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The Journal Spring 2021

2021

Spring

It's a Bit of a Puzzle
Helping Children through Bereavement
National Grief Awareness Week
The Importance of Being Together

Managed but not Manicured
Thank you: You are Valued and Valuable
Pulpit: The Boys Enlisted in the Army
What Could I Do?



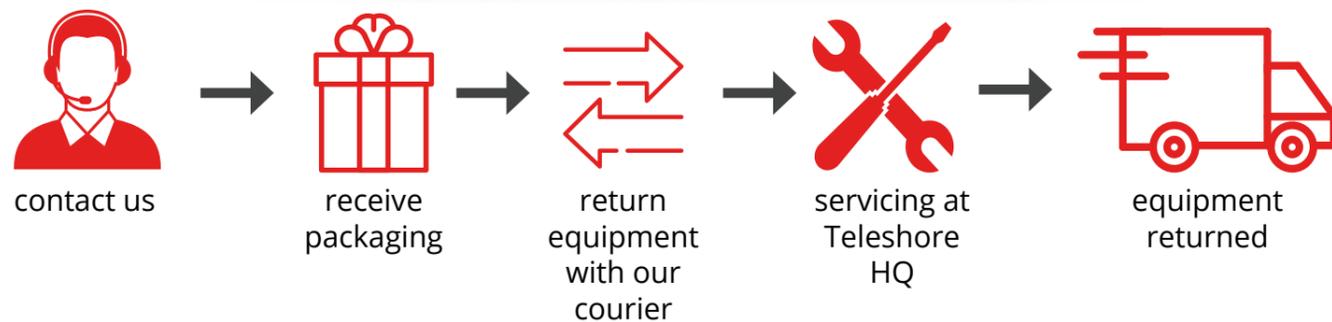
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editorial

Should bereavement be part of the school's curriculum?

Happy New Year to you all! Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of the Journal.

It has been a year of trials, tribulations and tiers, and maybe some triumphs, if you look for the positives that have come out of last year. The coronavirus has encouraged us to communicate more, it showed us the value of what is important and demonstrated the kindness of strangers. We started to hear the birds sing and see the landscape grow and it felt like this was the beginning of the healing process for the planet.

Of course, this was not all that came out of last year. As the virus took hold, the world experienced unexpected deaths in numbers not seen in recent history. As the virus became more contagious those daily death toll "numbers" now had "names." It was no longer a case of this happening to someone else – this was happening to people we know, friends, family, work colleagues – it felt much more real.

On a personal level, I experienced the death of two friends. Although not Covid related, both were unexpected and sudden. Both families were understandably devastated. This being their first experience of a close death, they had no idea what to do or where to go for help. They were not prepared for the administrative nightmare that death brings – starting with the death registration process, filling out burial or cremation forms, and then post funeral, dealing with estates, was there a will? What is Probate? What are Letters of Administration? All this to navigate whilst trying to deal with grief.

I spent time trying to use my experience to help those families from a practical and emotional perspective. I listened to the outpouring of grief and hurt, knowing there was nothing I could do to change things. Through these conversations it occurred to me that we are not taught at any level about bereavement, death, or grief. Or even to understand the practical challenges families face when someone dies – how it impacts them financially and legally, the importance of a will, or simply what to do. We are left with Googling "what to do when someone dies" and seeking out information that is out there somewhere! It made me think, should this be a subject that we are educated about at school level? Would talking about death, loss and grief at a young age help us prepare for the future?

So much of this comes down to society's perception about death and grieving. Death is still a taboo subject in Western culture. We do not want to think about it let alone talk about it until we are forced to experience it for ourselves. Why aren't we taught about the end of life in schools when we are taught extensively about conception

and birth? Maybe, I think, it is because we are afraid. We need to take the fear out of it, and the best way to do that is to talk about it – we will always be more afraid of the unknown. We need to talk about it in schools, we need to have an open dialogue with those around us, our families and our friendship groups. We need better legislation that protects grieving people in the workplace, and an easy access route to grief-specific mental health support. This way it takes away the stigma of accepting that we may need help and empowers us to ask for it.

Death is not limited to a specific age group. It can strike at any time, at any age. In 2018 Child Bereavement UK surveyed more than 1,000 teachers, and found that whilst the majority had experienced a death within the school community, many felt ill-equipped to manage it. Almost one in three respondents had experienced the death of a pupil at their school, and more than one in five had faced the death of a colleague. Almost three-quarters reported that pupils they taught had been affected by the death of someone important.

School plays a key and significant role for young people and it can provide support and continuity during these times, even more so if the teachers are given the right training and tools to help. I believe it can be taught in a sensitive and age-appropriate way. Young people are more resilient than we give them credit for. Their natural curiosity should be nurtured, and we should give them the space and opportunity to ask those questions that maybe they feel they otherwise can't.

My friend told me she was not prepared for the grief. She said it felt like someone was stamping on her chest, squeezing the air out of her lungs, and she physically felt crushed. At times she could not breathe. She described her pain as "violent", "deep rooted" and "permanent". Every one of us will experience loss and grief in our lives. Now, we are living through a period of collective loss on a large scale, yet it feels like we are ill-prepared to cope with our own grief, or the grief of those around us. We are already heading towards a national mental health crisis, and if we cannot find a way to better support each other through bereavement, that picture will only get worse.

Starting the conversation at an early age may just change the way we manage our grief and alter the mindset that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. If education starts at an early age, maybe, just maybe, it may change the course of action that someone might take in the future. Preventing one less suicide or a lifetime of depression has to be worth at least a conversation, don't you think?

Sofia Allana
Editor

INNOVATION BY DESIGN

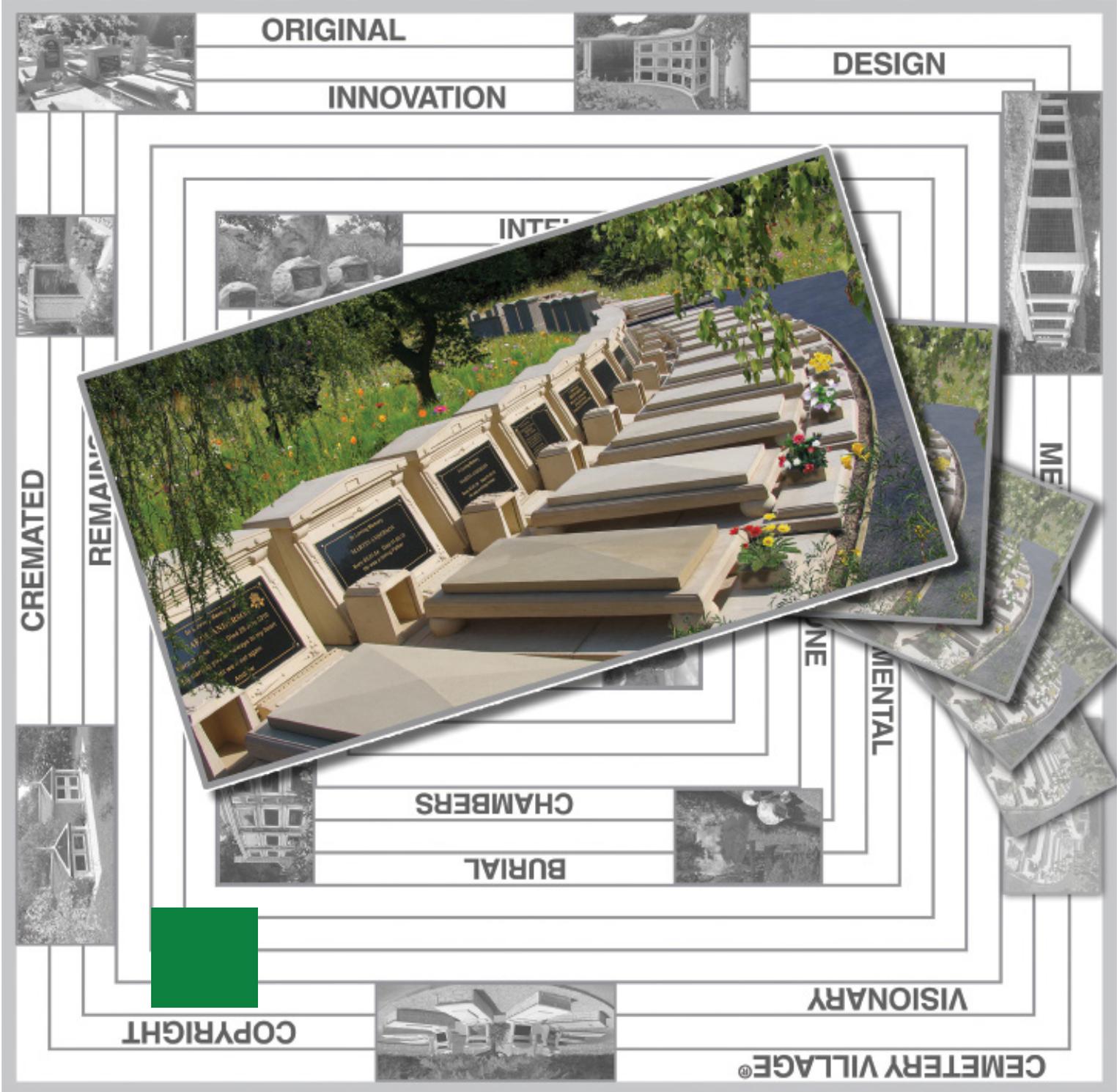
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president's page

I hope that you all managed to have a lovely Christmas and New Year and here we are again, going into 2021 with another national lockdown. It is such a difficult time for everyone, not to mention the families who are bereaved, as we enter another period with restrictions for numbers of mourners attending the funeral services of their loved ones.

Hopefully there is light at the end of the tunnel, with the UK becoming the first country in the world to approve the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine, paving the way for mass vaccination, and also the introduction of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine developed at the Oxford University NHS Hospitals Trust, to assist with scaling up the biggest immunisation programme in history with the NHS being the first health service in the world to deliver these life-saving jabs.

Christmas celebrations were far from normal in 2020, hopefully some of you managed to spend Christmas day with your loved ones. I am sure as many of you experienced, we were unable to hold our usual Christmas service at Southampton crematorium so instead we held an 'on-line' Christmas remembrance service and I would like to personally thank two of our bereavement service officers in particular, Ellie Johnston and Kat Raffo, for their hard work in making the service such a great success. You can still access it via our Facebook pages if you would like to view it. Both my grandchildren did a reading in memory of their big brother Harlee, to say I was proud of them would be an understatement. The staff also arranged for an evening where bereaved families were invited to attend the crematorium to place a memorial tag on our beautifully decorated Christmas tree and to light a candle in memory of their loved ones.

There has been no usual Learning Convention either and I would like to thank everyone who was able to join us for our 'on-line' 2020 AGM. Although I could not actually see you, I knew you were all there supporting the ICCM Officers and Board of Directors and it made all the difference especially as I know how busy you all are. Usually the ICCM awards and diplomas are presented at the awards ceremony as part of the Learning Convention and Exhibition, but it was lovely to be able to acknowledge the hard work of those who achieved their diploma in the last 12 months, and hopefully in the future it will be possible to celebrate members' achievements in person. Lots of you also stayed and contributed to the webinar that followed and I hope you found it useful. I know the webinars have been a great success during this very difficult time and they have been a great way for members to keep in contact and to ask questions.

During the on-line service I gave my Presidential Address which I would like to share with you for those who were unable to attend: -

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the virtual AGM.

Well, this is certainly different, I never thought for one moment that I would be sat in my living room giving my presidential address via a laptop, how times have changed.

So usually I think the protocol would be for me to reminisce with you all on the amazing year that we have all had,

however that is not going to happen.

I will go back just briefly to the beginning of my presidential year and firstly thank everyone who voted for me which enabled me to take part in a few different experiences and opportunities last year, visiting places I would not normally have been able to. Such as my time in Belfast for the BIFD conference and banquet. It was an absolutely wonderful event and the welcome and friendship we received during our time there are lovely memories to look back on, and then when me and Codge drove all the way to Cardiff for the evening to attend the rededication of the chapels at Thornhill Crematorium; I don't think we quite appreciated how far away Cardiff was from our house, it wasn't really an evening trip, but it was lovely to have been invited and to be part of the celebrations and also to get to taste those lovely Welsh balm cakes.

I want to take this opportunity to once more congratulate ICCM Director and Board Member, Mohamed Omer, for his MBE award in the Queen's Birthday Honours this year. The award for Mohamed is in recognition of his services to the British Muslim community during Covid-19 and is well deserved for his work with the Gardens of Peace Cemetery and the wider Muslim community.

Like so many others, this year has been particularly horrible for me and my family, the unexpected loss of my dear little grandson Harlee, who was just 11 years old and died so unexpectedly in June, has been devastating and it has actually made me realise more than ever that you have to live for today and not for tomorrow, and grab every opportunity that you can. Now we are all into our second lockdown, albeit slightly different to the first. We may not be able to hug like we used to, but we can still pick up the phone and make a call, use FaceTime, Zoom anything that allows you to be able to speak with your families and friends. I never thought that when Harlee stood outside my front door to wish me a happy birthday with his younger brother and sister back in May, that it would be the last time I would speak to him in person, but I will cherish that moment for ever. I know that others, some very close to me at Southampton Crematorium and within the Board, have also suffered loss and I send all my love to them and their families.

Funeral services have been so different during 2020 with the number of mourners allowed to attend rising and falling as the months have gone by. Today a maximum of 30 people can attend, and it is advised that only close friends and family do so, 15 people can attend ceremonial events such as stone settings, ash scatterings and social distancing should always be maintained especially between people who do not live together or share a support bubble. Times are very hard for people and it makes me realise how much our industry has been affected and how important each and every one of us are for supporting the bereaved.

There are hopes of a coronavirus vaccine by the end of the year.



The Prime Minister announced this week that early findings show a jab could prevent 90 per cent of people getting the virus, but did add it was still very, very early days and warned that we should not rely on this news as a solution to the pandemic – so therefore it is still hands, face, space.

I heard this poem by the poet Tom Roberts, it's called The Great Realisation which he wrote as a bedtime story to a child, in a time after the coronavirus pandemic has passed, you may have already heard it, but I thought I would share it with you.

*"Tell me the one about the virus again, then I'll go to bed.
'But my boy, you're growing weary, sleepy thoughts about your head.*

'Please! That one's my favourite. I promise just once more.

*'Okay, snuggle down my boy, though I know you know full well
The story starts before then, in a world I once dwelled
'It was a world of waste and wonder, of poverty and plenty
Back before we understood why hindsight's 2020*

'You see the people came up with companies to trade across all lands.

But they swelled and got bigger than we could ever have planned

*'We'd always had our wants, but now it got so quick.
You could have everything you dreamed of in a day and with a click.*

'We noticed families had stopped talking. That's not to say they never spoke.

But the meaning must have melted and the work life balance broke.

'And the children's eyes got squarer and every toddler had a phone.

They filtered out the imperfections but amidst the noise, they felt alone.

*'And every day the sky grew thicker, til we couldn't see the stars.
So we flew in planes to find them while down below we filled our cars.*

*'We'd drive around all day in circles. We'd forgotten how to run.
We swapped the grass for tarmac, shrunk the parks till there were none.*

*'We filled the sea with plastic, cause our waste was never capped.
Until each day when you went fishing, you'd pull them out already wrapped.*

'And while we drank and smoked and gambled, our leaders taught us why,

It's best to not upset the lobbies, more convenient to die.

*'But then in 2020, a new virus came our way.
The government reacted and told us all to hide away.
'But while we were all hidden, amidst the fear and all the while,
The people dusted off their instincts, they remembered how to smile.*

'They started clapping to say thank you and calling up their mums.

'And while the car keys were gathering dust, they would look forward to their runs.

*'And with the sky less full of planes, the earth began to breathe.
And the beaches brought new wildlife that scattered off into the seas.*

'Some people started dancing, some were singing, some were baking.

We'd grown so used to bad news, but some good news was in the making.

*'And so when we found the cure and were allowed to go outside,
We all preferred the world we found to the one we'd left behind.*

*'Old habits became extinct, and they made way for the new.
And every simple act of kindness was now given its due.*

*'But why did it take a virus to bring the people back together?'
Well, sometimes, you got to get sick, my boy, before you start feeling better.*

'Now lie down, and dream of tomorrow, and all the things that we can do.

And who knows, maybe if you dream strong enough, some of them will come true.

'We now call it the Great Realisation, and yes, since then there have been many.

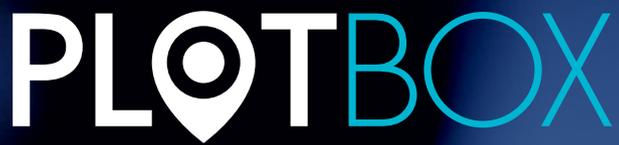
'But that's the story of how it started, and why hindsight's 2020.'

Thank you everyone for listening. I know it's a bit early but, I wish you all a peaceful Christmas and new year and I look forward to hopefully being able to attend some events in 2021 in my second presidential year and meeting up with as many of you as I possibly can.

I am not sure if I will be able to get to see any of you during 2021, it would be lovely to think that I could, maybe I will get a third year. Surely, we would be able to get out and about in 2022!!

Please all stay safe and as always, I send all my love to you all and thank you for your valued support.

Heather White
ICCM President



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*Spring is sprung,
The grass is ris
I wonder where the birdies is?
They say the bird is on the wing
But that's absurd
The wing is on the bird!*

I'm reminded of this poem that I used to love as child, often attributed to Spike Milligan but in fact it is not known who wrote it. The reason it springs to mind (sorry about the pun) at the moment is because it's almost time for the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch (see rspb.org.uk/birdwatch). By the time you read this Journal the BGB will be over for this year, but I would urge you to look at the details and sign up for next year. It is so important to monitor what is happening to our native birds, and how changes to agricultural practices, the environment and diminishing habitats are impacting on their numbers. Several species are in serious decline: the Common Bird Census records the percentage decline between 1970 and 1999:

• Tree sparrow	-95%
• Corn bunting	-88%
• Willow tit	-78%
• Spotted flycatcher	-77%
• Woodcock	-74%
• Starling	-71%
• Turtle dove	-71%
• Song thrush	-56%
• Bullfinch	-53%
• Skylark	-52%
• Cuckoo	-33%

Shocking figures. Further, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened species lists 5 British birds as being of particular concern – the capercaillie, the great bittern, the skylark, the song thrush and the grey partridge. It is unthinkable that such birds may disappear within our lifetimes.

We all need to play our part in stopping the decline of our native species. Cemeteries and crematoria are in a good position to assist with this through provision of suitable habitats and food sources for a large variety of birds. Do you know what species currently live in your sites, and what other species may be attracted with a few simple changes, such as stopping the use of pesticides, creation of wildflower areas and the installation of nesting boxes? Why not contact your local wildlife trust to find out more about the wildlife in your sites and what steps you can take to enhance it? The article by Mollie Taylor in the Winter 2020 Journal demonstrates the positive impact a more natural environment can have for bereaved people. Protecting the environment and helping bereaved people – it's a win/win.

There has never been a more important time to consider the impact our services are having on the environment, and to come up with innovative ideas to protect and enhance it. It is clear that we cannot continue to do what we have always done, and that the whole funeral sector needs to give serious consideration to alternative, more environmentally friendly methods of delivery. The ICCM has held seminars and had papers at the Learning

Convention and in the Journal on environmental subjects for many years and has championed 'green' issues through the Charter for the Bereaved and policies such as the recycling of metals, recycling of pacemakers, and recycling of plastics from floral tributes. But we cannot be a lone voice, and it is vital that we work with allied organisations to improve the situation across the whole funeral sector. What better time to start this than 2021, when the UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 1-12 November. The tag-line for COP26 is 'uniting the world to tackle climate change'. Let's hope the funeral sector can unite to play their part in tackling environmentally unfriendly practices.

Back to birds. The reason they are so much on my mind at the moment is because they have helped me through the difficult days of lockdown 3. We are still very much in the thrall of the pandemic and are currently seeing high death rates despite being in lockdown. A vaccination programme has begun, which will hopefully bring about a suitable end to the pandemic in due course, but meantime we must continue to deal with the unfortunate effects of the dreaded coronavirus. For those working in cemeteries and crematoria, it means a continuation of long hours, lack of holidays, potential exposure to the virus, and stressful working conditions. It's now almost 12 months since the pandemic began, and there has been little let up or relief along the way. We are all tired, stressed and generally fed-up with the situation.

One thing that has really helped me to cope during these difficult times is to watch the birds in the garden. We have built a couple of feeding stations and bought what seems like tonnes of high quality bird food to feed the local avian population. Watching their antics as they flock to the feeders provides so much entertainment, and never fails to make me smile and forget about my troubles. We are visited by many different species, each with their own characters, but it's the house sparrows that provide endless entertainment. They appear every morning waiting for me to go out, whatever the weather, and put food in and on the various feeders. We are then treated to the latest sparrow soap opera through the dining room windows whilst we enjoy our own breakfasts, which is the perfect way to start what will be a busy day. Being able to commune with nature in this way is a wonderful, and cheap, stress reliever. We can't afford to lose such simple pleasures.



Julie Dunk
ICCM Chief Executive

fourth quarter accredited COTS & CTTS candidates

Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme Courses October – December 2020

A - COTS 1 Health and Safety and the Burial Process **B - COTS 2 Excavator Operation**

C – COTS 3 Controlling Risks to Health & Safety in Cemeteries **F – Safe Use of Dumpers**

Daniel Baines A	Charlie Knight A
Charlie Burton A	Andrei Kulajev B F
Craig Cass A	Ruslans Noviks A B F
Joanne Cope B	Edwin Payne A
Steve Corsan A B F	Edwin Peel A B F
David Coventry A	Timothy Stock B F
Andrejs Cubarovs A B F	William Stock A B F
Adrian Day A	Jozsef Surinya A
John Earthrowl A	Liam Tomkins A
Charles Friedlander A	Paul Townley A
Jamie Gill A	John Wilkinson B
Olegs Golubovs A B F	Oliver Williams A

Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme - October – December 2020

Victoria Barnfield	Samuel Gritt
Patrick Bourke	Patrick Hartnett
Richard Drew	Liam Hynd
Shaun Eastgate	Gareth Jones
Lisa Fiddimore	Frank Maddin
Jonathan Fitzgerald	Jamie Markey
Matthew Fogg	Jamie Matthew
Hayley Gonderton	Dayle Pattison-Davies
Jayne Gordon	Andrew Smith

Congratulations to everyone who achieved COTS and CTTS qualifications in the last quarter.

With acknowledgement to all the local authorities and companies, listed below, who ensured that their employees, listed above, achieved recognised industry specific qualifications.

Ardur and Worthing Council, Belfast City Council, Bradford Council, Bridgend County Borough Council, Bromsgrove and Redditch District Council, Carlisle City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, Dudley Council, Harwood Park Crematorium, London Borough of Lambeth, North Lincolnshire Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Reading Borough Council, Rochdale Council, Rochford Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Scarborough Borough Council, Tendring District Council, Thurrock Council, Watford Borough Council, Wealden District Council, Westerleigh Group, Woodside Crematorium



The Institute provides training and qualifications that are fully accredited by recognised accreditation bodies. Both CTTS and COTS training and qualifications receive outside scrutiny and quality assurance verification by City & Guilds, Pearson and SBS. Such training and qualifications are available to all staff at all levels.



Go to <http://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm> and click on 'Training' for further information or contact Julie Callender at the ICCM national office – email: julie.callender@iccm-uk.com or tel: 020 8989 4661

what makes a cemetery of the year?

An overview of what it takes to meet the standards and what it means for the service.



Bereavement Service Customer Service Week 2019

After a brief hiatus the Cemetery of the year Awards returned in 2018 and in 2021 will see the fourth year of the awards dedicated to recognising high standards and best practice in Cemeteries throughout the UK. These awards are supported and endorsed by –

- Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM)
- The Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA)
- The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)
- Memorial Awareness Board (MAB)
- British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM)

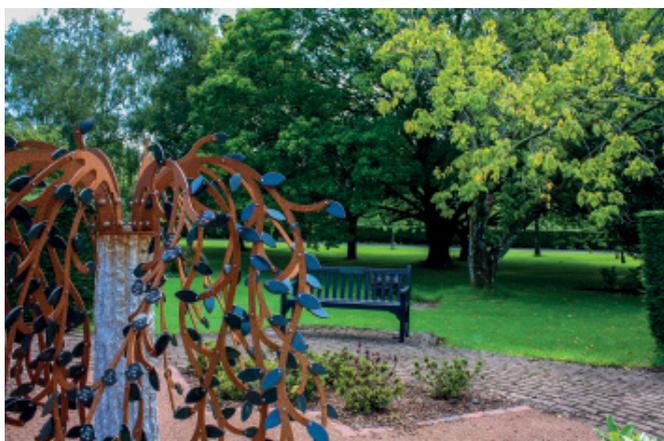
Cardiff Bereavement Services are no strangers to being recognised for the high standards of service they provide having won numerous awards including APSE Service team

of the year, Green Flags at multiple sites, a Green Heritage award and a Good Funeral Award. However winning the prestigious Cemetery of the Year award for the last 2 consecutive years 2019 and 2020 has been an incredible and proud achievement for the entire team.

Thornhill cemetery was opened in 1952 to serve the north part of Cardiff and provide the City's first crematorium which opened a year later in 1953. The site also provides the main office and administrative hub for the service which covers 6 additional sites throughout the City.

So what makes a Cemetery of the Year? Well, contrary to what many may think it isn't judged just on the length of the grass or how pretty the flower beds are. It is much more about the level of service provided to the bereaved and promoting freedom of choice. This is where the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved really helps as a starting point for

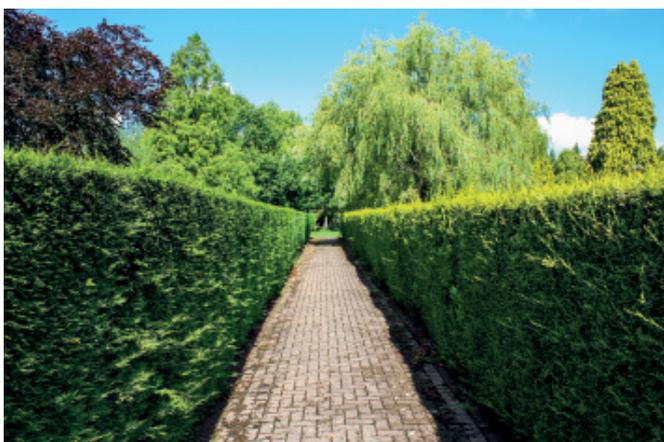




enhancing what you provide and to get an understanding of how you can begin that important improvement journey.

For any of you not familiar the Charter sets out specific criteria promoting both legal requirements and standards essential for charter membership for a service as well as best practice and enhanced provisions that are provided. These are split into various categories and a simple self-assessment is undertaken each year by the Authority whereby they simply answer yes or no to a number of questions. The answers then produce a score, and the service is awarded either, Bronze, Silver or Gold standard depending on the score achieved.

One of the keys to begin improvement is to look at your charter answers and then identify which 'No' answers can be turned into 'Yes'. This in many areas can be quite simple, such as producing a leaflet or adding information to a website, other areas may require additional resources or identifying alternative ways of working but the principle of providing an improved service to the public always remains. Cemetery regulations are often key to improving services and this is recognised as an integral part of the judging criteria for Cemetery of the Year as well as achieving a good Charter standard. Something I did early on when I started at Cardiff was to undertake a fundamental review of the regulations and look in detail at every one in place and, like



a small child, question continuously 'But Why?'. I find that many regulations are restrictive and in fact go against providing any sort of freedom of choice for the public and it is well worth spending some time analysing your regulations and really challenging what they say and why and look at turning them 'upside down' and rather than be prescriptive in prohibiting things, state and encourage things that are allowed.

As managers we will all differ on our views as to what is an essential or required regulation and what isn't, the public who use the sites will also have varying views but I encourage you to look carefully at what you don't allow and consider what the public want and need. For example, if you have a 'problem' with illegal or home-made kerbs being erected on lawn sections this would indicate those using the cemetery would prefer more traditional graves. Whilst it is accepted managing the issue in place will be a challenge (although this can be done successfully) in order to prevent



it continuing to be a problem why not look at opening a new traditional section where properly installed kerbs are permitted as well as keeping lawn sections for those who don't want edgings? This would not only meet an apparent need for the bereaved but also provide an opportunity for memorial masons to provide alternative memorials and for you to generate additional income through new or revised permit fees.

The Cemetery of the Year application is an online self-assessment that is completed and asks questions about your service, what is provided and how. It should be pointed out at this stage that unlike many other annual awards such as Green Flag there is no cost to enter the Cemetery of the Year awards and with a £1000 award for the category winner this makes entering both easy and very appealing.

There are a number of different categories based on size of cemeteries and type, including a specific category for woodland and natural burial sites. The questionnaire covers many different areas such as information available, websites, fees, memorials permitted to paint a picture of what is provided but all the categories focus on offering choice and



a good service to those who use the facility and has close links to the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved.

It should be pointed out that the Cemetery of the Year awards are sponsored by the Memorial Awareness Board (MAB) and so there is a strong focus on memorial types that are permitted in your cemeteries, again the more choice that is provided and promoted provides a better assessment in the judging process.

Once you have completed the questionnaire online it is submitted and firstly a desktop assessment is carried out by the judging team, those meeting the highest standards are then subject to a site visit where the submission is checked for accuracy and any queries can be considered. It should be noted that last year visits were not carried out due to the lockdown restrictions due to Covid-19 but it is hoped this can return in 2021.

After a wait of a few weeks notifications are sent out providing details as to whether you have made it in your particular category as a finalist and if so the date the awards will be made which is usually at the ICCM Learning Convention in October.

Regardless however as to what you score or reach the final all entries receive an extremely useful guide which shows a breakdown of the questions and how they were answered



once the awards have been completed. This is an extremely important tool in looking to make improvements for the following years and learning from good practice put in place by others. In addition to this, the guide offers help and advice on a number of other important cemetery related issues such as memorial safety inspections and memorial registration schemes.

So apart from the obvious promotion of improvements to your service what are the other key benefits to being a winner of Cemetery of the Year? In my experience the profile of the service is raised considerably both internally within the Local Authority and in the wider community.

Many of you who have been in bereavement services for many years will understand that cemeteries and crematoria have often historically been seen as 'Cinderella' services and often overlooked in terms of their importance and of course for funding when it's required. Being acknowledged as a national winner does please the politicians and decision makers and they do seem to remember these important achievements when it comes to needing funding for further improvements or new equipment.

Finally, doing well in the Cemetery of the Year is a real boost to the staff who work hard day in day out for the bereaved. Often they are overlooked and the jobs they do are not often considered attractive to discuss but we know the importance of a good grave digger, a helpful chapel attendant and knowledgeable administrative staff who all contribute to an excellent overall service.

I do think it is important that we continue to celebrate all that is good in our industry which serves so many people every year and even small changes and improvements can mean so much to the bereaved. Long live the Cemetery of the Year awards!

www.cemeteryoftheyear.org.uk

Martin Birch FICCM(Dip)
Operational Manager for Bereavement & Registration Services for the City of Cardiff

helping children through bereavement

Clare Shaw discusses the process of writing children's books that address the effects of bereavement

When it comes to bereavement, children can often end up overlooked. Adults avoid the subject so as not to upset them, but this really doesn't need to be the case. They have a higher level of understanding that we may give them credit for. Once children get to between 5 and 8 years old, they understand that death is irreversible.

Children learn from those around them so will model their behaviour on ours; if adults ignore the subject, so will they. A very good reason to set a good example.

There is widespread evidence to show that when a child does not grieve for a loss in childhood, it can cause them problems all through life, many getting into trouble as a result.

Two interesting, and quite startling statistics; a quarter of young people below the age of 20 who commit suicide have had experience of loss as a child. Also, 41% of youth offenders have lost someone close to them. These figures are staggering and could be reduced significantly with the right help at the right time.

Three things that can be done to ensure a child learns to grieve as they should:

Allow them to express their emotions. They need to feel comfortable enough to do this, although their emotions may come out in a variety of ways. Depending on their age and the situation, they may show a lot of anger. Allowing them a safe space to let this out is vital. Reassurance is key.

Use the correct language. To tell a child that someone they love "went to sleep" could be very damaging. As could saying that they have "lost" someone. They could have terrible trouble sleeping in fear that they might not wake up or spend all their waking hours looking for the person who is lost. Telling them that somebody has died and explaining what this means will be so much better for the child in the long run.

Be honest. Not only about what has happened but about your own feelings too. As I touched on at the beginning, children will look to those around them as to how to deal with death. Adults have a natural tendency to hide their grief so as not to upset any children in the family. The children then believe that the way to deal with death is to bottle everything up and not show any emotion. If they have questions (and they will) answer them as honestly as you can. Even if the question makes you feel a little uncomfortable; remember they are asking from a place of pure innocence.

On any normal day in the UK an average of 112 children are bereaved of a parent. Goodness knows how many lose siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents and close family friends in addition to this. Worryingly, the past twelve months have been anything but normal, there will be so many children who have experienced an unexpected bereavement without having their usual, extended support network around them.



In 2017, I published *Love Will Never Die*, a book to help children through bereavement. It is a unique resource offering both ideas on how the child can deal with their emotions, alongside areas where the child can write and draw their own feelings. It even houses a small packet of tissues to reassure the child that it is ok to cry! Many people have commented that it has helped the whole family open up and talk about their grief.

Funeral directors and celebrants around the UK have been using this, either by signposting people to my website or by handing it out to families in their care, for some time now. The feedback has been phenomenal. Particularly on the odd occasion I have been lucky enough to meet a child who has used the book. It is heart-warming the difference it can make to a child in such a terrible situation.

Having contact with families limited so much during Covid, it's not always immediately obvious that a child could be connected to the deceased in your care. I believe that with every death comes the possibility that this could be so, it's always best to ask. Offering something so simple could end up being so valuable to every family in grief, even retrospectively.

I have published several children's books all written from a child's perspective. They have pages of activities and areas where the child can express themselves freely, making them truly personal journals that the child can keep forever. All the techniques used within the books came from school ELSAs (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants), teachers and Educational Psychologists, and are tried and tested methods. Often referred to as a 'mental health crisis', the issue of a rising number of children in need of support is frequently seen in the UK media. A 2017 NHS study revealed that at least 1 in 8 children in the UK have a diagnosable mental health condition. There are many more without diagnoses but who feel worried or sad a lot of the time or suffer low

self-esteem. Often, schools are carrying the burden with many relying on ELSAs to keep track of the children in their setting.

During Covid-19's national lockdown and the closing of schools, there was growing concern for the mental health of our children and how they would be once returning to school, and in the long term. Many will have suffered a bereavement, possibly unexpectedly, and many will be feeling anxious.

In addition to the child mental health crisis, it is reported that supporting adult mental health issues in the workplace is costing businesses in the UK around £40 billion each year, with many companies training Mental Health First Aiders. I believe books like mine will help recognise and address issues much earlier in life, taking the stigma away from talking about emotions and therefore helping future working generations.

My books have been referred to as a 'much needed resource' in establishing good emotional resilience. ELSAs I have met with have suggested that every child in the country needs a copy of *At Times I Get These Feelings* and have pondered how different our generation would be had

we had this book when we were young.

To this end, I have entered into a corporate partnership with national mental health charity, The Kaleidoscope Plus Group, to raise awareness and provide sponsorship for schools. We are in contact with many schools on a regular basis who are desperate for copies of our titles but just do not have the funding to purchase many.

We would like to be able to offer our titles to these schools, for free! Getting these books to the children who need them at just the right time.

This scheme has been developed to provide companies a way to demonstrate their corporate social responsibilities by offering free mental wellbeing books to schools.

Working together and spreading the word of this initiative, we hope to provide books to schools across the UK for many years to come.

If you have any questions, or would like to find out more, or would be interested in considering nominating us through the ICCM metal recycling scheme, please visit www.cskidsbooks.com.





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the nature of loss podcast

Personal stories of grief and nature

Following a successful outdoor, nature-focused bereavement group set up by BCP Council at Hengistbury Head Nature Reserve, (Bournemouth, Dorset) came this podcast. Due to a tough year for everyone, including those who work within the people and engagement fields, the idea for this podcast was born. During 2020 we had to constantly change our rules and what we could offer as a part of our bereavement support services; limiting numbers, masks, cancellations and social distancing. Many industries have moved online, with even virtual links for funerals, weddings and conferences. The Nature of Loss Podcast was a way to provide these bereavement services virtually, with no limitations on who we could reach.

The idea for the podcast was to encourage others to share their personal or professional stories and journeys, with a focus on the beneficial and therapeutic elements of nature. This could increase our reach for highlighting this beneficial relationship with nature, and outline the wonderful work already going on in support of those who are grieving.

The benefits for physical and mental health have been well reported.

Numerous studies have shown that spending time outdoors, in nature can decrease stress, anxiety, loneliness, risk of diseases, ADD and the effects of grief. It can also increase mood, your microbiome, immunity and lots more. Just by being outdoors, in nature you claim the benefits, even if you aren't enjoying yourself! These benefits have been found to have effects in as little as 3 minutes. Stress is relieved within minutes of exposure to nature; quantified by reduced muscle tension, blood pressure and increased brain activity. Memory performance and attention span improves by 20% after spending an hour interacting with nature (Bird, 2007; Bratman et al, 2019; White et al, 2019). And white blood cells increase 50% after spending two or more consecutive days in nature. Uncovering these countless benefits has resulted in the creation of wonderful organisations such as A Dose of Nature, who prescribe time in nature as a form of physical and mental therapy in patients.

The cost of mental health problems for the NHS is estimated at £105 billion every year (Mental Health Taskforce, 2016). It would be a reasonable assumption that the cost for 2020 and consecutive years could be much higher. Nature is something that all of us found some sort of solace in during 2020 as a way to see friends and family, with being outside and keeping active one of the only reasons you could leave your homes. It is time we begin to integrate nature into our everyday lives, and respect it for the benefits it brings us, which extend much past our physical and mental health! As relatively wild spaces, our beautiful cemeteries and burial grounds are the perfect starting point to provide some of those benefits during ceremonies and visits, and the nature within these sites should be advertised to promote utilisation of a wonderful, free resource.

Our previous episodes have shared the stories of people from around the world, showing that this therapeutic link with nature is universal. And with an increase in nature prescriptions and serious recognitions of nature through scientific research, could soon be integrated into our health systems.

We are still looking for stories to tell on this podcast, so if you have a professional or personal story/project that you would like to share with us, please send an email to: mollie.taylor@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

For more information about our bereavement group or our podcast visit: <https://www.visithengistburyhead.co.uk/Events/Bereavement-Group.aspx>

And to give our podcast a listen head to: <https://anchor.fm/thenatureofloss>

Resources:

http://www2.rspb.org.uk/Images/naturalthinking_tcm9-161856.pdf

https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/5/7/eaax0903?utm_source=miragenews&utm_medium=miragenews&utm_campaign=news





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national grief awareness week

National Grief Awareness week took place last year between 2nd – 8th December.

National Grief Awareness week is an annual national event which started in 2019 and is driven by The Good Grief Trust, bringing all UK bereavement services, support organisations and helplines together under one central database. Offering early signposting to a choice of support for both the bereaved and those working with them.



The aim is to encourage people to talk about their experiences of grief as this is often an uncomfortable and difficult subject for many. When we talk about it, it can be one of the most effective ways of supporting yourself and can be a huge relief.

The theme of last year's event recognises that during Covid-19, many people are grieving at home and are unable to reach out to friends, family and loved ones for much-needed human contact.

As such people were urged to use the hashtag #ShareYourStory and document their experiences because "distance shouldn't mean we can't share our grief".

A poster campaign was launched, and these images are available to organisations to download from the website www.nationalgriefawarenessweek.org. The key messages are set out below and can also be found on the website.



Your story could become someone's hope

We know that many have not been able to share their stories of grief in the past year. Sharing our stories can help those grieving to know that the person who has died will be remembered and can help the bereaved to process their grief. Sharing stories will help others to understand the impact of grief and loss and will enable conversations to take place, to open up to emotions and feelings that are often difficult to express.



Just because I'm smiling doesn't mean I'm not grieving

The bereaved often have to hide their grief from others. Sometimes it is from their friends and family as they do not want to burden them. Sometimes it is from their colleagues at work. Please look out for them, check they are okay, in the early days and ongoing. They may look alright, they may be going to work, but deep inside they could be struggling and just need your support and understanding.



Say their name, I'm thinking about them anyway

We are often afraid to mention the person's name who has died. We think we will upset our friend or family member, but it is generally the opposite. By saying their name, remembering them and talking about them, you are helping to share your love and affection for that person. This is very important and will help those grieving to know that you will help to keep their memory alive.



There's no one face of grief

Grief does not discriminate. We will all be affected by a bereavement. Children, young people, the older generation, all faiths, all religions, all cultures, all sectors of our community will grieve. We need to help all minority groups who are often stigmatised to #OpenUpToGrief and help to support anyone, anywhere who needs help.



There's no set time for grieving

There is a myth that you 'get over' grief. That you 'move on'. You don't. You move forward with your grief, but you may be affected by a bereavement throughout your whole life. Often after the funeral, people leave and things go 'back to normal'. This is the time when the bereaved most need support, when they feel alone and isolated. We need to understand that there are triggers that may come from nowhere that will affect them in the weeks, months and years after the death.

national grief awareness week - Mortlake Crematorium

“It isn’t the circumstances of the death that will predict a positive or negative outcome, it is the support they get at the time and after the death. This is the key component to anybody finding a way to rebuild their life.” (Julia Samuel; Psychotherapist)

This was the second year of the Grief Awareness Week. The aim of the week was to:

- Help the bereaved feel acknowledged and understood.
- To help those grieving and the professionals working with them, to find the support they need NOW.
- To help those supporting their grieving friends and family to know what to say and do.
- To help the smaller support organisations raise their profile and reach those in need in the community.

In 2019, for the first grief awareness week, 25 people came together to run/walk 5K in Richmond Park as part of Park Run <https://www.parkrun.org.uk/>; others were there to support and cheer us on. Bereaved families, celebrants, funeral director staff and our crematoria staff took part. The objective was to raise awareness of grief, all people had to do was turn up and walk or run - we did not focus on fund raising as we understand that many feel a pressure to raise funds and feel uneasy asking friends and family which may prohibit them from joining in. Some did raise money for their chosen bereavement charity and that was great, and some donated rather than walk which is also good! Mortlake Crematorium provided the T-Shirts for the participants.

The organiser of the Park Run event gave a very thoughtful acknowledgement to all those running. He mentioned that almost everyone running that morning had known someone who had died, and this was a time to remember them and to know there was support out there for any needing help. He also mentioned how exercise and getting out of the house can really improve how you feel.

It was a great disappointment this year that we could not all run together, but T-shirts were delivered and many who ran last year ran again, albeit on their own or with their families.

There was a banner we had in place at the crematorium and many funeral directors, families, celebrants shared their photo on social media to promote the message and the week. The local MP, Sarah Olney, came to offer her support and spread the message too.



Sarah Olney, MP

The Week itself focuses on different groups/type of grief on each day. At Mortlake Crematorium we held a message writing and candle lighting service on the Monday which was baby and child loss day. Due to COVID we did not have our usual remembrance service, but families came to the

evening service and commented on how they needed to mark the Christmas period and honour their baby or child. We have strong links with SANDS, and they let their families know about the evening. Many other families who come year after year, contacted us to see if we were doing anything and the information was also on our website.



On the last day of Grief Awareness Week, public buildings including St Pauls and around the country were lit up in yellow. The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames lit Garrick’s Temple and the council through social media spread the message.

The Grief Awareness Week will be a fixed event in the calendar running from the 2nd -8th December. Those who have had to grieve alone for so long will really need that support this year. I imagine that remembrance services will be well attended, that Good Grief Cafes if you hold them, would also be well attended, none of which are expensive to arrange or difficult to set up. Knowing the date in advance means you could have your Christmas remembrance services during Grief Awareness Week. Communication and media teams could promote to ensure people in your community know about your event.

Throughout the year we give out the Good Grief Cards with every person’s ashes or to those attending a scattering of ashes appointment. The cards are also available in the remembrance room for people to take away. If every cemetery and crematorium distributed the cards it would ensure bereaved people would be able to access immediate support. The information on the Good Grief Trust website <https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/> is useful to the bereaved as well as everyone working in bereavement services and I recommend you watch the videos and read through the pages.

At the start of this article was a quote from Julia Samuel. Julia is a psychotherapist and has worked with bereaved families for over thirty years. She has written two books; Grief Works and This Too Shall Pass. I recommend both. In her books she discussed the pillars of strength. Her 8 pillars of strength also include grief from living losses. The pandemic has seen so many suffer living losses; job loss, not seeing families, health, financial security, not able to work in the usual way etc. These pillars of strength are a system of support, which if you start to put into place can help you every single day. I thank Julia Samuels @juliasamuelmbe as through her books and talks on Instagram she has helped me through this pandemic and I highly recommend her work to everyone!

Natasha Bradshaw
Superintendent & Registrar, Mortlake Crematorium

national grief awareness week - Waltham Forest

On Friday 3rd Dec Zoë (my better half!) and I did a 5k walk at Queens Road Cemetery followed by another 5k at Chingford Mount purely to raise awareness of the bereavement support that is out there and how accessible it now is. National Grief Awareness Week is quite new but is a cause close to my heart because of my story.

When I was in my late teens/early twenties I lost several close family members in quick succession. I was also involved in a coach accident with 5 fatalities. Three weeks after this I lost my father suddenly. Then the friend I was with during the accident also died tragically. I couldn't believe all of this had happened so quickly. I had no idea what to do about it. I carried on as normal but inside struggled with this for about 10 years. Thankfully, I eventually got the support I needed but it was hard to find back then. What helped was talking it through to help make sense of things.

Now, it is so much better because with a few clicks on The Good Grief Trust website you are paired up with the right support in your area when you need it most. Hence the walk, to raise awareness so people know where to go if they are struggling after losing a loved one. Thank you again to the friends for letting me share this.



**Tusar SenGupta, Cemeteries Manager
London Borough of Waltham Forest
Chingford Mount Cemetery**

national grief awareness week - St. Pauls Cathedral

The Evensong Service at St.Paul's Cathedral to mark National Grief Awareness Week was especially poignant for me this year as my wife had died suddenly only a few weeks before and I felt very fortunate to have been allocated a ticket. I arranged to meet Julie New (who is well known to many of us as a skilled personal recovery coach and author of the popular gift book *The Grief Garden Path*, sales of which see a donation made for each copy to the Good Grief Trust www.thegoodgrieftrust.org) for a coffee and a catch up before the service, and so that we could go in together, thank you Julie.

All of the arrangements were very carefully orchestrated to meet the government coronavirus guidelines and the entry to the cathedral was very well stewarded by Good Grief Trust volunteers and members of the St.Paul's Cathedral team. The service was led by The Very Reverend Dr David



Julie and Alan on the way to Evensong

Ison and the address given by the Right Reverend and Right Honourable Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London with Linda Magistris, the CEO of the Good Grief Trust reading one of the lessons. The full sung Evensong, especially with the wonderful St.Paul's Cathedral choir was a truly fitting way to mark the end of National Grief Awareness week and a real tribute to all those who we mourn. After the service was over, we gathered at a social distance of course to see the dome of the cathedral lit in yellow which was very dramatic.

Thank you to Linda and her team at the Good Grief Trust and to all those at St.Pauls Cathedral that made the service possible.

Alan José

MP Sir John Hayes pays tribute to funeral service employees

Over the past year, death – the definite destiny of us all – has become a present spectre in our communal consciousness. The departure of each unique and precious soul brings the pain of loss along with a chance to reflect for those who remain.

Amongst the pandemic's tidal wave of grief across the country, those whose work is to provide a final send-off for those who loved and lost, whilst ensuring the safety of staff and mourners, have gone to extraordinary lengths to support bereaved families.

With quiet dignity and enduring courtesy, clergy, funeral directors, morticians, undertakers, staff at cemeteries and crematoriums, and bereavement counsellors endeavour to avoid standing out from the crowd.

Perhaps that is why their work often goes unnoticed by those in the corridors of power. However, in my role as chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Funerals and Bereavement, I have gained an important insight into the lives and work of those who shoulder the burden of death each and every working day.

Though Covid-19 has hit our country hard, with 90,000 deaths here at home, we are fortunate indeed to have the societal and cultural infrastructure required to weather the storm.

Around the world, 2020 has placed enormous strain on funeral provision. In a number of countries, this has been overwhelming, leading to the sad indignity of hastily dug mass graves.

The restrictions on the number of mourners permitted to attend the funerals of those they love has, inevitably, resulted in distressing decisions for families. Despite these challenges, I have been struck by the ways in which professionals have been able to keep these funeral services as special as possible. This has included the livestreaming of services to friends and relatives at home and across the world, taking a cortege to pass directly by a vulnerable relative to enable them to pay their last respects, or making an extra effort to deliver a personal request, such as the funeral director who printed out scans of family members' handprints to place over the coffin, because touching it wasn't allowed.

It is vital therefore, that those essential workers involved in the provision of funerals are indeed considered essential. This means that they must be part of the conversation regarding both the provision of PPE at affordable prices and priority for vaccination. Worrying about their own exposure to the virus and witnessing the grief of families on a daily basis has come at a price for many within our society.

Though nurses, doctors, and paramedics and those in the care sector are trained to cope with trauma – emotional and physical – the sheer scale has taken its toll. They cannot be praised too much or too often. Funeral workers too are exhausted and saddened by what they have been through.

Their overriding commitment to supporting those who are grieving has maintained them, alongside the equally pivotal work of our nation's bereavement counsellors, the patience and compassion of whom has helped restore and revive those numbed by despair.

It is time we as a community and nation paid tribute to the 20,000 funeral service employees in the UK – many of whom work for independent, family-run businesses, passed down for generations.

With care and courtesy, those that officiate, organise and administer funerals, and who provide comfort to the bereaved, have been there for us throughout; their reassurance and kindness now still more important than ever.





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£10 million thank you's

The ICCM is proud to announce that the Recycling of Metals scheme has reached the £10 million mark for funds donated to bereavement related charities. This follows a record-breaking round of 121 nominations in November 2020 resulting in £1,210,000 being donated to good causes around the UK.

In terms of what £1,210,000 actually looks like in paperwork, the picture right should give a good example – somewhere under that is a table!

The ICCM Recycling of Metals scheme was introduced in 2007, and has been successfully run since then in partnership with Orthometals BV. To demonstrate the difference in scale from the first round of nominations to the latest one, here is the highly detailed table of the first set of awards made on 31st March 2007 – when we went, wow we have paid out £15,000 and we were worried about favouring one cause over another.

31/03/2007	7009	CRUSE - recycling money	7500
31/03/2007	7010	BCET - recycling money	3000
31/03/2007	7011	SANDS - recycling money	1500
31/03/2007	7012	MacMillan Nurses - recycling money	1500
31/03/2007	7013	The Hospice Movement - recycling money	1500
			£15,000.00



There were 8 nominations in that round from the initial scheme members.

Replace with Compare that to the 121 received in November and you'll get a good idea of how much the scheme has grown.

It took 8 rounds of requests and 5 years to manage to get that many nominations to begin with. Now we have got to the point where we have had 1,784 single requests for funds from all scheme members over the years.

I think its useful at this time to mention, and de-bunk some of the possible misconceptions, on how funds are awarded.

Only members who have donated funds in the last collection round can nominate.

Nope - All scheme members may nominate in each round.

Scheme members funds are allocated by the amount they have donated each round.

Each scheme member receives an equal award from the total pot of funds – we batch rounds to ensure there is a large amount to distribute each time.

No scheme member ever, or ever will, receive a share based on their metal's donations, as this will vary so much it is unworkable.

The ICCM Board decide which charities are suitable and if not, the crematoria cannot receive funds.

Every single suitable charity receives a share. If the nominated cause is outside the criteria, we would ask for a different one quickly to ensure a nomination.

The ICCM Board do verify the causes. A charity that has been awarded funds in the past, as long as it is still going, will receive funds again. Any new nominations will be checked by their description and if there are queries these can be resolved to ensure funds are going to the core of the scheme's aim.

Over the last 14 years the scheme has managed to donate a total £10,176,026 to 525 different charities. We have also arranged for large reusable presentation cheques to be sent to a crematorium where they are unable to get them from their own council or for other reasons.

This has caused an amount of amusement, especially when the cheque printing company asked me why they were sending cheques off to crematoria. An example of one is handily modelled right.



Some causes say that they need £10,000 a day to keep going, for example for large hospices. By my calculation, that would mean if all the funds had gone to those causes, we would have kept one going for 1,018 days or nearly 3 years. Any hospice funded for that long would have made an impact on people's lives as unfortunately all of us would be aware of.

For some charities £3,000 - £4,000 makes a huge difference. In those cases, we may have made 2,500 differences, but I'm trying to measure money against lives and all that has ever mattered is that causes have been rewarded and lives will have been improved.

Hospices and bereavement support have made up the majority of funds allocated from the scheme – caring for people, who are dying or supporting people after they have lost a loved one. The difference that everyone's commitment has made is immeasurable from what was waste 15 or more years ago.

Listing all 525 causes would take several more pages than our editor would sensibly allow so below are the top 50 recipients over this first £10 million, representing a broad scope of good causes and funding that will have improved or aided people's lives, recovery or made their last times better.

It also seems sensible at this point to mention that we are doing it all over again – not handing out £10 million again, but over £1 million should hopefully be donated in late May 2021.

If you haven't had your form and you're a scheme member then please check your emails or post as they went out in good old 2020 – reminders will follow as we aim to keep the funds going and keep helping those charities.

Acorns Children's Hospice	Make a wish
Age UK	Marie Curie
Alzheimer's society	Mayor's Appeal
Anna Drysdale Foundation	MIND
Barnsley Bereavement Support	Nottingham Wildlife trust
Blue Bell Wood Children's Hospice	Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice
British Heart Foundation	Princess Alice Hospice
Cancer Research	Rainbows Children Hospice
CHAS	Rowans Hospice
CHUMS	Royal British Legion
CLIC Sargent	Royal Trinity Hospice
COPE CHILDRENS TRUST	Samaritans
CRUSE	Sands
Dementia UK	Shooting Star (CHASE)
Diabetes UK	SLOW
Donna Louise Children's Hospice	St Barnabas Hospice (Chestnut Tree House)
Dragonflies - The Fellowship of St Nicholas	St Christopher Hospice
East Lancashire Hospice	St Luke's Hospice
Farleigh Hospice	St Michaels' Hospice
Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice	St Raphael's Hospice
Hope House Children's Hospice	Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide
Isabel Hospice	Touchstones Child Bereavement Support
Lindsey Lodge Hospice	Way
Macmillan Cancer Care	Winston's Wish
Maggie's	WPH Counselling & Education Service

It would also seem appropriate to mention a few weird/sad/bad and wonderful things with physical cheque awards over the years and charity mishaps – the funds got there in the end, but we've changed to BACS payments to make it all the smoother.

A group of councillors disagreed on an award and eventually made a decision after one of them died.

A charity spokesperson decided to insult the wife and chairman of the cremation board at a public function just before the nomination forms were due.

A charity went bust before the award could be made.

A Mayor had a heart attack at a meeting and then the award was made to the hospital that treated him.

On to more amusing ones – the cheque was eaten by a dog.

The cheque made it to the crematorium, then the charity locked it in their safe and forgot about it for 6 months.

The cheque made it to the crematorium, they passed it physically to the charity and it went missing in the office even though everyone had seen it.

And the best reason ever why a charity should be nominated – “Why does your charity qualify as bereavement support or ancillary to this when aiding the deceased or their families?”

The answer – “We stop people ending up dead and going along the road to the crematorium”.

£10 million could not have been donated without all the help of scheme members – the praise and thanks for us hitting the milestone is with scheme members, officers who make sure they joined and support it, new initiatives such as pacemaker recycling and finally and most importantly, the bereaved whose consent means the scheme can operate.

Trevor Robson
ICCM Finance and IT Manager

Please keep sending in your nominations!

iccm recycling of metals scheme



The Recycling of metals scheme shared out funds totalling £1,230,000 in November 2020. This took the total funds donated by the scheme since its inception to over £10 million.



Coychurch Crematorium – CLIC Sargent

Sending you our heartfelt thanks for the donation of £10,000 from Coychurch Crematorium in respect of an ICCM recycling of metals scheme donation. This incredibly generous donation will hugely help in our fight for young lives against cancer.

Today, 12 more children and young people will hear the devastating news that they have cancer. From diagnosis, CLIC Sargent's specialist care teams will step in, ready to help, support and guide each young cancer patient and their family.

We know that for young lives, when the doctor says cancer, normal life stops. CLIC Sargent care teams will fight tirelessly to limit the damage cancer causes; they will listen, and ask the right questions, so that they can provide the right support, tailored to each young person and family.

This might mean arranging a CLIC Sargent grant or helping young people and families get the benefits they are entitled to, coordinating care so that some medical procedures can happen at home, arranging free accommodation in a CLIC Sargent Home from Home, or helping young cancer patients and families keep in touch with school, college or work to keep life as normal as possible.

Sadly, this may also mean providing bereavement support which 500 families face each year. Our care teams provide bereavement support through home visits, local support groups and memory days. We do this to help children, young people and their families find a way to cope, and to help those left behind find a way to go on living.

Thank you to Coychurch Crematorium Committee, the ICCM and also to you Joanna for supporting CLIC Sargent and joining with us to fight for young lives against cancer.

Diolch yn fawr,

Cerys Sadler
Fundraising Engagement Manager South & Mid Wales and Herefordshire

Worcester - St. Richard's Hospice

Worcester City Council has presented a cheque for £10,000 to St. Richard's Hospice – a local charity which cares for adults and their loved ones following diagnosis of a serious progressive illness.

The amount was paid over on behalf of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management's metals recycling scheme, which the City Council's crematorium is part of.

Tricia Cavell, Fundraising Director at St. Richard's Hospice said: "We're so grateful for this generous donation, which could help pay for a clinical nurse specialist for close to three months. "It's been a particularly challenging year for charities like us with fundraising events cancelled and charity shops closed, but, with the support of wonderful community partners like the city council, we can continue to provide free care for patients and their families across Worcestershire when they need us."



The £10,000 cheque was presented by the Mayor of Worcester, Councillor Jo Hodges. Following the cremation of a deceased person, the cremated remains contain metals from the coffin and from orthopaedic implants such as hip and knee replacement joints. The recycling of metals resulting from cremation is only carried out with the written consent of each bereaved family.

To date, Worcester City Council has contributed close to £60,000 to local charities through the scheme.

For more information about St. Richard's Hospice, go to www.strichards.org.uk





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Support for our users, support for our system - our experienced, helpful, and professional technical staff are available to support you throughout the working day, contactable by phone and by email. Our developers are constantly improving Epilog Sequel and our system is regularly updated and patched.

Backed up and secure - whether you choose to host your system internally or whether you host with us, your data is always backed up and kept secure.

Yeovil Crematorium - Josephine's Star

The charity who supports children and families with their grief when some special dies will be getting the Christmas present of a £10,000 donation.

Chair of trustees at Josephine's Star, Leif Tarry, said: "To receive such a wonderful donation in what has been a very challenging year is simply a dream come true.

"Thanks to the generous actions of families who have chosen to support the crematorium's charity recycling scheme, we will now be able to support more children across the county."

John Ranger, manager at Yeovil Crematorium, said: "We looked long and hard at many, many charities and then we found Josephine's Star.

"They were over the moon and I think they were even more over the moon when they found out the sum of money as well!

"It's lovely to give something back to the community, especially within these strange times as well. I think there has been so much funding been cut."

The charity who like many has had to adapt and carefully manage its finances during the pandemic, has seen a sharp growth in demand for its services this year.

In response the charity has launched its "Guiding Star" campaign in November through which they hope to raise a further £8000 to support their work.

As part of this funding drive charity chair Leif Tarry has been persuaded to cut off his beloved beard to help toward the total. He said: "It's a small sacrifice to make to ensure we can support all the children who need us."

Some of the money will support the charities latest project called Little Bags of Help. This is a grief first aid kit to children who have lost a loved one.

Each £25 kit contains activities and resources to support a child in with their grief.

Leif said: "We put a call out to the community to ask if anyone would be able to make a bag for the kits to go in and we were overwhelmed by the generosity of the "sewers" and the number of bags we received.

"The feedback from the children who received these bags has been wonderful so for us ensuring we have sufficient funds to keep this project going is really important."



Chair of Trustees at Josephine's Star, Leif Tarry

City of Belfast Crematorium presented a cheque to Tiny Life, Northern Ireland's premature baby charity.

Crematorium administrator, Kathy Mageean and her daughter Matilda were delighted to present this cheque to Tiny Life as a way of saying thank you for all the help that they have received. Matilda was born 10 weeks before her due date, weighing 2lbs 12ozs. Tiny Life, Northern Ireland's premature baby charity, were able to offer practical advice, emotional support and give a helping hand during and after Matilda's stay in the neonatal intensive care unit."

Front Row; Valerie Cromie (Head of Fundraising & Communications, Tiny Life), Matilda Mageean.

Back Row; Kathy Mageean (City of Belfast Crematorium) and Ken Gilmore (National Society of Allied & Independent Funeral Directors).



Clyde Coast & Garnock Valley Crematorium handed over £10,000 to Ardgowan Hospice

A local cancer charity's funds have been boosted by a five figure cash injection from a crematorium's metal recycling scheme.

Clyde Coast & Garnock Valley Crematorium handed over £10,000 to Ardgowan Hospice to help support crucial and compassionate end of life care for those with the disease, and other life-limiting illnesses.

The figure was raised through the crematorium's membership of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management's national Recycling of Metals Scheme.

This sees them sensitively recover metals and orthopaedic implants following cremation, with the consent of bereaved families.

Phillip Ewing, manager at Clyde Coast & Garnock Valley Crematorium, said: "As professionals assisting the bereaved, we recognise the financial challenges that organisations supporting families at a most difficult and vulnerable time face, particularly during these exceptional times that we are all experiencing.

"These funds will directly benefit the inspirational Ardgowan Hospice, and the families they are supporting right now.

"We support all of our local hospices and also CHAS, the Children's Hospice for Scotland, taking each one in turn, and we have been able to donate a total of £48,000 since we opened our doors in June 2018.

"Hospices are a crucial and sensitive part of our community, and we feel so humbled to be able to make donations like the one we have made today to Ardgowan Hospice."

"Our deep and heart-felt thanks go to each and every family who consented to take part in the national recycling scheme."

Metals are extracted following the completion of the cremation process using magnets and are then stored and recycled with the crematorium's partners.

This is the second time the Largs-based crematorium has supported the local organisation, having handed over a £5,000 cheque in 2018.

On hand to receive the cheque was Elaine McNeill, hospice fundraising officer, who said: "We extend our thanks to Phillip and the team for the extremely kind donation that rounds off one of the most difficult years of fundraising in hospice fundraising.

"As well as the team at Clyde Coast & Garnock Valley, we want to thank all of the families who very kindly consented to take part in the national recycling scheme."

The donation comes at the end of a challenging year for the Nelson Street hospice, who rely on fundraising and donations to cover 60 per cent of their running costs.

Linda Kelly, head of corporate development at Ardgowan Hospice, added: "We are extremely thankful to Clyde Coast and Garnock Valley Crematorium for choosing to support us for the second time with this substantial donation, especially in such difficult times when our ability to fundraise has been impacted so significantly.

"We rely hugely on the generosity and support of our local community and businesses.



Bradford MBC – Bradford Hospice

Thank you so much for your very generous donation of £10,000 received with gratitude from our Bradford Hospice. We were overwhelmed to have received our second donation from yourselves during what has been a difficult year for many people and cannot express how much this means to our patients and families living with a terminal illness.

We help over 690 local people and their families every year in Bradford providing the very best specialist care for people at the very end of their lives. It costs £6,144 every day to run our Bradford Hospice so your donations have helped to cover the cost of three days of care supporting all aspects of our hospice, ensuring patients, families and loved ones can access crucial care and support.

We are here for you, if any member of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management is living with a terminal illness, or know someone who is, our information and support team, including nurses, are here to answer your questions, no matter how big or small. We are open 7 days a week. Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm, Saturdays and Sundays 11am to 5pm.

Call our Support Line **0800 090 2309*** or Find information or chat to us online **mariecurie.org.uk/support**.

Stafford Crematorium

Recycled artificial hip and knee joints at a Staffordshire crematorium have helped towards a £10,000 donation to a charity which supports people who have suffered bereavement.

Stafford Borough Council, which runs the crematorium on Stafford's Tixall Road, has donated more than £60,000 since 2013 through the scheme.

The latest charity to benefit is Stafford and District Bereavement and Loss Support Service (SDBLSS) which has received £10,000. The service offers emotional support to people who are experiencing grief or loss through death or terminal illness of a loved one, close friend or neighbour.

Lesley Bailey, from SDBLSS, said: "This is an incredible amount of money for a small charity and with the current difficult situation with the pandemic and the lack of fundraising opportunities we cannot thank you enough. It was such a tremendous surprise and is truly very much appreciated."

Councillor Jonathan Price, Cabinet Member for Environment at the Borough Council said: "I'd like to think that those who have had loved ones cremated will draw some comfort from knowing their loss is helping fund this very worthwhile charity.

"I'm very proud of how much our crematorium has raised over the years for many good causes and it has been great to hear the feedback from the charities about how this money is helping them with their excellent work."

The Tixall Road site was awarded 'Gold' status by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and has retained its 'Green Flag' as one of the best open spaces in the country.

More details about the service can be found at www.staffordbc.gov.uk/bereavement



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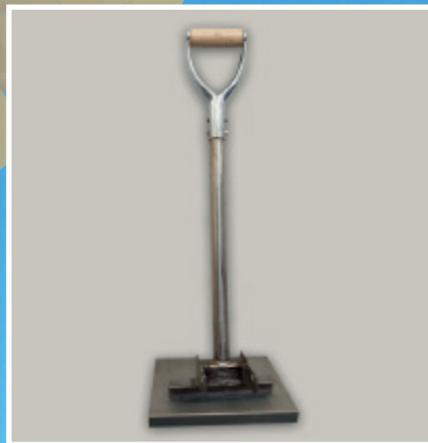
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the importance of being together

Vicky Waters tells the story of a mother being reunited with her babies.

I first met Sandra in 2015 when she visited the Eastbourne Crematorium and Cemetery Office asking if we were able to trace historic burials. She provided the name of a baby who she explained was her sister and the year she died which was 1955. I conducted the search in the usual way; our burial records which start from 1850 are not yet recorded electronically until the year 2000 onwards, and therefore I had to conduct a manual search which first requires us to check the register for the year and then alphabetically for the first letter of the surname which we had been told was March. I could find no record and not wanting to tell the lady incorrect information asked my colleague to cast her eye over the page to check. It can be easy to miss as the information which is all handwritten is not always clear and can be misinterpreted. My colleague could not find any details either and it was obvious Sandra left feeling confused as she was sure the baby had been buried at Ocklynge Cemetery in Eastbourne. Sandra was 3 years old when Patricia died and can still remember the sudden absence of the baby sister she had loved.

Sandra returned several times over the next few months having gathered further pieces of information which still led her to believe her sister had been laid to rest at Ocklynge Cemetery. Finally, she found something which revealed the reason we had not been able to find the details within our search. The baby had been registered as Patricia Linda Marsh instead of the correct surname of March. We were soon able to find the record once we were in possession of the registered name and found that the burial did indeed take place at Ocklynge Cemetery on the 4th February 1955 and the baby was 9 months old when she died. We could see that the father was the owner of the grave, but we were unable to share this information with Sandra as she had mentioned in conversations that her father had estranged himself from the family many years earlier and she didn't know if he was still alive. She suspected he was the owner as her mum had told her that her father had taken the baby for burial and had told her she had been laid to rest with other babies.

It was at this point that Sandra then revealed there had been another baby, her mother's first born child in 1949 and named Penelope Jean March who had died when she was 4 months old. Her mother had taken her to Berkshire to visit her own mother and sisters, and while away the baby had become poorly

and had been taken into hospital where she tragically died. The baby was buried at All Saints Cemetery in Maidenhead in a council owned grave.

Sandra explained that she wanted to exhume baby Penelope and re-inter her with Patricia at Ocklynge Cemetery. Sandra's mum, Jean, had suffered with dementia during her final years and Sandra had witnessed periods of her being very upset and crying for the babies she had lost and questioning why they had died. It was seeing her mum so distressed and upset about her babies that made it so important to Sandra to reunite them. We had many conversations about the procedure and discussed the hurdles that could stand in the way, but Sandra was determined and started the application for the exhumation of Penelope so that she could be reburied with her sister, Patricia, and her mum, Jean.

Sandra suspected that her father was the owner of the grave in Ocklynge Cemetery, and to enable the reinterment to proceed we explained he would need to complete the interment forms or in the event that he was deceased the grave ownership would need to be transferred. Sandra, never to be beaten by any barriers, started a search for her father and made contact with a lady from a national paper who traced Mr March. It turned out he had died sometime earlier, but previously had relocated to Harrogate, changed his name and had been living a new life where he had told people he was single and had no children! With this information available we were able to draw up a Statutory Declaration for Sandra and her siblings to take to a solicitor so that the grave at Ocklynge Cemetery could be legally transferred and she would then hold the Exclusive Right of Burial.

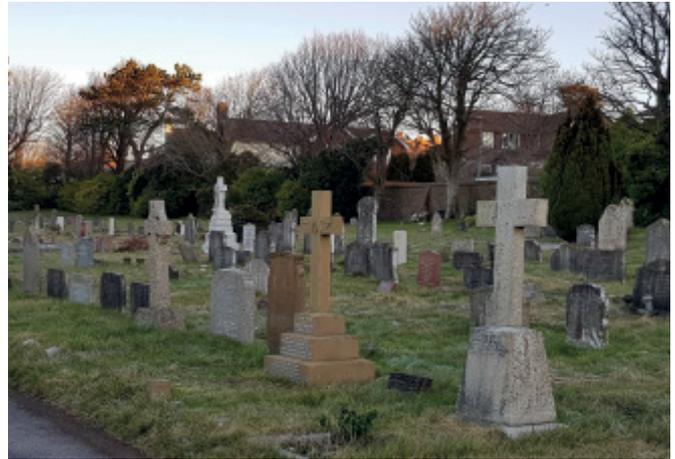
Eventually after many long conversations and form filling Sandra was informed that the application to exhume and re-inter Penelope had been upheld and could go ahead and it just required agreement from the receiving cemetery. At this particular time Julie Dunk was covering as Registrar at Eastbourne Crematorium and Cemetery Office. I explained the history to her and she immediately prepared a letter for Sandra to send to The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Cemeteries confirming that Ocklynge Cemetery would accept the re-interment.



On the 12th August 2019, baby Penelope's remains were exhumed, re-coffined and driven to Eastbourne. The grave was prepared, and I waited for the call to say they were close. Ocklynge Cemetery is approximately 4 miles from our office, and I wanted to be there before they arrived. I had already been to the Cemetery in the morning to mark out the grave with the grounds staff and it was wet and grey first thing, but as I drew up at the Cemetery there were signs of the sun making an appearance. Sandra arrived with her friend, followed soon after by Dawn and her partner, the people who had performed the exhumation. I had already checked the grave and was happy to proceed so I suggested that Sandra, her friend and myself walk in front of the hearse to the grave which was about 200 yards along the drive. Sandra carried Jean's ashes and as we made the walk along the main drive of the cemetery two white doves walked in front of us; it was almost like they were showing us the way and had been especially organised, making it a poignant and special moment. The coffin was placed at the grave side and I moved away to let Sandra have some time with the sister she had never met and the one she had lost so many years before. She placed her mum's ashes on top of Penelope's coffin, and it was then lowered into the grave to join Patricia.

Sandra had done it! She had reunited her mum with her babies, and she should be immensely proud of everything she did to

make that happen. I felt very privileged to have been a part of this very private family time. I admire Sandra's dedication and determination and if ever there was an act of love and respect for a parent, then this is it.



Vicky Waters
Bereavement Officer/Assistant Registrar
Lewes and Eastbourne Councils

NEW TEARDROP URNS

All memorial items from the FP-Originals collection are designed and produced by Funeral Products. Finding their inspiration in the aesthetics of Dutch Design. The latest addition to this collection are the new Teardrop urns, made from various premium quality metals.

The new Teardrop has a gentle shape, giving it an elegant and stylish look. A powerful design which preserves all the special memories. The abstract contour of the tip of the urn completes the tear-shape design. Symbolizing a final goodbye to a loved one.





CEMETERY SAFETY

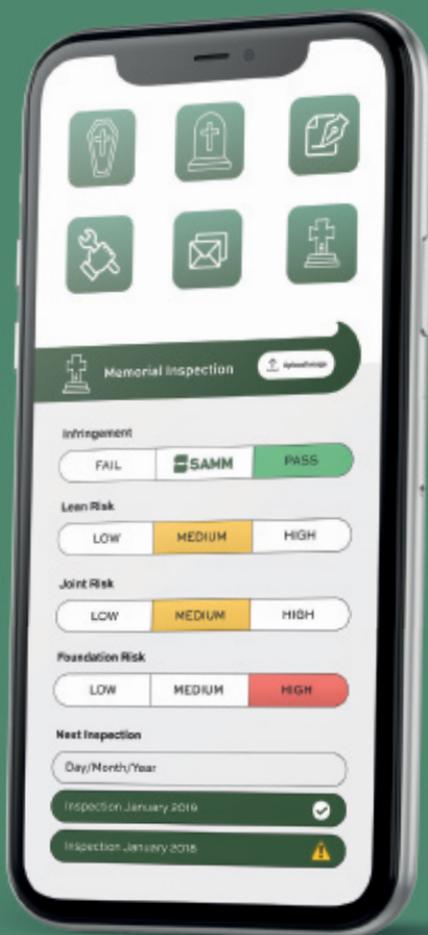
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the carbon crisis and the bereavement sector

Addressing the climate change crisis within our industry

According to the IPPC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), "Human-induced warming reached approximately 1°C (likely between 0.8°C and 1.2°C) above pre-industrial levels in 2017, increasing at 0.2°C per decade. This has been supported by the UN's World Meteorological Organization who are quoted as saying that 2011-2020 had been the warmest decade ever recorded. More concerning, the hottest seven years in recorded history are: 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014. The speed of global warming is therefore alarming. The world leading climatologists and international scientists are unified in their conclusions, this is not due to solar activity or natural climatic variation, it is human action specifically human emissions of greenhouse gas; those being carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide and methane.

Air quality

Air pollution in all its forms is now a very serious problem, and we should all be concerned. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 4.2 million deaths every year are as a result of exposure to ambient (outdoor) air pollution. New studies are also correlating a higher instance of Covid related deaths to inner city areas with poor air quality.

Under European Union (EU) laws, the annual average concentration level of nitrogen dioxide cannot exceed 40 micrograms per cubic metre of air (ug/m³) - a target Britain has missed for a decade; as an industry we must take some responsibility in failing to achieve that target. We are all part of the problem.

A time of change

Thankfully, with the departure of the world's most dangerous global warming denier, Donald Trump, the USA is set to re-join the Paris Climate Agreement under the leadership of Joe Biden. The major economies of the world are again united in the fight to reduce the progress of global warming and lessen the impact of the worst potential crisis the planet will see, one single crisis that may have longer lasting health and financial impacts than the horrors of COVID-19.

It is time for our industry and the wider bereavement sector to become unified in its own contribution in the battle to reduce carbon and NOx levels as we rapidly head towards irreversible damage to the planet.

The ICCM, FBCA and the Cremation Society of Great Britain are now united in working together with the Environment Agency to move the industry to achieve significant reductions in atmospheric, soil and water pollution through the establishment of the Environmental Stewardship Group (ESG).

The ICCM and its partners in the ESG are embarking upon a series of actions and activities to establish greater levels of environmental awareness, compliance and to create a number of opportunities to address the surge in climate emergency declarations. Working closely with the Environment Agency and other regulatory bodies it wants to ensure the industry is seen to be and recognised for its ownership of the agenda.

But to do this will also require support from the supply and commercial sector. This is happening, and it is exciting to see the manufacturing and supply industry responding so rapidly and positively; from cremators to coffins, maintenance machinery to memorialisation, the supply industry is providing the tools and the products for the bereavement sector to hit their targets for environmental protection and achieving the goals of the Green Agenda.

We therefore have no excuse not to significantly reduce our environmental impact within the bereavement sector; the only thing stopping our industry is the "will to".

Making the change

75% of Local Authorities have already declared a Climate Emergency and the bereavement sector can play a huge part in making the positive changes happen. Some councils have responded with the "will to". One authority that has demonstrated the will to change for the better is Huntingdon Town Council; the first council in the UK to have responded in so many positive ways to reduce the carbon footprint in their bereavement service provision to such an exacting standard. Installing electric green energy cremators, using heat transfer to heat their glass house nurseries, installing photovoltaics on the roof of their service building to charge electric maintenance equipment and vehicles. Even in their cemetery, they are regulating the use of formaldehyde, the use of chip board coffins and the installation of granite memorials. The visionary behind this? The Town Clerk, Philip Peacock.

The private sector is also leading the “will to” movement, with the Memoria Group operating the UK’s first green energy electric DFW Europe cremator. Installed in October 2020 at the North Oxford Memorial Park, it has already undertaken 600 cremations.

Memoria’s Director Jamieson Hodgson states:

“Since the beginning of time, mankind has chosen to either bury or cremate their loved ones, however, change to the cremation process was needed to ensure that it could meet its environmental obligations. This new development will allow the cremation process to be carried forward into the 21st century in a sustainable way. Our North Oxfordshire Memorial Park and Crematorium offers the first new-age electric cremator in the UK and reduce emissions by 95% when compared to a gas cremator. We are very proud to be the first operator to bring this innovation to the market. In short, it provides the first step for the cremation industry to become carbon neutral.”



DFW Europe Electric cremator installed at Memoria's North Oxford Memorial Park

“We have always been at the forefront of technology in this industry to ensure that the environment is as protected by the cremation process as possible. We have a commitment to continue to work on these technologies with cremator manufacturers so that these improvements can continue to be made and we can support the UK government’s target of being carbon neutral by 2050. To this end, we are working closely with DEFRA and DFW Europe to ensure that we use all available data to fully understand the benefits of the technology while making improvements to the settings over the first few months of operation.” - Jamieson Hodgson; Memoria Group.

Memoria Ltd is a family-run business which has developed 16 memorial parks and crematoria since 2003. They were also the first operator in the UK to install ‘mercury abatement’ filtration to their cremators in 2005.

So, we have momentum with a growing number of industry suppliers, we have uptake with a small number of operators, and, the feedback of those early adopters is clear and positive. But this is simply not enough, we need to do more.

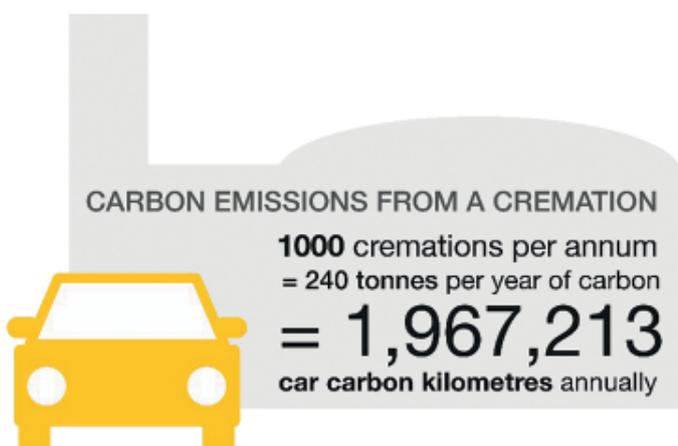
Green Cremation

Whilst we have green energy electric cremation in the market, we cannot just sit on our hands waiting for the gas cremator manufacturers to come up with a workable and economic alternative to natural gas that has yet to be proven cleaner, greener and cheaper to operate than the new generation electric cremation.

The 24 crematoriums in Greater London Authority (GLA) alone, produce an estimated 8,980 tonnes of CO₂ per year and 18,327,500g of NO_x. To put this in perspective, the combined annual CO₂ and NO_x emissions are estimated to be

the same as a private newly registered vehicle travelling over 130,000,000 miles. This equates to 35,700 cars travelling from the Greater London boundary to the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) every day for a whole year. Green electric cremators already installed in some sites in the UK can reduce the carbon output from the supply energy source by up to 95%!

Alternative synthetic gases such as biomethane and BioLPG, although significantly more expensive than natural gas can provide an alternative fuel source to reduce the carbon footprint. But as an energy source the use of Bio-methane and BioLPG has yet to be trialled in the UK cremation industry. Whilst more carbon neutral compared to natural gas, BioLPG and

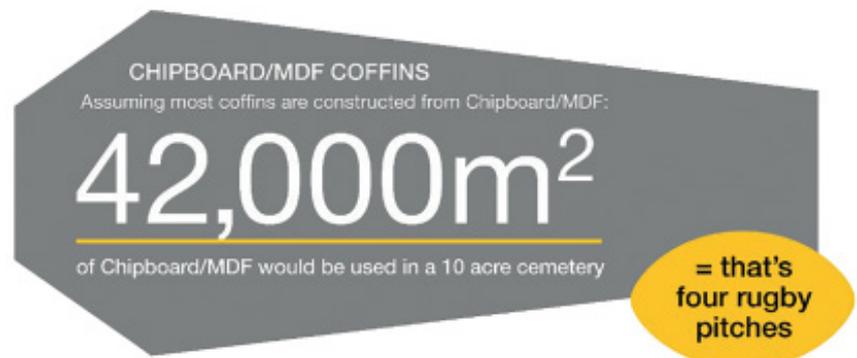


Bio-Methane still produce levels of NOx similar to natural gas and according to an article in the journal "Nature" in October 2020, it states that N2O has more than 300 times the potency unit for unit than carbon on global warming, this area therefore needs further investigation.

Coffins

We do not "need" to use chipboard and MDF coffins, they are a major contributor to NOx and carbon in cremation, we have alternatives, for example, LifeArt are proactive in developing low carbon, low NOx coffins that are able to significantly reduce green house gases.

One only needs to read the safety data sheets from the manufacturers of chip board and MDF, where they clearly do not recommend burning it or burying the material as a means of disposal, yet we do this in more than 90% of our cremations and burials, which begs the question,,, why?



Memorials and granite

The transport of granite is the largest source of carbon in the production process, an estimated 415kg/tonne of embodied CO2 would be found in granite imported from China (N.Crishna et al. 2011). Memorialisation in the UK using imported granite stone from China, produces an approximate 2,390 tonnes of CO2 per year. Research suggests that if the UK were to use UK granite quarries, the carbon reduction would be over 500%.

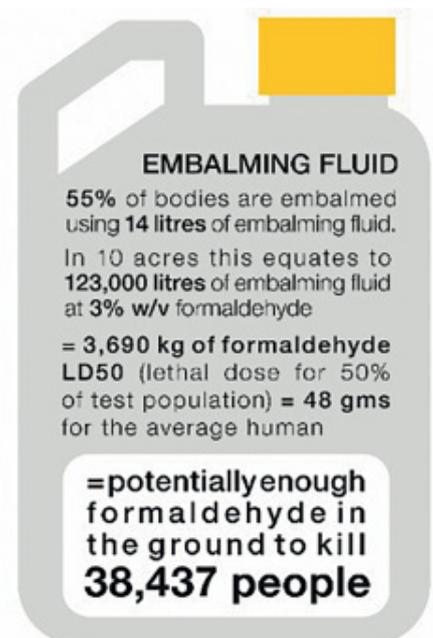
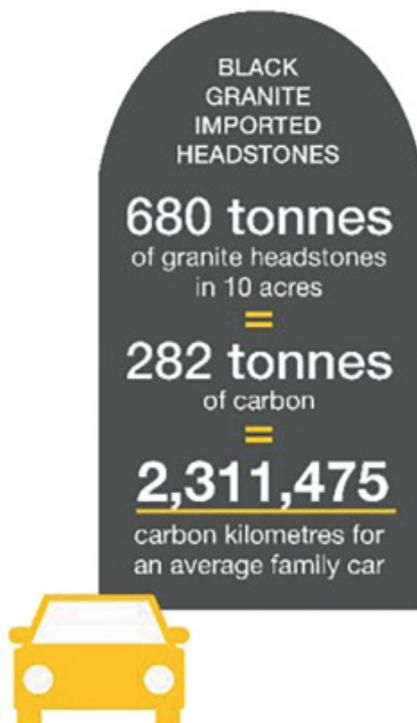
But more importantly it would be environmentally and ethically assured and UK skills and jobs could be generated. Yet Local Authorities accept memorials from their suppliers that have been imported from more than halfway around the world from countries with questionable records in environmental policies, human rights and child slavery.

Embalming and groundwater

We must stop polluting our groundwater stocks and water courses with formaldehyde. Formaldehyde is an incredibly toxic chemical, carcinogenic and a

genetic disrupter and very harmful to aquatic life. It should be either regulated or banned, but investment in alternative products needs to be done. Some of the biggest national funeral providers who boast about their environmental credentials have the highest percentage of embalming of the deceased, notwithstanding the biggest sales of imported granite headstones and the biggest users of chip board coffins.

The challenge of climate change and environmental pollution is here, it is now, it is today. We have the tools to make positive change we can see the harm we are doing, but we must have the "will to" change and apply that will immediately.





Development in Progress - December

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and thoughtfully constructed developments. Ones that have distinctive spatial qualities but that also offer excellent commercial value, and that are low-maintenance environments with minimal operational costs.

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EDGE are delighted to have been awarded a place on the Everything ICT procurement framework to supply Epiteph to the public sector.

The Everything ICT framework is focused towards providing public sector organisations with innovative, future proofed solutions which synergises perfectly with the core values of EDGE.

Everything ICT is OJEU pre-tendered which removes the need for lengthy competitions and instead provides a fully compliant route to make a direct award to Everything ICT for our Epiteph cemetery and crematoria solution.

The framework specialises in cloud products and related services, and has spent 5 years developing and refining a service that allows public sector organisations to save time and money on tendering.

EDGE underwent a rigorous application and vetting process, modelled on public procurement best practice which covered all the usual questions concerning mandatory and discretionary exclusion from public contracts. Our application was reviewed independently by a committee of Everything ICT Directors and the CEO

of E2BN (the framework contracting authority). Having successfully passed the application, EDGE are bound to supply in accordance with the full terms and conditions of the Everything ICT framework.

As EDGE is now the frameworks recommended partner for cemetery and crematoria management software, we are committed to providing cutting edge solutions in order to push innovation and maintain our approved status on the framework.

Full details can be downloaded from **www.edgelTsystems.com/procurement-framework**

Please do not hesitate to contact us to arrange an online demonstration and a proposal to migrate you to Epiteph with the security of the Everything ICT framework.



managed but not manicured

Ensuring the sustainable future of the historic Highgate Cemetery

Highgate Cemetery is one of the world's finest examples of the picturesque garden cemetery. When it opened in 1839 it was in a semi-rural setting on what were then the outskirts of London. Walking its sinuous paths, the visitor would experience a constantly changing series of views of its various buildings and monuments and occasionally be captivated by longer vistas back towards the smoky metropolis. Before the days of public parks there were few other opportunities for people to stroll in such a beautifully designed landscape.



Egyptian Avenue entrance. Courtesy of Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust

Nowadays it is also famous as the resting place of many well-known people from Karl Marx to Lucian Freud, and whilst the cemetery retains its enchanting atmosphere, its monuments are under threat from long-term decay and maturing self-seeded trees. The trees themselves are increasingly stressed by climate

change and afflicted by new pests and diseases. More extreme weather is eroding gravel paths and overwhelming the historic drainage systems. All this is undermining the historic landscape design and reducing biodiversity. Added to concerns related to sustainability and the climate emergency, the challenge for the cemetery is to find a way to adapt to the new demands of the twenty-first century. That's why Highgate Cemetery has launched two open competitions to ensure the captivating site is conserved and enhanced for future generations.

Both are now underway. The first is to find the best practitioners in landscape design to develop a landscape masterplan. The second is to find an architect-led multidisciplinary design team to investigate projects to preserve and enhance the historic structures and improve facilities for staff and visitors. A comprehensive conservation plan by Alan Baxter Ltd completed in 2019 forms the bedrock of these competitions.

Martin Adeney, Chair of the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, the charity which now owns the cemetery, said: 'We will be working with the local community, cemetery volunteers and experts so that the trees, paths, monuments

and buildings will be better looked after, the cemetery will continue to function as an active burial ground and visiting will be easier and more rewarding.'

'This is important because Highgate is still a working cemetery with over 170,000 people buried here and in more usual times welcomes over 100,000 visitors a year from all over the world.'

Having saved the cemetery from dereliction in the 1970s, and secured the major monuments, the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust is now looking at how this world-famous resting place of so many distinguished people can be conserved and enhanced for future generations.' 'We are seeking the most imaginative practitioners to work with us in developing a new landscape vision that can sensitively respond to the history and character of Highgate cemetery. We will ensure that the cemetery remains the place of enchantment which so many people value, whose carefully-tended natural environment provides sanctuary for those buried here and their loved ones, as well as the thousands who visit.'

The landscape masterplan will guide the development of the cemetery over the next twenty-five years. It must preserve and enhance the qualities for which the cemetery has been appreciated over generations while enabling it to meet the varied demands and expectations of the twenty-first century, including providing a suitable environment for the bereaved. It will mark a step away from the pragmatic 'managed neglect' approach of more recent years to a programme of more active management to ensure that its special attraction is maintained.

It will be an extremely difficult task. There is barely any ground not buried on. Space is at a premium. Naturally, many people are apprehensive about introducing change.



Outer circle of Lebanon at Highgate. Courtesy of Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust



Highgate's historic monuments. Courtesy of Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust

But the cemetery landscape is changing all the time as a result of natural processes, and the romantic decay which is now so attractive can also be damaging in itself. Whatever happens, there will be much scrutiny: the cemetery is a Grade 1 registered landscape; it is in a conservation area; it is mostly consecrated ground; it is a site of metropolitan

importance for nature conservation; and there are many heritage-listed monuments and structures as well as Commonwealth war graves.

As well as regulation, there is love. An active community of grave owners has a deep and lasting attachment to the place. Local residents feel it belongs to them as part of their local heritage, as do many of the Friends who have been so committed to caring for it over the years. People value the place for a variety of reasons, but it is up to the Friends to pass the cemetery on to the next generation in a sustainable manner.

There lies the reason for holding competitions: a competition can encourage innovative solutions and more creative ideas and can even challenge a client's own perceptions about their site and its potential. The idea of a competition was not simply a PR exercise: it was about Highgate cemetery thinking boldly and being open to new ideas. We will soon

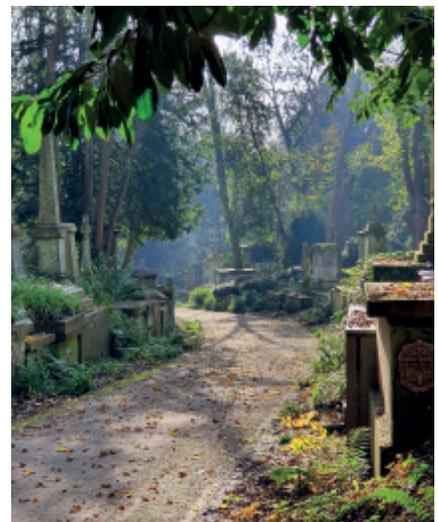


Highgate's terraced catacombs. Courtesy of Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust

see what they are: four entries will be shortlisted and exhibited online in Spring 2021 to obtain public views and inform next steps. One of those four teams will be appointed in May to develop their proposals.

Jane Findlay, President of the Landscape Institute said 'As custodians of such a significant landscape site, by launching these competitions the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust has taken the important step in ensuring it will be fit for the twenty-first century. This is not a short-term undertaking, but it is an important one. The landscape masterplan will guide the development of the cemetery for the next twenty-five years, so it is important that they attract the best talents in landscape design and architecture for this world-renowned cemetery.'

The second competition, which is running at the same time, is to find an architect-led multidisciplinary team to consider how to conserve historic structures and improve facilities at the cemetery for visitors and staff. It is too early to say exactly what new buildings might eventuate or where, as this will only become clear as a result of the competition.



Pathway through Highgate. Courtesy of Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust

However, new facilities are certainly needed: the gardeners are presently working out of goods containers, better disabled access is essential, and facilities for grave owners and visitors are very limited. Any new structures would be the subject of public consultation through the planning process.

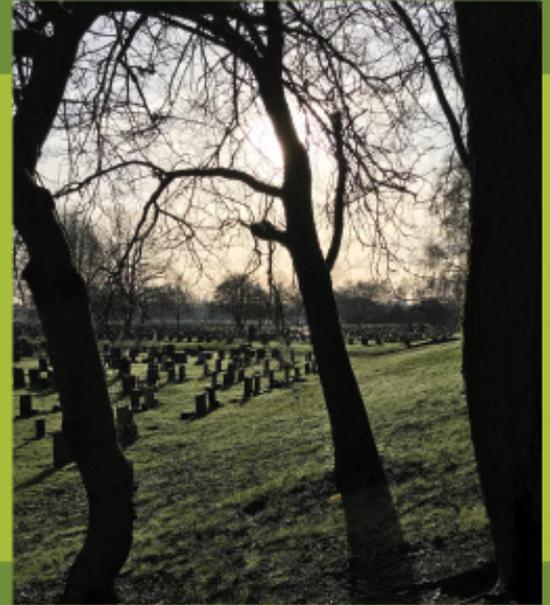
But what else is needed? And what more can we learn from a historic cemetery than just the curious tales of those there entombed? Who worked at the cemetery, what did they do, and how? What did the Victorians think about loss and bereavement, and how is it different now? How can visiting a historic cemetery help prepare us for our own bereavements?

A short film about Highgate cemetery and the people that make it what it is can be found at highgatecemetery.org/competitions.

Ian Dungavell
Chief Executive at Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust

The First Online Database for UK Burial and Cremation Records

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The logo for Deceased Online features a stylized graphic of three overlapping arches in shades of green and grey above the text 'deceased|online'. The word 'deceased' is in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font, followed by a vertical bar and the word 'online' in a similar font.

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Greenbridge Bespoke Mausolea

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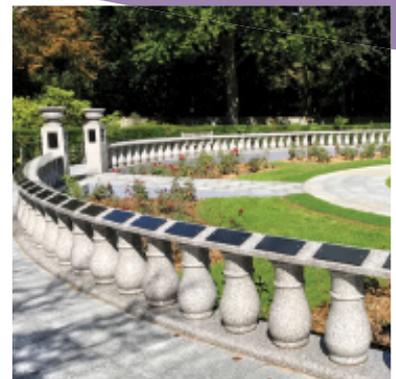
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Or visit www.greenbridgedesigns.com**



Sands spring update



From all at Sands, Happy New Year to you and your teams. In the last year Sands has achieved so much and this simply wouldn't be possible without your ongoing support. We transformed our services in response to the challenges of Covid-19 to meet a sustained 30% increase in demand and our free Helpline continues to be here for families, health professionals and also you and your teams whenever you need.

Find out more about the difference you helped to make in our latest Impact Report.

If you would like support, please visit <https://www.sands.org.uk/support-you>.

Sands is a national charity. We deliver bereavement and wellbeing support, resources and training directly to your local communities and hospitals. We are thankful to each of you, as a member of the ICCM, who has supported Sands through the ICCM's Metal Recycling Scheme. We would especially like to thank the following teams for their most recent donations:

- Carlisle Crematorium for donating £8,000.00
- Chanterlands Crematorium for donating £10,000.00
- Great Grimsby Crematorium for donating £10,000.00
- Havering Crematorium for donating £10,000.00
- Wrexham Crematorium for their amazing donation of £8,000.00
- Wolverhampton £10,000
- West Suffolk £5,000

Jen Coates, Director of Volunteering and Bereavement Support at Sands, said: "For over 40 years Sands has played a vital role in supporting families when the worst happens. Providing confidential and compassionate bereavement support to anyone impacted by the death of a baby, whenever they were bereaved, is one pillar that underpins our crucial work. Thank you to the teams across the ICCM network for your generosity. Together we can ensure everyone can seek Sands' bereavement support without barriers."

In the last nine months, phenomenal gifts from ICCM members has enabled Sands to deliver:

- 659 hours of support, accepting 1721 calls to our Helpline
- Responses to 2298 emails seeking bereavement support. Our bereavement support app was downloaded 763 times. Our GriefChat service was used by 482 people. Our forum welcomed 1078 new users where 16,296 messages were posted. Our newly formed Facebook support group grew to 602 members.
- 1520 memory boxes to local hospitals, 5844 bereavement support books, 2193 hand and footprint kits and 6558 birth certificates and baby details books.
- Covid-19 specific guidance, adapted to new restrictions and to offer guidance and reassurance.
- Regional workshops attended by 128 NHS professionals from 75 different NHS trusts to offer training and support
- Key messages directly to pregnant women to help them stay safe and healthy during pregnancy and address specific concerns relating to the pandemic.

Sands supports launch of Netflix film *Pieces Of A Woman*

Vanessa Kirby gives a powerful portrayal of a bereaved mother in *Pieces Of A Woman* that launched on Netflix this month. Sands supported Netflix and Vanessa Kirby ahead of the film's release to ensure that anyone affected by the issues portrayed in the story will be able to access support.

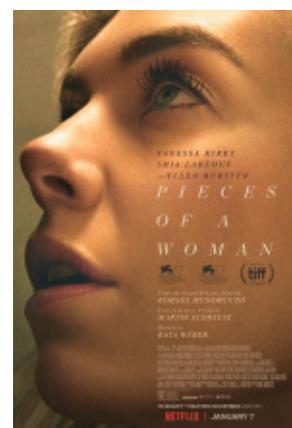
Trigger warning: Please be aware that the film contains scenes that could possibly be upsetting or triggering for anyone who has been affected by pregnancy loss or the death of a baby.

The movie centres around Martha and Sean, a couple from Boston in the US, on the verge of parenthood whose lives change irrevocably when a home birth ends in unimaginable tragedy. Thus begins a year long odyssey for Martha (Vanessa Kirby), who must navigate her grief while working through fractious relationships with her husband and her domineering mother (Ellen Burstyn), along with the publicly vilified midwife (Molly Parker), whom she must face in court.

Find out more about how we supported this landmark film: sands.org.uk/pieces-of-a-woman

If you would like to find out more about how your donation helps your community or if you would like to nominate Sands as the beneficiary for your crematorium's Metal Recycling Scheme, please contact Victoria Luk. Our thanks again to you and your teams for all that you are doing. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with Sands if you require further information or support.

Email: Victoria.luk@sands.org.uk **Telephone:** 0203 897 3470 **Sands:** www.sands.org.uk



it's all a bit of a puzzle

Sue Holden explains the complexities of the management of funerals.

The world of death management and funerals is a bit like a jigsaw puzzle. There are some very distinct pieces and areas of the puzzle that make up the overall picture. For example, funeral directors and staff, coffin makers, crematorium managers and staff, clergy and of course funeral celebrants. But where are the pieces that make up the funeral celebrants? Lost? Discarded? Still in the box? Who knows? but it certainly seems that funeral celebrants are not in the jigsaw, leaving the final picture incomplete.

This has become very evident to the Institute of Civil Funerals over this last Covid-19 year where the need for information, communication and the ability to work together with funeral directors and crematorium staff has been highlighted with the ever-changing rules and regulations around holding funerals.

Celebrants have a large and vital role to play in the completion of the death process. They get the families to where they need to be, for the funeral service is often seen as the final point of closure or affirmation that a loved one has died. Of course, it is not in isolation which is why celebrants need to have good working relations with their funeral directors and crematorium staff as well as their families. Celebrants can quite quickly build close, trusting, supportive relationships with a family so helping everyone with the funeral process. They help families to create and have the type of service that is personal and meaningful, maybe one of celebration yet still dignified and respectful. They can help funeral directors and crematorium staff to convey information and to manage family expectations. The funeral service is a very public scene in the death process. It can be comforting, fitting and is likely to be the most remembered and yes, enjoyable act! Many people have come out of a service and said, "I really enjoyed that" and then caught themselves as they realised what they had said and where they were!

Part of the jigsaw of a good funeral service are the pieces made with the crematorium staff. It is much appreciated by celebrants when crematoriums put them on the list of those to inform of not only national rulings but their own local ones. For example, changes in service times, numbers, singing or no singing. It has also been appreciated that some crematorium managers have been open to suggestions from celebrants into making the funeral experience more acceptable to the bereaved families during the pandemic.

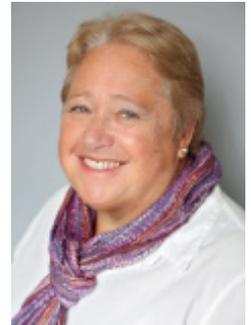
For example, some have agreed to install screens around the lectern or additional microphones for families to use or allowed the celebrant to control the closing of the curtain, (often a very distressing moment), at the end whilst still making sure that families cannot approach the coffin. Part of that 'enjoyable' experience is down to the crematoriums

and celebrants being able to work together.

So, maybe the celebrant jigsaw pieces are still in the box waiting to be taken out? The Institute of Civil Funerals has contributed to the CMA report several times, has asked to be part of the FSCSR discussions and to contribute towards the thinking of DAMG, NAFD and SAIF. We are associate members of the last two groups yet are in no way represented by them and can only stand by to pick up relevant crumbs of information intended for their full members. It seems that from the Government down the vital and visible part that a celebrant plays is not often recognised. If there were no celebrants leading funeral services and helping to look after bereaved families, what would the funeral jigsaw picture look like? Equally, the Government needs, I feel, to proffer the funeral industry as a whole a bit more importance. At the moment it seems that those who are talking at Cabinet level are always having to ask and wait around for clarification as to what exactly new advice means and to whom exactly it applies. The pandemic story does not stop at the time of death.

Throughout the pandemic, celebrants have continued to work alongside their funeral directors and crematoriums, allowing funerals to go ahead pretty much as normal. Although numbers and some timings at crematoriums have been reduced plus the implementation of social distancing controls, the actual content, meaning, and dignity of a service has not been lost. The final rite of passage has been completed. Celebrants have adapted to family meetings online, held virtual ceremonies and are available for further memorials when Covid-19 is under control.

Many people still do not know about celebrants and the work we do. Perhaps we are not a big enough group and are not united under one umbrella? Maybe there is confusion as to who we belong to? Are we independent or employed by the funeral directors? When information is relevant and available how is it disseminated? Is it time for regulation? Until some of these questions are considered there will be no answers. My wish for the coming New Year is that within the funeral industry some of these questions are answered, that celebrants are given a voice and are recognised for the part played. We want to help everyone to give and to have the best possible funeral that there is, to be informed and to work with our funeral directors and crematoriums. Only then can we complete the fine jigsaw picture that the funeral industry is.



Sue Holden



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As we begin a new year it's finally time to put 2020 behind us, as always we are doing our best to improve Standards in memorial installations so we have decided to make our ground anchors eco friendly. The collective aim of sharing Best Practice and further improving industry standards.

Stone Safe has become a leader in this field and our decision as far as practically possible to make being green a feature of our company. Our ground anchors are now made from 100% re-cycled plastic with only British sourced plastic waste, so we feel that we are playing our part with helping the environment. The recycled plastic anchors have a low carbon footprint, waterproof durable that will never rot and last a lifetime.

As we all know plastic has been regarded as a very convenient item, however there is a downside. Huge amounts of plastic waste ends up in our oceans each year and exposing marine life to a plastic pollution of our oceans.

British Standards sets the safety standard BS8415/2018

Having recently had independent tests carried out by a BSI Testing organisation has proven that the recycled ground anchor more than meets the requirements of the above new standard in a pull-force test and meets health and safety laws.

The test report can be produced by any organisation and as such it is not always easy to identify the credibility of such a report so we have decided to apply for a UKCA accreditation (conformity assessment) on our product in order to ensure capability, the inspection would cover many aspects of capability including but limited to -

- Engineers competence
- Training records
- Equipment calibration
- Process and procedures
- Keeping records and the understanding of the standard requirements.

Because in these days of 'buyer beware' the bereaved can be confident that the Stone Safe Stability System is based on quality, safety and reliability, in other words it does what it says on the tin which has been fundamental to our standing success.



in touch - up north



Well, that 12 months went well didn't it!

It seems very strange still be to talking about how we used to do things and how things were before Covid-19 but hey-ho. While its early January when I am writing this, I have a funny feeling that we will still be in lockdown when this comes out, so happy January, February and possibly an early Happy Easter, you never know we might be able to have an Easter egg hunt somewhere!

It's very apparent that people are struggling, and have been for a while, and the fact is you've got every right to be -it's been a ridiculous case of rules changing, being allowed to do things, then not allowed, and then back to square 1 or maybe square 2. So, to you all, as the phrase goes, its ok NOT to be ok. The ICCM team have spoken to members from all over the country who are feeling the pressure of still working when the world's gone mad, and whilst we never advertise ourselves as a "shout at us" line or a "rant at us" line, we'll be here to support you as we can.

The most important thing that you can do is to look after yourself, your family and where possible your colleagues. There are support services for you out there.

My colleague Mat kindly shared this on Facebook and its always worth just taking a minute, breathe, think, relax, and remember that no matter what is going on, you are never alone.

The world's crazy and the pace of things doesn't help, so to anyone that's tried a New Years' resolution – well first of all good luck and secondly you picked the wrong year.

To everyone with small children who may have seen the excellent Hey Duggies's Christmas special – then a very thoughtful and apt line came from Clarence talking about Christmas - but it can be life in general and something to help with all of this.

"It's the little things that make the magic".

So, every little thing that brings a smile or takes you away from worrying we need to treasure.

Staying in touch

Whether its via Facebook, Twitter or Mailchimp newsletters, you can sign up and stay in touch - we can't add you if you don't want to with the joys of GDPR but there are many ways to keep up to date with these or via the website.

As ever drop me a message at – trevor.robson@iccm-uk.com to make sure you and your colleagues are signed up.

ICCM recently finally managed to fix the eternal gremlins of years for email addresses so as far as we know we will reach you when we try to – if 2020 only manged one thing that was worth it, then this was it.



christmas celebrations

A look at how Christmas was celebrated across the country in these challenging times.

Southwark Service of Remembrance

It has been such a difficult and challenging year for all of us and especially how we are able to offer help and support to the bereaved. It would be usual for services of remembrance to be taking place in crematoria and cemeteries nationally to mark the memory of those that have died. However, the coronavirus has impacted on our ability to physically come together to acknowledge a shared experience of loss.

Your response to overcome these obstacles has been truly heart-warming. Despite the restrictions, and in line with respecting the Covid-19 protocols, I was so pleased to see so many of you organising virtual events alongside services with limited attendance. Having experienced the death of my own mum, and the death of two friends during the year, it meant a lot to be invited to Southwark's Service of Remembrance.

As this was my first service I have attended virtually, I didn't really know what to expect and how it would be organised. Sam Rees, the Bereavement Services Development Manager, emailed me the order of service, the scroll of remembrance that lists all deceased persons who Southwark have received into their care, and instructions on how to join online and presented ideas on how to be part of the service.



Virtual view of the service

Logging on was simple and easy through the Obitus website. Once connected you were transported inside the chapel, presented with a beautiful wall of light and Christmas tree display in front of the catafalque.

It was obvious to see that those who were attending the service were socially distanced and wearing face masks. There was a lovely piece of music playing in the background which set the scene for the start of the service.

Sam Rees opened the service with a welcome message. He said

"2020 has been the year that has changed so much for so many, it has changed the way we hold funerals and the ways in which families say goodbye.

While endeavouring to maintain services and support families we created the wall of light and placed a dedication in memory of every deceased entrusted to our care, extending our support to families and personally acknowledging loss.

An important part of the support we provide extends beyond a funeral and our remembrance services help to celebrate life and keep memories alive, and while today's service is delivered in a very

different format the message remains the same.

And while those who would attend our services can't physically be here with us, we can continue to support and share time and reflect and remember.

During our service today we will honour and remember loved ones, family, friends, residents and Southwark council colleagues who have lost their lives during 2020."



The service was officiated by the Reverend Antony Roskoss. As a symbol of remembrance and our hopes, the Reverend invited a selected number of attendees to light the candles that were placed on the catafalque. This was followed by a reading from Luke Sagers called 'Hope'.

A wall of remembrance was unveiled in the chapel and Reverend Roskoss then invited the congregation to hang their tag on the tree of memories. I watched one by one as each person did just that whilst the music "Tomorrow" by Marisha Wallace played in the background, at the same time the scroll of names of those that had died was displayed on the screen. It was a very moving and poignant moment.

Another reading followed together with The Lord's Prayer.

Sam Rees gave a message of thanks:

"In closing I would first like to thank Rev Roskoss for leading today's service, the bereavement team and grounds contractors for maintaining our services and continuing to support families, our thoughts are with all of the families and friends who have experienced loss during 2020.

While we understand that grief looks different for everyone, please know you are not alone.

Throughout 2020 we have all encountered the theme of rainbows, in embracing hope and the future I wanted to share this message

*A rainbow is a promise
Of sunshine after the rain
Of calm after the storms
Of joy after sadness
Of peace after pain
And of love after loss"*

This really was a lovely service, and it was in no way compromised by attending virtually. The sentiment and emotion were felt as strongly as being there in person. It is true that distance shouldn't mean we can't share our grief.

Well done and thank you to all at Southwark and to all of you who have held similar services of remembrance.

Sofia Allana

Clyde Coast and Garnock Valley Crematorium Festive Service film 2020

With so many of you looking at alternative ways to deliver a Christmas service under these circumstances, I was delighted to receive a link to a short film produced by Clyde Coast and Garnock Valley Crematorium in conjunction with the Humanist Society Scotland, in place of a traditional Christmas service we are all so used to.

The video starts with a warm and compassionate welcome from Philip Ewing, Crematorium Manager. He opens the doors to lead us into their beautiful chapel. There is a large Christmas tree that displays the many heart messages from families.



Philip Ewing



The Pond at Sunset

gentler with ourselves? She goes on to say “self-compassion is not self-pity or indulging oneself. It’s not self-centred, it’s not weak. Perhaps now is the time to give yourself the same encouragement you might offer to others in need of support”. I am sure we have all been guilty of this and recognise these traits in ourselves. It is important we give ourselves permission to grieve too.



The Team

The service is introduced by Maggie Kinlock, a member of the humanist society, who explains that the service is non-denominational and intended for everyone. The coronavirus has forced us to think more digitally and in doing so this has been an opportunity to reach all the community, not just those that would have normally physically attended the crematorium. At the end of her part, she lit a candle and “passed” it on to the next speaker, Lesley Adam.



The tree planting team

Lesley gave us an overview of the year’s challenges and acknowledged the feeling of grief and loss felt, especially during the festive season. The pressure to put on a brave face can become too much. She says, “false merriment can leave you feeling more isolated, so perhaps it’s time to turn that kindness and the need to give, towards yourself”. Why is it that we are often so much better in dealing with the grief of friends and even strangers with patience, compassion and understanding, but find it harder to be

The candle “baton” was then passed to Viven Adam who told a wonderful story depicting loss, which was narrated beautifully. This was followed by a video put together by Tom Urie to the music “lean on me/ In the Bleak Midwinter”. The images were both powerful and emotional.

Jennifer Buchan lit her candle and told us a personal story about her gran, Lizzie. It was lovely to hear about her and how she had an impact on her life.

The tree situated in the chapel is decorated by many messages of love. The film shows the placing of these messages together with a scroll of remembrance.

At Clyde Coast and Garnock Valley Crematorium, every time a loved one leaves, a tree is planted, an act of love and legacy. This is a lovely gesture and, in a way, helps the healing of our planet.



Let’s hope that one day soon we will hold hands again.

If you wish to view this service, please use the following link https://youtu.be/5Ec_iNr-r-8



The Hall

St Helens Crematorium Tree of Remembrance virtual ceremony

On Saturday, December 12, 2020, St Helens Council and the Friends of St Helens Group, launched our annual Tree of Remembrance Service virtually via social media channels at 11am. This was promoted in advance of the ceremony and is normally a really well attended annual event where families can come together to celebrate Christmas whilst remembering loved ones, visit a dedicated Christmas tree and hang a leaf with a personal message. The annual event has been running for ten years now set up initially by one of the Friends group who lost their daughter around Christmas time. The Friends kindly donate a tree and refreshments and normally arrange a choir to sing at the service. This unites families together over a mince pie and a cup of tea and helps families feel united in their grief at an already difficult time.



Due to the current pandemic, we cannot do many things like we have previously done, and we have all had to find innovative and new ways to support our bereaved community. We had during Summer, in partnership with other local authorities and Greenacres Rainford, hosted a virtual Merseyside bereavement Father's Day event across the region, and this helped inspire this idea as we did not want families to feel left out.

We spoke to a local minister who was keen to help us with our blessing message, along with a member of the bereavement services team doing a reading and our Friends group member also gave a message and read a reading to remember loved ones at Christmas.

Peterborough's first virtual carol service

Peterborough Crematorium re-introduced carol services in 2006; we wanted to provide a service that was meaningful to the bereaved but also traditional for the time of year. The staff dealt with the arrangements, by contacting a local minister, selecting traditional carols and even providing a reading at the service. It wasn't long before the annual carol service became an event that families returned to each year and we welcomed the regular faces and new.

We had some gold discs made (baubles), with 'In celebration of the life of' written on the reverse, to allow families to remember their loved ones with a short message. They could hang them on one of the Christmas trees (donated by a local garden centre) that were located at the back of the chapel and within the waiting room.

As the years have passed, we have had a junior school choir providing carols of their choice; a member of staff dressed up as scrooge to read a passage from 'A Christmas Carol'; children of the staff providing Christmas readings; church choirs and pianists. It has all been very well received with lots of families coming together at what can be a difficult time of year.

Free refreshments of traditional mince pies, tea, coffee, a tot of port or sherry for the adults and chocolates for the children were

The tree was on display in the crematorium's Book of Remembrance building over the Christmas and new year period and visitors were welcomed to contribute personal messages to the tree during this time. The Friends group also helped families unable to attend in person due to local restrictions, by arranging for the message to be hung on the tree.

The Tree of Remembrance is one of those projects that remind you of the community spirit we are so fortunate to have here in St Helens Borough.

We are also very grateful to the Friends group, who, working with our bereavement team and the local faith leaders, have taken the time to do something special every year for those who have experienced loss. After such a difficult year, with many residents experiencing the loss of family and friends, this is more important now than ever before, to provide some peace and support to them.

We received many kind comments from the community following the event, such as "thank you for sharing such a thoughtful gift for everyone at this very special time of year", "Very well presented", "Just beautiful" and "made me cry but for the right reasons, so missed the events this year".

The Council and the Merseyside bereavement team are already in the planning stage of arranging a virtual Mother's Day Event for March 2021. This group includes regional Merseyside local authorities and Greenacres Rainford, who formed a strong working relationship during the pandemic via regular meetings of the Merseyside resilience forum. The continued collaboration of working together will ensure we support the bereaved community in the region during this difficult time and beyond.

Sonia Smith
Bereavement Services Manager
St Helens Council

provided, for which we asked for small donations to our chosen charity.

After a couple of years had passed, we even introduced a tombola in the waiting room after the service which, in the first year, staff provided gifts and then, as years passed, the local funeral directors and members of the public also provided and made gifts as prizes. This was very well received and each year you could see that children and adults had their change ready in anticipation of winning a prize!

This year, however, has been a very different story, it has been difficult for everyone and as a service to the bereaved we have had to find many different ways to provide this service with compassion and dignity.

Although the annual open air memorial service, traditionally held on the last Sunday in June couldn't go ahead, it was suggested to us that we could still provide a carol service 'virtually'. The demand for webcasts has increased considerably over the last few months, as restrictions put in place meant that more vulnerable family members couldn't attend funerals. So why couldn't we do this for the carol service?

Our minister was on board with this and suggested that we could

ask bereaved families to provide the names of their loved ones which he would read out during the service. Two musicians from the same household would provide some live music and everyone in attendance could provide the service from the chapel while socially distanced. The webcast supplier confirmed that they could do this on the date we wanted, and at this point the suggestion became real. Posters were placed in the grounds, and flyers sent to our list of families who have asked to be informed of any events and our media team promoted the event and placed information on social media.

A service sheet was prepared, with similar wording to our traditional carol service, but changed to a format that could be easily printed off and families could follow and join in with the service. As people emailed in asking for details of the service, we provided the web link, instructions and the service sheet. We also asked families if they would like us to place a bauble on the Christmas tree with a short message as they weren't able to do this themselves. Families are also advised that online donations can be made, if families wish, to a local charity Peterborough Soup Kitchen.

Families have welcomed the 'virtual' carol service and we have received many emails of thanks from people who have said that it has offered them comfort in a year that has been difficult. We have had the 'regular' carol service attendees wanting to be involved in the service, and we have had new families who are recently bereaved.

We may not be able to provide, refreshments or tombola's but we can still find a way to bring people together safely for a traditional carol service for the bereaved where their loved one can be remembered at Christmas.

The service was viewed by approximately 100 people and the feedback has been very positive. Next Christmas, we will hopefully be able to provide an attended carol service, however with establishing this new way of working, we will also offer a virtual service to those who live at distance or are unable to attend.

Teena Wright
Bereavement Services Manager

Westerleigh Christmas Services

Whatever profession, location, age or gender there is no doubt at all that the lives of all of us in almost every corner of the world will have had their lives affected by the Covid-19 virus and the pandemic which followed and indeed our lives here in the UK are still being impacted some nine months after the first Lockdown in March 2020. There is no doubt that 2020 will be a year that is remembered in history, for the tragedy of so many people losing their lives to the



*CEO Roger McLaughlan
welcoming on-line viewers*

virus including many brave front line NHS staff and other keyworkers. 2020 will also be remembered by the many, many great examples of people going above and beyond to help others and numerous examples of how technology came to the rescue in so many ways enabling business meetings to take place remotely and families to stay in touch by using one of the many platforms that enabled video conferencing.

And so, it was that technology came to the rescue of the annual Christmas remembrance services that are such an integral part of the year at each of the Westerleigh crematoria. In normal years the Christmas services are well attended, and the opportunity is often taken to distribute cheques to local charities, but this year of course was different. James Crossland and the team at Obitus did a fantastic job in recording individual services at each of our sites which were then broadcast and available via a link on each of our crematoria's websites. Thank-you Obitus and thank-you to the clergy and celebrants and our site teams who organised and participated in the wonderful services that were very meaningful and brought great comfort to so many bereaved families at Christmas, always a difficult time for those who have lost close family members during the year.

The CEO of The Westerleigh Group, Roger McLaughlan, opened each broadcast and welcomed everyone to the services, outlining some of the challenges that 2020 had brought. He paid tribute to

the NHS and other keyworkers and also recognised that many people had gone above and beyond to help others and urged us all to be kind to each other over the coming year.

Each of the Christmas services were different, as indeed they are each year, and all were well attended by people logging on. In fact, in excess of 11,000 people logged onto the services in total and the number of appreciative letters and cards received at our crematorium offices was remarkable, testimony to the success of the virtual services.

A very popular part of the organisation of the services was that when families were invited to attend the virtual service, the letter contained a memorial tag that could be returned to the crematorium concerned and placed on the Christmas tree by staff. Literally thousands were returned by families with their cards of gratitude for the efforts that we had made. It was interesting that many people told us that this year they could attend the Christmas service for the first time as they have not been able to attend in person for various reasons in the past.

We all hope of course that this year, Christmas 2021 we will be able to hold our Christmas services as usual, but I think that we will also be making them available again on-line so that as many people as possible have the opportunity to join in.

Alan José



An Example of a Christmas Tree with Memorial Name Tags



The Crematorium and Memorial Group (CMG)



Is running an initiative across all 46 of its locations to remember those lost in 2020.

Families have been invited to dedicate a star-shaped tree tag to a loved one, while CMG has produced a specially commissioned memorial plaque to put on display.

The response so far has been fantastic and the team at CMG will keep adding new tags throughout the festive period.

Each crematorium has also nominated a local charity to receive a £500 donation along with any additional contribution's families wish to make.

Steve Gant, Crematorium Director, said: "This year has been immensely challenging for our community, and will be particularly hard for those who are recently bereaved.

"With many memorial services and events unable to go ahead, we hope that our memorial Christmas tree offers comfort and reflection for those that have lost loved ones this year.



Jonathan Spalding, Manager at East Riding Crematorium, with the Memorial Christmas Tree.

"Our teams continue to do everything possible to provide families with support at this difficult time and are committed to ensuring that families are able to arrange a respectful funeral for their loved ones."

Employees working at CMG, which operates 46 crematoria across England and Scotland, are continuing to provide families with a high-quality service that ensures they can arrange a respectful funeral for their loved ones.

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Have You Got Something Interesting to Share?

Are you involved with an innovative project?

Are you opening a new site or extending your existing site?

Have you introduced any environmental initiatives?

Have you introduced a new service or new ways of working?

Have you held any virtual events?

Are you doing something that others should know about?

Why not write an article for the journal?

We would be delighted to include any articles from anyone that would like to share their experiences with other members.

Need help? We are here to offer you any assistance or guidance with putting your article together.

Please contact Sofia Allana on sofia.allana@iccm-uk.com or phone 07502 627521

company news

Teleshore Group



Peter Smith, MD of Teleshore Group reflects on the challenges and successes of Covid-19's impact on the bereavement services industry.

As 2021 rolls in, we reflect on the challenges of 2020 and can see where we have achieved great things and overcome obstacles that would once have been more at home in an episode of Black Mirror than in our daily reality. Evidently, we're not done yet.

As the country entered its newest round of lockdowns, we considered how best to protect our team to ensure both their health and our ability to remain operational should a member of the team test positive for Covid-19. As a close-knit bunch who all work together across departments, we took the decision to split our office, warehouse and operational teams into two bubbles to mitigate the risk of the whole team being instructed to isolate.

Whilst we are confident this is the right decision in the circumstances, it has meant that at a time when we are busier than ever in some departments, we are half a team down operationally. All of us now need to muck in and wear many 'hats' to work each day; we are fortunate to have a team that is willing and able to do this effectively.

As the pandemic continues to flex its muscles through 2021, we need next to consider how we work most effectively with our clients in the continued absence of the face-to-face contact upon which we have built our strongest working relationships. To this end, we have invested in CGI technology to enable us to more effectively demonstrate our products and provide training remotely, something which is necessary in a pandemic but will also enable a reduction in our carbon footprint in the future too.

As a full year of restrictions approaches, our industry needs to ensure that equipment is regularly maintained – something which in some areas has been put on hold due to Covid restrictions. As the months have rolled on, it's now necessary for equipment to receive scheduled maintenance to ensure its PUWER compliance and safety in regards to employer's liability regulations. Regular maintenance is also crucial for the longevity of machinery, which is of great importance for our local authority clients with ever-increasing budgetary pressures. Yet in many cases, we are still awaiting confirmation under Government instruction that this can continue.

Conversely, Covid-19 risk assessments have led to a greater than anticipated uptake of some of our newer products; we introduced biodegradable lowering rope in 2020 which can be left in the grave space with no fear of further pollution or cross infection between the burials team and funeral directors. Uptake of this has been so significant that last year we sold enough biodegradable lowering rope to stretch from Lands End to John O'Groats and back to Hadrian's Wall. This has saved a significant amount of plastic from ending up in the ground, in addition to its risk assessment benefits; we continue to develop our range of biodegradable products through 2021.

Amidst all of the operational pressures and uncertainties, the bereavement services industry has been quietly carrying on; considered key workers, equally under increased pressure from the pandemic, but without the public eye upon us and no priority status for immunisation. We know that stress levels in the bereavement services industry are currently higher than ever; we have more work to do with less staff available.

It is not, of course, in our nature to draw attention to ourselves, as befits our role of supporting people through bereavement. It is crucial that we continue to retain a swan-like appearance even if we are paddling furiously behind the scenes! How we do this is still a work in progress, but as we head into the second year of a 'new normal' we can see how some of the changes we have made will already have a continued positive impact in the future, particularly for the environment and that is something which we hope our industry continues to embrace.



company news

welters® organisation worldwide

We can all agree that 2020, was an unexpected challenge in many ways. A challenge that looks to continue well into 2021.

As may be expected, along with the saddening and ever increasing rise in daily death toll due to covid, so comes the increase in demand for interment systems. In response, we have increased our investment risk to maximise our tooling and systems, increasing our production capacity. This, in turn, has necessitated the increase in workforce and training to ensure we have the necessary personnel to facilitate the use of these new systems.

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“thank you: you are valued and valuable”

A message from Canon Sandra Millar

Just before the funeral yesterday, I took a moment to chat to the staff at the crematorium. As always, they were cheerful, helpful and efficient. And to the families who come, and to their special person, they are always respectful, kind and courteous, but so often completely unnoticed. Behind-the-scenes people are so important: it is you who make sure the space works well and is managed with dignity. You help to make sure that the sense of a special time is created and maintained throughout the service. It's not easy for ministers to reflect the value of a life when time is pressured, but calm support in the background, helps us to lead with dignity and kindness.



In the past year we have all had to be more adaptable and flexible in our work and have to had to learn quickly how to respond to new technologies, and a whole raft of changing practices. This has been true for ministers, for funeral directors and for you who work at cemeteries and crematoria. Many of us are getting used to being live streamed to people far and wide and learning how to convey warmth and empathy from behind a mask, and at a distance. You have to cope with managing numbers and behaviours in ways that are so difficult when people are grieving, and just long to pay respects or to show simple human warmth by standing alongside, shaking hands, giving hugs. It's a strange world, and one where the reality of mortality and bereavement has hit home for so many families.

The demands of working around death and with the bereaved takes its toll on our wellbeing. Many of you will be managing complex home situations as well and facing your own anxieties on a daily basis. On behalf of Church of England ministers, I simply want to say thank you to all of you, whatever your role is, for the way you play your part in supporting the bereaved in our communities. We couldn't do our job without you and we want you to know that we pray for you just as we pray for the families we meet. Please don't hesitate to ask us for help, whether that is for you personally, or in suggestions for how we can learn together to keep doing things well for families.

With prayers for all of you this day.

Canon Sandra Millar, Head of Life Events, Church of England
Sandra.millar@churchofengland.org

Member interaction is the Institute's lifeblood. Why not facilitate a branch meeting?

iccm branch secretaries, contact details

Northern: Graham Harrison

Email: Graham.Harrison@durham.gov.uk T: 03000 265 606

Eastern: Tracy Lawrence

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pulpit: the boys enlisted into the army

Stories of young men who joined the army during the first world war.



My grandson Tom aged 16 by the grave of a 16 year old soldier.

High Easter is a village some ten miles to the north of Chelmsford. It is a lovely village with a fine church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and large a churchyard. In 2011, the population was 754. I went to visit the village and had a look around the graves and headstones. To my surprise, even to my shock, I read the headstone of one soldier, named as Private A. Staines, of the Essex Regiment who died in 1915 at the age of 16. I was really shocked.

The gravestone is difficult to read, but this is what it declared, right.

I learned that he was the son of William and Sarah Mary Staines, of Chalks Cottage, High Easter. He had less than 6 months qualifying service and did not get a War Gratuity as he had no overseas service.

I immediately recruited my oldest grandson Tom, also aged 16 (above) and dragged him to High Easter to pose by this other 16-year-old's gravestone to emphasise what a 16-year-old looks like in normal times.

But how could a 16-year-old have been killed in a soldier's uniform? I was just a bit fuming! Well, then I did some research, and all is not what it appeared to me to be at first sight. I was helped by one of the proprietors of Lodge Brothers Coaches, just down the road from the church. I got lucky! Mr Lodge went out of his way to be helpful, even leaving work to go home and fetch me a book about the village in the 20th century. He photocopied some pages, and this was a great discovery for me. The vicar of the parish, back in 1914, wrote a regular report on what was happening in the village and also reported on those villagers who were involved with the war. In April, 1915, the vicar reported as follows:

April. The War. It is with much sorrow that we think of the death of Arthur Staines, one of the recent recruits. He enlisted last November and joined the 5th Batt. of the Essex Regt quartered at Peterborough. There he was taken ill on Feb 4th and was moved to the First Eastern General Hospital at Cambridge, where he died on Feb 22nd cerebrospinal meningitis. (His burial took place at High Easter where the register records Feb 27th Arthur Staines 17)

I was relieved that Arthur didn't die in action, but even so, how did a 15-year-old manage to enlist at all?

I discovered that a man wishing to join the army could do so providing he passed certain physical tests and was willing to enlist for a number of years. The recruit had to be taller than 5 feet 3 inches and aged between 18 and 38 (although he could not be sent overseas until he was aged 19). At first, enlisting was not compulsory and as the war effort grew it became obvious that there was a need to introduce conscription. After a fairly unsuccessful recruitment scheme was introduced, known as the Derby Scheme, the Government introduced The Military Service Act on 27 January 1916. All voluntary enlistment was stopped. All British males were now deemed to have enlisted on 2 March 1916 – that is, they were conscripted – if they were aged between 19 and 41 and resided in Great Britain (excluding Ireland) and were unmarried or a widower on 2 November 1915. Conscripted men were no longer given a choice of which service, regiment or unit they joined, although if a man preferred the navy it got priority to take him. This act



A. Staines
2894 Private
Essex Regiment
22nd February 1915
Age 16



God took him



was extended to married men, and the lower age dropped to 18, on 25 May 1916. It was clear that in 1915, under-age recruits did not have to prove their age, and they didn't even have to prove their identity!

Although there are lots of new houses in High Easter, Chalks Cottage where Arthur Staines was born, is still there. (See above).



Poelkappele Cemetery

My research led me to read about many under-age recruits. On the right you see the headstone of Private J. Condon of the Royal Irish Regiment who died aged 14. John Condon (1900 – 1915) was an Irish soldier born in Waterford, long believed to have been the youngest Allied soldier killed during the Great War, at the age of 14 years, as shown on his gravestone. It is now believed from a birth certificate, census, war diaries and other records that John Condon was 18 years old at the recorded date of his death and that the wrong individual is named on the grave in Poelkappele Cemetery, in Langemark, Belgium.



A somewhat happier outcome was to be enjoyed by Sidney George Lewis (1903 – 1969) who enlisted in the East Surrey Regiment in August 1915 at the age of twelve! He fought in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, then aged thirteen, in the 106th Machine Gun Company of the Machine Gun Corps. Lewis fought in the Battle of Delville Wood which saw some of the worst casualties on the Somme. He was sent home after his mother sent his birth certificate to the War Office and



Boy soldiers from the Lancashire Regiment

demanding his return. (Well done, mum!!) Lewis was awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. He re-enlisted in 1918 and served with the army of occupation in Austria. He joined the police in Kingston upon Thames after the war and served in bomb disposal in World War II. Later, he ran a pub in Frant, East Sussex. He died in 1969. Although The Great War army recruiters often turned a blind eye to underage recruits, another factor may have been Lewis's mature appearance. He was a tall, heavily built boy, growing to 6 feet 2 inches (1.88 m) as an adult. The minimum height requirement of the British Army at the time was only 5 feet 3 inches (1.60 m).

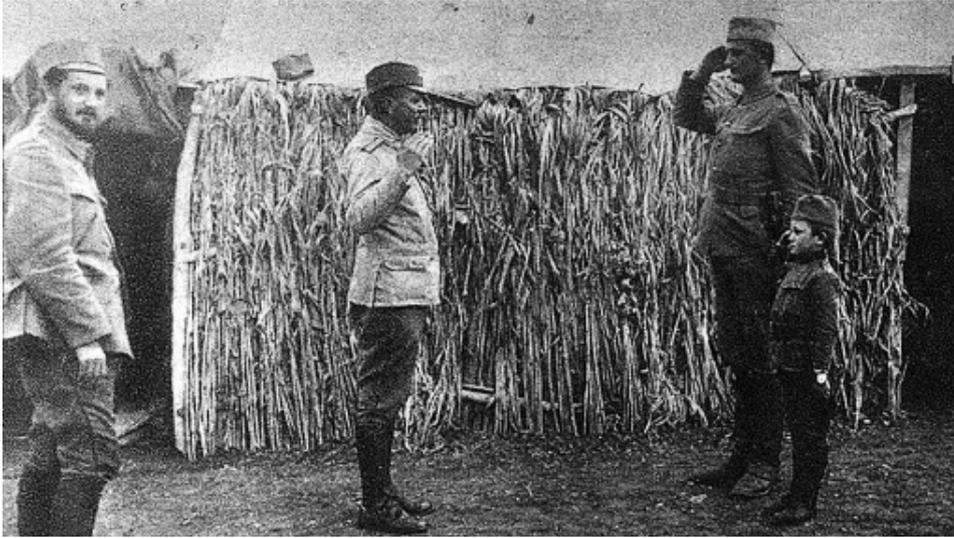
According to the BBC documentary *Teenage Tommies* (first broadcast 2014), the British Army recruited 250,000 boys under eighteen during the Great War. This included Horace Iles who was shamed into joining up after being handed a white feather by a woman whilst at the tender age of fourteen. He died at the Battle of the Somme at the age of sixteen.

Amusing stories may be found among all this strangely dangerous behaviour by young boys. For example, George Maher (1903 – c.1999) was only thirteen when he lied to a recruiting officer by claiming he was eighteen and was allowed to join up with the 2nd Battalion King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment. Maher was sent to the front lines and his actual age was not

found out until he began crying during heavy shelling and was taken before an officer of his regiment to reveal his young age. George said he was then locked in a train with a number of other young boys who had all lied to join up as well. Maher said "The youngest was twelve years old. A little nuggety bloke he was, too. We joked that the other soldiers would need to lift him up to see over the trenches."

But it wasn't just the British Army that found boys among the soldiers. The case of seven year-old Serbian Momčilo Gavrić (pictured right) is a shocking story indeed. In the beginning of August 1914, Austro-Hungarian soldiers of 42nd Croatian Home Guard Infantry Division maimed and hanged his father, mother, grandmother, his three sisters, and four of his brothers. His house was also set on fire. Momčilo survived because he was not at home when it happened—his father had sent him to his uncle earlier.





Momčilo takes the salute

Left without family and without a home, Momčilo went to find the 6th Artillery Division of the Serbian army, which was near Gučevo at the time. Major Stevan Tucović, accepted Gavrić into his unit after hearing about what had happened, and assigned Miloš Mišović, a soldier in the unit, to be Gavrić's caretaker. The same evening, he took revenge by showing his unit the location of the Austro-Hungarian soldiers, and participated in the bombardment, as told by his son Branislav Gavrić in an interview.

At the age of 8, after the Battle of Cer, he was promoted to the rank of Corporal by the commander of his unit, and given a military uniform. He survived the war and died in Belgrade in 1993. There are memorials dedicated to him on the island of Korfu and in the Jadar Museum in Loznica. In 2014, a street in Loznica was named after him.

On 2 April 2015, the Serbian government decided to raise a monument in Belgrade dedicated to Gavrić.

A final example of this under-age story is that of fifteen-year-old Cyril Jose. He was a tin-miner's son from Cornwall. With the region suffering from heavy unemployment, the boy with a strong sense of adventure joined up. From his training camp he wrote an excited letter to his sister Ivy:

"Dearest Ivy, stand back. I've got my own rifle and bayonet. The bayonet's about 2ft long from hilt to end of point. Must feel a bit rummy to run into one of them in a charge. Not 'arf. Goodbye and God bless you, from your fit brother, Cyril."



Cyril survived the war but the bloodshed he witnessed in France turned him into a vehement opponent of militarism for the rest of his life. In one letter home he poured scorn on the British commander, Field Marshal Earl Haig. (pictured left) "What brains Earl Douglas must have. 'I attacked,' he boasted! Old women in England picturing Sir Doug in front of the British waves brandishing his sword at Johnny in the trenches... attack Johnny from 100 miles back. I'll get a job like that in the next war."

And through all the deception, injury, death, separation and hardship which war creates, here you see the Church of St. Mary in High Easter, standing calmly and witnessing to centuries of disaster and warfare, but reminding us that in the end, love is the answer, all kinds of expressions of love, from the many people who have made marriage vows to each other, the many babies that have been carried lovingly for baptism, and the loving farewells offered to many people buried in the churchyard.



waste not, want not - the first living coffin

Are we ready for environmental change?

Like many of you, I suspect, working in bereavement is more than just something you do between the hours of 9-5, Monday to Friday. The interest extends into our personal lives, often seeking out cemeteries to visit on holiday and tuning in to watch BBC's Britain's Biggest Dig as they uncovered a burial site during the preparations for the HS2 train line at St James in London. We watched with somewhat morbid fascination as they excavated an estimated 50,000 burials, revealing stories from the forgotten fortunes of both rich and poor in Georgian London. What was even more impressive was how preserved the coffins were, many with no signs of deterioration and with all the coffin furniture and nameplates intact and legible.

So, when I got a link sent to me by my colleague one Saturday morning (who obviously must be as equally obsessed as me!) for an article on the first living coffin, I was intrigued and a little excited. With environmental issues climbing up the agenda, this is a fascinating and very real concept. Unlike the 200-year-old coffins dug up at St James, these would leave no trace in time.

The coffin, called Living Cocoon, was developed by a Netherlands-based company known as Loop, to serve as a more sustainable option for burials. The Loop Cocoon is the first living coffin created by nature, made of mycelium, the mat of fibres that forms the underground part of fungi.

After months of testing, and at a cost of approximately €1500, the first funeral has taken place in the Netherlands using this eco-friendly, fast composting "living" coffin.

Loop's vision of sustainability after death is commendable. Their goal to use our bodies, not to pollute the earth, but to enrich it when we die, is something we should all take notice of. According to Loop, the average human body contains 219 chemicals that can endanger ecosystems. Current burial methods can lead to soil degradation and groundwater pollution. But what if we can turn our polluted cemeteries into flourishing forests by using nature's own recycler, mycelium?

Mycelium is the vegetative part of a fungus (mushroom) or fungus-like bacterial colony, consisting of a mass of branching, thread-like hyphae, found underground. Loop explains this underground fungal network connects the roots of plants to form 'Nature's Internet'. Not only does it share nutrients, it is also able to communicate and distribute information. It's this network that is the driving force in nature's end-of-lifecycle, due to its ability to recycle organic matter into key nutrients for new seedlings to flourish.

So, how do you grow a living coffin? The mycelium grows in the Loop Cocoon mould, which is filled with wood chips, allowing the mycelium to grow and act as a self-assembling biological binder. After seven days the mycelium has grown into the complete shape of the coffin, after which it's naturally dried. This stops its growth and gives the coffin its strength. The result is a unique, waterproof coffin that will only continue to grow again after long exposure to groundwater. The inside of the coffin is

filled with a soft bed of moss, that contributes to the composting process.

The Loop Living Cocoon not only breaks itself down in 45 days, it also hosts bacteria

and microorganisms that neutralize toxins in both the body and surrounding soil, enabling people to enrich and clean the soil with their own nutrients. The duration of composting strongly depends on the body itself, the soil quality and the climatic conditions. Loop says, in collaboration with professors of the Delft University of Technology, it has been estimated to take 3 years to compost the human body with the Loop Cocoon compared to the current 10 to 20 years it takes in traditional coffins.

Your own body will increase biodiversity and allow new seedlings to thrive. From graveyard to forest - could this change the landscape of cemeteries for the future? Should we at least consider this in our design and planning for new sites?

I would like to thank Bob Hendrikx, Inventor of the living coffin and founder of Loop for the use of images and material and who so generously replied to my LinkedIn messages! If your interest is piqued, you can get more information from the following sources:

www.loop-of-life.com

LinkedIn

Bob Hendrikx linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bobhendrikx/>

Loop linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/closetheoop/?viewAsMember=true>

Facebook

Bob Hendrikx facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bob.hendrikx.7>

Loop facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LoopLivingCoffin>

Instagram

Bob Hendrikx instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/studiohendrikx/?hl=de>

Loop instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/loopbiotech/?hl=de>

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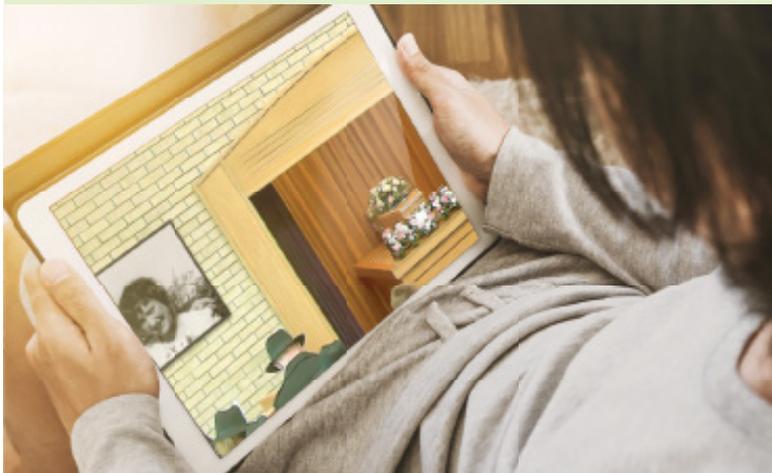
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Following suggestions from Burial Authorities; BRAMM have now simplified the criteria required for BRAMM Burial Authority Registration.

The current criteria of only allowing BRAMM registered masons to work in their cemeteries is deterring some Burial Authorities from adopting a National Registration Scheme.

To help with this, BRAMM now simply require that Burial Authorities ensure that under the BRAMM Scheme –

- All Memorials are required to be erected to British Standard 8415
- Recognise the BRAMM register and allow BRAMM accredited masons to erect safe memorials in their cemeteries.

In return BRAMM, which is significantly the largest register of accredited memorial masons and burial authorities in the UK and **free** to Burial Authorities, will provide the authority with several benefits, including free technical advice.

This effectively means that if they wish, the Burial Authority can now use other registration schemes within their cemeteries, and BRAMM will be responsible for memorials erected under the BRAMM Scheme by registered masons.

BRAMM is the register of choice and fully supported by the following leading industry organisations.

- ✓ ICCM - Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management,
- ✓ FBCA – Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities,
- ✓ SLCC – Society of Local Council Clerks.

Equal representation from these bodies sit alongside independent Memorial Masons on the BRAMM Board, to ensure fair and non-biased decision making.

For further details on BRAMM Burial Authority Registration please contact Head Office on –

Telephone: 01452 346741

Email: bramm@bramm-uk.org

Simply provide us with the following information - Name: - Burial Authority: - Postal Address for free newsletters: - Telephone number: - Email address.

‘Burial authorities and memorial masons working together – improving standards’

what could I do?

V. Charles Ward offers legal advice on compliance with COVID rules and regulations.

Ignore the parking ticket which is attached to your windscreen and it is only a matter of time before bailiffs come knocking at your door. The initial £60 required to pay the Penalty Charge Notice has escalated to £600 and is increasing with every month's delay. You have only 28 days to either pay the PCN or to challenge it.

But challenging a PCN through the statutory appeals process is both tiresome and time-consuming. It seems that the entire legal process is weighted in favour of the local authority or, in the case of private land, the owner of the car park. Even if you win, you will only achieve cancellation of the PCN. Nothing to compensate you for your time and cost in pursuing the challenge.

Fortunately, fixed penalty notices issued under covid legislation aren't like that. Payment of the fixed penalty is entirely optional. If you pay that fixed penalty within the 28 days allowed, you will not be at risk of prosecution for the offence for which the FPN was issued. Paying £200 to avoid prosecution and the risk of a criminal record might seem a bargain. But £10,000? It is why anyone receiving a £10,000 fixed penalty notice should at least take prompt independent legal advice before paying it.

There have also been cases of funeral directors and at least one priest, having received £10,000 fixed penalty notices when large gatherings of mourners have attended events in contravention of covid regulations. Why? Because it is easier for police to target funeral directors, celebrants and bereavement services managers than to engage in physical confrontation with mass gatherings.

On 21 January 2021, a funeral director received a £10,000 fixed penalty when almost 150 mourners attended a funeral in Welwyn Garden City. The fine was issued against the funeral director for 'Not managing the event correctly and advising clients of the rules'. In fact, the funeral director had previously warned the bereaved family as regards limitations on numbers. In that case police had forced their way into the church to send mourners home. A police spokesperson later said, 'Flagrant breaches of the rules will not be tolerated in Hertfordshire'. A second funeral director received a £10,000 fixed penalty for a funeral in Mansfield.

More than two months earlier, a priest had received a £10,000 fixed penalty when 200 guests attended a wedding service. He said, 'What could I do? I just wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible.'

Compliance with covid regulations is primarily the responsibility of each individual. If I step onto a bus without wearing a facemask, it is hardly the fault of the bus driver. Nor is it the fault of the bus company. So why is it the fault of funeral directors and others in the bereavement industry when guests deliberately choose to break rules of which all of us are aware and with which most of us comply?

For cemetery and crematorium operators, covid-compliance should be seen as an occupiers-liability issue. It is about doing enough to protect mourners, staff, as well as other contractors and tradespeople, from coronavirus. The way to deal with that responsibility is to ensure absolute compliance with the covid regulations and associated official guidance as regards the management of premises.

It is about carrying out the required risk-assessments. Enabling mourners to social distance. Making sure that everyone involved is aware of the rules and installing appropriate signage. But if a large group of mourners choose to ignore statutory guidance and push their way in to the cemetery or funeral chapel, the burial or cremation staff cannot be held responsible for that. When people choose to put their own health at risk, that is a matter for them. The primary duty for staff is then to do what they can to protect the health and safety of other mourners as well as anyone else present on the premises who is trying to abide by the rules.

But whilst staff should do what they can to encourage compliance, they are not police officers and should not be asked to put their own safety at risk by confronting an aggressive situation. So, if mourners are sitting too close together to provide comfort to each other, or if a face-mask slips, is it really the responsibility of staff to intervene?

That happened at the Crownhill Crematorium on 2 October 2020 when staff interrupted a funeral service to berate mourners for moving too close together. Craig Bicknell from Milton Keynes explained that he had moved his chair to

comfort his mother at the funeral of his father. He said, 'The member of staff then interrupted the service by waving his arms and shouting at mourners to "move the chairs back" '. The resulting press and media coverage was not good.

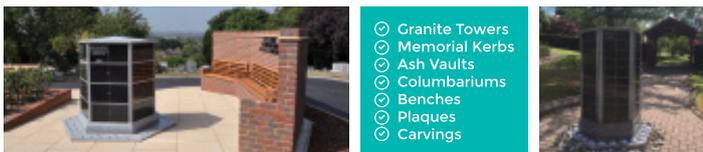
If the recipient of a fixed penalty notice does not pay it within the stipulated 28 days, they run the risk of prosecution. But there is no guarantee that the prosecution will actually take place. Under magistrates' court rules, any summons issued for a covid offence must be issued within six months from the date the offence occurred. If allowance is also made for the initial 28-day moratorium on prosecution, the prosecutor has a window of only five months in which to gather their evidence and launch criminal proceedings. Another issue is that covid offences are not easy to prove, save in the most flagrant disregard of regulations. The Daily Mail reported on 21st January 2021 that out of 1137 covid prosecutions, 286 had to be withdrawn or were set aside, either because they had been charged under the wrong legislation or because the persons charged had done nothing wrong. But some of the people charged still had to go to court to prove their innocence.

Non-compliance with covid regulations is not an absolute offence. There are proportionality issues. There is also a statutory defence of 'reasonable excuse'. What that means is that a funeral director or bereavement services manager or cemetery or crematorium operator should have a sustainable defence to prosecution if they can demonstrate that they have used 'best practical means' to prevent the contravention occurring.

It means ensuring that the proprietor has complied with their own covid responsibilities and informed and encouraged others to comply with theirs. But it does not mean that staff have to put their own safety at risk when other people are refusing to comply.




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When, against advice, a mass gathering pushes their way into a cemetery or crematorium chapel, it is appropriate that call is made to the police. But if police-officers then decline to attend, that is hardly the fault of the cemetery or crematorium operator. The important thing is that the telephone call has been made and that you insist on a crime-reference number. Also, that you have done what you can to keep other mourners, staff and trades-people safe. The situation has to be managed in the best way possible.

One way in which cemetery and crematorium operators can safeguard their position is by insisting on payment of a returnable deposit when taking bookings. Funeral directors are already recommended to consider this. The deposit doesn't have to be £10,000. But it has to be enough to make mourners think. Cemetery owners are better placed to insist on such deposits than crematorium operators because that market is less competitive. It means that cemetery owners are in a stronger position to dictate terms.

V. Charles Ward

V. Charles Ward is the ICCM Company Solicitor and the author of the forthcoming publication 'Essential Law for Cemetery and Crematorium Operators'

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