Cameron on the TV) – I must be such a disappointment to him!

However, I was not disappointed when I visited Durham Crematorium in October 2012 for the Northern Branch Meeting, recorded in the Winter 2012 issue of *The Journal* on page 65. It was great to see an active and lively branch and the thirty members in attendance.

A huge project of replacing cremators, installing filtration system and creating new office space has been completed at Durham. What stood out for me was the commitment of the Council Members; in particular Maria Plews. Not only does she attend crematorium meetings but also the ICCM Learning Convention and branch meetings. Having Members that are interested ensures councils make informed and educated decisions, resulting in better services for the communities they serve. Maybe the next meeting you attend you could bring along a Member from your council or board?

I was made to feel very welcome at Durham and was presented with a local calendar which I am now using and reminds me on a daily basis of my first visit to a branch as President of the ICCM. I would like to thank all the members of the Northern Branch, and especially Alan José who has been an excellent Branch Secretary for many years.

During my visit to the north east I only wish that I'd been able to stay longer and visit more crematoria in the area. It is my intention to go back as I would love to visit Sunderland Crematorium which has the last electric cremators in the country. Sunderland also provides an excellent 'joined-up' Bereavement Service, with coroners, cemeteries and crematoria all working closely together.

I am delighted to see that the East and East Midlands Branch has started to have meetings again. The next will be at Cambridge Crematorium on 27th April and a big 'thank you' to Tracy Lawrence for hosting and help organise the event. This is a joint meeting with the South East Branch so attendance should be good. Members within striking distance from the West Midlands would also be more than welcome. Remember as an ICCM member you can attend any branch meeting, so please watch out for further

information in *The Journal* [page 26] and E Newsletters. Initial discussions indicate that the North West and North Wales Branch might also be revitalised this year so keep a look out for this. The recipe for a successful meeting is not too much formality, good topics for discussion and an interesting cemetery, crematorium or other facility to visit.

My own South East Branch has held meetings at the London School of Anatomy, West London Coroner's Court, RHS gardens at Wisley and the Neasden Temple as well as many cemeteries and crematoria that were keen to show off their completed projects or examples of good practice – most recently at the magnificently manicured Kingston Cemetery and Crematorium pictured below. A report and more pictures on page 41.



There is always something to learn at a meeting, which makes them so worthwhile. Conferring with like-minded people and making new friends can help those that might feel isolated.

In December I, and Roddy McGinley, our Deputy President were invited by Gary Burks, (Superintendent at the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium) to the Port Health and Environmental Services Committee of the City of London Corporation dinner at HQS Wellington, Victoria Embankment, London.



Each year the dinner is held in one of the 108 Livery Halls in the City of London. It is a lifelong ambition of mine to visit all the Halls, so I felt very privileged to be on board the HQS Wellington (pictured above on the night of the dinner) which is the Hall of The Honourable Company of Master Mariners. So I have now been to 3, only 105 to go!

It was inspiring to listen to the speakers who were all so very proud of the excellent services that are delivered, and for these achievements to be celebrated; one of which was their involvement in the 2012 Olympics with partners and stakeholders.

A week later I was honoured to be invited to the official opening of the babies garden at South West Middlesex Crematorium. This crematorium has continually improved over the past 7 years and this has been achieved through the commitment of the Board, management and team. The garden is unique and not like any other I have seen. All those involved from the Mayor of Hounslow's PA Julie Davies, artists, builders, suppliers, bricklayers did not do this as just a job but from a much deeper and more personal place. Many told me how James New, the Head Gardener who had been working on the project for many years, had inspired them. So many families have been affected by a child or baby death and the experience changes them forever. What South West Middlesex have done is ensure that there is a place for people to go, reflect and remember their precious baby. There is more about the garden on page 22.

The Crematorium is special to me as I was Clerk to the Board for a time and worked with then manager Brian Keep. Brian died 2 years ago and is still missed by so many and we were delighted to see his wife Marion, son Matthew and daughter Michelle at the opening. Thank you Teresa for inviting me, it really was a privilege.

At the time of writing this it is the first week of January. I am not one for New Year's resolutions, but if you were thinking of work-related resolutions here are some suggestions where the ICCM can help:

- book into the Learning Convention and Exhibition for our centenary year [more on page 29];
- attend a branch meeting and bring a guest;
- write an article for *The Journal* on an interesting topic;
- after reading *The Journal* pass it on to someone else;
- attend an ICCM Training Course to update or learn new skills.

First person that contacts me to let me know they have done all 5 will get a surprise prize at Convention!

Many of you may already have a Remembrance Tree at Christmas. I just wanted to share with you what we do at Mortlake Crematorium.

A tree is placed outside each of our Remembrance Rooms and visitors are given the opportunity to write a message on a star and place it on the tree. They are invited to make a small donation and this year it was to the Meadow House Hospice in Ealing, west London. Over 1,000 stars were placed on the trees and I was delighted to present £720.20 to Lynne May from the hospice. They are so pleased.



We have now done this for 3 years and never received a complaint – only favourable comments such as 'what a lovely idea'. Children very much enjoy being involved and here are a couple of messages that were left this time;

"Dear Baby Gerry, I hope you have a lovely time in Heaven at Christmas"

"To Mum and Dad, miss you every day and wish you were with us this Christmas".

I know that it is a small enhancement to the service but it gives comfort to many.

Natasha Bradshaw

death of the socially undesirable



From a presentation by Catherine Brew, Red Plait Interpretation LLP, to delegates at the ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition, Forest Pines Hotel, Broughton, North Lincolnshire on 3rd October 2012.

I'm fascinated by social history and the stuff that no-one wants to talk about. It's especially interesting

when looking at death, dying and mortality, as death really is the last taboo. The majority of people don't *really* want to talk about it or they feel uncomfortable when they do. I often hear people say, it's morbid or its depressing, it's weird. So, if death is already a tension, it becomes even more tricky, when it's combined with people that are deemed to be socially unacceptable. The death of a person who is socially unacceptable kind of doubles the tension, emotions can run high and ethical and moral dilemmas come to the fore very quickly, especially when looking at post death care.

The world today is dictated by social norms that prescribe how we ought to behave, what we are meant to say and what is deemed to be socially acceptable. There are boundaries of course, but these can be just as mysterious, especially to an outsider like me. Social rules tend to be unwritten and hidden, but generally accepted by everyone as the norm. You all know how to behave within the confines of your own culture and social structure. You know what is socially acceptable and what is not.

When I first came to live in this country from Australia, my partner gave me a book, called 'Watching the English' – the hidden rules of English behaviour, by Kate Fox. It helped me to understand British history, social expectations and consequently, helped me to chart my path to living here long term. I learnt that there are social connotations about whether my midday meal is called 'dinner' or in fact 'lunch', whether I choose to have 'pudding', 'dessert' or 'afters', I learnt about the rules of privacy, about queuing, the difference between 'class' (*pronounced with a received English accent*) and 'class' (*pronounced with northern accent*), the stiff upper lip and pub etiquette. And apparently the way I hold my knife and fork also speaks volumes.

I say this in jest, but there's also a serious side to all of this. What I also learnt was that as an outsider I could ask the questions everyone else knew they weren't meant to ask. I was not expected to understand centuries of social history, social class and the accepted associated appropriate behaviours. From my perspective as a death and social history researcher/interpreter, this is invaluable. All of this led me to think about social unacceptability, particularly relating to death.

What has become apparent to me is that regardless any of the rules, the social norm all over the world is that when someone dies, they are honoured by some kind of ritual. I once read that that the difference between 'modern man' and the previous species was that when someone died, they could not just walk away from them, they had to bury that person. There was a need to mark the death of that person.

So whether that ritual comes through the earliest burials of modern man ancient traditions like Tibetan sky burial where vultures dispose of the body, from hanging coffins in the Philippines, to large funerals where hundreds attend or to more intimate affairs with just a few, these are all occasions that mark someone's death and honour that person.

We know that death is the great leveller.

In the image to the right, 'death is depicted as a skeleton figure wielding a scythe and is shown riding a funeral carriage studded with human skulls and bones, drawn by four oxens' (Ward & Steeds, 2007: 238). Death is 'not simply a reminder to mortals of the inescapable moment when their lives would end...but an advancing crushing chariot destroying all, including kings, courtiers and cardinals in its path – for this is death, the great leveller' (Ward & Steeds, 2007: 238). So, yes we all die – we all know that. But it's what happens afterwards death that really interests me and that depends greatly on what has happened in life.



As I've mentioned earlier, when someone dies, the social norm dictates that the deceased is honoured with a funeral. But what about those people who are deemed socially unacceptable, whether that's through actively breaking the social norm or being unacceptable purely by their situation in life or social status? Death might be the great leveller, but are the socially unacceptable equal in death? Are they afforded the same funeral rights?

¹ Taken from: Ward, L. & Steeds, W. (2007) *Demons: Visions of Evil in Art*, London: Carlton Books Limited, p.238

So, who are the socially unacceptable?

Interestingly, in researching this subject I was surprised that much of what came to the fore was more akin to Kate Fox's *Watching the English* book, and all that appeared were behaviours like:

- Talk about sex, politics, or God
- Lick their plate in company
- Answer honestly when someone asks how you are
- Belch in public
- Have sex in public
- Pick their nose
- Talk to strangers about personal matters
- Invade personal space
- Draw graffiti

Clearly, the kinds of people who pick their nose or lick their plate in public are still decent people and are going to have a regular funeral ritual. They might do things deemed socially undesirable by some, but their deeds do not necessarily define them in death, or in life for that matter.

The people I'm interested in are those that really break the bounds of social acceptability, those people who really and truly offend society to its highest degree, and those whom, by their behaviour, in life, test the moral fibre of society through their death – often creating an uncomfortable and emotive tension around decisions relating to their after death care.

As I researched newspaper articles, comments on the internet and various journal articles, it became very apparent that the groups of people deemed to be 'socially unacceptable' fell into three different categories:

- *People who commit heinous crimes*
- *Culturally and Ethnically Unacceptable*
- *People with diseases*

So if we look at these in more detail.....

People who commit heinous crimes

It goes without saying that civilised society considers murder, rape, sexual abuse as among the most serious crimes. People who commit such crimes cause so much grief and suffering in life and whilst we might like to think that in death, they lose all power to do more harm, so horrific were their crimes that decisions around their funerals are never simple.

The culturally and ethnically unacceptable are an interesting category. Unlike the people who chose to commit heinous crimes, people in this category are deemed socially unacceptable through no fault of their own. Often born into a particular community, caste or a status that dictates how other people view them and treat them in death.

People with diseases

Historically, the fear of catching an infectious disease or it spreading into an epidemic has provoked reactions from the public and public health authorities that ranged from mild concern to irrational panic. Fear, fuelled with misinformation has led to rejection, pain and often an unwritten label that people with diseases are deemed socially undesirable.

In looking at people who commit heinous crimes, the case of Myra Hindley is a good example.

Myra Hindley, one half of the convicted Moors murderers, was cremated shortly after 7.30pm on 20 November 2002 (Adley, 2002). A few hours afterwards, her ashes were collected by the prison service and driven off into the night (Adley, 2002). Apart from collection by the prison service, it appeared as an otherwise normal cremation. Or so we think.

We do not know which firm of funeral directors was charged with driving Hindley's body the short distance to the crematorium from the hospital where she died – this information was deemed so sensitive that only a handful of senior prison service and Home Office officials were privy to it (Adley, 2002). Expecting that they might have a problem in finding a company to do the funeral, the prison service started to look for a funeral director a year before she died (Adley, 2002). Such was the strength of feeling, 35 years after the murders, that 20 local funeral directors refused to take on the job and an increasingly desperate prison service ended up hiring a firm 'somewhere in the north' (Adley, 2002). Hindley's relatives did not attend the short service at the crematorium as they were living anonymously under assumed names in Manchester (Adley, 2002); four months later her ashes were scattered at Stalybridge Country Park by a former lover. Fears were expressed by locals that some visitors might even avoid the park or vandalise it.

So it seems that Hindley was as noxious in death and 'her presence in the back of a hearse was too dangerous for comfort' (Adley, 2002). When the Guardian newspaper interviewed local funeral directors as to why they had refused the funeral, apparently there were 'awkward mumbles' (Adley, 2002). One company said 'we declined as soon as we were approached, last year. Basically we didn't feel comfortable doing that, we knew that public emotions run quite high on this so we felt it was in our best interest to say no' (Adley, 2002).

Understandably funeral directors had to think about the repercussions if they were involved, no doubt a commercial decision, but it surprised me that they did not feel able to advise the prison service to do the funeral themselves, especially as he'd also said, 'it put us in quite an awkward position to be honest, because we are here to help people at the time they need us most' (Adley, 2002). Morally, I wonder whether they could have perhaps seen themselves as helping the prison service, rather than helping Myra Hindley?

When asked if it was a moral decision, this same funeral director answered, 'Oh no, I'm not here to judge anybody. She'll be judged by someone greater than me' (Adley, 2002). But as he also commented, 'everyone who has asked me this, I have put the question to them, how would you feel if it was their mother or their grandfather in the same chapel of rest or in the same hearse as Myra Hindley?' (Adley, 2002).

Morality is a complex and challenging thing to understand. On the one hand, a society can't function long without a shared moral code. While the world loves to judge the rightness and wrongness of everything, most of us don't think about morality too much, nor do we reflect on the nature of our decisions. When we do so, it's usually motivated by something that shocks us or threatens us in some manner, as in the case of Hindley.

And it is cases like this that set new standards. Whilst Hindley's death brought a sense of relief to many, it also offered an opportunity to question our moral code. So I ask you what you might have done? Would you have accepted the funeral? What really were they afraid of? What would you be afraid of and why? Is there a notion of too bad to bury?

Conversely, where Hindley became a problem, in Texas in the USA, funerals for people who have committed similar crimes become an opportunity. Like in the UK where an undertaker will have the coroner's contract for the removal of bodies, in Texas, funeral directors can apply to be given the State contract to remove from the prison, the bodies of executed people. After removal the family will make their own arrangements or the deceased is buried in a State cemetery near the prison (Adley, 2002). Public outcry comes from people protesting against the death penalty and family members of the executed, but the prison's problem of the

deceased being too bad to bury or cremate never arises. As Larry Fitzgerald of the State's Department of Criminal Justice says, 'We make no distinction between natural causes and execution. It's just an inmate who's passed away' (Adley, 2002).



Now.....my understanding is that to be on death row and to be executed, you are going to have committed some fairly horrendous crimes, so why the difference to the UK? Perhaps it's to do with capital punishment. Does society get a sense of justice from the execution in that the perpetrator

has paid the price? Maybe that way, it is easier to be involved in their funerals. Justice has been done so to speak and so it cannot be construed that the undertakers are in any way shape or form endorsing the criminal's actions in life? I don't know the answers, but it makes me wonder where we draw the line and why?

As I was looking at the perpetrators of heinous crimes, I started to realise that two categories of funerals were emerging. There were those that we question greatly like Myra Hindley – so sensitive that nobody wants to be associated with them. But then there's the ones we don't question, we know not to question – the deceased is responsible for equally horrendous crimes, but their funerals become huge lavish affairs for all to see and be involved with. These are the funerals of the Mafia and mobsters.

In 2010 in Taiwan, the funeral of Mafia boss, Lee Chao-Hsiung included a 108-car funeral procession taking his body to a crematorium. His funeral drew prominent politicians, 2000 chanting Buddhist monks, TV variety show celebrities and foreign dignitaries. 'Female models carried large signs announcing each delegation in what amounted to the closing ceremony for an Olympian of Asian organized crime' (Adams, 2010).



More than 20,000 people attended with lines of spectators stretching for more than a mile (Adams, 2010). Chin Ko-lin, a specialist in Asian organised crime has said, 'it's not a big deal to be associated with an underworld figure', but interestingly Taiwanese police were unhappy with the ostentatious funeral of a top Four Seas gang boss and in recent times have worked out funeral guidelines with gangsters (Adams, 2010).



Despite the police's discontent, mobster funerals are very public affairs. I've thought a lot about why we don't question their appropriateness to the same degree as the funeral of someone like Myra Hindley. 'Maybe the difference is that for the Mafia, the deceased have *not* broken the social codes within which they live, which in their case says that there are specific rules, and if you break them, you get

² Taken from: <http://scrapetv.com/News/News%20Pages/usa/pages-3/Texas-Governor-says-state-has-never-executed-anyone-Scrape-TV-The-World-on-your-side.html>

³ Taken from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/taiwan/7634985/Gang-leaders-turn-out-for-funeral-of-Taiwanese-mafia-boss.html>

⁴ Taken from: <http://www.chinasmack.com/2010/pictures/taiwanese-black-society-funeral.html>

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what's coming...in other words you get bumped off!' (Cawley, 2012). So like with Texas, the price has been paid. Curiously, they live within their own moral code that lies within the moral code of greater society. As an example, I remember in Australia listening to a Melbourne underworld figure talking about the gangland murders. The killing of someone's wife had caused outrage in the underworld, because the unwritten rule was that you didn't touch women and children. The men were fine, but women and children were off limits.

The funeral for Brooklyn mobster, Frankie Yale in 1927 was the most ostentatious in mob history at that time, featuring a \$15,000 silver casket and 110 Cadillac limousines (Nobel, 2010). Yet Mafia funerals aren't always entirely accepted.

A pastor in Trinidad and Tobago complained in a local newspaper about, as he puts it, a 'very disturbing trend of gangsters friends and family members attending funerals *en masse*, resulting in 'mayhem, mass hysteria and wild uncontrolled behaviour in the hallowed grounds of cemeteries' (Nobel, 2010). And in the case of one New York underworld leader killed in 1979, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York refused to allow him a funeral mass, due to his notoriety (McFadden, 1979). Over the top funeral aren't exclusive to Mafia families. When the president of the San Francisco chapter of the Hell's Angels was killed, more than 2000 Angels attended his funeral with some coming from as far as Australia and Germany (Nobel, 2010).

So, perhaps the personification of evil is not restricted to religious frescos and imagery. I'm not suggesting that evil exists or does not exist, more that those who society deems to be socially unacceptable have the ability to test our moral code.

How do human beings decide what is right and wrong and do we afford the same funeral rights to someone we think has wronged society? Nothing captures human attention more than a moral dilemma. By developing an insight into what society believes to be tantamount to a good life, it can help us understand why and how we treat the socially unacceptable in their death.

Now I come to the culturally and ethnically unacceptable.

Dalits are members of the lowest social class of the Hindu caste system, in fact they are born below the caste system. It is believed that humans are born a Dalit as punishment for misbehaviour in a previous life. Dalit women find themselves on the lowest rung of the ladder in a rigid social hierarchy in which Dalits are classed entirely as 'untouchables'.

Traditionally, India's untouchables performed spiritually contaminating work that no one else wanted to do....tasks like preparing bodies for funerals, tanning hides, slaughtering animals and killing rats or other pests. In line with their low social position, the needs of caste Hindus are seen to be greater than those of Dalits.



5

In July 2012, Dalits in Tamil Nadu were prevented by Caste Indians to carry the dead body of an old woman through their streets to the cremation grounds, citing that the bursting of crackers during the procession was a nuisance (Karthikeyan, 2012). The procession was pelted with stones and attracted verbal abuse. Fearing a clash, the Dalits left the dead body without cremating it as a mark of respect. Eventually the body was cremated but only after the intervention of police officials, but the Dalits unequal social footing and society's intolerance of their existence, results in an ever present tension that regularly spills out into conflict.

Every community needs to be able to honour their dead in a manner that is culturally and socially acceptable.

Traditionally, Dalits were so untouchable and socially unacceptable that they could not eat in the same room or drink from the same well as cast Hindus. Thus, if Dalits, are not able to deal with their own dead or are prevented from doing so as occurred in Tamil Nadu, then no one else will do it for them. Here, the division between us and them is distinct. Although Dalits are permitted to manage their own funerals, this pretence and disguise of self determination

remains coated in the accepted wisdom of discrimination, control and separation. Ultimately, there are enormous moral, social and political repercussions.



6

Similarly, the Eta and Burakumin in Japan were the untouchables or pariahs who through no fault of their own, were born into a class of people set apart....outcast and unapproachable. So distasteful was their work that they were considered, permanently sullied. Similarly tasks included butchering animals, preparing the dead for burial, tanning hides and executing condemned criminals.

⁵ Taken from: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/youthink/category/tags/dalit>

⁶ Taken from: http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/Olahr/OIAHR-Dalit_Justice.html

On a different level altogether, some gypsy communities are encountering problems in Europe with their funeral and burial practices. There are cases where gypsies are acquiring 5-6 plots, but only using them for one person, providing the deceased with everything they need. Consequently, their practises are being deemed contrary to accepted standards of available burial space and so tensions arise about burial rights and the manner in which gypsy funerals are conducted. But as Kate Dimmock pointed out in her paper, 'Dealing with Challenging Funerals' [p. 52], with a little negotiation and a lot of communication, these cultural differences can be managed to the satisfaction of the majority.



There's no denying that gypsies have had a pretty rough time over the years. But it's easy to focus on the negative. Gypsy culture is an astounding old culture with reports of gypsies in Crete in 1323. Traditionally, incredibly rich in ritual and beliefs, gypsy culture has a way of life that celebrates a love of music, dance, community and culture. They are much misunderstood and as such often find themselves pushed to the edge of society. They become socially unacceptable because they are not like us.

Or are they?

They too have funerals and burials like us. Here in Romania the family gathers around the old man before he dies. The community comes together for his funeral....walking together, standing at his graveside and burying him in a simple grave.



So perhaps we do come together in death?

If only the cultural legacy of the gypsy people was not so misunderstood.

Lastly and briefly, we come to people with diseases. 'In the very early days of AIDS in the UK, there were some funeral directors who would not take the bodies of those who had died with AIDS' (Stuart, 2012).

Jean White who was a pastor in MCC London had to 'triple bag bodies on her dining table and arrange transportation of the bodies herself. There are also horror stories of people dying in hospitals not of HIV related illness as such, but starvation because staff would only leave their meals outside the door' (Stuart, 2012).

For quite a few years, the fear and panic around HIV/AIDS meant that funerals for people with HIV/AIDS were very different affairs. The social unacceptability of having HIV/AIDS meant that publically, it wasn't what people died from.

Supposedly the author, Bruce Chatwin's, symptoms were a fungal infection or the effects of the bite of a Chinese bat. To add to this secrecy, gay people's partners were frequently denied access to funeral homes and indeed funerals by families. The grief already being experienced by people was added to and enormously complicated by the pressure of society's moral code.

'While most mainstream churches moralised over how to deal with AIDS the two groups of Christians who just got on for caring for the dying and their loved ones were MCC – the Metropolitan Community Church and the Salvation Army - both were terrific' (Stuart, 2012). The gay community pulled together and some undertakers in the south west did astonishing work, working up against social conventions, fear and panic to ensure that people who died with AIDS were treated like everyone else.

The plague and smallpox had similar effects in their day. Smallpox outbreaks decimated Aboriginal communities in Australia. So terror-stricken were the tribes that they did not stay to bury their dead as they would have done traditionally. By not burying their dead and by fleeing from the dying, a curse was laid on

7 Taken from: <http://www.funnythreat.com/photo/gypsy-funeral.htm>

8 Taken from: <http://maggielavigne.theworldrace.org/?filename=a-gypsy-funeral>

9 Taken from: <http://katdavis.theworldrace.org/>

them that someday this plague would return. But staying, meant that they too would suffer the disease brought by the wundah or the 'white devils' (Campbell, 2002). So they were dammed if they did and dammed if they didn't. Such was the terror of disease in England, that victims of the Black Death were nailed into their houses so that they could not spread the disease.

So....having discussed death of the socially unacceptable, I ask you how bad is too bad to bury or cremate?

In parts of Asia, 'people for whom funeral rites are not performed are condemned to a pitiable existence, since they

never enter the world of the dead or are incorporated there. They are the most dangerous of dead, behaving like hostile strangers towards the world of the living' (Ven Gennep, 2004; 218).

Whilst society may prefer to shy away from performing funeral rites for the socially unacceptable, and in particular for unsavoury people like Myra Hindley, it is worth considering the effects of the alternative.

Without that funeral and the chance to formally expel the toxicity of Hindley's actions, where do we find ourselves?

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Secretaries contact details & forthcoming meetings on page 26

the litigation minefield

Every cemetery is a potential litigation minefield. Even if there are no actual mines there may be uneven paving, loose headstones or open graves: all of which could give rise to accidents and the inevitable personal injury claims. But it is not just about accident-risk.

There are a raft of other potential liabilities for a cemetery manager. These include employee claims or perhaps administrative error, such as losing records, or, in more serious cases, resulting in the wrong body being deposited in the wrong grave. And potential liability is spread across a range of common law and regulatory requirements, for example:

1. The common law of negligence, which makes a burial authority liable for almost any accident resulting from a lack of due diligence on its part.
2. The Occupiers Liability Acts 1955 and 1984 under which burial authorities must ensure that cemeteries are reasonably safe against foreseeable risk for both lawful visitors as well as trespassers.
3. General regulatory requirements, such as Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977, which require local authority cemeteries to be kept in good order and repair.
4. More specific regulatory requirements such as the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, which governs the safety of mechanical grave digging equipment amongst other things.

The situation is made worse because, like it or not, we now exist in a litigation culture. Money which should be spent providing public services is instead used to pay lawyers. Switch on the radio and, as likely as not, you'll hear an advertisement from one of many hundreds of lawyers firms offering no-win-no-fee accident claims. In fact some firms are so confident they can get you money that they will pay you something up-front as soon as they accept your accident claim.

Thompsons Solicitors, in their December 2008 Law Bulletin, make specific reference to a case which they won for a council gardener who was using a ride-on mower to cut the grass in a cemetery when the front wheel of the mower went over the kerbed edging of a grave that had not been topped up, causing the mower to jolt to one side and the claimant to aggravate a pre-existing shoulder injury. The claim succeeded on the basis of Regulation 5 of the Workplace Regulations as the judge found the grass to be sufficiently long to create an unsafe place of work and therefore the cemetery was not maintained in good working order. For similar reasons the judge also found for the claimant under the Occupiers Liability Acts. But not all claimants have it their own way.

In an action to recover damages against a council in the Staines County Court to recover the costs of reinstalling a headstone to current standards, including a NAMM approved ground anchor, the judge dismissed the claim. The claimant had questioned the council's authority to carry out inspections and to take immediate action by laying down memorials. He acknowledged that he had seen notices in the local press and at the cemetery, but contended that he should have been contacted in advance and given an opportunity to witness the test. He challenged the validity of the force-testing machine used, arguing that the test procedure caused the foundation of the headstone to fail and that the council had neglected in its duty by failing to control the installation of memorials over the previous years.

In its defence the council gave evidence of its working procedure for memorial inspections which demonstrated, amongst other things: calibration; risk-assessments; a safe system of work, inspection records and staff training and competence; and compliance with ICCM's Code of Practice for the Management of Memorials. As a result the judge ruled that the testing had been carried out properly, that the reading had to be accepted, and that the council had powers to remove dangers and therefore power to act as it did as a result of the test reading. The council had done no more than it was statutorily required to do. However, dealing with potentially unstable headstones remains a special area of legal difficulty for burial authorities.

Notwithstanding the fact that there have been around ten recorded cases of falling headstones, many involving children, councils intending to remove memorials or lay them flat must be absolutely sure of their ground and follow due process.

Following a series of successful ombudsman complaints by aggrieved relatives against councils who had laid memorials flat, the Ombudsman Service issued formal guidance in its 2006 Special Report 'Memorial safety in local authority cemeteries', to the effect that councils must balance the (sometimes slight) risk of injury from unstable memorials against the certainty of distress and outrage if memorials are laid down. As regards due-process, the report recommended: giving advance public notice of memorial testing; notifying known individual owners of rights of burial that testing is to be carried out; notifying that owner if a memorial fails the test; displaying in the cemetery and on an official website lists of memorials which failed the test as well as individual notices displayed near the identified memorials; offering demonstrations of safety testing procedures to owners and interested members of the public.



A common theme of all case-law; regulations and official guidance is the need to ensure that staff have received adequate training. And to count legally, such training must go beyond simply showing an operative how to do a job. Competence must be formalised through official training which is recorded and accredited. A burial authority which invests in such staff training will always be better placed to defend itself against accident claims or those arising out of administrative error.

The 2006 Ombudsman Special Report makes several references to training throughout its 48 pages. Personnel carrying out testing must be properly trained (page 7). The point is repeated on Page 16, with staff training being one of the three principal elements to a satisfactory testing regime and adding, 'To fail to train staff to carry out safety testing to a reasonable and competent standard is maladministration'. And as we have seen, it was evidence of staff training and competence which helped convince a judge in Staines County Court to reject a civil claim for damages.

The November 2005 Guide for Burial Ground Managers, published by the Department for Constitutional Affairs contains an entire section on Staff training and states:

"In order to comply with health and safety legislation, and to provide a professional level of service, staff training is an essential investment."

It adds,

"While on-the-job training has its place, burial managers need to consider whether skills and knowledge are up to date. Some training external to the burial authority is largely unavoidable."

Recommended training is stated to include: health and safety; machinery operation; horticulture and landscaping; historic and natural environmental conservation; grave digging; building maintenance; record management; customer care and bereavement issues; burial law and practice; minority faith customs and practice.

Regulation 9 of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 imposes a specific obligation on every employer to ensure that users of work equipment have received adequate training for purposes of health and safety, including training in the methods which may be adopted when using work equipment and associated risks and precautions. Employers must also ensure that anyone supervising or managing the use of equipment has also received adequate health and safety training, including risks and precautions.

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***Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme (CTTS)**

– provides BTEC qualifications accredited by Edexcel. The system of verification and periodic centre audit made by Edexcel are similar to those required by City and Guilds.



ICCM originally embarked on gaining accreditation for its training courses as it felt that external scrutiny would ensure the maintenance of quality and consistency with its schemes and thereby provide assurances to burial and cremation authorities that such qualifications are worthwhile. Further details from Julie Callender at the ICCM National Office on 020 8989 4661 or email julie.callender@iccm-uk.com

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Parndon Wood – a new beginning

Parndon Wood Cemetery and Crematorium opened in 1961. It is set within ancient woodland and provides a tranquil setting to serve the people of Essex and Hertfordshire. The crematorium was run by the local authority until July 2011 after which the facility came under the specialist management of the Westerleigh Group working in partnership with Harlow Council.

Parndon Wood has always been a special place to the local residents and since it opened 50 years ago over 80,000 funerals have taken place here. Unfortunately after this period of time, the buildings, infrastructure and grounds were starting to show their age and look tired.

Investment was very much needed in the facility to ensure the highest level of dignity was maintained. This was one of the reasons why the council awarded the management contract to the Westerleigh Group. With their proven track record in providing first class facilities for the needs of the bereaved, Parndon Wood would certainly be an interesting challenge.

I was given the role of managing the facility in tandem with my current role of managing Forest Park Cemetery and Crematorium. I already had the advantage of knowing many of the funeral directors and officiants due to the proximity of the two sites. This would hopefully give them confidence in knowing how, as a company, we like to manage our sites and the standards we aspire to.

Our company's ambition for Parndon Wood was to invest in major improvements to the service. First and foremost we wanted to ensure the bereaved received a professional service and were given greater choice followed by an extensive refurbishment programme for the entire facility.

Prior to taking over the management of Parndon Wood there was expected scepticism by some visitors and local residents. Any fears were immediately dispelled when, within the first weeks, praise was received for the immediate improvement to the maintenance of the grounds and the professionalism of the staff. This improvement continued over the following months with the introduction of new systems and equipment, new memorial ranges, greater choices for the bereaved and a new sense of pride by the existing staff. This was going to be easy!

Having established the foundations for the future the next most crucial part of our short-term plan was to improve the workings and appearance of the facility. This would include all public and office spaces as phase one and then replace the cremators with new fully abated equipment as phase two.

The problem affecting Parndon Wood was that although we are surrounded by impressive woodlands the buildings had a

lot to be desired and desperately needed improvement. The chapel was cold, dark and uninviting, the public waiting room and toilet facilities were small, the floral tribute area had insufficient space and incoming funerals would clash with outgoing mourners. All these issues, and more, were the main concerns we had and they were echoed at several consultation meetings with funeral directors, staff and cemetery user groups.

Several plans were put forward and amended but once agreed the building work commenced in June 2012 with an anticipated completion time of 16 weeks. It had been decided that, as stated, the refurbishment would take place in two phases. The second phase, the replacement of the cremators, would take place early in 2013. This would allow us to remain fully operational and conduct funeral services throughout the entire refurbishment.

In order to achieve this we installed a large temporary chapel set as far away as possible from any building works. The chapel had all the facilities expected of the original one; comfortable seating, lectern, electrically operated closing curtains and a full digital music system. Public facilities, including disabled toilets, were also provided together with covered areas for mourners. To sensitively convey the coffin to the still operational crematory we purchased a hearse for the purpose.

The temporary arrangements were fully explained to every family making funeral arrangements and during the refurbishment over 450 funerals were cared for in our temporary chapel. The feedback from funeral directors and families was very encouraging and we had no major issues throughout the refurbishment.

The newly refurbished crematorium opened on 2nd October 2012, on schedule and the improvements include;

- Fully refurbished chapel and entrance lobby with large bay windows allowing plenty of natural light to enter while overlooking a calming water feature. Landscaping outside provides necessary privacy to mourners. New comfortable seating, lectern and catafalque installed. New curtain canopy with voile and velvet drapes. Complete new heating, lighting and air conditioning systems were installed together with full digital music with recording facilities. The exit from the chapel is through a new glazed lobby which when closed reduces any outside noise interference.



Exterior & interior of the temporary chapel*Interior of the refurbished chapel**New porte cochère & enhanced entrance to the crematorium**New floral tribute area with views to woodland*

Parndon Wood before & after refurbishment

- Rebuilt and refurbished office space with private family rooms, large extended waiting room for mourners with views of the oncoming funeral. Fully refurbished public toilets.
- Large steel-framed porte cochère with clear glazing, spanning across the office building and chapel entrance to provide uninterrupted views of the surrounding woodland.
- Beautifully landscaped shrub beds, lawns and trees surround and soften the building whilst providing an intimate setting for the funeral.
- Enlarged and improved floral tribute area which has been fully block paved with beds containing further shrubs and trees. The entire length leading to the limousine pick up point has been covered with a timber canopy with a high tensile fabric roof.

- Funeral directors room with CCTV and refreshments facilities.

Following the completion of the refurbishment we received many kind messages and positive feedback from delighted visitors, funeral directors and clergy. Some commented that they even found the refurbishment far exceeded their expectations, which has been very encouraging as we look forward to the completion of the second phase of refurbishment, the crematory.

Parndon Wood is a special and important place for so many people. Over the years it had gradually suffered from poor performance and under-investment and this affected the people it is meant to help for all the wrong reasons. Today vast improvements have been made both in the facility and the service provided; for Parndon Wood Cemetery and Crematorium this is a new beginning.

Jason King



honorary MA for Ken West MBE

The pioneer of natural burials received an honorary Master of Arts from Durham's Vice Chancellor Professor Chris Higgins on the 10th January. Ken West established the world's first "green" burial provision in Carlisle in 1993, when he also conceived an idea for a Charter for the Bereaved, which the ICCM launched in 1996.

Ken's lead has since been followed in North America, Australia and New Zealand. He was made an MBE in 2002 for his services to burial and cremation. He said, "The death industry is rarely topical or appealing so I feel overwhelmed to be recognised for my contribution to work in bereavement."

"I will also remain forever indebted to those people in the north, including Durham, who gave me support when natural burial was in its infancy in Cumbria. Without these passionate advocates, I would not be in this fortunate position."

Ken was nominated by Professor Douglas Davies, among other members of Durham University's departments of Theology and Religion, Anthropology and the School of Medicine, Pharmacy and Health who said, "It is rare for a single individual to be hugely catalytic of a social trend that emerges distinct from new social policies forged by national or local government. He has, in effect, engendered a new British 'way of death', that has spread to over 200 sites."

a children's memorial garden – once a dream, now reality

The Gardens of Remembrance at South West Middlesex Crematorium always lacked a designated area for families who have experienced the loss of a child. A year ago the Spring 2012 issue of The Journal recorded the planning and financing of a Children's Memorial Garden and now, twelve months on, the garden is complete and has been formally opened.

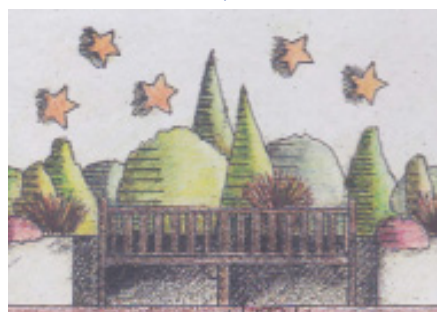
Work began in earnest on the 11th June but nobody could have predicted the wettest summer in 100 years, especially after the widespread droughts at the beginning of 2012. Because of this work took longer than anticipated. However, we were so lucky to have the help of Ardmore Construction and Kingston Garden Services who gave us their time and materials for nothing. But if it wasn't for the St Georges plc building company and their Director, Ian Dobie, we would never have found such fantastic contractors to help with the work and make this possible.

£13,949 was raised through the efforts of the staff and donations from funeral directors, visitors to the crematorium, a sponsored half marathon completed by Jack Sheehan who was touched by the project, the Mayor of Hounslow's Halloween Quiz night and Barclays Bank who doubled the money raised at the event. These generous donations paid for preparing the area ready for work to begin, the stained glass windows and finishing touches, such as the wall murals, benches and containers.

Gates to a disused bin store were replaced with a wall, where later the stained glass window would be fitted, and an entrance created to connect the new Garden with the Gardens of Remembrance.



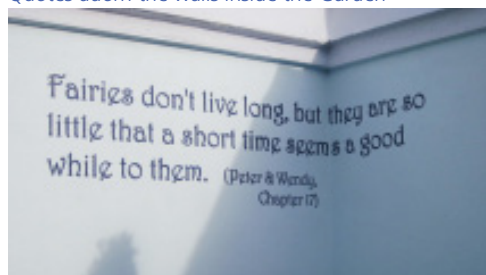
Realisation of the concept



Our completed Children's Memorial Garden has two large benches, both backed by raised planters which are adorned by a mix of topiary balls, cones and 'lollipops'. Seasonal bedding is planted between the evergreens and along the front of the topiary tulip bulbs have also been planted to add more colour in the spring.

The walls are painted a pale blue, with a darker shade of blue highlighting detail around the arch and top of the walls. Quotes from *Peter Pan* have been painted onto the walls, four inside, and one on the outside rear wall to create an air of interest to passers by.

Quotes adorn the walls inside the Garden



Families now have the opportunity to sponsor a bronze star plaque on the walls which will be engraved to make them personal to each family. Twenty blank stars have been fitted to make the garden look more finished and to give visitors an idea of what they can have.

The focal point of the garden is the Peter Pan stained glass window, which we are very proud to have in the garden. When the sun is shining through the glass it really does come alive and looks absolutely stunning. Either side of the window and archway are large containers each with a 6ft spiral yew tree, which just adds a final finishing touch and interest.

Work was complete at the end of October, and on Saturday 8th December we held the official opening. Teresa Kearney, Superintendent and Registrar, thanked everyone for coming and introduced the Chairman to the Board, Councillor Denise Grant, Spelthorne Borough Council and Natasha Bradshaw, President of the ICCM. After the official cutting of the gold ribbon, with topiary shears, Councillor Grant spoke of her 20 year involvement with the crematorium.

She expressed her thanks to all the staff for their hard work and commitment, and her grateful thanks for the monumental changes that have taken place in recent years. She stressed how everyone works as a "team" to provide a first class service to all the communities they serve, and of how she has been proud to have been the Chairman during this period of transformation.

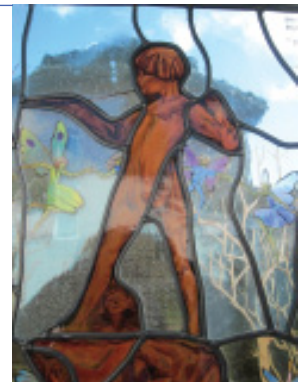
Teresa Kearney, Councillor Denise Grant, Natasha Bradshaw and James New in front of the entrance to the Garden



Head Gardener James New with Margaret Kuffel and Jeremy Lifford from Coriander Stained Glass, Wimbledon



Detail from stained glass window depicts the painting 'Peter's Friends' by Victorian artist Margaret Tarrant



Natasha Bradshaw, who in the past had been Clerk to the Board, spoke of her gratitude to the Board and staff in adopting the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved and of her admiration and high regard for the service the crematorium provides. Ian Dobie, St. Georges plc, expressed his own personal thanks in being given the opportunity to contribute in getting the Memorial Garden up and running, and to Ardmore Builders and Kingston Garden Services for their assistance and genuine interest and involvement in the project.

As Head Gardener and project leader I was given the opportunity to thank those attending who had contributed in helping the dream become a reality, with a special thanks to Coriander Stained Glass for interpreting the original Peter Pan painting and providing a unique stained glass window for the Garden.

To close the official opening ceremony a toast was raised to the future of the Garden, doves were released to commemorate the occasion and wishes were expressed that all those who visit the Garden will gain peace and solace. We couldn't be happier with the finished project and, now open, we hope families who have experienced the loss of a baby or child will be able to come here to reflect and find some peace.

James New

article of the year 2012

The editor is delighted to receive copy for publication in The Journal either from members of the ICCM, or from others made aware of 'TJ' thanks to members suggesting they write an article which may be of interest. Each year a selection of these original articles are considered for the coveted title of 'Article of the Year'. Below are those shortlisted last year – but there can only be one winner. The 2012 award goes to 'Being Let Down by the Funeral Director'. Congratulations to author Dr Brian Parsons and to the other nominees Ken West MBE, Aileen Harvey, Sue Bonner, John Kemp and Mark Robinson.



Dr Brian Parsons
Being Let Down by the Funeral Director
Spring 2012 (Vol.80 No. 1)



Ken West MBE
Spiritual Funerals – Naturally
Spring 2012 (Vol.80 No. 1)



Aileen Harvey
New Facilities for Carmountside
Summer 2012 (Vol.80 No. 2)



Sue Bonner
Epsom Cemetery Opens First Baby Memorial
Garden
Autumn 2012 (Vol.80 No. 3)



John Kemp
First Leg of Our Journey to Abatement
Autumn 2012 (Vol.80 No. 3)



Mark Robinson
Merton & Sutton Joint Cemetery Extension
Winter 2012 (Vol.80 No. 4)



For your chance to win the 2013 prize of £100 submit original copy to the editor at rncates@aol.com or call 01722 710 801 if you'd like to discuss an article. Copy deadline dates on page 1.



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architect wins national award for Crownhill crematorium

Milton Keynes-based architect Adrian Morrow wins two awards at the 2012 Concrete Society Awards event for his design of the Oak Chapel at Crownhill Crematorium.

Adrian, formerly Principal Architect at Milton Keynes Council, won praise from a distinguished panel of judges and was awarded not only a Certificate of Excellence in the Building category but also a Commendation in the Sustainability category. The design incorporates a combination of curved cycloid-shaped in-situ concrete roofs and flat roofs, and was inspired by the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth Texas by American architect Louis Kahn. The judges, including Ruth Reed, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects 2010-11, commented, "The new crematorium is well proportioned, blends well with the landscape, exploiting the vaulted roof design across the whole structure. It provides an air of tranquillity appropriate to its function. The shapes and forms of the elements have been well thought out and constructed".



Adrian (pictured centre) attended the glittering event at the Intercontinental London Hotel in Park Lane on 1st November with Chris Londy (far left), Regulatory Investigations Manager, Milton Keynes Council, who commissioned the project in his former post as Chief Environmental Health Officer.

Adrian said, "It was very exciting and a great honour for us both to be invited on stage to receive our certificates and meet BBC broadcaster Nicky Campbell (near left), who presented on the night. I'm pleased that the judges appreciated the care and attention that was taken in the design and detailing of the building. I'd like to thank all who contributed to this project to make it the success that it has become."



iccm branch secretaries & forthcoming meetings 2013

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

Wednesday 13th March, Westoe Rugby Club, South Shields

Main theme at request of Members: Muslim Burial – Tim Morris will be presenting a paper with a view to providing a tool kit for successful operation

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

Saturday 16th March, Southampton Crematorium at the invitation of Branch Chairman Linda Francis

Saturday 22nd June, Epping Forest Woodland Burial Park – Green Burial Charter, environmentally friendly wreaths

East and East Midlands with Sth East Branch: Tracy Lawrence – Email: Tracy.Lawrence@cambridge.gov.uk T: 01954 882 428

Saturday 27th April, Cambridge City Crematorium: Speaker Chris Bowring – Mediation in the Workplace

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

Wednesday 8th May, Glasgow – Celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Branch, and the AGM

Nth West & Nth Wales: Steve Jones – Email: steve.jones@knowsley.gov.uk T: 0151 443 5231

NEW for 2012
Barbican Range
small footprint,
large revenue
memorials

40 Tablet Barbican

A stylish feature memorial
with 40 individual 7" x 5"
tablets within a footprint
37" wide. This 41" high
monument is available in
a wide range of coloured
granites, with either granite
or UK sourced tablets. All
tablets are available with
20 different font styles and
a wide range of standard
or bespoke design options

192 Tablet Barbican

A superb revenue generating memorial
and the largest in this range, with 192 7" x 5"
tablets within a footprint 54" wide. This 86"
high monument is available in a wide range
of coloured granites, with either granite or
UK sourced tablets. All tablets are available
with 20 different font styles and a wide range
of standard or bespoke design options

80 Tablet Barbican

A centre piece memorial
with 80 individual 7" x 5"
tablets within a footprint
37" wide. This 75" high
monument is available in
a wide range of coloured
granites, with either granite
or UK sourced tablets. All
tablets are available with
20 different font styles and
a wide range of standard
or bespoke design options

images shown not to scale

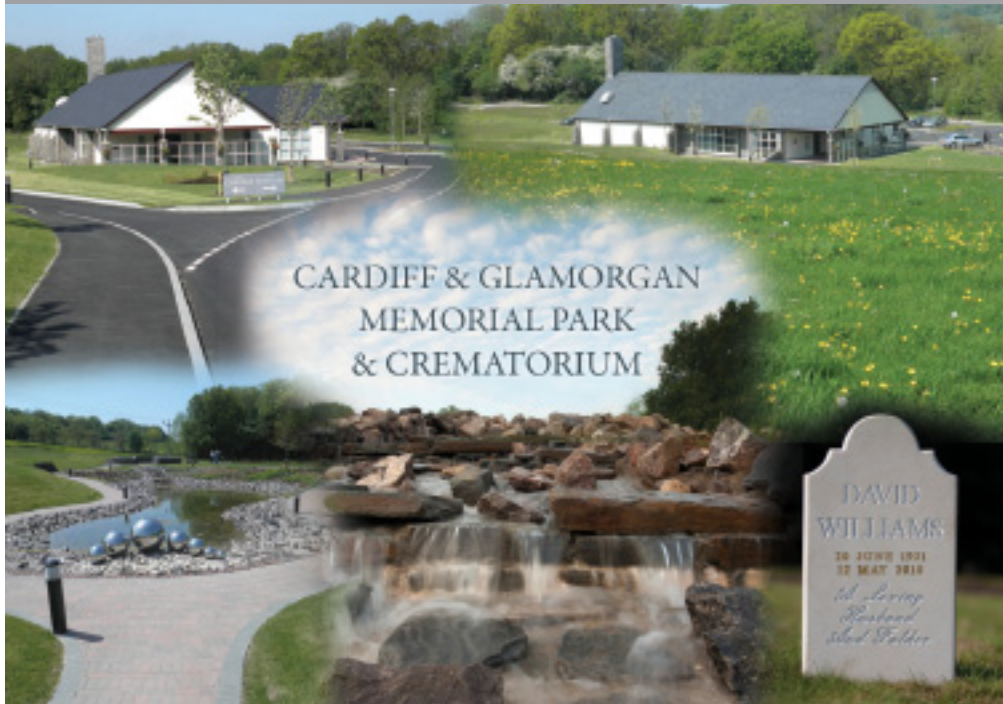
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Our first Memorial Park, in the Vale of Glamorgan, is a new concept and opened in October 2011. Its facility innovation and use of local materials is designed to enhance the public experience and it succeeds in this. It is set in 20 acres of beautiful parkland and offers natural burial, traditional flat stone burial and cremation with local stone memorialisation.

We have:

- A Professional Team of 80 years experience.
- Several new projects at planning stages.
- Often received preferred partner status.

We can:

- Design, build and manage new memorial parks, cemeteries or crematoria.
- Re-vitalise and manage existing facilities.
- Enter into joint-venture partnerships or acquire existing establishments.



For an informal discussion call: Jamieson Hodgson on 07899 886994 or Michael Hackney on 07932 012045

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*The crematoria mentioned in this advertisement were sold in 2009

ICCM Learning Convention & Exhibition 2013



**In this the Institute's Centenary Year
and following last year's successful event
the Learning Convention & Exhibition will be
returning to the Forest Pines Hotel, Nth Lincolnshire
from 30th September to 2nd October.**

The ICCM has existed in several guises during its long history, starting with the UK Association of Cemetery Superintendents, established in 1913. To mark the centenary some papers will have a historic theme but, more importantly, we shall be looking at the present and future to ensure that things continue to develop (for the best) over the next 100 years.

We need to ensure that our services are fit for purpose so workshops will encourage delegates to think 'outside the box' and explore radical ideas for new ways of dealing with death and helping the bereaved. If you would like to offer a paper, or have any suggestions for topics for the workshops or networking sessions please contact the ICCM Events Manager Julie Dunk.

For further information or to register your interest contact Julie on 07976 939585, or email julie.dunk@iccm-uk.com

**Ensuring excellent value for money prices have been held once again (no increase since 2008!).
Full delegate rate for an ICCM Member £495.00. Day delegate and half day delegate rates also available.**

Keep an eye on the 'Events' page of the website – www.iccm-uk.com – for further information as it becomes available.

This is what William Schelkers from Funeral Products had to say about his experience of the 2012 ICCM Learning Convention & Exhibition

"Prior to the Exhibition I didn't have any idea what to expect being a first time attendee, but I can truly say that it was well organised and I felt comfortable from the start. I arrived late the night before so was very happy to see that ICCM Events Manager Julie Dunk was still around. She gave me the opportunity to unload boxes and place them in the exhibition room. This definitely gave me a head start the next morning and I want to thank Julie and Blue for being so helpful and giving me such a warm welcome. The venue was perfect and all under one roof, exhibition, networking sessions, speakers and not to forget the social events in the evening.



"Having our own stand was a necessity, our products actually have to be seen to give an honest opinion. I had lots of conversations with people who work in the cremation industry who gave me useful and positive feedback about our urns such as the price versus quality and their uniqueness. It has been important hearing views from different angles whilst speaking with bereavement managers, group managers, cremator manufacturers and many more.

"As an urn supplier I am very pleased to have seen positive reactions and major interest from the delegates and visitors to the Exhibition. This has resulted in precious leads creating new business.

"The ICCM Learning Convention & Exhibition is the ideal platform for those of us working in the cremation industry and I have already reserved exhibition space for this year. Can't wait to return and I hope to see you there!"

Vinters Park crematorium 50th anniversary

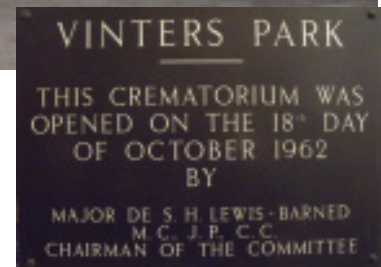
Maidstone Borough Council celebrated 50 years of operations at its Vinters Park Crematorium on November 13th 2012 by inviting guests to join them to commemorate the occasion and also witness the opening of the newly refurbished Book of Remembrance Hall.

David Edwards, Director of Change, Planning and the Environment welcomed the invited guests and spoke about the 50 year history of the crematorium and its aims for the future. Vinters Park Crematorium is owned and operated by Maidstone Borough Council and was opened on 18th October 1962 by Mayor De S. H. Lewis-Barned, Chairman of the Committee. During its 50 years of operation Vinters Park has undertaken almost 84,000 cremations.

Over the years, visually the chapel and site have remained very much the same as they were 50 years ago though there have been many modernisations in the intervening years, all to the benefit of the community and the bereaved.



For example the crematorium has been upgraded with the latest cremators together with mercury abatement equipment to ensure that Maidstone is an environmentally friendly authority. At the same time that this upgrade was taking place Maidstone Borough Council took the opportunity to move the administration office from the small side office attached to the crematorium chapel to the purpose designed offices at the entrance to the site. This new administration office, left, is far better for the bereaved as they can visit the pleasant offices and discuss how best they can commemorate their loved ones without having to go back to the crematorium itself, where they would more than likely have to walk through mourners attending a funeral.



The gardens that surround the crematorium allow for the bereaved to choose a number of ways in which to commemorate their loved ones. There are a generous variety of memorials and eight dedicated areas within the well laid out site where cremated remains may be strewn. For those that desire burial of cremated remains this is also catered for either within the Vinters Park site or a short distance away at the Council's Sutton Road Cemetery.

Maidstone Borough Council has also invested in the Wesley Music System which allows the bereaved to personalise the funeral service with any music of their choice. For those that prefer a more traditional service there is the organ which may be used. The Council has recently been piloting an out of hours booking system which is linked directly to BACAS. Five funeral directors had taken part in the pilot scheme and Paul O'Grady from Maidstone Borough Council's Business Improvement department was on hand to demonstrate the booking system which will now be made available to all funeral directors using Vinters Park Crematorium.



Maidstone Borough Council has recently refurbished the Book of Remembrance Hall. The refurbishment involved the building of a new entrance into what was once the side of the building and replacing the old doors with a large stained glass window that ensures that the Book of Remembrance Hall is light and inviting. The new Hall has been tastefully decorated and incorporates a new electronic version of the Books of Remembrance. The books themselves are displayed in newly designed cabinets that allow for three of the books to be on display.

The Book of Remembrance Hall was officially opened by Maidstone Borough Council Cabinet Member Cllr Marion Ring who cut the ribbon – held in place by Glynis Fell (left) and Sue Pardy (right) from the Bereavement Service staff – with David Edwards far right.



Cllr Marion Ring, right, said: "We strive to ensure cremations are as pleasant an experience as they can be under the circumstances. By making the crematorium as pleasant a place as possible, and the booking of the cremation and the service run smoothly, we can ease the burden on families and friends of someone who has passed away at a difficult time. The memorial areas and the new Book of Remembrance Hall are tranquil areas for remembrance and reflection and we're very proud of the staff at the crematorium and the facilities we provide."

Vinters Park Crematorium has been offering a high quality service to the bereaved for the past 50 years and is set to do so for another 50 years and beyond.

David McCarthy



ICCM Photographic Competition 'Many Shades of Grey'

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

After the success of last year's competition we have launched the 2013 competition. The photograph must have been taken in a cemetery, crematorium, churchyard or natural burial ground.

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 well over 1100 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. (Closing date 30th June.) Colour images will be converted to black and white for judging.

Copyright of all photographs submitted remains with the ICCM who reserve the right to use them without further compensation, restriction on use, attribution or liability.



the spring plantsman

Bob Langford continues to give Journal readers the benefit of his horticultural knowledge in this, the second, of his seasonal Q & A columns.

How can we reduce our slug population explosion?

Following our extremely wet autumn and winter we are about to be plagued with an enormous quantity of slugs and snails. I am constantly being asked how to get rid of them from gardens without using products that are harmful to pets or children.

I say try nematodes, they are natural organisms, already present in our soil. They are not pests, but prey on garden pests giving us natural garden pest controls. There are more species of nematodes than insects and at 500 microns long by 20 microns wide; they are invisible to the human eye.

A natural nematode pest controller available from garden centres and online



Research scientists have isolated the nematode that kills a specific garden pest, whether slugs, vine weevils, chafer grubs, leatherjackets, caterpillars or codling moths. Millions of nematodes are bred to be easily applied by gardeners.

These aggressive organisms attack the pest by entering natural body openings or by penetrating the insect cuticle directly. Once inside, they release bacteria that stops the pest from feeding, quickly killing the pest.

But they do not stop there. The nematodes reproduce inside the dead pest and release a new generation of hungry nematodes, which disperse to hunt down further prey. Once they have killed the pest for which they have been bred they die back to their natural numbers.

They are easy to apply, effective, harmless to children, pets, birds and wildlife. Unlike many chemicals they can assist wildlife in combating pests without posing a risk to wildlife itself – and nematodes are perfectly safe to use on food crops.

Slimy Slug Facts

- Britain is the slug capital of the world.
- Our moist climate without the extremes of hot or cold is ideal for them.
- Each cubic metre of soil contains on average up to 200 slugs.
- Slugs are hermaphrodite (have both male and female sex organs).
- Each slug lays about 300 eggs in batches of up to 50 in crevices in the soil.
- They hatch in 3 weeks in the spring, whilst eggs laid in the autumn can over-winter before hatching.
- Slugs have approximately 25,000 teeth.
- Slugs consume around twice their own body weight each day. If you consider that an average slug weighs 0.1 oz, it will consume an amazing 1.75 lbs of plant material in a growing season.
- Young slugs tend to stay underground, feeding on decaying organic matter. This creates an unseen menace, developing out of sight waiting for young seedlings to be planted.
- Slugs breed all year round. There are two overlapping generations usually with peaks of egg laying in March-April and September-October.



On a personal note, how cheerful and pleasing it is to see the daffodils springing into action this year. I love the way they appear to dance as they sway in the gentle breeze reminding me that the warm sunny days are not far away – hopefully! I tried some different varieties this year and so far have been impressed with the results.



'Sir Winston Churchill' above is a double daffodil with stems to 40cm bearing several fragrant creamy-white flowers with orange segments interspersed. The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) has given it their prestigious Award of Garden Merit (AGM) in recognition of its outstanding excellence, as they also have to the plant below.



'Actaea' has a solitary fragrant flower with spreading pure white perianth segments and a small cup edged with red. It grows up to 45cms, forming a clump of narrow, strap shaped leaves.



'Red Devon' grows to 50cm in height is a solitary flower that has perianth segments of light yellow with a deep orange corona that is frilly at the mouth. Although with little fragrance it is grown for its boldness! These large-cupped daffodils have solitary flowers in which the cup is at least one third as long as, but shorter than, the perianth segments. Another RHS award winner, as is;



'Yellow Cheerfulness' a vigorous grower which will reach 45cms tall with erect foliage and stems holding a cluster of double flowers of golden yellow. The flowers are fragrant and very attractive, well worth the effort.

Make plans now and plant daffodil bulbs this autumn for a colourful, dramatic yet dainty display in spring 2014, and don't forget if you have a particular horticultural problem I am only too happy to try and solve it.

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.

vintage visit; Gwent crematorium



On an earlier visit to Gwent Crematorium it was widely felt by all parties that I wouldn't be able to get my Leyland Beaver around the back of the facility. The alternative route involved driving through the car park and reversing against the traffic flow to meet up with the family, which wasn't without its own dangers.

When I knew that I would be visiting the crematorium again I contacted Miriam Deacon, Duty Manager, and she advised that due to building works it might be tight but I was welcome to try, and she would provide someone to help.

With the first slot in the day booked for the funeral I left home at 0430 hours to get into Newport before the rush-hour started. The journey went well despite a delay at the Old Severn Bridge – not caused by high winds or lane closures but by a lady in the toll booth who was interested in my lorry!

On arrival the coffin was off-loaded to the sound of 'Convoy', which – given the journey through Newport which I did hit during the rush hour despite my best efforts – seemed quite appropriate. Before C. W. McCall (pseudonym of Bill Fries)'s rasping voice had subsided a man behind me said, 'I'm here to help you reverse out.' I asked, 'Why?'. He said, 'You'll never get around the back.' I told what turned out to be a contractor that my father had taught me never to trust anyone and suggested that I would have a look and judge for myself. Luckily Miriam came out and offered the services of Billy Cook, Crematorium Technician, who was brilliant. We looked around the back, shifted a contractor's sign and I took the Leyland through very slowly on tick over with just over 2 inches to spare on each side. Billy then took me to the rest room and made me a welcome cup of tea before I met the family. I would like to thank Miriam and Billy for all that they did for me making my second visit to Gwent most successful.

David Hall

portal almost 10 years old – does your entry need updating?

The UK's largest on-line contact directory for cemeteries and crematoria, available on The Bereavement Services Portal, was launched in 2004 following the success of the Confederation of Burial Authorities (now ICCM Corporate) paper directory.

The directory has been expanded into the most comprehensive listing of active cemeteries, crematoria, and natural burial grounds, together with some closed churchyards. Public and professional usage now reaches nearly 300 hits a day.

Contact details of over 1824 burial authorities and private company operators, 251 crematoria, and 277 natural burial ground operators can be accessed by anyone, and is a free resource. It represents more than 3500 individual sites in England Scotland and Wales. Visitors may use the database to find contact details for bereavement services operators, detailed cremation and burial site information or managers in the industry by clicking the 'Search' buttons.

The information is kept up-to-date by the site operators themselves so if you manage a cemetery, crematorium, or natural burial ground please add or update your details. Contact webmaster, ASSETtrac Ltd, for a secure password, update details by logging in with your existing password or tel: 01403 860063 or email: info@assettrac.co.uk for further help.

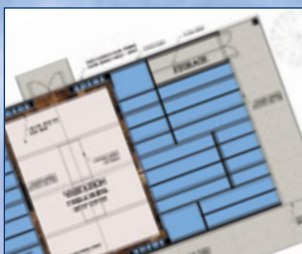


This important resource for the public and your professional colleagues relies on you providing information and inputting the data. Help make 'The Directory' on 'The Bereavement Services Portal' at www.iccm-uk.com as comprehensive as possible.



Still Growing

With over 200 cemetery environmental feasibility studies, 50 designs and numerous other cemetery projects undertaken since establishing in 2004, Cemetery Development Services Ltd have ensured that they remain the leading cemetery design and development company in the UK.



EA Audits, Drainage, Design, Planning Applications, Project Management.

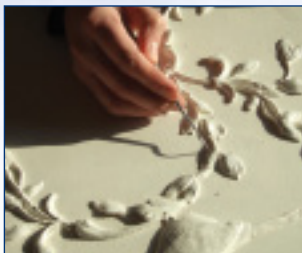
CDSL continue to grow the cemetery feasibility, development business, servicing a fully integrated approach from land searches, EA groundwater audits, topographic surveys, mitigation strategy, design through to project management.

CDSL have taken on new design and landscape staff to ensure the very best of cemetery designs



Mausoleum Design and Build

CDSL have now added the design and construction of large scale community and chapel mausoleum to its portfolio, supplying its sister company MML with world class mausoleum and related products. These include a number of mausoleum projects underway and soon to be completed this year.



Investing in the Future

After a year of significant investment in staff and technology CDSL are now designing and manufacturing bespoke memorials through the use of locally sourced stone ensuring a reduced carbon footprint..

CDSL have designed and engineered a range of cremation niches and burial chambers.

Investing in Cemeteries

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Investing in People

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.



obituary; Ted Appleton 1924-2012

The funeral of Ted Appleton was held on Friday 23rd November 2012 at Portchester Crematorium, Hampshire which Ted managed for nearly thirty years.

Ted was born in Wigan, the son of a coal miner. He began his career at Wigan Cemetery and Crematorium but like so many of his generation it was soon interrupted by the Second World War which saw him serving with RAF Bomber Command. He never spoke of the war years although I later discovered that he had difficult memories from that time.

After the war he resumed his career at Wigan then shortly moved to Leicester City Council's Gilroes Cemetery and Crematorium. I remember him telling me that at Leicester he received his first official transport – a bike! By this time he had married Rene his beloved wife and after a few years he was on the move again this time to Cheltenham Cemetery and Crematorium as Deputy Superintendent. Here he worked for Phillip Higginson – a man Ted greatly admired and styled his own management skills on – who produced several crematorium managers from his Cheltenham stable including Bert Howcroft late of Norwich.



Ted was appointed the first Superintendent and Registrar of the new crematorium at Portchester in 1957, which duly opened the following year. I remember him telling me that when he arrived to look at the site, on the day of the interviews, he stood on the little railway bridge at Upper Cornaway Lane and surveyed the crematorium under construction, amidst what was then fields with distant views to Portsmouth harbour, and thought 'this is for me'. Under his guidance the facility grew from infancy to become one of the very busiest in the U.K. (By the time of his retirement more than 4,000 cremations were taking place each year.)

Ted was very much of the old school always appearing for work in black jacket and striped trousers, white shirt and black tie. Much revered in the local community he was regarded on a par with the local vicar or doctor – how times have changed! His attention to detail and concern for the bereaved meant that he was always looking for perfection in the service offered to the public.

Very much 'hands on' as a manager, he would cover any role in the absence of staff including cremating.

A lifelong member of the ICCM he was a regular attendee at conferences with his committee chairman.

In his spare time Ted was a keen gardener and active member of the local amateur dramatics group. He was also a keen follower of horse racing with an in-depth knowledge of the sport.

I began working for Ted in 1978 and succeeded him in 1984, by which time James Clark, the current manager, had already joined the team and subsequently succeeded me in 1989. Ted had retired in 1984 at the age of 60. He purchased a house very near the crematorium and, following the death of Rene, lived alone. He is survived by son Steven, daughter Sharon, grandchildren Kayleigh, Janine, Benjamin and Rory and great grandchild Bradley – pictured above with Ted.

It was a privilege to work for Ted. He was a true professional and much of what I know about this industry I learnt in the crucible that was Portchester Crematorium at that time.

Chris Johns

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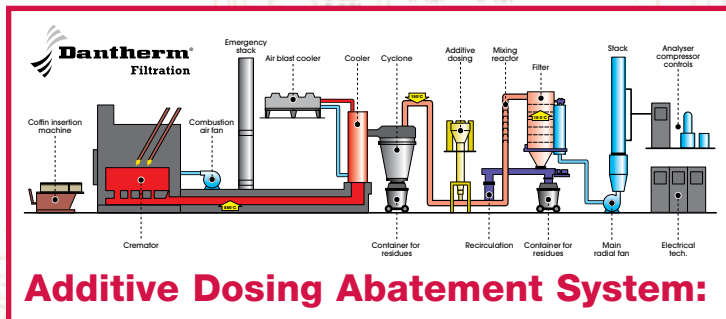
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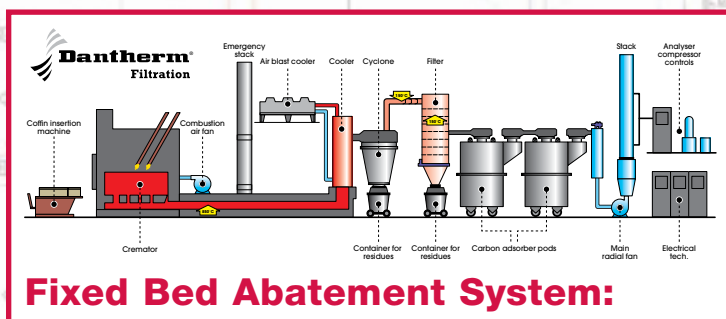
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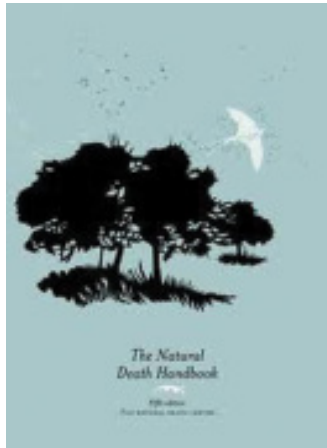
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booked: the natural death handbook fifth edition



Authors: Ru Callender, Lara Dinius-Inman, Rosie Inman-Cook, Michael Jarvis, Dr John Mallatratt, Susan Morris, Judith Pidgeon and Brett Walwyn

Publication date: 2012

Published by the Natural Death Centre (www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

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£24

The Natural Death Handbook has come a long way since it was first published in 1993. The fifth edition comprises not only a thoroughly revised handbook, but two companion volumes: one titled *Writing on Death* and the other a directory of natural burial grounds, funeral directors and suppliers.

Dividing the huge amount of material into three separate texts is sensible, as is their presentation in an attractive case, complete with a black ribbon to aid their removal.

The handbook consists of eleven chapters. After a foreword by Professor Tony Walter of the University of Bath, the introduction is a succinct but comprehensive overview that traces the rise of the natural death movement, while the tenacious work of Nicholas Albery, the Natural Death Centre's late co-founder, is given much credit.

Of note is the material detailing growth of the movement in countries such as the USA and Australia. Other chapters then focus on care of the dying and dealing with the body, before discussing family-organised and inexpensive funerals, along with interment on private land and in natural burial grounds. The last chapter covers loss, grief and bereavement.

Three overall comments can be made about the contents of the handbook. First, the text contains much practical wisdom about funerals from the perspective of those wishing to 'do something different'. The writing is straightforward and clear, particularly the chapters on natural burial grounds (chapter 10) and bereavement (chapter 11). The latter encapsulates very well what other writers take many pages to say.

Secondly, some of the text makes the task of planning and carrying out everything involved in a funeral sound quite easy: the friendly style of writing belies the emotional and practical intensity of 'going it alone'. Whilst this issue is acknowledged, the point must be emphasised that a strong-willed and supportive network of family and/or friends needs to exist to take on tasks such as body removal, digging a grave and dealing with bureaucracy, along with the possibility of disagreements and tensions.

Lastly, the book encourages questions to be asked about funerals and the work of the funeral director, whether they are utilised or not. Scrutiny of any occupation is the prerogative of the consumer: *caveat emptor*. The handbook encourages those needing to engage a funeral director to give thought to the funeral before making contact. The book is not alone in urging this, as its publisher, the Natural

Death Centre, now has a facility where reviews of funeral directors can be submitted (www.funeraladvisor.com), in a similar fashion to those commenting about a hotel. Time will tell on how this will be received by the industry. However, consumers can only do this with neutral and balanced information. Whilst on the whole this is to be found in the handbook, it is the section on embalming that raises eyebrows, as some claims are based on anecdote rather than evidence. Chapter 9 states that embalming involves pumping the body with 'toxic and tinted chemicals . . . [then] entering the ground . . .'. However, this is not supported by peer-reviewed, published research. Neither is the assertion that embalmed bodies can sometimes leave a 'damaging lasting impression on the bereaved' or that 'funeral directors, especially the larger groups, embalm as a matter of routine, without the families understanding the full implications of the process.' Such criticisms can only be substantiated by research.

The volume *Writing on Death* is a compilation of sixteen essays by contributors who have an interest in death, dying and disposal. The subjects range from death masks and ideas for a modern hospice to the psychedelic experiences of the dying and music-thanatology. Apart from mortality there is no common theme, however, Ru Callender's introduction reveals that he selected them as they all have something to say about their area of interest. The introduction contains some insightful biographical details of the writers. Readers involved in the wider field of funeral service may be mildly provoked or entertained by the chapters entitled 'Dancing around the bonfire' and 'The new priests: secular celebrants and ceremonies.'

The fact that *The Natural Death Handbook* is now in its fifth edition proves that there is much interest in the final rite of passage. Such literature helps create awareness that funerals can be planned according to specific needs. What is clear is that the natural death movement, and all it brings, is here to stay.

Dr Brian Parsons

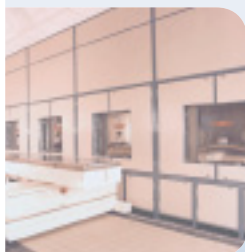


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the long journey to my first iccm branch meeting

Chris Bowring reflects on how he first became aware of what we do and, more recently, on attending the Learning Convention and a South East Branch Meeting.

It all started nearly 30 years ago when I first met Heather, now my wife, and Chris Johns – one of your past ICCM Presidents – when they were working together at the Portchester Crematorium between 1978 and 1984 when Heather left. At that time I was working for IBM and, in all honesty, working at a crematorium or cemetery never struck me as the sort of occupation with which I would choose to become involved or associated! It was probably the same for most of you!

Looking back, that impression was almost entirely due to my experiences with crematoria and cemeteries having been as a visitor in times of sadness. What I never stopped to consider was what goes on behind the scenes to make an emotional occasion one that is memorable for all the right reasons.

Roll on a few decades and, together with my experiences with the ICCM in 2012, I am now a lot wiser and how my views have changed.

In recent years, my wife has been commissioned to do some paintings for Chris Johns' two new crematoria at Braintree and East Devon (Ottery St Mary), pictured below, and I was fortunate enough to be invited to both dedication services.



During conversation, Chris and I were talking about my business interests in "Mediation, Training and Consultancy", and he asked whether I would be interested in presenting a paper at the 2012 ICCM Learning Convention on "Mediation in the Workplace".

Given that workplace and/or family mediation is all about resolving conflict between employees, employers, businesses and families, it sounded like a perfect opportunity to speak about the benefits of mediation to an audience I would never have considered. What I wasn't prepared for in any way was how much I would learn about your business and, most amazingly, the attitudes, personalities and sincerity of the people I have met. It has been fantastic, to say the least.

I arrived at your Convention late in the afternoon on Monday 1st October, slightly apprehensive and not at all sure what to expect. The Forest Pines Hotel in Lincolnshire is a lovely venue and, having checked in, I first met the ICCM Events Manager Julie Dunk, who turned out to be the perfect host.

It wasn't long before my eyes were opened as to the scale of a business that basically surrounds death. A subject that I might previously have found to be morbid, suddenly became fascinating, emotional, comforting and probably many other things as well. In any other context it might be insensitive to say that it all "came alive".



My first evening couldn't have been more welcoming, sitting at the same table with then newly appointed ICCM President Natasha Bradshaw, along with Sue Ireland, Gary Burks and Peter Hardwick amongst others. Our table came 2nd in the quiz organised by Martin Birch, an added bonus given that I have never before been in the top 3 in any quiz!

On the following days of Tuesday and Wednesday I found myself becoming engrossed in papers where the subjects ranged from "Radio active implants and cremation", "Building future cemeteries", "Simple cremation and choice" and "Death of the socially undesirable" [reproduced on page 8]. There was also the horrific story that Tim Morris covered regarding a 'natural' coffin not loading smoothly into the cremator, and to hear just how quickly draft regulations were drawn up to prevent any future occurrence.

If that wasn't enough, I found myself talking to some of the people in the exhibition area where the stands ranged from how to design whole new cemeteries, to decorative urns and jewellery, to the most beautiful woollen coffins for babies. What a cross section of topics and what an education. ►

During the various breaks in the proceedings I was also able to meet and talk with a great number of people. From a business point of view I learnt that there are the usual trials and tribulations of dealing with staff, other companies, suppliers, the public, facilities and general bureaucracy but what was most obvious was that the people I spoke with all seem to have incredibly large and caring personalities. And some even know the words of the Maori Haka – a great performance Blue!

Towards the end of the Convention, Natasha very kindly invited me to attend the next ICCM meeting of the South East Branch, of which she is secretary. It was held on 3rd November and kindly hosted by Howard Greenoff, pictured below, at Kingston Cemetery and Crematorium.



Kingston are Gold Standard Charter for the Bereaved holders, and using this as a management tool they have really improved services to the bereaved. Choice for families was apparent in everything they do from grave types to different types of urns and their service provision.

This is a beautiful location, with manicured lawns, carefully tended gardens and an overwhelming sense of dignity and respect. I added another aspect to my education with the tour around the crematory and learning about abatement and what it means. Not a cheap process, that's for sure. The 'business' part of meeting itself, chaired by Southampton CC's Linda Francis, right, was very informal and I was able to understand some of the discussions based on my visit to the Convention.



Mike Grimwood, below right, gave a presentation on green coffins and the ICCM guidance – one of his last duties after 10 years as Bereavement Services Manager with Ipswich Borough Council. Mike is staying with the authority but as their Community Safety and Licensing Operations Manager.



Kevin Pilkington from the London Borough of Croydon, above left, thanked Mike for all his work for bereavement services and his staunch support of the ICCM. [Mike's swan song for *The Journal* 'Replacing, abating and refurbishing at Ipswich' starts on page 56.] ICCM CEO Tim Morris updated members on several topics including reuse and radioactive implants.

What was very clear to me was how it is like being part of a big family where you may not see one another for months or years, but when you all get together you are catching up on events, people, and business, and reminiscing on previous times.



It was wonderful to meet Geoff Scrutton and his wife Mary. Geoff, worked for the London Borough of Wandsworth from 1959 until retirement in 1985 and hosted his first SE Branch Meeting at the Town Hall in 1961. Geoff and Mary have been regular attendees of the meetings for over 50 years – an exemplary attendance record. The Branch presented Mary with a card and a bouquet of flowers in celebration of her forthcoming 80th birthday.

As for lunch at the local restaurant “Fat Boys”, that was an experience that I would love to repeat but certainly not every day!



Where will my journey take me next? Well, I have recently been over to Mortlake Crematorium to meet with Natasha again to discuss a number of things and hopefully, in the not too distant future, I will attend some regional meetings to present a bit more on mediation related topics which may be recorded in future issues of *The Journal*. Time will tell.

And finally, thank you to Chris Johns for the initial invitation, to all of you who I met at the Convention and the SE Branch Meeting, to Natasha for some very interesting and enlightening conversations, and to the ICCM in general.

I hope to meet with many of you again but, if not, I have thoroughly enjoyed my experiences and for that I feel very fortunate. Thank you.

Chris Bowring



holding coffins over – energy savings 2003-04 to 2011-12

The potential desirability of ‘holding over’ – not cremating all coffins on the same day as the funeral service – first started being talked about in the 1990s in connection with emerging concerns about the use of the world’s resources and sustainability, the environment, and the likely effect on the cost of energy. For understandable reasons this was, and still is, a relatively controversial issue. After hearing Ken West talking on the subject at a Branch Meeting some years ago Charles Howlett was finally convinced of the need to take action, and this is the story of what has happened at Chilterns Crematorium as a result.

On Christmas Eve I was reading some statistics in the winter 2012 edition of *Pharos* showing that 51% of crematoria do not hold cremations over from the previous day (and there are another 5.7% where it isn’t known whether they hold over or not). However, at the same time I was interested to read that 40% of crematoria do hold over.

I did some quick calculations, looking at our energy consumption in 2003-04, which was the last year we were still cremating all coffins on the same day as the funeral service, compared with last year 2011-12. The figures are only indicative as we don’t have separate meters for the cremators, and also in that time we have doubled the size of the building (our second funeral chapel opened in 2005), replaced the electric under-floor heating system in the original part of the building with radiators (2009), and installed cremator filtration and a heat exchanger (2011). That said, I compared the energy used in KWH in 2003-04 with the energy used in 2011-12 and what it would cost at the current price, as follows:-

Year	2003-2004	2011- 2012
No. of cremations	3,065	3,118
Cremation policy	All cremations carried out on the same day as the service	Cremations carried over for up to 72 hours
Amount of gas used @ 2.98p per KWH	2,811,651 KWH = £83,787	1,411,442 KWH = £42,060
Amount of electricity used @ 10.30p per KWH	225,169 KWH = £23,192	148,924 KWH = £15,339
Total energy used	3,036,820 KWH	1,560,366 KWH
Total cost	£106,979	£57,399

There is a further saving which I am unable to calculate so easily. By holding over we have been able to reduce the number of cremators we need from four to three, saving on maintenance costs. In turn, removing the redundant cremator created the space to install the filtration equipment. Without this space we would have had to build an extension.

As far as the bereaved are concerned, the cremation authority has been able to take into account the effect of the combined savings in capital and running expenses when setting the cremation fee each year, which (currently £490) remains below average for the UK.

How holding over works

The principle is a fairly straightforward one. When we were cremating all coffins on the day of the funeral we might not get the first coffin until, say, 11.30am, but in order to cremate every coffin received during the rest of the day we often had to switch all four cremators on, and even then staff were working overtime to finish. The energy used to pre-heat the cremators, and during ‘idling’ time before the next coffin came off the catafalque, was substantial. Worse still, having expended the energy to get the fourth cremator up to working temperature it might only be required for one or two cremations, and then there might be a two day gap before it was needed again. In energy terms this is a very wasteful way of managing the operation of cremators – costly financially, costly in the use of non-renewable resource (energy) and costly for the environment through the excessive production of carbon dioxide.

A much more efficient way to operate a cremator is to put as many cremations through it as you can in a day. To do this you need to start cremating first thing in the morning (I’ve got our crematorium attendants well trained to make their cup of tea after they’ve got the first cremations underway!), and you need to have enough coffins available during the day to ensure there is no ‘idling’ time between cremations. You can only consistently do this by holding coffins over from the previous day’s funerals.



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Getting started – consultation and handling potential opposition

I believe one of the main issues that hold cremation authorities back may be concerns about potential opposition and to my knowledge, where this has happened, it usually comes from funeral directors. I can understand this, particularly if funeral directors believe it may affect the service they receive. I also think we human beings are often naturally averse to change, and as 'same day' cremation was first enshrined in the FBCA Code of Cremation Practice as long ago as 1945, and commonly practiced even earlier than that, then holding over is quite a significant change to get used to.

Many months before actual implementation, and with the backing in principle of the Crematorium Management Committee, we started telling people we were thinking about holding over and why – in newsletters, at the annual liaison meeting and an open day. This enabled them to ask questions and raise any potential drawbacks or other issues for discussion. In this way, by the time we put the policy into practice we had been able to allay many of the concerns and everyone had got used to the idea. Once in operation funeral directors quickly realised that, for example, if they made arrangements in advance families could still witness a coffin being charged into a cremator, or when necessary have the cremation ashes ready to take away four hours after the funeral or at 9am the next morning – in other words, 'business as usual'.

Holding over in practice

1. Administration

We are fully transparent about our holding over policy – it is in accordance with the ICCM's Guiding Principles of Cremation (up to 72 hours) displayed in our office reception area, printed in various items of literature and on our web site, and most significantly it is on our application form where the applicant is asked to sign a 'statement of understanding' (see fig.1 page 48) acknowledging, amongst other things, the fact that not all coffins are cremated on the day of the funeral. We always insist that we have this 'statement of understanding' signed in every case, to the extent that when we get funerals coming from outside our 'normal' area we ask funeral directors to download the form from our website, or we send it to them by email or fax.

2. Coffin storage

When I was first considering holding over I went to visit one of the pioneers of the process, Kevin Browne, at Bramcote Crematorium in Nottinghamshire, to see what he was doing. There are obvious ethical and practical concerns – nothing is more likely to bring the policy into disrepute than to have coffins stacked around the crematory in a higgledy-piggledy fashion and without any regard to the potential onset of decomposition.

With regard the latter point, Kevin was able to put my mind at rest. Although he had installed refrigeration he said that in practice it had proved largely unnecessary. Kevin pointed out that the majority of bodies are either embalmed, which delays the onset of decay at normal room temperatures, or stored at the funeral directors in a mortuary refrigerator. In the case of the latter, a closed coffin is a relatively effective insulator, keeping a body cool for some time after it has been removed from the refrigerator. Conversely, placing a coffin in a refrigerator at the crematorium for 24/36 hours is unlikely to have much affect on the body inside. All in all it seems that for the relatively short timescales involved refrigeration is not necessary/effective and therefore, in view of the fact that it also uses a lot of energy, its installation could be considered counterproductive.



In the light of what I learnt we decided not to install a mortuary refrigerator. Instead we built a bespoke insulated enclosure, pictured above, with a roller-shutter door, containing racking for 9 coffins and a small air conditioner sufficient to lower the temperature if coffins are held for more than 36 hours in very hot summer weather. In practice not many coffins are held for this long, particularly in the summer (and when do we ever get hot summer weather in England?!) so, as Kevin predicted, the air conditioner has been little used without any problems being experienced.



After checking the nameplate, coffins are placed on the racking with the signed instructions to cremate taped onto them.

The crematorium attendants also check to ensure any special instructions are adhered to e.g. the cremation ashes required by a particular time, and use a simple marking system (a coloured felt-tip pen) to ensure coffins held longest are cremated before those only recently stored.

3. Planning cremator use

At the beginning of each week the crematorium attendant on cremating duty uses the 'cremators calculator' form (see fig.2 page 50) to work out how many cremators he needs to use and when. At Chilterns the four crematorium attendants work on a 4 week rota, with staggered start and finishing times, enabling the crematory to be staffed for 12 hours each week day (and 9 hours on Saturday). We have learnt from experience that using both the automatic pre-heat and automatic close-down facility we can carry out six and often seven cremations a day in a cremator.

Remembering that for maximum efficiency we need to keep a cremator cremating all day, then using the 'calculator' form the attendant can work through different scenarios with one, two (or three) cremators to see how many coffins this leaves at the end of each day to keep the cremator(s) working the next morning before the funerals begin. If the calculation shows that we need to start a second (or third) cremator for only one day's cremating then a few hours overtime are worked instead – hence the columns for 14 and 16 hours on the form – because from trials we have carried out we know that the cost of gas for pre-heating and running a cremator from cold for only one day exceeds the cost of six to eight hours overtime.

In practice usually only one cremator is used at the beginning of the week, with a second started up on Wednesday or Thursday depending how busy we are; both are then used for the rest of the week. The last time all three cremators were needed for any length of time was in January/February 2009 (which was before Steve Gould from Bournemouth Crematorium taught us how to use 'auto stop'). In effect, in 2003-2004 we carried out 3,000+ cremations in four cremators and now we are carrying out the same number of cremations in two cremators.

View of the crematory with the Evans 300/2 cremators installed in 1997 and on the left the screen around the retrofitted filtration plant installed in 2011. The screen is for aesthetic reasons when mourners come into the crematory to witness the coffin being charged.



Cremator No.2 and to the immediate left of it can be seen the end of the boiler which was slotted into the space vacated by the redundant No.1 cremator. To the very left is the edge of the screen surrounding the filter which stands in the space previously required to charge No.1 cremator.



Conclusion

I remember when we first started consulting about holding over a funeral director had particular concerns about the security of bodies being held at our premises overnight. I discussed this with him. I pointed out that bodies were also held at his premises and I asked him about his security arrangements. Did he have a monitored intruder alarm system? Did he have a monitored fire alarm system? When he said that he didn't, as we did, I politely suggested that perhaps in security terms the sooner his bodies were transferred to our premises the better! He got the point, and to be fair I think when he thought about it he realised that it was just that he'd been a funeral director for a long time and 'same day' cremation was what he was used to.

I'm happy for our procedures and storage facilities to be inspected at any time – I believe them entirely ethical. So far, in eight years, no negative incidents have occurred as a result of the policy and no one has complained. The economic and environmental arguments for holding over are increasingly compelling and so I wonder why 50% of the countries crematoria are still not doing it?

Charles Howlett

Holding coffins over – energy savings 2003-04 to 2011-12 figure 1.

CHILTERNS CREMATORIUM INFORMATION ABOUT OUR SERVICES

Cremation Procedure

The Chilterns Crematorium abides by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management's Guiding Principles for Cremation and The Charter for The Bereaved. Copies of these documents are available from your Funeral Director or by contacting the Crematorium on 01494 724263, or looking on the web site www.chilternscrematorium.co.uk.

Cremation within 72 hours

Cremators use a lot of gas and electricity. For technical reasons excessive energy can be used if all cremations are carried out on the same day as the funeral service. In order to reduce costs and the impact on our environment by ensuring better use of energy and minimizing carbon dioxide emissions ('greenhouse gas') the cremation may be delayed, sometimes by up to three days, although **the majority of cremations are carried out on the same day or the day after the funeral service.**

Recycling of Metals

All metals remaining following cremation will be sent for recycling. Disposing of these metals by recycling helps to reduce the impact on our environment, avoids the use of non-renewable resources and complies with waste-management legislation. The metals recovered are recycled through a national scheme with the net profits going to death related charities. Please see the Recycling of Metals leaflet provided by the Crematorium for further information. Should you wish to dispose of the metals in any other way then please tick the box and the metals will be returned to you. ☐

Floral Tributes

An area is provided at the Crematorium for the display of floral tributes following a funeral service, where they can remain until they are disposed of by staff on Monday mornings, or as soon as possible thereafter following Public Holidays. However, please note that unfortunately the Joint Committee and its staff **cannot accept any responsibility for floral tributes left at the crematorium** before, during, or after a funeral service.

Commemoration

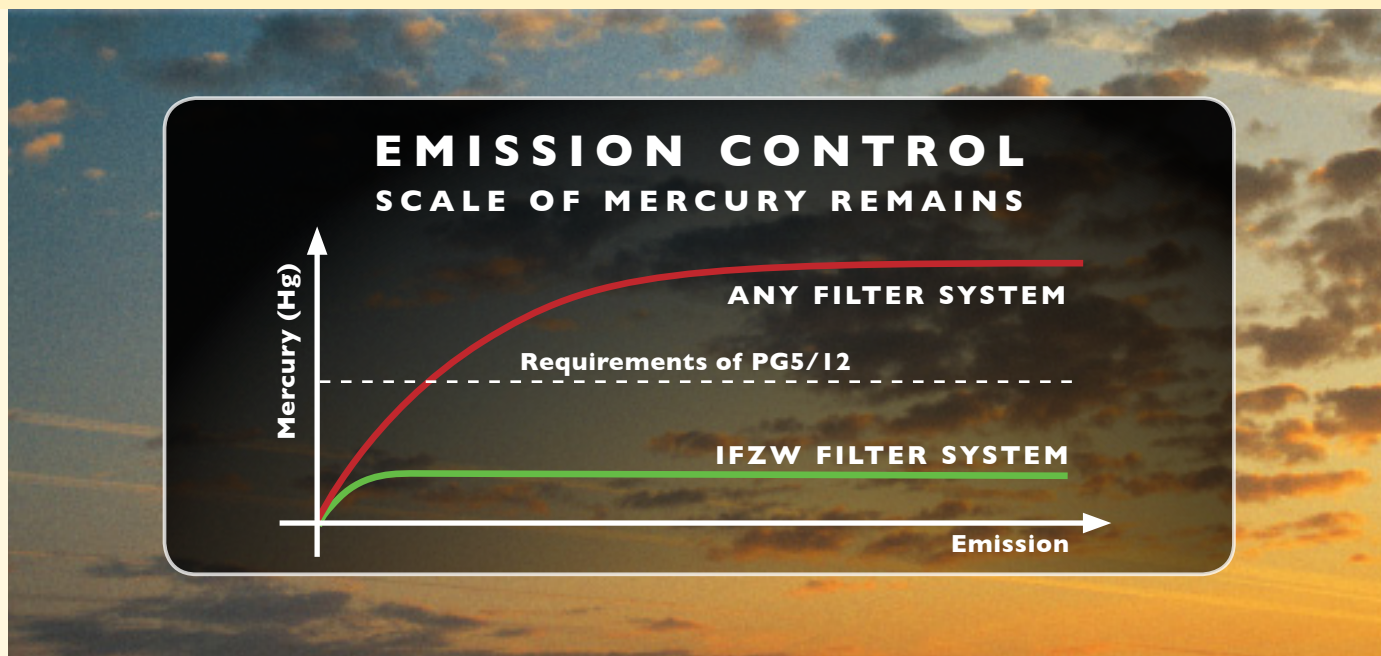
Details of commemoration will be sent to the applicant for cremation a few days after the funeral service. Please be aware that you are under no obligation to purchase any memorial, and the letter is sent for your information only. If you **do not** require this information please tick the box. ☐

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

I have read and understood the information above about cremation procedure, cremation within 72 hours, recycling of metals, floral tributes and commemoration.

Date..... Signature of Applicant.....

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Holding coffins over – energy savings 2003-04 to 2011-12 figure 2.

CHILTERNS CREMATORIUM USE OF CREMATORS CALCULATOR

For week beginning Calculated on Time.....

Allow 2 hours per cremation cycle, 12 hours minimum day, start cremators with highest retained heat from the previous week and once started use continuously for the remainder of the week.

Number of coffins carried over from the previous week

Number of Working Hours			12		14		16	
Day	Total crems & time first coffins available	No of cremators	No of crems	C/O	No of crems	C/O	No of crems	C/O
MON		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
TUES		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
WED		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
THURS		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
FRI		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
SAT		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						

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- Flood Risk Assessments

Bereavement Services

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

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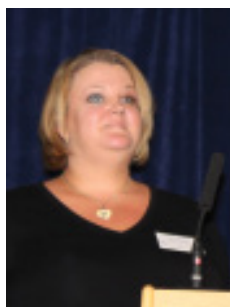
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dealing with challenging funerals



From a presentation by Kate Dimmock to delegates at the ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition, Forest Pines Hotel, Broughton, North Lincolnshire on 1st October 2012.

I, like many others, fell into this line of work. I never had a burning desire to work for a local authority, and it was never an ambition to

work in bereavement. However, as my parents will quite happily tell anybody, I have always had a 'worrying' fixation with the macabre and been predisposed to wear black! My first foray into bereavement care was working for a memorial mason and then into what I do now as the Cemetery Officer for Dunstable Town Council. This is my 14th year in bereavement and I'm still not sure how I got here, let alone what I want to do when I grow up!!

I attended my first ICCM Conference (as it was called then) in 2009 and soon after was 'bounced' by those who shall remain nameless (Julie and Blue!) into giving a paper at the next. I wriggled out of that quite well claiming Diploma studies made me far too busy. Last year, having just completed my Diploma, I was having a discrete flap in the opening session of the now named Learning Convention having received text notification from my local police about traffic chaos in Dunstable due to a traveller funeral. A couple of people said 'you could do a paper on that'....so here I am.

I did dither over the subject....'Dealing with Challenging Funerals'.... where to start on that topic. The one with the witches hat? The 'minimalist' one where the minister held the entire graveside service in one sentence saying "We are all gathered here today to say good bye to Fred. Good bye."? No, on reflection, traveller funerals seemed the way to go.

Dunstable Cemetery opened in 1861. The site covers approximately 17 acres and we average about 115 burials a year. Funerals for the 'traveller community' as we know it today, began in the late 1960s, and since I started in January 2008 we have buried seventeen 'travellers'.

There is a general perception that travellers are all the same, and that they are 'trouble', to say the least. I can honestly say I have found this assumption to be incorrect; although there are, of course (as in any community), the exceptions that prove the rule.

Travellers, like many other ethnic groups, have rituals surrounding death. The deceased will be taken home the night before the funeral and members of the extended family will keep an all night vigil around the body. In my area this is known as 'bideing up'. During this time the immediate family will not cook (rather like Jewish families sitting Shiva), and will only drink black coffee or hard liquor.

Like all funerals, traveller funerals vary in size and content enormously. From the reasonably restrained hearse and 4,5 or 6, to the ones you know will be hassle from the start, to white hearse and 14 white stretch limousines or a horsedrawn.....but with a team of 6 (the same ones that took Jordan to one of her weddings). They also have all the usual 'bolt-ons', but more so. Why settle for releasing a pair of doves when you can release a dozen? We've even had a funeral where a member of the funeral director's staff walked in front of the hearse scattering rose petals from church to grave.

The one thing they all have in common is the amount of planning involved.

When I first started at Dunstable I had no previous knowledge or experience of traveller funerals and soon found out that they 'happened' in a big way. The cemetery would be packed full of vehicles from stupid o'clock in the morning, cars and vans were parked anywhere and everywhere, traffic through the town would be a nightmare, the cemetery would become a 'no-go' area for non-travellers, the hearse would be unable to leave the cemetery, the day would be a write-off, and the following week or so would be spent fielding complaints.



For me the secret of a successful funeral is communication with all parties, and this applies even more so with traveller families. If everyone involved is aware of everything that will or might happen there will be no nasty surprises on the day, hopefully. For a number of years we relied on goodwill and relatively limited communication and it worked – to a point.

Then we had the wake-up call; a funeral which did not involve one of our 'usual' traveller families.

The family didn't want to visit the cemetery and the funeral director had never done a traveller funeral before. The deceased was a girl in her twenties, an unexplained death. I'll be honest here – I had a cemetery full of vehicles, the hearse couldn't move, her father collapsed, her twin sister flung herself into the grave, the funeral director lost control, the shoring was kicked down the grave, and we – the staff out on the ground – had no way to communicate with each other. 'Chaos' does not even come close to describing the scenario. I have no qualms about admitting I was scared. Obviously something had to change. We now micro-manage any large funeral.

A check list (currently three pages and growing) has been developed and is used whenever a large funeral, and especially a traveller funeral, is booked. The list is used in conjunction with standard paperwork and helps to keep track of who has asked who what and what the answers were.

It starts with the basics – name, address, age etc. – same as any other funeral, but many travellers have a number of names, that's before we even get into aliases. It is important that we are aware of all of these; one lady's funeral was booked under her different names on different dates with different FDs until we realised! 'Address' is another which sounds simple, but has hidden depths. The majority of traveller families have multiple abodes and what we class as the home address is not necessarily that which a traveller family would. Like many other authorities we have a two tier fees structure for burials – with resident fees being less than those for non-residents, which does lead to some interesting conversations!

The way in which we receive notification of an impending burial involving the traveller community varies hugely. Sometimes we get a phone call from a funeral director... but only sometimes. I have a very good relationship with all my local FDs, but an especially good one with Jackie who is the funeral arranger of choice at one of the larger companies in my area. Jackie is sometimes accosted in the street or supermarket by travellers who want advice, or to pass on thanks, or to let her know they'll be coming to see her soon.

Sometimes we hear from travellers visiting graves that 'so-and-so' is dying....(which gives us the heads up) and occasionally we hear from a family member that they're visiting someone who is dying.

But the usual way we find out is when male family members turn up (always when I'm either up to my eyes in paperwork, or worse, with another family) and tell me that 'Big John's little brother' has died. The first time this happened, I was terrified. When half a dozen large men pile out from a couple of transits and say they're 'looking for the woman who does the cemetery' honestly, your life

flashes before your eyes, your mouth goes dry and the only thought in your head is 'why me?'. But experience has taught me that this first contact with the direct family is very important; this is where the cemetery plans come out and the way forward is discussed. The vast majority of travellers who choose to be buried at Dunstable have pre-purchased graves, and the few who don't inevitably want to be buried as close to other family members as possible so it's a case of seeing who owns the rights to what, and whether it's possible for the grave to be near to so-and-so. It is also our big chance to meet the male head of the family, and to get them onside. In gypsy and traveller culture the male head of the family will take the lead, and what he says goes. They can make life very easy, or incredibly difficult!

The next thing on the list is type of grave, depth, section, etc. Many non-travellers say we ought to have a designated 'traveller' section, like some cemeteries have Muslim sections, but the travelling communities we serve are from very different and distinct roots. We have Irish travellers who are Catholic and buried in unconsecrated ground, we have English travellers who prefer consecrated ground and we have some travellers of Romany descent who also prefer consecrated ground. Although, having said that, there are givens which apply regardless of the faith or creed of the families.

In our cemetery a traveller's grave will, 9 times out of 10, be a brick one, the deceased will, without fail, be buried in an American casket, and the right to purchase the adjacent grave space is usually exercised.



Brick graves are graves in which a brick chamber has been constructed – they take up the space of two earth graves. The average size we dig to for a traveller plot is 6ft wide by 8ft long. Any grave to be bricked needs to be dug out at least a week in advance to allow for the bricking and for the brickwork to 'go off'. The families prefer to do the brickwork themselves, and our 'usual' families are very good about understanding our health and safety

requirements, wear PPE (personal protective equipment) and take good care of themselves and our apparatus. But we do have clashes over when the bricking is to be done. Families would prefer to brick over a weekend – something we will not permit. However good the planning, there are occasions when 'blips' occur – like when shuttering wasn't used when the base was poured and our shoring was concreted in to the grave. After the brickwork has set the family will normally return to 'dress' the grave a couple of days before the funeral. The walls will be painted, carpet laid, pictures hung.....



Our checklist also covers the not so obvious....how did the deceased die? Knowing this helps us to gauge the mood of the mourners. In the same way as knowing the age and status of the deceased the cause of death also gives a clue about the number of mourners expected – exactly how many limousines have been ordered? (numbers again), special requests? If we know we're expecting 20 doves to be released or hundreds of balloons we can prepare. Likewise with horses; a team of 2 is one thing and we can handle that with little or no notice, but a team of six needs a little more planning; access and turning circles need to be checked.

Have the local police been informed? Traffic in Dunstable doesn't flow easily at the best of times so if you add upwards of 100 slow-moving vehicles and possibly horses into the mix – all trooping down the A5 or through the centre of town – it's better if the police are aware. If the family are coming any distance we may need to inform police in neighbouring counties. Are any of Her Majesty's 'guests' expected? If so, how many and what sort of escort? We'd much rather know in advance than have a nasty surprise on the day!

I also ask for (and get) at least one further meeting with whoever is the family 'lead', and one with the funeral director who will be there on the day. These meetings are at the cemetery and are to ensure that all parties are aware of what will happen, how it will happen and what restrictions and expectations there are. This is also when we get a

further idea of numbers. Traveller funerals are very well attended and even a low-key one will have several hundred in attendance which can mean the staff on the ground feel isolated and have difficulty in communicating as I mentioned earlier. To overcome this, we have walkie-talkies. It may seem excessive but has helped no end.

We exclude all vehicles from the cemetery when any funeral is coming in.....usually we close off half-an-hour or so before the hearse is due. But for traveller funerals we extend this to all day. I've had a cemetery full of vehicles at 9am for a traveller funeral at 2pm.

We always maintain pedestrian access, and are currently able to provide plenty of alternative parking in what will be our extension. The only vehicles allowed through are the hearse, limousines and the flower lorries, which we take on a long route to the grave so they can form up with the hearse pointing towards the way out. This allows us to keep a 'blue route' through the cemetery, just in case!

Traveller families like to seal off the burial chamber and either backfill the grave themselves, or to watch while it's being done. We always try to accommodate any requests, but a full backfill is rarely possible. We remove all spoil from the graveside when digging, which means it is brought back in by machine. The sheer number of people present, which includes large numbers of children and young adults, coupled with their complete relaxation around large plant machinery means it would be very dangerous to do a full backfill. If this is explained to the family beforehand, they know what to expect, and understand why.

After the funeral, the grave will be a sea of flowers for anything from a week (if the family had fresh flowers) to several months (if the floral tributes were silk). Travellers do not like to see a grave which is just bare earth and until a memorial can be placed will go to great lengths to keep the grave tidy and neat, covering it with carpet, chippings, a frame and lots of tributes. Fresh flowers will be cleared and replaced weekly.





The grave will also be visited daily, sometimes several times a day, especially morning and evening, for anything from 3 or 4 months up to a year or even longer. It becomes a gathering place for the family, especially during the first year when those all important first anniversaries arrive.

Then comes the memorial. Sometimes the application will arrive, from the mason, in the usual way. Sometimes there will be a 'phone call and the mason will ask to come and see me. However it arrives, the application will be about 5 pages long. I go through it with a fine tooth comb; this is where having worked for a memorial mason helps. I query everything. For instance a design of 'leaves'....I check what sort of leaves (a predecessor didn't and we now have a lovely traveller memorial with cannabis leaves on the back). Likewise 'birds'....feathered or page 3?



The inscription will invariably be long and will cover many different parts of the memorial and the memorial will be larger than most non-traveller memorials, although we now cap the height at 6'6", and will have a good selection of 'bolt-ons' – solar lamps, statues, books to take additional inscriptions, photo plaques, gilded railings, posts and chains. Less most definitely is not more! The memorial will be erected for the first anniversary of the death and the family will usually be present when it is fitted, which does tend to make the mason nervous.

The traveller graves we have are beautifully maintained and visited regularly. We do get complaints from some people about the car park being full of vans or horses and carts at the weekends.



Many are very quick to point the finger at the travellers when anything is stolen from a grave but the travellers graves are also targeted by petty thieves. Whilst many are quick to complain about things in the cemetery, the travellers are actually pro-active. For instance, we have water troughs rather than taps and one weekend in August someone had appropriated the ballcocks from a couple of them, meaning they constantly overflowed. On the Monday morning I had a call from a traveller telling me that there was a problem with a couple of the water troughs overflowing and he'd turned the water off for us!

To sum up. Yes, traveller funerals are a lot of work but I've found that if you are honest with the families, give them straight answers and are fair they will come to respect you.



The biggest compliment I've had came from a traveller lady whose son is buried at Dunstable. She brought another traveller in to meet me shortly after his brother's funeral and said 'This is Kate, she treats everybody the same, you can trust her.'

replacing, abating and refurbishing at Ipswich

National legislation decreed that by the end of 2012 crematoria should have mercury abatement plant fitted to their cremators to ensure emissions were abated by a minimum of 50%. Ipswich Borough Council decided to replace, in full, their cremators – with 100% abatement – and to upgrade the current building and facilities.

Following the relevant tender process the contract was awarded to ATI Environment, a French company with fully trained UK-based refractory and electrical service personnel. They have an extensive portfolio of cremators in France and elsewhere but at the time of awarding the contract no installations in the UK. Below are the views of three people involved in the project; the first from Mark Hunter, the Project and Building and Design Manager at Ipswich Borough Council (IBC), my own view as the then client and Bereavement Services Manager and Nabil Laqtaibi, ATI UK's Sales Manager.

Mark Hunter states, "After a long project programme Ipswich has finally got two new fully abated ATI cremators. In addition to replacing the cremators the authority took the decision to take the opportunity to refurbish the 'back of house' facilities to improve staff working conditions.

"The project ran for over three years (with the first 18 months for the project inception phase) following feasibility studies into the pros and cons of building a new crematorium through to staying unabated. IBC decided to proceed with a design and build project utilising one of the existing chapels to house the new crematory.

"After the appointment of a client side design team (who weren't novated to the main contractor but stayed with the client to provide project management and assurance roles) a tender exercise was carried out with disappointing results; only two of the five suppliers decided to tender. However, following the tender appraisal and a review of the equipment provided by ATI, the client project team decided to appoint the company to provide the new cremators. This would be a first installation for ATI in the UK market.

"The project progressed well delivering the abated equipment slightly ahead of schedule with the minimum of fuss. The crematorium remained open throughout the life of the build. The finished product seems to be working well and ATI (as part of the tender process) are providing Ipswich with a ten year maintenance contract based on a per-cremation cost.

"On the whole the project was well delivered, on time and to budget. The main lesson learnt was to appoint an experienced employer's agent from Allman Woodcock Ltd who was able to deal effectively with all contractual and design matters ensuring that the project ran smoothly."

My own brief was to ensure continued service delivery to the public with the minimum of disruption resulting in upgraded welfare facilities, new cremators and 100% mercury abatement. To be honest the success of achieving this, in my opinion, was the robust management of the entire project team and the leadership of Mark Hunter.

ATI were an unknown, and to be totally honest we had in place an effective and efficient maintenance contractor who looked after our previous cremators. However, the tender process dictated the result and ATI were awarded the contract. I have to concur with Mark that the project went exceptionally smoothly and ATI were very responsive, collaborative and willing to work with the Council to ensure a high quality of service remained.

In the main this was achieved by handing the site over to ATI and Needham Builders, their building contractor, every morning of the week and they handed it back to us to enable services to be run each afternoon. This was made slightly easier as we had capacity to install the new cremators and plant, and commission them, before needing to de-commission the old machines and strip them out. The 'considerate contractor' scheme was in place ensuring all areas were fenced in when any works were being undertaken and no noise made, even during a morning, if a burial was taking place close by.

The cremators can be described as industrial looking, no frills, no sparkles but, in all honesty, what more do we need other than cremators that cleanly cremate and abate emissions – and we certainly got what was needed. It is still early days and we continue to work closely with ATI who remain responsive to our requests and continue to provide a good level of support to our operators. As they obtain more contracts the maintenance and shared experience will develop more and ATI have certainly established themselves in the UK market.

Nabil Laqtaibi added, "Established in 1960 in France, ATI is involved in the design and manufacturing of cremators and mercury abatement equipment on the global scene but as a new entrant into the UK market with no previous references in the country, we have encountered many challenges in order to demonstrate that we were not only the best choice for Ipswich but the right choice. Subsequently, we have been awarded many more contracts which has put ATI on the path to growth and now a firm player in the UK market. ►

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"Our main goal at Ipswich Crematorium was to provide excellent quality works to meet the council's expectations, together with excellent health and safety, consideration of environmental impact and comply with deadlines all under the customer's budget! And we did!!

"The communication and coordination with Ipswich Borough Council and site personnel was the key to the overall success and ensured business continuity. It was an honour and a privilege for ATI to work for Ipswich Borough Council and to serve experienced managers like Mark Hunter, Mike Grimwood and their staff."

After 10 years as BSM I now have a new role at IBC. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the front line of this emotive public service and have overseen many projects relating to cemeteries and crematoria, not the least of which was the process described above.



I'd like to express my thanks to all the cemetery and crematorium staff who supported me, and colleagues from around the UK whom I've met at conferences, seminars and branch meetings. I've made some good friends along the way and will always appreciate the wealth of knowledge and commitment shown by all of you involved in bereavement services throughout the UK. There are far too many special people to mention but each of them know who they are.

Mike Grimwood
Community Safety and Licensing Operations Manager



LET'S GET STARTED !

Funeral Products B.V. is a wholesale company specialising in the supply of urns and other funeral products. The company understands that every funeral is unique and should reflect the way the deceased person viewed life and how their loved ones want to say goodbye, which is why innovation and development are at the heart of its activities.



Attending the ICCM Learning Convention & Exhibition 2012 for the first time has been very successful. Having an own stand has been a necessity due to fact that our products actually have to be seen to give an honest opinion. Therefore I have happily seen there has been a major interest from the delegates and visitors. I especially want to thank Julie and Blue for being so helpful and giving me such a warm welcome. I have found out the ICCM Convention is an ideal platform for the people who work in the cremation industry.

For those who couldn't make it to the convention:

Funeral Products is continually adapting its offer to meet the changing demands of the market and all of its products meet the most stringent quality standards and feature some of the most interesting designs. This is not simply by chance but, rather, the result of extensive market research and years of experience in the funeral sector. The company's staff are passionate about what they do, developing the ranges and creating new products, while also ensuring that the company has a reputation for reliability, rapid supply and customer service.

We provide a wide and diverse range of products manufactured from crystal, ceramic, marble, wood, biodegradable and fibreglass. Funeral Products is the exclusive supplier of LoveUrns™ in Europe, the only worldwide brand name in urns made from high quality brass and treated with the utmost care by the manufacturer. Every urn is hand made to the highest precision, while the shapes and colours of the Premium line are unique and the most exclusive models in this collection are patented in the European Union.

Our headquarters and logistics centre are the Netherlands which enables us to deliver to the UK within three days where two days is merely the norm.

I feel there's a turning point in the crematoriums. I strongly believe they are getting around to the idea that they actually have got the possibility to keep business in their own hands. My advice is to create a small space in the public areas in the crematoriums such as a cabinet or shelves where you can display the urns the proper way. We have experienced that working with sets works very well. Combine and Adult urn, keepsake urn, candleholder keepsake and you have a perfect presentation set.



For further information contact me, William Schelkers, direct on +31(0)6 21711119 or e-mail me on w.schelkers@funeralproducts.nl. We will also be attending the NFE in Stoneleigh Park 2013 with our own stand. See you there!



Sandakan memorial park

Officially opened on 15th February 1995, the memorial park immortalises the suffering and death of British and Australian soldiers and other civilians imprisoned in Sandakan during World War II by Japan's Imperial Army during their occupation of Sabah from 1942 until 1945.

A recent holiday to the East Malaysian state of Sabah brought me to the capital Kota Kinabalu in the north east part of Borneo.

This island – divided among three countries, Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia – is the third largest in the world at 743,330 km², we are 9th at 229,848 km². So a flight across the top from Kota Kinabalu to Sandakan, Sabah's second city to visit the famous Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre was the equivalent of London to Manchester.

After a day's sightseeing, including the 'great apes', I found myself close to the city's memorial park and came to learn of the tragic event in World War II that it commemorates.



The park is situated on the site of a POW camp where the inmates were members of a 2,700-strong Allied contingent transferred to Sandakan by the Japanese in 1942-43, following Singapore's fall. Their task was to construct a military airfield, using not much more than their bare hands.

As the end of the war approached, conditions deteriorated. In late January 1945 the Japanese decided to move 455 of the fittest prisoners to Jesselton (now Kota Kinabalu) to act as coolie labourers – only to halt them at Ranau, owing to Allied air activity on the west coast.



Ranau is a small village on the flanks of Mt Kinabalu, South East Asia's highest peak, situated 250 kilometres away to the west in the rugged Borneo jungle interior which we had visited the day before. As both sea and air were under the complete control of the Allies, a track had been cut through the mountains, linking existing bridle-trails. Unaware that it was to be used by POWs, the local headmen given the task of creating this track had deliberately routed it away from any habitation, across the most inhospitable and difficult terrain possible. At the end of May, there was a second march from Sandakan and in mid-June a third, comprised of only 75 men.

The story of Sandakan and the death marches is one of the most tragic of World War II. It is also one of the most heroic. Despite appalling conditions, the prisoners never gave up. Their heroism and their indomitable spirit are testimony to the strength of the human spirit and an inspiration to all.

Of the 2,434 prisoners incarcerated at Sandakan 1,787 were Australian. The remaining 641 were British. Six Australians escaped – they were the only survivors.

The clearly sign-posted Sandakan Memorial Park is well maintained and beautifully landscaped, which makes it ideal for contemplation. You don't want to rush anyway in 30°C and 90% of humidity! The park also includes a small museum that serves as a memorial to the thousands of Australian and British who lost their lives in Borneo during WWII. Built in the Malayan 'long house' style, the story is well displayed in one room via a series of wooden panels with letters and photographs of the time as well as well researched narratives.



The oppression of the period is emphasized by the rusting remains of an excavator, a generator and a boiler – now mirrored by the trunks of surrounding trees – which still lie in their original positions near the steps leading up to the museum.

The heat, noisy cicadas and jungle atmosphere make it all the more poignant when reflecting on the horrors of all those years ago.

Stephen Laing

official opening of the Borders crematorium

The service opened its doors in December 2011 and had endured months of snow, rain and more rain in its early months. Thankfully the official opening day itself, Thursday 4th October, was dry and sunny – a rare event for Melrose in 2012 – and the grounds had finally knitted together to provide a lush, green backdrop to the new building.

The site is naturally blessed. Set in the heart of the countryside, in the shadow of the Eildon Hills and surrounded by rolling hills and fields, it is so typical of the wonderful Borders landscape.

Borders people are very proud of their distinct area and had pressed for a crematorium of their own for over 20 years to save long journeys to Edinburgh or to Newcastle upon Tyne. It is therefore unsurprising that the service has quickly become an integral part of the Borders community, holding almost 600 funerals in its first year.

It was important to everyone in the area to mark the crematorium's arrival with an official event and we were blessed, along with a sunny day, by having wonderful support from local ministers and community leaders who were keen to show their commitment to this new facility.



The service of dedication was led by the Revd Jane Howitt, Moderator of Melrose and Peebles Presbytery who was joined by other religious and secular leaders reflecting the diverse beliefs within the area. Rev Duncan McCosh, the Rector of St Peter's Scottish Episcopal Church, Galashiels led an early prayer and was followed by Rev Mary Taylor from the United Reform Church, Selkirk who read the moving piece 'This is my Place' by Marjorie Dobson.



Further readings were expertly articulated by Rev Brian Talbot, Pastor Selkirk Baptist Church and Revd Father Basil Clark, our Lady and St Andrews, Galashiels, with a secular tone struck by Tom Hudson of the Humanist Society. The event was capped off with a fantastic melody from local musicians; organist Chris Achenbach and fiddle player June Meikle who played a selection of local music including the famous Soft Lowland Tongue.

In the chapel, soon filled to capacity with more than 80 guests, a number of hymns including 'O Love of God' set to the locally composed tune Ye Banks and Braes reverberated around the building.

The Leader of Scottish Borders Council, Councillor David Parker closed the ceremony by saying, "Obviously for many years people have had to travel outwith the Borders for cremations which involved a trip to Edinburgh or England, many families have had long journeys on miserable days outwith our region and it has just added to the stress of the funeral. What this facility does, is it allows Borderers to end life's great journey here in a truly wonderful and scenic location."

Service leader Reverend Jane Howitt also highlighted the benefits of the crematorium. "For people to be able to come to somewhere local, especially for those who have lived in the Borders all their lives, to actually carry out the cremation in the region is quite significant. From the welcome you get from the staff, the stability of the building and the beauty of the surroundings – it's an excellent facility."



The contract to build the new crematorium was awarded in 2011 and the opening ceremony marks the end of a huge programme of work in developing the site to provide this new service.

"It seems a long time ago since we started to plan this important community service but we hope that you will agree that the ultimate facilities are a great asset to the area", commented Richard Evans, Managing Director of Westerleigh Group who operate the crematorium. He added, "Most importantly we have retained the natural setting of the site and the ongoing landscaping work should ensure that the building and grounds eventually blend into the countryside. These surroundings will provide an ideal backdrop for the crematorium and for the family and friends of those whose funeral services are held here."

L. to r.: Paul Cuthell (NAFD), Andrew Ironside (SAIF), Isobel Mattick (FBCA), George Bell, Roddy McGinley, Lucille Furie (ICCM Scotland and Northern Ireland Branch Chair) & Richard Evans



George Bell, Westerleigh Group Regional Manager, Scotland



first official duty for iccm deputy president

As newly elected Deputy President of the Institute I was extremely proud and honoured to be invited to the official opening of the Borders Crematorium.

My wife Patricia and I arrived at the crematorium to find a beautifully designed, low impact chapel building faced with Borders stone sitting at the foot of the stunning Eildon Hills and within walking distance of the spectacular River Tweed. We were very impressed to say the least.

Near the entrance to the crematorium we were welcomed by George Bell, Westerleigh Group's Scotland Regional Manager and Richard Evans, Managing Director of the company. Once inside the chapel area it was instantly apparent that the interior was every bit as impressive as the outside. Borders stone crafted by Borders stone masons adorned the catafalque with light streaming in from the predominantly glass east wall. It really is an impressive facility in an equally impressive location.

With everyone seated on 'Rosehill' chairs the dedication service began. Local clergy from all denominations, including a celebrant from the Scottish Humanist Society, gave their individual orations clearly during pre-determined intervals

throughout the service, all with special emphasis on the spectacular scenery which surrounds the site. However, the overall message focused on the benefit to the Borders community who, for many years, have had to travel not insubstantial distances for cremation of their loved ones.

After the service refreshments were very kindly supplied in a marquee which gave us the ideal opportunity to 'talk shop'. As a Scot, I was delighted to be back home, even just for a short while. It was great to see some faces from the past such as the inimitable Duncan McCallum, who was keen to hear of the ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition which had concluded the previous day. He regaled us with stories from the past and was immensely enjoyable company. Also Rick Powell, Secretary of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities who is a gentleman by nature and deed. We met in a beautifully designed crematorium in a spectacular setting. Well done Westerleigh.

Roddy McGinley

company news



Safety First for ASSETtrac and GreenAcres Woodland Burials

With over 150 acres of woodland to their name, GreenAcres Woodland Burials were keen to ensure that their record keeping on tree health, safety inspections and facilities management was first rate.

So they turned to ASSETtrac to help with providing a flexible field-based solution that did not compromise on quality and reliability. After several successful trials both parties are pleased to announce the launch of the first electronic natural burial ground asset tracking tool.

GreenAcres Woodland Burials who have sites in Norfolk, Essex and Buckinghamshire have moved all paper based safety inspections and facilities maintenance recording to hand held mobile terminals with online storage for each burial ground enabling the woodland team to accurately record what is going on in the woodland and report back immediately on any issues that need to be raised.

Jez Perkins Group Woodland Manager said "This new system will make our record keeping more efficient and robust, allowing continuous remote auditing from any location and enable immediate roll out to new sites as we expand our business."

ASSETtrac Ltd has grown quickly since it was formed in 1999. The company specialises in the supply of barcode or RFID identification tags, integrated with hand held terminals and desktop or online tracking software.

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pulpit; it's good to talk

One of the most impressive sites I have ever seen is Tyne Cot Cemetery. There are 11,954 graves of which 8,367 are unnamed because the man's mortal remains were in such a bad state due to the manner of his death that he was unrecognisable. For the generations which came – and still come to this cemetery – many had to accept that they would never know the exact spot where their father or husband or brother were buried.

Tyne Cot Cemetery near Ieper, Belgium



Clearly visiting helped those who were bereaved and knew the whereabouts of the grave; others had to be comforted to know:

*"That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England."*

from *The Soldier* by Rupert Brooke

*Rupert Brooke
(1887-1916)*



When I visit Tyne Cot Cemetery I feel a strong sense of communication with those dead soldiers, although my grandfather who fought in the battles of Ypres survived and lived on until 1948. I come away from Tyne Cot with a passion for ending war as a means of settling disputes. That is what 'they' say to me, each time I visit.

When 'Jack Halford' needs to think and reflect and gain inspiration from his deceased wife Mary, he goes into the garden of the house where he lives and where her ashes are kept and he talks to her, as if she was really there and listening. The scene is both touching and ridiculous at the same time, a maudlin moment in an otherwise quite rowdy comedy police drama. Yes, it is one of those unforgettable aspects of the highly popular television series *New Tricks*! Halford was played by the seasoned and very recognisable James Bolam, MBE (right), who left the cast for retirement last year.



So, do we all need to have a special place where we go when we feel the need to be as close as possible to our dead relatives? Traditionally, that is why there were graveyards and elaborate headstones, except that the headstones were mainly for those who could afford them, like the one pictured below left in St. Mary's churchyard, Langley, Berkshire or that below – heavy with symbolism and the life history of the deceased – in St. Mary's, Walberton, West Sussex.



In times past, most people were just buried somewhere in the common areas of the graveyard and when the next body came along for burial, it was not unknown for the last body to be shoved over a bit to make room. There are still, of course, what used to be called pauper's funerals, paid for by the local authority, but nowadays most people can afford either a burial with a headstone bearing information about the person buried beneath or a cremation followed by a burial of the cremated remains, again in a place which can be visited at will by mourners.

The trend towards woodland burial might appear to mitigate against this tradition. Billed as the top of the class for ecology, the woodland burial movement has a fine example of their work at The Chiltern Woodland Burial Park. The woodland is managed in a partnership with the Forestry Commission, and the objective is to maintain the woodland without any significant markers such as the stone headstones you find in traditional graveyards and cemeteries. I reported in *The Journal* of the opening ceremony of the Chiltern Woodland Park back in the Autumn edition of 2009. In this photograph you see a raised mound of earth with a stick of wood at either end. Their woodland approach permits seven alternatives:



1. the erection of a wooden memorial post;
2. an entry in the Book of Remembrance;
3. purchase of a memorial bench;
4. the sponsorship of a tree;
5. the sponsorship of a bird box;
6. the sponsorship of a bat box;
7. the sponsorship of an owl box.

Option 1. above, as illustrated, would not be given much chance of survival beyond a few years. But in reality, does any strong desire to visit the grave last more than a few years? After 50 years, few people are still involved with grave visiting in England. It is possibly different in other countries and other cultures.

So would it be satisfactory for a bereaved person to know only that their loved-one was buried simply somewhere over there, in the woods? Would that be sufficient for them to feel comforted or close enough for a homely chat with the dead?

In the end, the need for a close relationship with a specific place of burial will not normally last for more than a generation, if that. The wooden memorial option would therefore seem satisfactory.

Behind these questions is our human unease about death as such. In times past, death and childhood death was very prominent in family life experiences. So much improvement in health and medicine has saved many young lives but the situation now is that we don't see death as our business and it scares us.

Gone are the days when bodies were returned home the day before the burial for people to come in and pay their respects, often with the coffin lid taken off leaving the body visible. All the work is now done by professionals, and done very well of course.

But, as a child, I remember seeing the closed curtains of front rooms on our street, indicating the presence of the corpse of someone I knew and had talked to fairly recently. Funerals would also be attended by small children which is not normally the case nowadays. Thought is given as to whether children should attend and often the decision is taken to protect them from the reality of death by leaving them at home with someone.



Another aspect of unease is expressed in the American-based Hallowe'en rituals and costumes, a tradition which sadly now dominates in our country too. This photograph is of a primary school pupil in Scotland.



The school website explains:

"The children and parents.....had a wonderful time at their Hallowe'en party on Friday. It was organized and run by the PTA and was held in the Village Hall. There was a huge variety in costumes worn by children and adults, ranging from ghosts and vampires, to Strictly Come Dancing couples. The local reverend was dressed as Elvis Presley! The PTA had organized games and activities, and there was a lovely buffet for all to eat."

Actually, I am not against a bit of Hallowe'en fun and games, but it represents a missed opportunity to talk to children about real death in the context of the life of the Saints and Martyrs who lived exemplary lives and who are now remembered on All Saints' Day, of which Hallowe'en is the previous day. Americanised Hallowe'en is a distorted view of death and leads children into a hopeless cul-de-sac of misinformation and ignorance about what is the final reality for everyone.

The impact of these changes is that people want death to be a stranger in their household and in this way, they fail to prepare themselves for the inevitable. Perhaps the conversations with the deceased which take place in cemeteries are the ones which should have taken place when the person was still alive? Perhaps the many issues surrounding life and death are put to one side because nobody wants to talk about it beforehand so the only option is afterwards? Going to a grave to remember and offer thanks for someone's life is one thing. Actually talking to them feels as though something is wrong, perhaps a state of self-deception or lingering dependency? After all, we know it is going to happen, so let us have the conversations we need before it does. Talk about the family history, clear up misunderstandings, share memories and feelings, talk about death too.



Personally, I have never felt the need to visit the graves of any of my relatives and I do not want a headstone or plaque to mark my own grave. I really like the idea of saying "he's buried in the woods somewhere." For me, that is enough. As my mortal remains return to the dust from whence they came, perhaps my spirit will revel in the woodlands, as in this poem about William Wordsworth by Sidney Keyes who was tragically killed in action in Italy in 1943 at the age of 21:

Sidney Keyes
1922-1943



*No room for mourning: he's gone out
Into the noisy glen, or stands between the stones
Of the gaunt ridge, or you'll hear his shout
Rolling among the scree, he being a boy again.
He'll never fail nor die
And if they laid his bones
In the wet vaults or iron sarcophagi
Of fame, he'd rise at the first summer rain
And stride across the hills to seek
His rest among the broken lands and clouds.
He was a stormy day, a granite peak
Spearing the sky; and look, about its base
Words flower like crocuses in the hanging woods,
Blank though the dalehead and the bony face.*



Prebendary Neil Richardson
Parish of Greenford Magna, Diocese of London

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new facilities for Cheshire West and Chester residents

Cheshire West and Chester Council are pleased to announce the construction of brand new facilities for the residents of the borough. Construction of this distinctive, high quality public building with a number of innovative environmental benefits commenced in April 2012.

This £5million improvement scheme includes a new crematorium and new burial plots.

Kier Construction were appointed as the Building Contractor and through their involvement with the project, they have identified opportunities to involve, provide development skills and employ members of the local community. Its programme of activities included the creation of five new apprenticeships and work experience for a local undergraduate, studying construction.

Kier also placed 75% of the total subcontract spend with local subcontractors which again has benefited the local community.

The materials for the new buildings reflect the natural theme of the site, with extensive use of timber in the structure and ceilings, natural red sandstone walling following the Cheshire tradition and stone flooring.

Several features have been incorporated to enhance sustainability such as natural ventilation, whilst excess heat will be used to heat water and the chapel facilities. The large chapel, with a feature timber roof, natural floor finishes and extensive glazing, will offer views across open landscaped areas.

Canopy and glazed entrance to the waiting area and chapel under construction



Chapel with vaulted roof and feature windows with views over landscaped gardens



Once the new building is ready to hold services the 1965 crematorium is to be demolished and the site on which it sits will become a memorial garden with landscaped features, seating and memorial options for the bereaved.

Two fully automated Furnace Construction Cremators Ltd Joule cremators are to be installed alongside adsorber bed gas treatment plant.

An automatic charge system will also be installed along with chilled storage capacity to house up to six coffins.

A high speed cremulator has been purchased to reduce the overall processing time for each cremation.

External facilities include a new flower cloister exit with sufficient space for the funeral party to view floral tributes. This project also offers bereaved families further memorial choices, as a number of areas within the landscaped grounds are dedicated for memorial features.

A new remembrance room will include up-dated services such as an electronic book of remembrance and families will be able to view memorial entries at any time of the year; either in person when visiting the crematorium or via the internet.

Car parking provision will be increased to accommodate the volume of visitors attending modern funeral services.

The new remembrance room under construction



Area to rear of chapel and remembrance room for future burial plots



The land surrounding the crematorium will provide more than 700 new burial plots, with room for a further 800 plots in the future. These areas will be of a lawned design, with rows of concrete rafts installed so that families will be able to have a memorial placed immediately after a burial.



The artist's impression above shows the design of the finished new crematorium. At the time of writing this article in January we are approximately three months away from completion – weather permitting! An update will be published in *The Journal* when the project is finished.

Julie Proctor

Pictured back row l. to r: Justin Williams - Kier Contract Manager, Keith Bryant - Kier Project Manager, Clare Barlow - Cemetery and Crematorium Lifetime Services Assistant, Nathan Shaw - Crematorium Technician/Assistant Registrar, Wayne Atkinson - Crematorium Technician/Assistant Registrar and David Caldwell - Chester West and Chester Council Project Manager.

Centre front l. to r: Lyn Noble - Cemetery Officer, Julie Proctor - Cemetery and Crematorium Team Leader, Mike Povey - Crematorium Technician/Assistant Registrar.

iccm @ the iocf

The Institute of Civil Funerals (IOCF) Conference 2012 was held at the Hillscourt Centre near Birmingham on the weekend of 16th-18th November. I'm not a Civil Funeral Celebrant, but I represent the ICCM on the Council of the IOCF, and we have helped this fledgling professional organisation grow in both size and stature since its inception in 2004. Having not long returned from our own annual Learning Convention and Exhibition, where the atmosphere was described as being among family, this felt like spending time with favourite cousins.

The IOCF shares similar aspirations to the ICCM in that it seeks to raise standards through education and training of its members. Concern about the poor quality of some civil funeral celebrants led to the establishment of the IOCF, with professional development being one of its core objectives. This helps to ensure that those who are fully trained and provide an excellent level of service to their clients have the support of a professional organisation. Another of the key aims of the IOCF is to provide a quality control system, and every person who uses an IOCF member to take a funeral service is sent a questionnaire so they can give feedback. Any negative feedback is discussed with the celebrant, and membership can be withdrawn if the celebrants do not come up to standard.

Each celebrant also has to submit a number of their funeral ceremony scripts each year, which are then assessed by senior Council celebrants. Further, each celebrant has to be observed and assessed delivering a funeral service, and some of our own members undertake this important monitoring role. All in all the IOCF sets very high standards for its members, which in turn gives reassurance to funeral directors and members of the public choosing to use an IOCF celebrant for a funeral service. Although it is not mandatory, it would be wise to only recommend using a celebrant that is a member of the IOCF – this would ensure that they are properly trained, work to a high standard according to an established Code of Practice, and that there is a robust complaints procedure in place should anything go wrong.

The Conference started with registration and dinner on the Friday night, followed by an ice breaker quiz hosted by the legendary quiz master Blue Donnebaer of BlueAV, with yours truly playing the role of adjudicator and marker. The usual chaos – with a little bit of head scratching – ensued, but ensured that a good time was had by all and that everybody felt relaxed going into the Saturday for a full day of talks and workshops.



Following the opening of the Conference and a report on the last year by the IOCF Chair Peter McNulty and IOCF President Anne Barber, delegates were treated to a moving and surprising talk from the keynote speaker, Rev Paul Sinclair, left. You may know Paul as the owner of Motorcycle Funerals, often referred to as the Faster Pastor. He is an engaging and entertaining speaker and he gave an excellent talk about focussing on the needs of the family.



I have to say, however, that excellent though Paul's talk was, he was definitely upstaged by his wife Marian, left, who stood in front of us and sang The Lord's My Shepherd in various vocal styles without any accompaniment. Her renditions made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up, and refreshed my liking for a hymn that I hear perhaps too often during the course of my work. If every version was as good as Marian's, funerals would be a lot better!



After coffee and cakes, including a rather good chocolate cake made by the IOCF administrator Barbara Pearce and presented to celebrant Diana Gould, right, in honour of her 79th birthday, we were treated to three further excellent papers. The first was by Andrew Hickson, who established a new funeral directing business in a cemetery chapel in St Neots in 2010. Andrew has fresh ideas about the funeral industry, and is proving very successful. A major factor in his success was his decision to obtain a 'bereavement dog'.

Roxie, a black Labrador puppy, pictured with Andrew, has proved a huge hit with bereaved people – several of whom ask for her to attend the funeral. Andrew has found that having Roxie in the office (although she can be kept out if requested) has helped families to relax and talk about their funeral requirements, and also helps after the funeral as they call in to see the dog. Roxie accompanied Andrew to the IOCF Conference, and received probably the biggest round of applause of the weekend (well, she is terribly cute!).



Next came the inimitable Charles Cowling, author of the *Good Funeral Guide* and blog, who challenged delegates to think about alternative ways of providing funeral services. Charles was followed by Julia Barrand of the RNIB, who explained the difficulties that people who are blind or partially sighted face when arranging and attending funerals – a good reminder to look at our premises and ensure that they are accessible to all.

After lunch regional groups of celebrants met to discuss issues in their areas. These informal networking sessions are crucial as they allow celebrants to meet and provide support to each other in what can be a lonely job otherwise. The final papers of the day saw celebrant Lynn Banham explain how she provides a range of additional services to families; television producer Jonathan Alderson was seeking help with a programme he is making on dying and death, and celebrants Jill Maguire and Janice Thomson illustrated some of the common mistakes in funeral script presentations (their/they're, less/fewer, affect/effect etc – it is a shame but the days of good grammar have long since went!).

The AGM closed the proceedings for the day, and the evening saw a presentation dinner at which awards were made to celebrants who have made significant contributions to the profession. An annual award was instigated this year to commemorate Marilyn Watts, co-founder of the IOCF and an inspirational trainer who encouraged many to believe that they could become excellent celebrants. Marilyn died earlier this year, and is very greatly missed by all who knew her. Recipient of the first Marilyn Watts Award was Lynn Banham (pictured near right with Anne Barber) for her outstanding script presentations.

The final morning saw further presentations by celebrants: Jo Donlevy informed delegates of how she deals with those who want to pre-plan their funeral, including appointing a celebrant; Andrew Patey and Deni Darke advised how to market celebrant services to funeral directors; and Anne Barber gave helpful tips for top and tailing ceremonies with suitable beginnings and endings.



Celebrants cannot fail to have left the Conference inspired, educated and confident that they are part of a small but vibrant quality-driven institute. It was a real privilege to spend time with such professional people who care very deeply about raising the standard of funeral services and providing a fitting tribute to help support bereaved people. If you haven't already, I would recommend that you check out the IOCF website (www.iocf.org.uk) and find the IOCF member celebrants in your area – invite them to your premises and get to know them. I know you will find it rewarding.

Julie Dunk

why Sue is deadly serious about farewells

Dying, death and funerals are still taboo subjects for many people but one woman is determined to change that with the launch of a magazine available at more than 120 branches of WH Smith, 1250 independent newsagents in high retirement areas around the UK and doctor's surgeries, funeral homes, hospitals, hospices and solicitors practices nationwide.



Sue White spent the last seven years in the wedding industry, but has now launched *Farewell* magazine, a quarterly publication designed to demystify the funeral trade. Sue, from Chesterfield, in Derbyshire, is giving up her high-flying career as director of White Media and instead will look death in the face with the unveiling of this new magazine which will provide practical, emotional and professional advice for people grieving, preparing for death or simply intrigued by what the options are.

Sue said: "I have spent the majority of my planning career working in the weddings industry, which is very much about planning the happiest day of someone's life. But when I lost my own dear dad I realized that as a nation we are totally unprepared for what can be the saddest day of our lives.

"Because we don't talk about death, or funerals, when it comes to planning a loved one's send-off often we have no idea what they might have wanted, or how to go about organising it.

"I felt there was a total lack of information about palliative care, funeral planning and memorial ideas and that it was about time we started talking about dying, instead of pretending that it's not going to happen. Death is inevitable, yet few of us consider it until confrontation is absolutely unavoidable. I also felt it was time to lift the lid on the funeral industry – let's find out what's changing, what's innovative and above all what options are available to us when the time comes.

"Each edition will feature inspiring real life stories of people who made a difference, take a look behind the scenes in the funeral industry, help readers create a meaningful and memorable funeral ceremony or memorial and profile innovative and pioneering new services. We would love hear from individuals with great stories for issue 2 out at the end of April".



Sue added: "We firmly believe there is demand for a magazine like this from both readers and advertisers with nothing else like it in the marketplace directly available to the public – whether they are looking for avenues of inspiration and guidance towards the end of their life, or are just curious. The time has come to start talking about death and put aside our own fears about dying; death is the one inevitable element of life. You can subscribe via our online Newsstand partner at www.farewell-magazine.co.uk"

ICCM Chief Executive Tim Morris was asked to contribute to the first issue, published at the end of January. Tim highlighted the Institute's original Charter for the Bereaved (launched in 1996 and most recently updated last year) and the launch, in early summer this year, of the Charter for Natural Burial Grounds and associated accredited qualifications for those working at the sites – which have increased in number from just one in the 1990's to 260 throughout the UK today. The aim of the new Charter is to promote natural burial as an equal and valid choice for the public alongside traditional burial and cremation.

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