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The Journal Autumn 2020

2020

Autumn

Under the Spotlight

Oh Vienna

Vamping the Van

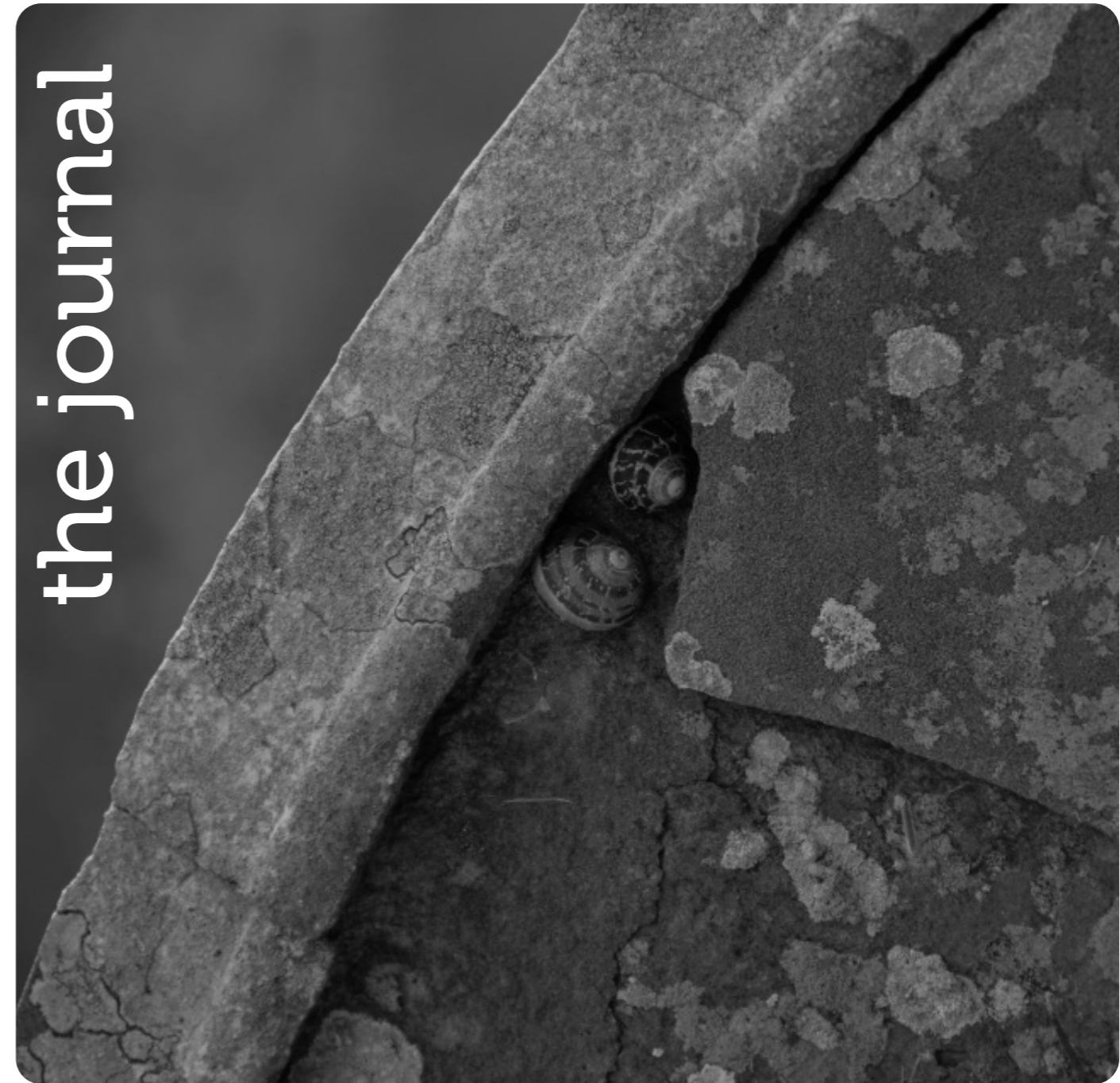
We Winged it and it Worked

My Journey through the Pandemic

Keep Calm and Wash Your Hands

Pulpit: Tragedy Averted in the Belgian Congo

The Funeral Front Lines



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Subscription Rates

£50 per annum (4 issues)
Payment to 'ICCM', or an official order sent to;
Trevor Robson
ICCM Finance & IT Manager
1 Colbeck Avenue
Swalwell
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE16 3EB

Cover image by Julie Dunk

2020

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The Journal is published quarterly in March, June, September and December. Copy dates: 15 Jan, 15 Apr, 15 July, 15 Oct.

ISSN 1747-129X

Published by

The Institute of Cemetery
& Crematorium Management (Inc)
City of London Cemetery
Aldersbrook Road
London E12 5DQ

Printed and distributed by

Sudbury Print Group
Ballingdon Hill Industrial Estate
Sudbury, Suffolk
CO10 2DX

T: 01787 373421

editorial

Self-Care is Key

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Journal. What a year it has been so far, where, without doubt, we have been experiencing the biggest health crisis the world has seen within our lifetime. During this global pandemic, it is clear we have already suffered a huge loss of life. The coronavirus has no boundaries and it targets everyone, regardless of age, gender and financial status. It doesn't discriminate, and for those families that have found themselves unexpectedly bereaved, it doesn't allow for the process of grieving. Unlike some events in life, there is no "pause" button on grief.

We could never have imagined a time where the doors of the Funeral Director are closed, arranging a funeral over the phone without the personal interactions we would normally expect, the absence of a shoulder to cry on and the denial of being able to physically view or say one last goodbye. It is extremely difficult for those working on these frontline services to be forced to deny the bereaved when, for all of us, it is the exact opposite of what we are here for.

COVID-19 is causing many people to die before their time. This can be very distressing for those who work within our sector and who may feel they also have to support, not just those families coming through the gates, but also their friends and family. You may also feel anxious that, despite safety measures being put in place, you are exposed to a greater chance of catching the illness, adding another layer of anxiety that may sit silently below the surface whilst we are just "getting on with it".

As those of you witnessing this first hand, and who may also have had personal experience of either having the virus itself or losing someone to it, it can be extremely distressing and can take its toll emotionally as well as physically. As bereavement workers we are under pressure like never before and it can be hard to prioritise your own mental health when you're caring for others in such a difficult situation – but your wellbeing matters.

Just like the safety procedures on aeroplanes, the advice is always, in cases of emergency, to place the oxygen mask on yourself first before attempting to help others. This is exactly what we must do as we slowly emerge from this. We are only now just starting to take stock and reflect on the past few months. I know from speaking with members, there have been many of you that have worked relentlessly, often working long hours, to ensure all funerals took place and the needs of the bereaved could be met as much as possible. It's only now that the build-up of pressure and stress can take hold and can have a negative effect on your mental health.

There has often been a stigma attached to admitting that we need help. This can be perceived as a weakness and can make us feel vulnerable – better to put a "brave face" on things and carry on. Fear and anxiety can be overwhelming and workplace stress can lead to burn out. How you cope with these emotions and stress can affect your well-being, the well-being of the people you care about, and colleagues that you work with. It is critical that you recognise what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and manage job stress, and know where to go if you need help. Self-care is the key and should be a priority for all employers, even more so under these unusual and changing times.

Where to go for help should be clearly sign posted for employees, an open dialogue in the workplace should be encouraged and, if communicated effectively, will help break down those walls that divide us. We should be encouraged to talk openly and honestly with our employers and our work colleagues and may even find that you are not alone in your feelings. You cannot control what is happening around you, but you can control how you respond to it.

With enforced social distancing, everyday communal interactions – a handshake, a shared laugh, even the subtle pressure of shoulders as we stand on trains and in queues – is noticeable in their very absence. In losing this closeness, we may learn appreciation and imagine new possibilities for mutual support. We need physical distancing, not social distancing. We need to be more socially connected now and not more isolated. The use of media platforms such as Zoom, Skype and Microsoft Teams has at least, in part, kept us connected. As I read somewhere, Ashes to Ashes: adjust adjust.

Our training partner, Heartled Wellbeing can offer coaching, counselling and psychotherapy consultations via Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp and telephone appointments at a reduced rate for ICCM Members. Annie Raven-Vause will be available from 5pm – 8pm Monday to Friday should anyone wish to receive support. Francis Raven-Vause, who is a fully insured NLP Master Practitioner, is also offering coaching and stress management from 09.00 – 18.00 Monday to Friday. Details of what Annie and Francis can offer, and their contact details, can be found on the Heartland Wellbeing website <https://heartledwellbeing.com/>

I would encourage you all to take some time for yourselves. If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is to recognise and understand what is important in our lives.

Sofia Allana
Editor

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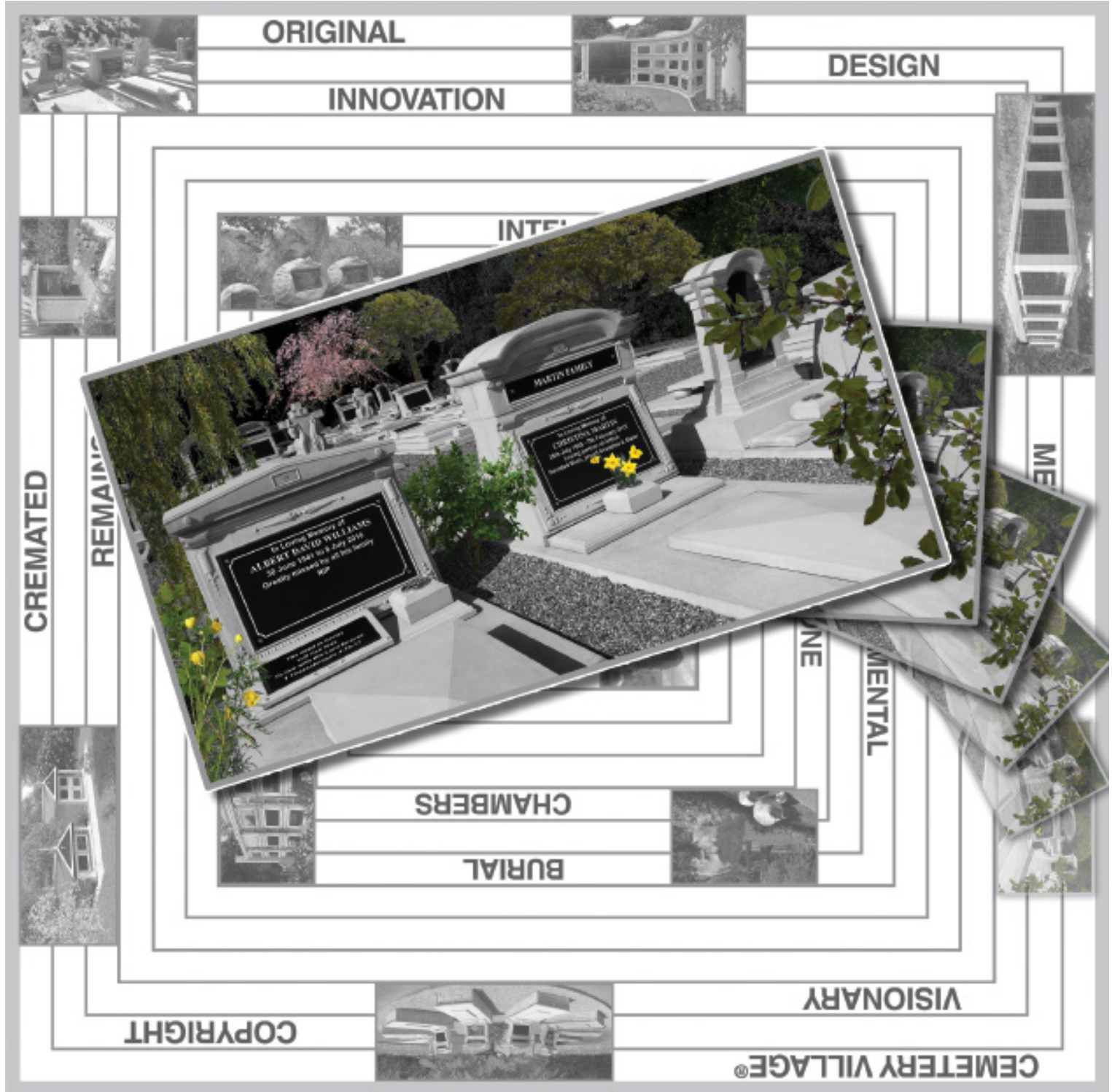
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president's page

What an awful year 2020 is turning out to be for so many of us. I hoped that when I wrote my next article I would be able to say about all the places and colleagues I have now managed to visit; however, this is not to be.

I do however have a sad story to tell, and I apologise in advance but feel that possibly sharing my own experience with you all, may help to highlight what we already know as professionals within the industry.



With so many people losing their loved ones during COVID and being unable to have the proper funeral they so deserve, I never thought for one moment that I would be one of those families. Most of you know how much I love my grandchildren, I mention it enough (a bit like Blue. I love my wife ☺), so I am sure you can imagine my heartache when I share my own sad news about the passing of our own dear little grandson Harlee aged just 11 years old, was who was taken so suddenly and unexpectedly. As a family we witnessed first-hand the trauma this awful pandemic causes to all bereaved families. We were fortunate enough, if that is the right words to use in these circumstances, to be able to visit Harlee in hospital to say our final goodbyes, however for those losing an adult I know it is entirely different. The wearing of masks to enter the hospital building, the questioning of "why are you visiting?" and "do so many of you need to go in?" when all you feel like doing is screaming to the world "don't you know what I am going through!". The arranging of the funeral, all done so differently, not being able to hug everyone for comfort and then the final goodbye when you can't have that packed chapel that you know your loved one so deserved. It all seems so unfair in a world which has been torn apart by the death of someone you love and miss so very much.

I will say that everyone we dealt with from the funeral directors to the staff here at Southampton Crematorium and all my friends and colleagues in the ICCM and the industry, have all been absolutely brilliant, so supportive and this helps immensely. So, although his school friends and teachers had to wait outside, lining the driveway, keeping their 2 metre distance from each other, like little soldiers with my wonderful work colleagues forming their own guard of honour, we were able to say goodbye to Harlee in a special way, with visual tributes to music, although Harlee's music tastes would not personally be mine ☺, a web cast and a beautiful personalised coffin which we had a replica for his ashes casket and a keep sake box. I can honestly say that I am proud that I work in an industry where we can offer these little extras to the bereaved as they make such a difference.

Well that's my story, there is no happy ending I'm afraid, but there is hope now for 6 other children who Harlee saved by organ donation, something his mum and dad will one day, when the hurt begins to subside a little, feel so proud of allowing to happen.

So, as we all continue to do our very best for all our families, as we always do. Most crematoriums are slowly increasing the number of mourners they can safely permit into their chapels. Thankfully, numbers of COVID related deaths are decreasing and it appears to be quietening down for everyone, which means we can start to concentrate on all the other important issues related with the industry. The ICCM officers continue to provide us with updates and advice and the webinars are proving to be very popular with lots of good information from speakers. However, we do have the confusing wearing of the face masks information from the government. Wear one in a shop when you are purchasing your groceries etc, wear one in the take-away, but if that take-away is also a café and you can sit-down and eat and don't go to the counter, don't wear one!! I am sure one day we will actually look back and maybe learn something from all this I have to say as yet I do not know what that is.

How marvellous it is to see that the recycling of metals scheme has now reach £8.9 million for its donations to your nominated charities, what a fantastic achievement by everyone involved, don't forget to keep nominating.

Take care everyone and continue to stay safe and follow the advice given as best you can.

Heather White xx

in touch



Another crazy few months have flown by and we continue to see unprecedented situations in the four nations of the UK. In recent days the issue of face coverings has been very much to the fore, with different approaches being adopted in the different nations. In all four nations it is compulsory for face coverings to be worn on public transport, but in Wales this has to be a 3 layer face covering whereas in the other nations it can be any type of face covering. In England and Scotland face coverings are mandatory in shops, whereas in Wales they are only advisory in public places if there are large crowds. Northern Ireland are currently considering whether face coverings should be mandatory in shops. But what constitutes a shop? In England, The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings in a Relevant Place) (England) Regulations 2020 defines a shop as "any building, room or other indoor establishment which is open to the public in whole or in part and is used wholly or mainly for the purposes of retail sale or hire of goods or services". The Regulations list a number of exemptions, which, interestingly, includes funeral director premises. Could a cemetery or crematorium chapel be considered a shop? After all, they are rooms and indoor establishments that are open to the public and used mainly for the purposes of retail sale (a burial or cremation) or the hire of goods or services (a funeral service).

I'm using the issues around face coverings and how open to interpretation the regulations and guidance are, to illustrate just how difficult it has been to issue guidance to members throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. As soon as any new regulations or guidance is issued by the Governments, ICCM Officers devour it to try and make sense of it so that we can interpret it for our sector. We have to be very careful to ensure that any guidance we circulate is not in contravention of the Government's guidance; at the start of the pandemic there was much confusion caused by badly worded regulations about crematoria having to close except for funerals, with different representative organisations offering differing advice to their members about whether associated burial grounds also had to close. That was a salutary lesson. Wherever possible the various organisations now check with each other before issuing guidance.

Throughout the pandemic the ICCM Officers have also had contact with many members who have kindly shared their thoughts and experiences to help inform thinking and shape guidance. We would like to thank all those who contributed, whether it was through asking a question which caused us to think, or through providing accounts of first-hand experiences that formed useful learning points for sharing.

At the time of writing, the worst of the first coronavirus wave is over, but there is talk of a second wave. There are concerns about the winter period, and whether a resurgence, coupled with the usual seasonal flu, will overwhelm the NHS. Although no firm figures have been provided, it is possible that the number of deaths may be higher than in the first wave (although there is some debate

as to what that figure actually is). Although there may be some doubt regarding the actual cause of death and whether Covid-19 was recorded correctly, we know that our sector dealt with roughly 61,000 excess deaths between March and June, with the peak being in April (44,000 more deaths than in April 2019). As a sector we coped really well with the extra demands, not just in terms of numbers but also the associated challenges of protecting ourselves, our families, our teams and those attending funerals, whilst continuing to provide the best level of care for bereaved people that we could under the circumstances. In some countries, including some in Europe, this hasn't been the case and death care systems have been compromised or have collapsed. We can't and won't let that happen in the UK. You have all done (and I know you will continue to do) an amazing job, and although it doesn't often get reported in the press, the UK Governments are aware of the important role that you play and are grateful for it.

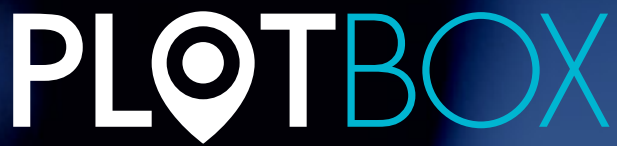
The ICCM Officers are continuing to work with allied organisations through the Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG) to ensure that lessons from the first wave are learnt, and that guidance is in place for dealing with any future outbreaks. Obviously, we are hoping that there won't be a second wave, but hope isn't enough and we have to start making plans in case numbers rise significantly again.

Many thousands of families have been affected by restrictions on funerals during the Covid-19 period, and still continue to be. However, it has not all been negative. There has been much creativity in making funerals personal and meaningful; increased use of digital platforms such as webcasting, enabling people from all over the world who may not have been able to attend in person to attend virtually; a rethinking of what is important in marking the lives of those that have died. There has been a sharp rise in the number of people opting for a direct cremation. Whether this is a temporary or a permanent trend remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that the time is ripe for exploring options for doing things differently. Do we need to keep following a Victorian funeral model, or a time-based system that suits a busy crematorium? Maybe at last bereaved people will find the voice that the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved tried to give them to express what really matters to them and how they wish to say goodbye and commemorate the lives of their family and friends.

And finally, in answer to the question I posed in the first paragraph, no, a cemetery or crematorium chapel is not considered a shop and both are currently exempt from face covering requirements, as long as 2m social distancing can be maintained (this is the situation at the time of writing, but it could well have changed yet again by the time of publication so please don't rely on this and check on the ICCM website or with the ICCM Officers!).

Thank you.

Julie Dunk
ICCM Chief Executive



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Books by V. CHARLES WARD, ICCM Honorary Solicitor



The Residential Leaseholders' Handbook

The Residential Leaseholders' Handbook explains in plain language everything leaseholders and their advisers need to know in relation to long residential leases.

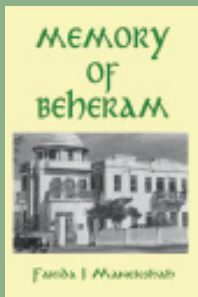
Among the common problems it tackles are absent landlords; spiralling service charges; the right to be consulted on significant or long term service charge items; how to challenge excessive charges; how to gain control from difficult or exploitative landlords and how to set up a management company.



Legal Profession: Is It For You?

Solicitor Charles Ward introduces the legal profession as a career option for school-leavers and anyone else considering a career-change. But, as this book explains, there are at least seven distinct career-options within the law. It also deals with the unspoken issues, such as 'How much do lawyers really earn?'

As well as providing everything you need to know about training to be a lawyer, the book also looks at the human side of becoming a lawyer. What are the personal qualities that make a good lawyer and why are they so important? How do you develop a legal career? And no introduction to the Legal Profession would be complete without an overview of its rich history, dating back to the Knights Templar.



Memory of Beheram

"The Quaid e Azam's spirit came to me. I told him that I'd done a very bad thing when I broke the Murti and that I had lost my son because of it." Seen through eyes of Farida J Manekshah, the rich man's favourite daughter, Memory of Beheram tells the story of the jobbing photographer who bought a palace in the turmoil which followed the British withdrawal from India and the creation of the new State of Pakistan. With his wealth, Jehangir could take on anyone: even the Pakistan Government, which had requisitioned the ground floor of his palace to house foreign diplomats. But it all came tumbling down when Farida's elder brother, Beheram, was killed on Hawkesbay Beach and his body swept out to sea.



Pass your Exam, Get that Job and Build a Career

This book contains everything you need to know about exam technique; applying for and getting shortlisted for a job interview; attending and making a good impression at interview; starting a new job; and building a career.

Practical tips include: 'how to apply for a job if you've got a criminal conviction or police caution'; 'how to ask for a pay rise'; 'how to get promoted'. Exam technique alone They say you can't put an old head on young shoulders. Well let's see.....



Pass your Exam

A guide for small business people on collecting outstanding accounts for work carried out or goods supplied without spending thousands in lawyers' fees. Provides a complete, practical and workable guide to recovery procedures and how to use the small-claims court to get what is owed to you. Also includes tips on how you can ensure that your claim to payment is watertight. Your statutory entitlement to interest and compensation on trade debts which are paid late. What you can and can't do to chase an unpaid debt. How to issue a claim in the county court. Navigating your way to judgment. Sending in the bailiffs. How to secure a debt against a debtor's property. Bankruptcy. And much more.



Pass your Exam

Written from an 'in house' perspective in response to the UK Government Housing White Paper released in February 2017, Housing Regeneration: A Plan for Implementation presents sustainable solutions to Britain's housing crisis and will be a useful practical guide for anyone involved in the process of regeneration. Taking as its starting point an idea for a housing regeneration scheme, it provides an overview of each of the issues to be considered and the options for addressing them. In clear and concise language, it explains the issues and work involved in a regeneration scheme, answering questions such as who is involved, how is it paid for, what options are available and, importantly, what are the risks. It will appeal to lawyers, councillors, town planners, surveyors, chief officers, finance officers, procurement officers, project managers and students, amongst others.

Now available to buy at Amazon

under the spotlight....

Welcome to our feature “Under the Spotlight” – asking 20 questions for 2020! Throughout the year we will be getting to know the people that have been elected to sit on the ICCM Board of Directors. This time it is the turn of Kevin Pilkington, Head of Bereavement & Registrar Services for Croydon and past president of the ICCM.

1. Can you tell us how you started working within bereavement?

I was made redundant from my role as Operations Manager for a photocopier supplier in Jan 2000, a great way to start the new millennium! I updated my CV and fired off applications here there and everywhere including one for an Operations Manager at Croydon Crematorium. I matched a number of the generic skills required, but I had no previous experience in working in a bereavement environment. I filled the application out correctly, more by luck than judgement and surprisingly was invited to interview. The interview seemed to go well and I was offered the post. Given the fact that I had a large mortgage and two young children I accepted the job as it would do until I could find something else! That was 20 years ago on the 29 March just gone!



2. Can you give us a brief outline on what you do in your role?

I am the Head of Bereavement and Registrars at the London Borough of Croydon, which tends to keep me pretty well occupied.

I am responsible for the management, statutory responsibilities and future strategies of bereavement and registrars services which includes three cemeteries, a crematorium, statutory funerals, the public mortuary and the register office.

3. What do you find the most challenging?

Dealing with the political aspects of the role, which sometimes can conflict with providing the highest levels of service to the bereaved particularly where budgets are concerned.

4. What was your experience of being ICCM President?

It was one of the best experiences of my working life, and a tremendous honour to represent the Institute and the members that do so much unsung work for the bereaved. I particularly enjoyed the branch visits and getting to meet people that I wouldn't usually see. I have always believed that a strong branch structure is integral to the industry and the ongoing success of the ICCM.

5. What are your impressions so far as an ICCM Board Director?

It's good to be involved in helping the industry and members face and deal with the huge number of challenges that the industry has dealt with recently and those we know are still to come

6. What is the most interesting thing you are working on now?

I have been working for many years on trying to obtain planning permission to extend one of our cemeteries to meet future demand and continue to provide new graves for residents in Croydon, as in 2 of our 3 cemeteries we can only offer reclaimed graves. This has proved to be extremely challenging and has not been helped by the cemetery being located in another borough who have not welcomed the proposal. After 20 years, 2 failed planning applications, 1 failed appeal and considerable effort on behalf of us and our consultants we finally obtained planning permission in late December 2019. With the current crisis the need to get this site operational as quickly as possible has never been so great.

7. If there's one thing you could change within the bereavement sector what would it be?

The regard in which we are held. Under normal circumstances cemeteries, crematoria and all those that work in the sector are seldom given the kudos they deserve for their incredible hard work and efforts. Hopefully one positive thing to come out of the pandemic will be that this will change and the true value of these services will be realised and not only focussed on in times of crisis.

8. Do you want to be cremated or buried and why?

Cremated – no chance of being buried alive!

9. Who would you most like to swap places for a day with? It can be anyone.

A frontline RAF fighter pilot, my dream job. Although following lock down I would struggle to get into a Hercules transport aircraft!

10. What was the best thing that happened to you last week?

We've just bought a 1973 MG Midget to potter about in during what's left of the summer. Sold my motorbike (still not totally sure if I'm happy with that!). As lockdown lifts looking forward to attending some smaller car shows.

11. What's the one question you get asked the most at work?

Can I borrow you a second? The follow on question from that can be about absolutely anything, but that's what makes the job so enjoyable and interesting.

12. What are you most looking forward to in the next 5 years?

I would like to retire within 5 years, finances permitting. I don't want to wish my life away, but recent experiences both in and out of work have taught me to make the most of the moment as you don't know what's around the corner.

13. What would be your first question if you woke up after being cryogenically frozen for a 100 years?

Where's the loo?

14. Who inspires you to be better?

My wife and children. They are not perfect, unlike me ☺, but they are my world.

15. What is one interesting fact about you that nobody could guess?

I can touch the tip of my nose with my tongue.

16. If you had 24 hours left to live what would you do?

Spend it with my family and close friends, preferably watching rugby and drinking heavily at the same time.

17. What do you wish you could tell yourself 10 years ago?

Take early retirement in late 2019

18. In the past people were buried with the items they would need in the afterlife, what would you want buried with you so you could use it in the afterlife?

My coffee machine and my phone

19. What topic could you give a 20 minute presentation on with no preparation?

Cold war British jets. Yes I know it's a bit geeky, but they are a great interest of mine.

20. What would you want your epitaph to be?

One of the good guys.

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first quarter accredited COTS & CTTS candidates

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

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Robert Bradshaw A B	Tony Lack C	Samantha Smith C
Nicola Cherry C	Philip Lucas A	Lewis Sweeney A
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Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme January - March 2020

Adrian Banks	Nigel Esberger	Stephen Richmond
Michael Broadley	Matthew Finch	Sidney Thornton
Julie Busuttil	Thomas Johnston	Zachary Wayman
Philip Cregg	Christopher Price	

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.

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Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme Courses April - June 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**

Mark Godden **A**
Leslie Humphrys **A**
Matthew Palmer **B**
Chris Moor **A**
Rachel Watson **A**
Luke White **A**
John Wilkinson **A**

Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme April - June 2020

Nigel Arak-Newman	Blue Donnebaer	Murray Hamilton
Paul Kenny	Colin Palfreyman	Kathleen Walker
Jack Barr	Matthew Driver	Justine Hillier
Stephanie Laycock	Mark Richards	James Webster
Craig Bonham	Jamie Featon	Simon Johns
Michael Lynch	Luke Smith	Alan Whyte
Dariusz Chwala	Oliver Gidman	Katrina Johnston
Drew McAllister	Paul Sparkes	Alec Woods
Clair Cooper	Daniel Gonera	Michelle Kendrick
Kathryn Molyneaux Brooks	Alan Stewart	David Wright
Joanne Deadman	Jack Hamilton	
Colin Morton	Ronan Sutton	

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Blue AV, Bristol City Council, Brookwood Park Ltd, Chesterfield Borough Council, Coventry City Council, Coychurch Crematorium JC, Craven District Council, Dorset Council, Kensal Green Cemetery, Kettering Borough Council, Lee Snashfold Crematoria Management & Consultancy Ltd, Medway Norse, NE Lincolnshire Council, Nene Valley Crematorium, Paisley Cemetery Company, Perth and Kinross Cross, Pure Cremation Ltd, Respect Crematoria Ltd, Rugby Borough Council, Salford City Council, Stoke on Trent City Council, Thanet District Council

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oh Vienna!

On a trip to explore Vienna's glorious Christmas markets I discovered one of the largest cemeteries in Europe, Central Cemetery, completely by accident.

Having a few drinks with my friends we got chatting to a German tourist whose passion happened to be visiting cemeteries! What are the chances? – it had to be fate! His enthusiasm was infectious and by the end of the evening he had managed to persuade all my friends to add it to our itinerary. I, obviously, didn't need any convincing that the MUST do activity on any holiday is to visit a cemetery!

So, whilst the iron was still hot – strike I did. We set off with a city map and bus tickets in the direction of the outskirts of the city towards a district called Simmering. When Vienna grew into a city of more than one million inhabitants, the old cemeteries of the various districts became too small. To accommodate the growing capital, the Central Cemetery, with an area of over 600 acres, was opened in 1874. The first individual funeral to take place was for Jakob Zelzer. The grave still stands today.



Family Mausolea in Jewish section

The Vienna Central Cemetery has over 330,000 graves and 3 million deceased buried there. It is one of Europe's largest cemeteries and is interdenominational. Alongside Catholic graves of the main interdenominational section, the extensive grounds also house a Protestant cemetery, the new and old Jewish cemetery, an Islamic section, a Syriac Orthodox section, a Muslim Egyptian section, a Coptic Orthodox section, a Greek Orthodox section, a Russian Orthodox section, a Romanian Orthodox section, a Serbian Orthodox section and burial plots for those who have donated their bodies to anatomical research. The size of the cemetery is overwhelming and truly impressive. There are several different entrances to the site and a little research should be carried out before visiting as well as a good pair of walking shoes!

In the first decades following its opening, Vienna Central Cemetery was not very popular in view of its distance from the city and wide open, barren spaces that prevailed at that time. However, with the construction of the honorary grave area, the cemetery soon turned into an attractive destination

for visitors. Many famous and deserving people who had died before the cemetery was built and were interred in other cemeteries in Vienna were transferred here.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Honorary graves are an integral part of Vienna's cultural history. They represent a significant honour which can be bestowed by the City of Vienna on public figures after their death. Today, around 1,000 honorary graves can be found in the honorary grave lot and in other lots designated as honorary graves.

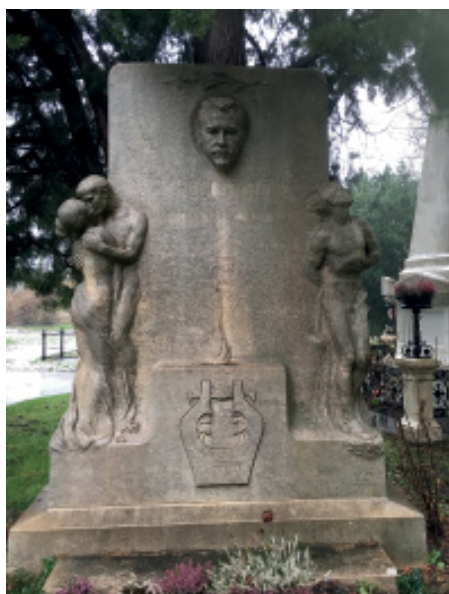
The cemetery has been enlarged a total of seven times, most recently in 1921. Vienna Central Cemetery suffered considerable bomb damage from air raids conducted during the Second World War. 12,000 graves and hundreds of crypts were completely destroyed. Every building was damaged. The church's dome was obliterated by an incendiary bomb. Following extensive restoration work, Vienna Central Cemetery has since assumed the position of the most important burial site in Vienna and presents itself as a cemetery for every religion.

The people buried there come from all walks of public life in Vienna up until the very recent past. They achieved renown in the areas of music, poetry, science, architecture, painting, invention, acting, politics or sport. Politicians who played a key role in shaping the fortunes of Austria are also buried in honorary graves. The presidential crypt in front of the Art Nouveau church is the final resting place of every Austrian federal president since 1945.



Cemeteries are places of culture and part of Vienna's history as a city. Apart from thousands of graves, there are also green spaces, trees, churches, historical buildings and cultural monuments to be seen.

If you visit the site, you won't find big neon signs pointing to the most interesting graves and crypts, which is fair enough as it's a working cemetery and not primarily a tourist attraction, facilitating 20 or 25 burials a day. For those lovers of classical music, or even just an appreciation of memorialisation, a visit to this cemetery—Section 32A—Gate 2 is a moving experience as a tribute to the



Hugo Wolf

wonderful legacies of composers including Beethoven, Schubert, Johannes Strauss, Von Suppé, Schonberg and Mozart.

The cemetery administration department and two of the three morgues are situated next to the main entrance. The old, imposing covered

footpaths with 36 crypts can be clearly seen from the gate. They were built in a Neo-Renaissance style. The cemetery church of St. Charles Borromeo sits prominently and is the most significant Art Nouveau church building, together with Otto Wagner's Church of St. Leopold at Steinhof, in Vienna. After approximately three years of construction work, the church was inaugurated in 1911. It underwent

comprehensive renovation work between 1995 and 2000.

The Central Cemetery is also home to a Funeral Museum and gives insights into the funeral and cemetery culture of past centuries. You can expect to learn interesting facts about the Viennese funeral service, the funeral industry, the history of Vienna's cemeteries and about

the features of the "Viennese cult of the dead" from the end of the 18th century until today. More than 250 original objects and photographic material are on display, including an original "Fourgon" (coach for transporting bodies) from around the year 1900. A heart palpitation knife and a life-saving clock are the most bizarre exhibits: they date to a time when people worried about being buried alive. From the year 1784 comes the famous foldaway coffin, which Emperor Joseph II had used in order to be able to recycle coffins several times.

The cemetery is so big you can literally spend days there – which quite honestly, I would have happily done but unfortunately my friends didn't share the same enthusiasm! To be fair it was cold, and we were only there for a long weekend, so reluctantly we headed back in search of a warm bar! There is so much I didn't get to explore so will definitely be planning another visit. I would highly recommend you put this on your "to do" list!

Sofia Allana
Editor



Church of St. Barromeo



Beethoven



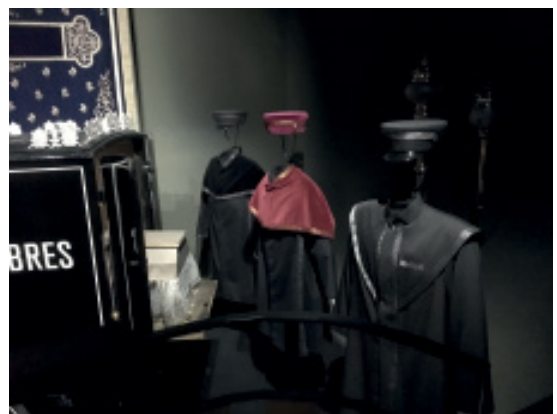
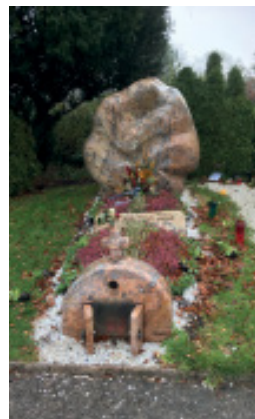
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COVID-19 memorial garden design unveiled

The Westerleigh Group has unveiled an artist's impression of how its new memorial gardens to remember people who have died during the COVID-19 pandemic will look.



Westerleigh, the UK's largest independent owner-operator of crematoria and cemeteries, announced last month its intention to create a memorial garden at each of its 34 sites across the country.

Now the group has provided a first glimpse of what the memorials will look like.

The gardens are designed to be tranquil places for people to visit and remember loved ones who died during the pandemic, and to pay tribute to those who sacrificed so much to help others who were sick, isolated or vulnerable.

Roger McLaughlan, CEO of Westerleigh said: "The centre-piece of each garden will be a stone monument surrounded by a floral arrangement representing a rainbow, which has become a symbol of hope during the pandemic.

Many people have put pictures of rainbows in their windows during the lockdown, to cheer up passers-by and to offer a bright message of hope.

Our rainbows will be created using the vibrant colours of Begonias, Petunias and Geraniums".

The stone at the centre of the memorial gardens will be made from all-polished black granite, and is a typical traditional memorial for remembrance but with a Westerleigh change of design. The memorials will be individually carved by Westerleigh's highly-skilled stonemasons.

Work is expected to begin on the stone memorials in the Autumn with garden landscaping taking place in early Spring 2021. The gardens are then expected to open shortly afterward.

Roger added: "All our sites have close links to their local communities, and they have all been impacted by the pandemic.

We therefore thought it would be an appropriate gesture to create a permanent and lasting memorial at our crematoria.

The garden(s) will be a special place/special places, where people can come to remember and reflect, and to give thanks to the wonderful way that the NHS, key workers and whole communities pulled together during this unprecedented crisis.

As this project progresses, we will be reaching out to our local communities to help shape and finalise our plans."





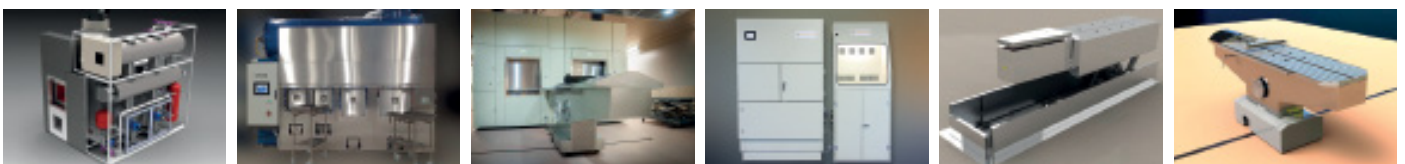
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researching lone deaths and public health funerals

A study by Dr Glenys Caswell and Dr Nicola Turner of the University of Nottingham

Working as you do in the cemeteries and crematoria sector you will be much more familiar with public health funerals than most members of the public. You will understand the legal background, and you will know why and how public health funerals come about. You will also know what they are like in practice and how difficult they can be for all involved.

Often such funerals can seem sad. No one appears to mourn the person who died, and little seems to be known about their life.

Until recently our personal knowledge of public health funerals was limited to reading about them and talking to people involved. Just before the pandemic lockdown, however, we were both privileged to attend two different funerals. Each of us attended a cremation and a burial. The services were led by a civil celebrant. If the lockdown had not begun, we would have wished to attend more.

The reason we attended these two funerals was as part of a research project we were carrying out.

The research aimed to explore what we call lone deaths. We define a lone death as one where the person concerned lives alone, dies alone at home and then their body is not found for an extended period of time. We are researchers at the University of Nottingham and we both have an interest in exploring the ways in which, as a society, we manage death and dying.

In this piece of research we wanted to understand how lone deaths could come about. How was it that people could be so cut off from others that no one noticed when they died? Was it that their families and communities had abandoned them?

We also wanted to learn about the processes that take place after someone dies a lone death. What are the legal requirements, we wondered? Who makes decisions about whether it should be a burial or cremation? Who, if anyone, looks for family members? What do people working in the sector think and feel about this part of their role?

Our research was funded by the Leverhulme Trust and we began work in August 2018. The first thing we did was to carry out a media review, exploring news media responses to lone deaths. Such reports are influential, in that this is how most people learn about lone deaths.

Next, over the following 18 months or so, we established ten case studies. A case study is a way of gathering information about one case from a number of different sources. For us, each case study was focused on the lone death of one individual.

To set up the case studies we drew on a variety of sources. For example, we reviewed coroner files on the case. Coroner files included documents such as statements from police

officers, from members of the public who were witnesses, and from family members.

They also included the post-mortem report, and details about the inquest (if there was one) and the coroner's conclusion about the case.



Dr. Glenys Caswell and Dr. Nicola Turner

We also reviewed the media coverage of the case. Media coverage varied, but there was always at least one item in the local paper. All of it, of course, is readily available online.

Whenever possible we also interviewed someone who had known the person who died. This was the most difficult aspect of the research. In most cases there was no family to approach and ask for an interview. In the end we completed four such interviews, each about a different case study. The third way in which we explored the topic of lone deaths was to interview professionals. We talked to people working in local authorities, who had responsibility for managing public health funerals. We talked to funeral directors and funeral celebrants. Between us we attended four public health funerals, two cremations and two burials, to observe such funerals in practice.

What did we find?

For us as researchers attending public health funerals, at first sight they appeared the same as any other funeral we had attended. The coffin arriving in a smart hearse – it is not too surprising nowadays for there to be no display of flowers with the coffin, as families opt for donations to charity instead. The funeral director, their staff, the celebrant and the cemetery/crematorium workers all smartly dressed. The funeral director paging the hearse for the final yards to the venue and then leading the coffin inside or to the graveside.

It was as we entered the cemetery chapel or arrived at the open grave and took our places that the differences were brought home to us. There was no one to mourn, apart from workers. The funeral celebrant talked about the 'celebration of a meaningful life' as the reason we had come together but knew so little about the person who had died.

A eulogy was given, comprised of just one or two scant pieces of information. Speaking to the celebrant after the funeral, we heard how hard it was for them to write and deliver a meaningful service in these circumstances.

Out of our ten case studies, seven are men, three are women. We think that men do undergo lone deaths more often than women, but we took on cases as they came our way. Two of our cases are Welsh and eight are English.

They people who died were aged between 48 and 72. The shortest period between death and the discovery of the body was two days. The longest period was about six years.

The level of decomposition meant that the pathologist was unable to assign a cause to the death in seven cases. In two cases identification of the body was difficult. This was because their face could not be recognised, and DNA comparison could not be carried out because there was no one to take a comparison sample from. It was also the case that they could not be identified through their teeth because they had not attended a dentist.

Two of the people who formed our case studies, one man and one woman, had cut themselves off entirely from the social world. They had both worked, but on stopping work they ceased contact with their colleagues, neighbours and anyone else they had previously known. They did not appear to have any relatives. Their bodies were not found for several years.

In most cases, however, we learned that the person who died had been a private person who liked their own company. They had very few, if any, friends. If they had family, it was likely to be very small and quite possible that their closest relatives had already died. In some cases, their family had dispersed across the UK or even the world. When this happens, it is very easy to lose contact.

All of the people who formed our case studies had worked in the past, but none did so at the time of their death. Amongst their number were a Falklands veteran, a postman, a nurse, a shop manager, a sailor, a coffin bearer, a traffic warden, an engineer.

We were struck by how ordinary they seemed as a group. They died in an unusual way, perhaps, but had worked in the kinds of jobs that any of us might do. In this they contributed to society in the way that most of us do. They did work that was useful to the community and they paid their taxes.

To illustrate what we mean we would like to tell you about the case of Mrs Helen Walsh. Mrs Walsh was 70 years old when she died. She lived in the house she had shared with her husband, who had died about 10 years before. This was her first marriage, but Mr Walsh had been married before. They did not have children together, but he had a daughter from his previous relationship. After his death Mrs Walsh lost touch with her stepdaughter. Mrs Walsh did not have any family, so far as the initial investigation into her death could discover.

Helen Walsh's body was discovered when traders who worked near her home realised that they had not seen her for some time. The manager of the grocery store spoke to the owner of the garage across the road from Mrs Walsh's home, asking if he had seen her recently. He had not. He went over the road and rang Mrs Walsh's bell. She did not answer, so he looked through the letter box. He could see

her lying on the floor, but she did not respond when he called out to her.

He called the police, who came and broke into Mrs Walsh's home. They found her lying dead on the floor. They described the house as messy and unkempt. The garage owner said that he saw Mrs Walsh about once a week when she went out to go shopping. He described her as a private person who did not stop to chat. She never had callers at her home.

A post-mortem was carried out at the coroner's request, and the pathologist determined that she had died of natural causes. The inquest into Mrs Walsh's death commented that she had not seen her general practitioner for quite some time. It is not known, however, whether this was because she enjoyed good health, or had a disinclination to visit the doctor.

Helen Walsh, it seems, lived a quiet, private life. So far as we can tell, she appears to have been contented with her own company. She died alone, in a manner that may seem sad to many of us but which was, in fact, in keeping with the way she lived.

We are used, in the 21st century, to funerals which celebrate the life of the person who died. The coronavirus pandemic altered the way in which this could be carried out, but despite this we retain the desire to celebrate the life as well as mourn the death.

From our research we would suggest that there are some people for whom this is not such an appropriate form of funeral. We believe that sometimes, for people such as Helen Walsh who was a private person, a celebration of their life is not appropriate. Better, perhaps, for the funeral to acknowledge them as a member of the human community. In many, perhaps most, cases it is the right thing to do to celebrate the life, with a eulogy, and a personalised choice of music, readings and so on. Sometimes, however, it is more suitable perhaps to say we have come here today to acknowledge the death of one of our community, we know little about them, they were a private person who was contented in their own company. What we do know is that the fact of their living contributed to our society and for that we thank them and say goodbye.

It is our view that we should continue with the current practice whereby public health funerals are managed in the same way as any other. In addition, we could refocus on the acknowledgement of community membership instead of the funeral as a celebration of life. We would also suggest rebranding the public health funeral as a community funeral; carried out on behalf of the community to acknowledge and say goodbye to a community member.

If anyone has any questions or would like more information they can email me on: glenys.caswell@nottingham.ac.uk

Dr Glenys Caswell and Dr Nicola Turner
University of Nottingham

Obituary: Kim Stopher

It was with great sadness that I learned that Kim had lost his 18 month battle with cancer and I know that I speak for all his friends and colleagues at the ICCM when I send our sincere condolences to his wife Heather and his mother Juliette.

Kim David Stopher was born on 11th June 1956 in Enfield and had a comfortable childhood and excelled at Latimer School which led to a job with the Ministry of Defence which involved procurement. Kim did well in his role but he realised that this was not where his interests lay. His real passion was for steam engineering in which he went on to be a recognised expert, a tutor and examiner for the Combustion Engineering Association with whom he was working up to two weeks before his death.

I first met Kim soon after he was appointed as the UK Managing Director of IFZW, a German company looking to sell its range of cremators into the competitive British market. We quickly established a good relationship and we subsequently enjoyed many professional and social engagements together and we shared a passion for motorcars which we could discuss for hours!

Kim took on his role with IFZW with great enthusiasm and quickly became one of the most recognisable characters at any bereavement industry conference or event and will be

remembered for his knowledge and willingness to share this. He was a regular contributor to conferences and indeed undertook a number of projects with the ICCM and also gave some presentations.

Kim will be remembered for his immaculate appearance, always a neatly folded handkerchief in his jacket pocket and his enthusiasm for all that he did. IFZW went on to win a number of cremator installation contracts in the UK before he left that position and formed his own company Kim Stopher Associates which was very successful.

Kim had a few passions; he was a very enthusiastic golfer from the age of eleven and won many competitions and trophies over the years. Kim was a committed member of the Ickwell Cricket Club Golf Society, a passionate and dedicated freemason and was master of his Lodge in 2014 and as mentioned a confirmed car enthusiast. Kim loved Mercedes cars and particularly his 6 litre S Class and more recently a car he had long coveted, a Bentley Brooklands.

Kim we will miss your friendship and wise council.

Alan José



Obituary: Ernie Turner

Ernie Turner was born in East Ham, London on 12th February 1923, the youngest of four children. Ernie left school at fourteen as was common practice in those days unless your family was well off and did various jobs. A runner for a firm in the city of London, he worked for an electrician and then at an office job in the City of London Cemetery before being conscripted into the RAF during World War II.

Ernie was in training as a pilot in bomber command before a fault in his eyesight was noticed by his superior officers, which sadly for Ernie at the time, quashed that ambition. Very reluctantly Ernie agreed to become a member of ground crew. Ernie many years later told his son Matthew that his eye fault saved his life as all the people he did his pilot training with died during the War.

Ernie later began working on RADAR and was asked to continue in this field after the end of the war as it was something he excelled at. When finally Ernie was demobbed, he was standing in a bus queue outside Manor Park station one day in his demob suit, when a man turned around to him saying he remembered him. This man was in fact Mr Herbert, the superintendent and registrar of the City of London Cemetery who said that if he needed a job he could come and work back at the cemetery.

Ernie went back to the cemetery office as a general assistant on 22nd April 1947 and went on to be one of the most influential people of his generation in the burial and cremation industry during a career that spanned over 40 years.

Ernie married Betty at St. Mary's church in Beckton in 1951 and worked diligently at his daily duties at the cemetery and at the same time studying for the diploma of the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration (now the ICCM) obtaining his diploma with honours in 1960. A report to the Port of London Health and Social Services Committee held on 30th November 1960 advised that Mr E Turner as chief assistant of the City of London Cemetery had "passed the final examination of the IBCA with honours in two subjects and the highest aggregate marks among the candidates sitting the final examination" an achievement for which Ernie was rightly congratulated.

Ernie was appointed deputy superintendent and registrar in 1961 and on Mr Herbert's retirement on 31st October 1964 to the top job.



Ernie was a first-class manager and had a deep understanding of the business that enabled him to significantly reduce deficits while at the same time improving standards. The City of London Cemetery and Crematorium gained worldwide renown and Ernie advised cremation authorities in Florida, the Soviet Union and Australia, and in fact was offered posts both in Florida and Australia.

Ernie oversaw the design and construction of the new crematorium built within the grounds of the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium which opened in 1973 replacing the original crematorium which was opened in 1904. This was a bright airy and thoroughly modern building that was full of the latest technical innovation including the rather short-lived wellman incandescent cremators.

Ernie was the IBCA public relations officer for three years, was tutor for office records and administration examination for many years and was elected a Fellow of the Institute in 1971. Ernie was a member of the council for the Cremation Society of Great Britain and a member of the executive committee for the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities.

In 1973 / 1974 Ernie served as the president of the IBCA, a position he was very proud to hold and said after his installation "As this chain of office with its many links indicates, a great many men have stood where I am standing at this moment and I dare say they experienced very much the same emotions as I am experiencing. To be elected by one's own professional colleagues to the highest office in this long established and much respected organisation is an honour which it would be difficult to match".

Ernie and he and his wife Betty visited every branch in the UK

during his year of office. Ernie was elected a life member of the IBCA in 1976.

Ernie retired from his post at the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium on 30th June 1981.

Ernie did not completely retire however as he continued as the secretary of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities which he took up after the sudden death of Arthur McMillan in 1978. Ernie enjoyed this role and without the pressures of a full-time job he devoted his considerable talents to the FBCA and worked tirelessly until 1988 when he fully retired after ten years of service.

Ernie and Betty retired to a house in Broadstairs, Kent where they lived for many happy years during which time Ernie had time for his passionate hobby of sailing. Sadly, Betty died in 2018 after which Ernie moved to a British Legion retirement home in Southam near his son's family until his death in April 2020 aged 97.

Such was the esteem that Ernie was held in was demonstrated when the City of London Corporation and the Port Health and Environmental Services Committee took the decision to name the new training facility at the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium after him 29 years after he had retired. What an accolade! Ernie, Betty and their son Mark, were invited to the opening ceremony on Saturday 18th July 2009.

The chairman of the corporation welcomed Ernie and his family back and spoke of his many achievements. Ernie replied in typically modest fashion but was absolutely delighted that the centre for training in which he so passionately believed had been named after him.

Alan José

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

iccm branch secretaries, contact details

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Eastern: Tracy Lawrence

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South East: Heather White

Email: heather.white@southampton.gov.uk T: 023 8076 6405

Midlands and Mid Wales: Michael Birkinshaw

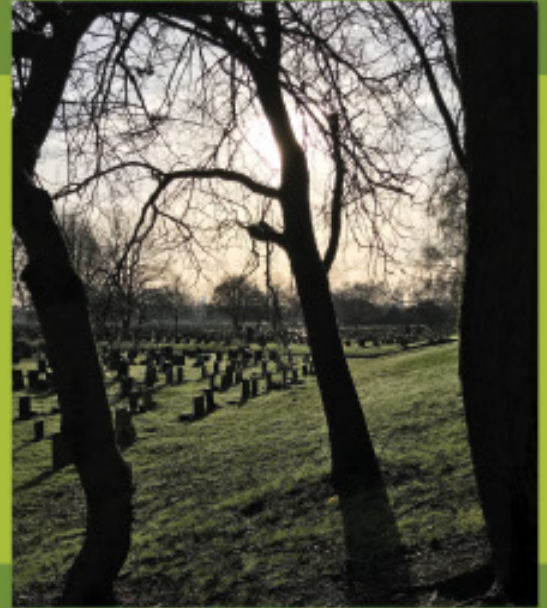
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the cemetery chapel

A very English building



Constructed in 1839, the chapels at Highgate Cemetery were the first to be joined by a porte cochère.

When 'the magnificent Seven' cemeteries opened in London between 1832 and 1841, each company constructed a chapel or chapels for a service to take place prior to burial. Section 11 of the Cemeteries Clauses Act 1847, under which a number were opened, empowered '...the owning company to build such chapels as they may think fit...' Brompton, Nunhead and Abney Park had a single chapel, whilst at Highgate, Kensal Green, Tower Hamlets and West Norwood two were provided, one for Church of England services, with the other being for Nonconformist, Roman Catholic and other denominations. At all except Highgate, the two chapels were situated separately from one another whereas the building in Swain's Lane comprises two chapels joined by a porte cochère; a covered area linking the entrance doors to each chapel, designed to protect the hearse and mourners from inclement weather. This feature has come to be recognised as a hallmark of English cemetery architecture. Chapels joined by a porte cochère don't exist in Scotland, although there are a small number in Wales, so it's not quite exclusive to England.

This architectural device was adopted by architects engaged by Burial Boards, not only in London following the Burial Act 1852 but also throughout England and Wales after the Act was broadened the following year. Many submitted designs as part of a competition, which would often have included ancillary structures including a lodge, a boundary wall and possibly a mortuary. Whilst most are in what can loosely be called a 'Gothic' style (Highgate being in 'Undertakers' Gothic'), they all vary in terms of layout, linking arrangements and external decoration. Large numbers of these chapels can still be seen in cemeteries. Some continue to be used for their original purpose, whilst others are in a very poor state or their use has changed through being adapted for cremation or another purpose. Inevitably, some have disappeared. Historic and contemporary images give us an insight into the variety of this very English building type.



A typical example is at Biggleswade in Bedfordshire which dates from 1868. Here the chapels are joined by a large central spire. Many chapels had a bell that could be tolled for a fee upon the arrival of a funeral.

The chapels in Biggleswade Cemetery, Bedfordshire.



The large chapels in Sheffield's Burngreave Cemetery.

Buildings varied in size according to the anticipated number of burials and also the financial resources of the Burial Board. There are impressively sized chapels at Belper in Derbyshire, Stapleford in Nottingham, Hampstead in north London and at Sheffield's Burngreave Cemetery.



At Harton Cemetery in South Shields you can find these fine chapels described by Historic England as being in a '...free late gothic manner with Tudor overtones'.



The timber-framed chapel in Longton Cemetery dates from 1868. (Image from the internet)

The chapels in Staffordshire’s Longton Cemetery are unique by being timber framed; they were listed in 1993.²



The chapels in St Mary’s Cemetery, Battersea in south London (1860).

Some chapels were very modestly proportioned: those at St Mary’s Battersea Cemetery are no more than twenty feet in length, while at Putney Lower Common cemetery they are only slightly larger. In both cases the chapels are joined by a porte cochère, but whereas at Battersea a hearse could stop under the bell cote that joins the two chapels, at Putney this was for pedestrian access only to both chapels. Both buildings can be regarded as perfect miniatures. In some locations the porte cochère was surmounted by a bell cote, rather than a spire, such as Twickenham and South Ealing. At Ryde on the Isle of Wight, the chapels are joined by a wooden porte cochère and a fleche. A similar arrangement can be found at Bandon Hill in Surrey, but with a very tall wooden spire.



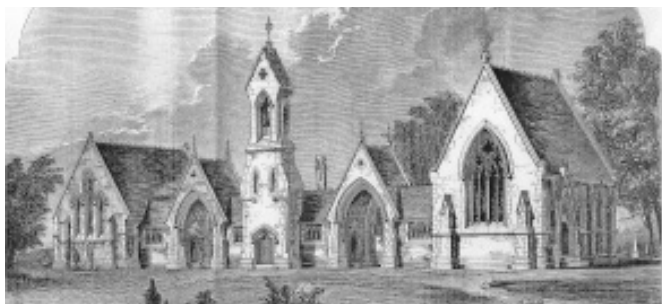
The chapels in Teddington Cemetery (1879).

At Teddington there is wooden framed porte cochère and the bell is hung in one of the two crocketed spires adjacent to each chapel.



The substantial chapels in Chatham Cemetery (1869).

At the other the other end of the spectrum is Chatham in Kent where a substantial porte cochère houses a large room, possibly for meetings of the Burial Board or for storing records. Access is via an external turret. The same can be found within the tower joining the two chapels at Derby. Tottenham has the unusual distinction of having a room above the porte cochère but without access other than a ladder up to the window that helpfully opens outwards.



Paddington Cemetery (1855) in Kilburn, north west London, has two arches for vehicles in addition to a series of linked rooms. (The Builder 25 August 1855)

Other chapels possess multiple arches. Those at Paddington Old Cemetery have two arches for the hearses and a series of linked rooms with a central bell tower under which is a room for cemetery staff. The same arrangement can be found at Cardiff's Cathays Cemetery. In 1857, Loughborough was provided by two chapels linked by three arches, with the centre one completely avoiding the entrances to the chapels. At Bromley in south east London a further variation can be found with a central road for vehicles and two pedestrian arches either side. At Bristol's Greenbank Cemetery the central bell tower of some considerable height is flanked by pedestrian entrance to the chapels. There are also secondary doors into the chapel on the outer extremities to permit an 'in and out' flow, a feature adopted elsewhere.



The chapels in Barnsley Cemetery linked by a screen.

Some chapels were joined not by a porte cochère but by a linking screen or cloisters, such as at Barnsley.



Hartshill Cemetery. The chapels have since lost their unique pointed towers.

At Hartshill Cemetery in Staffordshire, the German Romanesque chapels are also linked by a cloister, but no central carriage way for the funeral vehicles.³



A funeral arriving at the chapels in Leicester's Welford Road Cemetery. The chapels built in 1849 have since been demolished.

A grand linking cloister joined the chapels in Leicester's Welford Road Cemetery, designed in 1849 for the Leicester General Cemetery Company. In other places the entrance arch doubles as a porte cochère to include the cemetery lodge. Nottingham Road Cemetery in Derby is a good example.



The chapels in Walthamstow Cemetery are at right angles to distinguish between denominations.

Subtle differences distinguished the denomination of the chapel. For example, some chapels were placed at right angles to each other: Hyde Park at Doncaster, Walthamstow in north east London, Lawnswood at Leeds, Goole in the East Riding, Oundle in Northamptonshire and Cornwall's St Austell Cemetery are examples. The second distinguishing feature was the windows. At Barnsley, the Nonconformists probably had their services in the chapel with the rose window, rather than in the chapel with the three windows, perhaps considered too Anglican by the Dissenters. Other differences were apparent. At Leicester's Welford Road Cemetery the Anglican chapel was 10ft longer than the one for the Nonconformists.⁴

But the porte cochère did not always link two chapels. At the City of Westminster's cemetery at Hanwell in West



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London, there is a chapel on one side and a mortuary or coffin holding area on the other. This side of the building also contains two-story office accommodation. A further example of chapel and mortuary can be found at Penarth near Cardiff.



The now-demolished chapels in Willesden Cemetery (1891) in north west London are an exception to the typical Gothic-style chapels found in so many cemeteries.

Many of these examples are in what can broadly be called a Gothic-style and usually built using ragstone or bath stone. But there are some notable exceptions, such as the Renaissance designed 'Pont Street Dutch' chapels in Willesden New Cemetery.



Brandwood End chapel were strikingly decorated with red terracotta.

In 1899 at Brandwood End in Birmingham, the local architect provide a pair of chapels in red terracotta, a material used extensively in the region.⁵ This was among the last of these decidedly English buildings to be constructed as the new century ushered in the Burial Act 1900 which effectively put an end to the obligation of the burial authority to provide two chapels. Under Section 2 (1&2), burial authorities may continue to erect a chapel, but it shall not be consecrated or reserved for the exclusive use of any particular denomination.⁶ It did, however, permit a particular denomination to finance the building of their own chapel. This legislation effectively

put an end to chapels linked by a porte cochère, as few denominations were interested in raising the capital for an exclusive chapel. From now onwards a single cemetery chapel would be built. Looking around the London area where over 36 cemeteries have opened since 1900, many examples can be found such as at Bromley Hill (1905), East Sheen (1906) and Chadwell Heath (1934). At Grove Park Cemetery, which dates from 1935, the single chapel was constructed from wood.



The interior of the single chapel in Hendon Cemetery (1899).

Dating from 1903, Hendon Cemetery possesses a single chapel worth a mention. The directors of the Abney Park Cemetery Company engaged the architect Alfred Bonella to design the building. Although a private company with a Nonconformist heritage, one might be mistaken for thinking they were of another persuasion considering the installation of a facsimile of Della Robbia's Resurrection from Florence Cathedral on the wall of the burial chapel.



The chapel in Chiswick New Cemetery (1933) in the 'Great West Road' style.

There are some particularly distinctive single chapels, such as Chiswick New in the 'Great West Road style' by the Chiswick and Brentford Borough Surveyor, Joseph R

Musto. The best example in London was regrettably only short-lived. In 1937, the Anglican clergy of Kensington engaged the architect Arthur Knapp-Fisher to build a chapel in Gunnersbury Cemetery. Sadly, it was destroyed during World War Two.⁷ An elegant chapel dating from 1910 can be found in Crookes Cemetery, Sheffield, while two further examples can also be found outside London.⁸



Dating from 1910, Handsworth Cemetery chapel must be one of the largest in England.

The first is in Handsworth Cemetery. Constructed in 1910, the chapel in Handsworth Cemetery, Birmingham, with its lofty proportions and skinny lancet windows gives it the air of a French cathedral. It was Grade I listed in 1982 and restored in 2012.



The chapel complex in Leicester's Saffron Hill Cemetery was built in 1929.

The second is in Saffron Hill Cemetery south of Leicester and dates from 1929. Here the landscape architect Prentice Mawson nearly provided the City with a pioneering new lawn cemetery restricting memorial to ground level, which was never adopted.⁹ He did, however, design a single chapel with a cloister and campanile.

Single chapels continued to appear in twentieth century cemeteries, but there are a few exceptions as architects continued to look back to the building design of the past. Nottingham City Council secured a new burial ground at Wilford Hill, which opened in 1914. Five years later the

substantial pair of chapels designed by the City architect appeared on the crown of the hill.



The twin chapels in Camberwell New were designed by the distinguished architect Sir Aston Webb and constructed in 1929. (The Builder 12 April 1929)

In 1901, the Borough of Camberwell purchased land in reserve for a cemetery at Honor Oak in south London. Requiring a new cemetery, in 1929 they commissioned Sir Aston Webb to provide a pair of large chapels.¹⁰ Despite the sketch in *The Builder* showing a porte cochère giving access to the chapels, when constructed the doors were positioned at either end of the chapel, thus providing no shelter for the waiting mourners. The space under the arch is no more than a driveway for the vehicles with a large panel proudly listing the names of the members of the Public Service Committee. The reason for two chapels was '...dictated by the necessity of dealing with a large number of funerals at the same time.'¹¹



Dating from 1937, the building in Alperton Cemetery in north west London is probably the last example of a chapel with a porte cochère.

Probably the last example of a chapel with a porte cochère can be found at Alperton in north west London. The cemetery opened in 1914, but it was not until 1937 before the pair of chapels were completed. But whilst one

side is a chapel for burial services, the other was fitted out as a columbarium for the deposit of caskets of ashes.



The chapel in Sheffield's City Road Cemetery was the first to be converted into a crematorium. It was designed by ME and Charles Hadfield and adapted in 1905.

The mention of cremation is appropriate at this point. Although the crematorium at Woking was used for the first time in 1885, cremation was slow to be adopted in England and Wales. However, cremation could only be encouraged if there were convenient facilities. As the cost of building a new crematorium was greater than converting an existing cemetery chapel, this option has been frequently pursued particularly as cremation increased and burial chapels were less frequently used. Sheffield and Lawnswood in Leeds were converted in 1905 then West Norwood in 1915. But these were all stand-alone, single chapels. Where chapels with a porte cochère were converted, the change was often radical. The first was at Glyntaff Cemetery at Pontypridd in 1924. This key feature would often be lost with arches being closed off. The layout of the chapels would also necessitate reconfiguration to accommodate a catafalque, while a crematory also had to be added to the building either as an extension or in the basement area. A chimney would further be required.

Seventy-three years after they were constructed, the chapels in Brighton's extra-mural cemetery were converted into a crematorium, under the hand of Albert Freeman, an authority of crematoria design.¹³ Other chapels received similar treatment including the substantial chapels in Nottingham's Wilford Hill Cemetery. Built in 1919, these had a short life as burial chapels as they were adapted for cremation in late 1930 by enclosing the porte cochère while a crematory compound was constructed at the rear. In London, the first adaptation of twin chapels was at Putney Vale in 1938. Many conversions took place in the 1950s, a period when the preference for cremation was shifting significantly. Of the 44 conversions that took place, most were of single chapels, with only eleven being twin chapels including Blyth north of Newcastle, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Stourbridge. At Bedford, the larger burial chapel was transformed into the crematorium

while the smaller chapel accommodated the Book of Remembrance.



The chapels in Battersea New Cemetery in Morden, Surrey, were converted into North East Surrey Crematorium in 1958.

Built in 1891, the chapels in Battersea New Cemetery at Morden were converted in 1958 to become the North East Surrey Crematorium. The chapel on the right was used for cremation services while the one on the left remained for burials. Both arches were blocked off to screen the crematory and the chimney was cunningly directed up the spire.

As cremation increased, the overall usage of burial chapels declined which has brought both decay and destruction on an epic scale. Today, many chapels are in a parlous state being barricaded and often sporting vegetation. In West London, Isleworth has been boarded up for the last twenty-five plus years; Hounslow Cemetery chapels are in a similar state.



The redundant chapels in St John's Elswick Cemetery (1856) in Newcastle urgently need restoration.

All the buildings in St John's Cemetery Elswick in Newcastle, including the entrance and lodge, are in a shocking state.¹⁴ The Grade I listed chapels at Birmingham's Brandwood End Cemetery suffered an arson

attack some years ago, but at least the roof of one chapel has recently been given a temporary fix. Others have lost features including spires, such as at Hartshill in Stoke and also Greenbank in Bristol.¹⁵ Some have completely disappeared; those in Willesden were unceremoniously demolished by the London Borough of Brent in 1986 and tarmac covers the location. Two spectacular examples with linking cloisters have gone. Welford Road in Leicester disappeared in 1955, whilst Barnsley finally went in 1983. King's Lynn, Ashford in Kent, and Gorton Cemetery in Manchester can be added to the list of casualties.

At least there have been some positive developments. After being left to deteriorate, the chapels in what is now Flaybrick Memorial Park in Birkenhead were partly restored in 2015 and this structure could in the future be given a more dignified use.¹⁶ Sometimes the space has been utilised for equipment storage. At Camberwell New Cemetery, temporary office accommodation was found for the staff of Southwark's Cemeteries Department in one of Aston Webb's chapels with the other continuing to be used for burial services.

Credit must go to the London Borough of Wandsworth where at Putney Lower Common the pair of chapels have been sold (along with the lodge) after years of being boarded up. In the summer of 2018, they were converted into a private residence. One chapel contains a bedroom and bathroom, and the other provides living space while the entrance arch has been converted into the kitchen.

Issues over access and finding an appropriate use can be overcome as this example indicates. Surely this could be employed elsewhere and there certainly is precedent as many other places of worship have been converted into residential use. At Stourbridge the chapels have become the office of the local registration service, another wholly appropriate use for the buildings.

As already noted, at Bedford the chapels became a crematorium in 1955, but it was never that successful and when a new, more modern and accessible facility was built outside the town it was decommissioned. Heritage Lottery Funding was subsequently secured, both chapels refurbished and turned into community space. The large chapels at Loughborough too have been restored and elegant glazing now encloses the triple arches. These last examples show that there is hope for this very English building type.

All images from the author's collection except where stated.

This is an extract from a paper given at the Victorian Society's Great Gardens of Death conference on Saturday 18 May 2019.

www.brianparsons.org.uk

Brian Parsons

¹ Fellows A (1952) *The Law of Burial and Generally of The Disposal of the Dead* London: Hadden, Best & Co p147

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1210413> (accessed 11 March 2019)

³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001690> (accessed 11 March 2019)

⁴ www.fowrcl.org.uk/history/ (accessed 24 March 20a19)

⁵ <https://fbec.org.uk/about-the-cemetery/> (accessed 14 February 2019)

⁶ Fellows A (1952) *The Law of Burial and Generally of The Disposal of the Dead* London: Hadden, Best & Co p294.

⁷ Parsons B (2016) 'A Tale of Two Cemeteries - securing burial space in London during the inter-war period' *ICCM Journal* Vol 84 No 3 pp54-65

⁸ See *The Builder* 25 April 1908 p491 and *The Builder* 8 October 1910 p396

⁹ See Prentice Mawson E 'Garden Cemeteries' (1935) *Landscape and Garden* 11:3 p 193. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001571> (accessed 19 January 2019). See <https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/saffron-hill-cemetery> (accessed 11 March 2019).

¹⁰ See *The Builder* 12 April 1929 p680 & 688 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1378388> (accessed 19 January 2019)

¹¹ *The Builder* 12 April 1929 p680

¹² 'Opening of the Sheffield crematorium' (1905) *The Undertakers' Journal* 15 April pp78-79, and Parsons B (2015) 'The Centenary of West Norwood Crematorium' *ICCM Journal* Vol 83 No4 pp57-65

¹³ 'Brighton Crematorium' *The Undertakers' Journal* December 1929 p394

¹⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000761> (accessed 11 March 2019)

¹⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1202252> (accessed 11 March 2019)

¹⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001564> (accessed 11 March 2019)
<https://flaybrick.org/history/> (accessed 24 March 2019)

Cutchi Sunni Muslim Association (CSMA)

Birmingham Free Funeral Support

We are a Non-Profit Organisation called the Cutchi Sunni Muslim Association Birmingham (CSMA Birmingham) founded in 2010. We aim to serve the Muslim community of the West Midlands by providing them with many services. As well as Islamic events, we work with other communities and charities on many projects such as helping the homeless and vulnerable, offering them nutritious food and counselling to support their need for a better life. We also work on poverty projects locally and in countries in need of help. In addition, we offer free bereavement support to all communities in Birmingham, helping the families from start to finish at no cost at all.

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At CSMA Birmingham we have our own vehicles and we provide a FREE Muslim funeral service for the needy in the West Midlands.

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We try our best to help the needy families to cover the cost of the funerals as not everyone can afford it, especially those with no legal status and Muslim reverts who have no family support. Therefore, we have setup a Muslim burial fund to support the needy members of the Muslim community. We have supported many individuals with burial support.

CSMA Birmingham provide funeral services as a funeral director for the Muslim community in West Midlands especially for the poor. Although we offer a free funeral service, the grave cost needs to be covered by family and friends. We have been providing bereavement support for the past 10 years and now, at this difficult time of Covid, we started offering the funeral services at no cost as there has been an influx of Muslim families who cannot afford burials for their loved ones. This includes both adults and children.

Furthermore, we offer our support to all families regardless of their financial status, but only ask if they can afford to, help cover the cost of the coffins etc, so we serve all.

<https://youtu.be/ruWzmbxJOU> (Testimonial Video)
www.csmabirmingham.co.uk (Website)

At CSMA Birmingham we do not charge for our services, we do it all for free.



vamping the van

What does an artist do in lockdown? She vamps her van!



My wife's van was the perfect canvas to thank the UK's keyworkers during COVID19 lockdown.

I imagine the broader public think of keyworkers as nurses, doctors and carers, but for me, any thank you needed to include funeral teams and cemetery/crematoria workers.

As always, you are 'on the front line', but it's that hidden front line isn't it?

Not on our van. I wanted you there for everyone to see and acknowledge.

The community feedback and conversations I've had whilst working on the van have been incredible. Deeply moving and humbling.

A nurse on the COVID ward at our local County hospital thanked me. Having received so much verbal abuse they'd been advised not to wear their uniforms in public. "Your work reminds me that people actually do care" she said.

The pictures also brought a funeral director I know to tears. "It helps", he said. He'd been finding it hard not being able to care for families in the manner he wanted to. A prison officer thanked me for including her job. Families who've walked by raise awareness with their kids. Dog walkers tell me it makes them happy to see it. A woman who works at a medical supplies company told me it's

really helped her because of the abuse she receives. Bus drivers drive past and give me a thumbs up when they see themselves illustrated there.

A local firefighter walked past and told me that if the rainy weather halted things, that I should drive up to the fire station. He'd move the truck out and I could keep working there indoors.

It seems to have struck a chord with people.

I started this as my way of saying thank you. It became so much more. It's felt good and right.

In July I added the brewery that responded to a certain 'test' drive to Barnard Castle. With a surname like Brew it would be rude not to right? I also included Sir Tom and Her Majesty The Queen granting his Knighthood.

So, again, I thank you.

I thank you for being there. I thank you for putting on the 'black armour' every day under the most difficult of circumstances. I thank you for caring and I thank you for everything you've done for the families, who didn't know that they needed you....

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Mental health

A factual look at mental health issues is relevant to people's lives, however, when preparing this article it seemed more useful to have someone with issues describing things to give another perspective. This article, therefore, has my own take on the facts and my male friend's view on how it has and is affecting him.

Seems fair to me – that's me the friend

February 2020 once again highlighted an issue that is talked about, but frequently misunderstood, the impact of people's lives from mental health problems, with the death of Caroline Flack.



Image - Sky News 2020

Whatever your own view on her, she was only 40 years old and her public image may have ultimately been an unfortunate factor in her early death. The UK life expectancy for women is 82 (ONS 2019 data). A half life is a life too short.

September 2017, a combination of family matters going on for a long time, being a parent and working a full time job, without asking for support finally took its toll. I knew I was behaving differently and my family had started to pick up on things. I wasn't sleeping well, wasn't enjoying things in life, I was getting annoyed easily and slowly losing who I was. An incident then sparked a personal breakdown, months of therapy and trying to rebuild myself.

Unfortunately, Caroline joined a long list of famous suicides, mostly due to mental illness, that includes Robin Williams, Chester Bennington, Chris Cornell and a Wikipedia list of 21st Century names that is sadly impressive and not all male.

What makes a connection with all of these people and non-celebrities to make it relevant?

Well, for the most part a lot of the sadly departed were intelligent, successful people. It isn't a simple case of them

being celebrities past the point of their own success, Kurt Cobain a more famous name from the past to fit the list.

In fact (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/bad-news-for-the-highly-intelligent/>) a 2017 scientific survey found a worrying link between very high IQ, the top 2% and mental illnesses. It's also noticeable how many of the famous suicides were creative people or musicians.

Heading back to the more mundane aspects of life, we're all aware that life just doesn't put pressure on the rich/poor/famous/ordinary person. It is more apparent though that a famous death carries more media coverage than most of the bereaved we deal with each day. Does that matter? Of course not, what matters is how we get to that point.

Foolishly, I believed that having had an episode and time passing that the guidance and help I had received then meant I was fine for the future. Talking therapies are the first starting point medically that doctors use for stress/anxiety/depression and talking about your problems and how you got there is revealing and initially they hurt, but over time they help. Unfortunately, knowing what you need and describing it is difficult. What I hadn't realised is that an episode isn't just cured in most cases, and that mental illness is more of a disease/disability than just a short illness.

ICCM started work with Annie Raven-Vause on mental health training in 2017. The idea of ICCM leading courses was initially viewed strange by some individuals. A better question would have been, why hasn't more been done in the past? The issue of mental health problems is a silent disease and silent problems.

Some sobering facts on mental illness – 1 in 6 workers will experience depression or problems at one point (Mental health and wellbeing in England – content.digital.nhs.uk) and that in 2018/19 there were 620,000 cases of work related stress/depression in Great Britain (Health and safety executive 2019 study – hse.gov.uk). Now these figures don't give a financial affect, however, (<https://www.breathehr.com/blog/breathe-reveals-insights-into-2019-uk-sickness-trends>) suggest that "stigma around mental health struggles and burnout costs the UK economy £1.4bn a year through unexplained sick days."

That's a rather large figure and the HSE study also suggests that 54% of all working days lost due to health issues are mental health related.

In 2019, I started to notice that while family issues weren't as bad as they had been, that I wasn't feeling brilliant at times, my concentration was slipping from lots of things

and managing to enjoy myself was becoming harder. A problem one night suddenly made my whole body shutdown. All I wanted to do was escape everything in my life and curl up in a ball and hide. All my feeling and emotions disappeared for an hour and I just felt like an empty shell.

I went back to the doctor's for more help and more talking therapies were arranged, but due to funding it takes 4 – 6 weeks to get put back on the systems and plans. More worrying for me was that this time felt different, something in me had changed or got worse and part way through the treatment I had another flare up.

This one had me making plans to commit suicide, I felt that way for over 2 days and but for help from my family I wouldn't be writing this now. My doctor then put me on sertraline tablets to try and help. I'd dodged medication as I didn't want to admit to myself, I had an illness, but the reality of life is different to what you want to pretend it is.

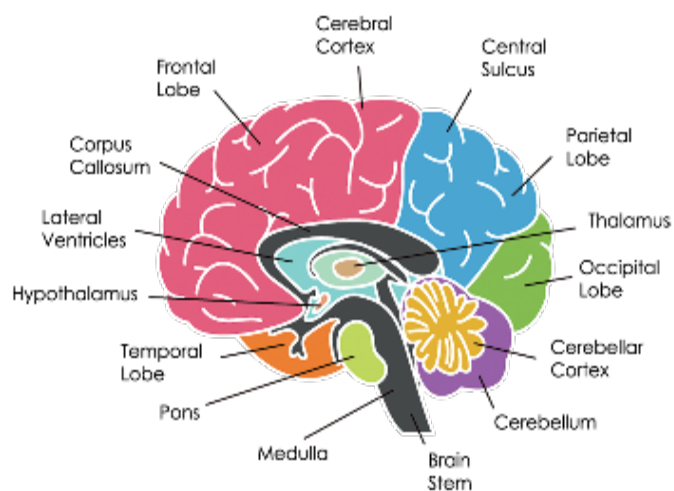
Moving away from the cold figures about what is happening, a better issue to consider is why we are seeing these problems much more now?

(<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/managing-your-memory/201712/don-t-listen-your-lizard-brain>) shows that we believe our brain exists in 3 parts:

1. The reptilian brain, composed of the basal ganglia (striatum) and brainstem, is involved with primitive drives related to thirst, hunger, sexuality, and territoriality, as well as habits and procedural memory (like putting your keys in the same place every day without thinking about it or riding a bike).
2. The paleomammalian (old mammal) brain, including the hypothalamus, hippocampus, amygdala, and cingulate cortex, is the centre of our motivation, emotions, and memory, including behaviour such as parenting.
3. The neomammalian (new mammal) brain, consisting of the neocortex, enables language, abstraction, reasoning, and planning.

Our problems mainly arise from the reptilian brain. When we are faced with stress, difficulties and issues, the primitive parts of our brain look to make us survive - hence fight or flight. In the case of flight it is also why the digestive system is well linked to the brain, you want to run away from danger – well lets make you lighter really quickly to do that!

Unfortunately, the change from the reptilian aspects of our brain to the mammal ones is a low evolutionary process. It didn't used to matter when it was Neolithic days and hunting and surviving were the most important things. Now, however, humans live in a different world. The work



and lives we live and the very world we exist in is so vastly different each year that we haven't evolved to it.

Eventually through the course of talking therapies, I managed to find acceptance in myself, that I was ill and that as someone who is ill or has a disability, that this is something that needs to be managed. In my case it reached a tipping point before I could cope and so the medication. Anyone that is unfortunate to know Sertraline, is aware that it is lovely and horrible. It makes you feel trippy at times and happy, but its main effect is to level your body's emotions. In my case it sometimes makes we very distracted or just not present. It took 2 months of drugs and therapy for me to be able to enjoy anything again, unfortunately, it does at times mean I don't want to do things or just don't have the energy or enjoyment of them. It's a bit like suddenly going off your favourite food even though you know you want to eat it. You've never consciously made the decision your body just does it.

At times you are existing rather than living, however, the reason you're there is the illness that nearly killed you.

As evolution hasn't kept pace with humans, we really need to be aware of our own problems and manage them, this is where we have issues. We now live in a much faster paced world than our parents and we're bringing up children into a world that we can't manage and sometimes don't want or enjoy.

Positive thoughts are always good, however, better than that are more positive actions and self healing. Using crystals and mantra's isn't where this is going.

Stress and anxiety can be thought of as a bucket filling up with water, if you don't let the water out then eventually it will overflow and that's a disaster. The fuller it gets is also an issue as you'll worry it'll overflow.

So, what you need to do is to make holes in it to drain the water away and put less in than gets out.

For human's it means to combat our own instincts, we need to calm/heal ourselves to survive, reduce stress where we can and don't have to accept more stress then we can manage.



Picture, clipart-library.com

This calming and healing can just be doing things that you like to do, but it's making the time and commitment to do them - me time, as it were is the only thing to make big holes in the bucket, let the water drain out and be able to cope. Only by making time for you to enjoy things and have happy memories and thoughts can you stop the cycle.

When you can't make time to heal/rest it's also being able to stop the flow or slow it down. Therapists can suggest breathing exercises to slow your mind down and relax and importantly being able to just go **STOP** in your mind to your train of thought to halt your anxiety building.

The biggest problem I discovered for my own health was when I realised that it was my own mind that was causing me to get more ill. I like to think about things and solve problems, but this was leading to me dwelling on thoughts. These "ruminations" were going round-and-round and making my anxiety and depression worse. As my own body was trying to kill me, the only thing to do is to stop your own feelings and thoughts. If I started to think too much and dwell, then changing my thoughts and thinking of 5 things I could see, smell, touch and changing my focus from worrying or grumbling to finding a positive thing.

The modern world we all now inhabit is a fast-changing place and technology means we are always connected,

always able to be in touch with people if we want to be and now able to comment on the world as a whole. Unfortunately, this new freedom of expression and the new way we can see the world is not always used positively.

Going back to the beginning, Caroline Flack was successful due to social media and television. Unfortunately, when problems arose for her, some of these channels turned from positive influences in her life very publicly and quickly to negative ones. We are now able to rant online about anything or anybody, whether we know them or not. We watch programmes about people watching television to see their reactions to it and believe we have the right to an opinion on any matter. We've always had that ability, but we wouldn't all walk around our streets with a billboard with it on, now we can all have hundreds of our own virtual billboards.

The need for speed of data to avoid the fear of missing out (FOMO) is making people be under more pressure then we need to be and placing more pressure on us then in the past. As we can't evolve quickly to handle this, we're successfully making new problems and pressures for ourselves that are unnecessary.

For all of us, the need to stop and make positive connections is growing. The need to address and combat stress and anxiety isn't just a role for line managers and senior officers. It's an understanding that it can affect all employees in different ways and it's making changes in culture that can benefit people. If the supposed rich and talented people of the world can fall victim to mental illness then we all can.

Cancer is estimated by the WHO to have killed 9.6 million people worldwide in 2018, while the best estimate in 2015 was that 8 million deaths a year can be linked to mental illness – (Futurity www.futurity.org).

I am still recovering from my own mental illness problems – the scariest thing for my family and friends was that I was the only one who realised how poorly I was and I didn't know exactly what to do. I've managed to scare lots of people, but talking about my own problems has made me realise I'm not alone.

I'm as normal as I can be.

I need to stop thinking about everything too much.

And that talking and listening can be as good as medicine in small doses.

My therapist best advice was – Control what you can control and don't worry about what you can't control.

coronavirus law & guidance for cemetery and crematorium managers



One thing which can be guaranteed about the Coronavirus emergency is that it has forever changed the way Britain works.

Well at least for those of us who are lucky enough to still have jobs. If you have become accustomed to working from home because of forced social distancing, why would you exchange that for a stuffy office and the rush hour commute? Our glorious 2020 summer has provided the added bonus.

But cemetery and crematorium management is public-facing. Whilst some administrative tasks can be carried out remotely, most involves dealing with people. Its services have to be accessible to grieving families. Funerals have to be accommodated. Bodies cremated or buried. Facilities provided for families to grieve. Graves to be dug or memorial books to be inscribed.

This now has to be done in a way which does not put families, staff, or others at risk of infection because of Coronavirus. Since March 2020 the Government has published a mass of temporary legislation and non-statutory guidance for every sector of industry, including bereavement services, which seems to change almost daily.

Most industry-specific advice revolves around common themes: social-distancing; frequent handwashing; reducing numbers of people needing to come into close physical contact with each other; special protections for people identified as 'vulnerable' or 'extremely vulnerable'. The latter are those who have received a government letter identifying them as such. But it is not just about perceived risk. And it is not just about professional judgment. Cemetery and crematorium managers have to be seen to comply with the law as contained in the **Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020**. It is the Restriction Regulations (not the Coronavirus Act 2020), which governs the purposes for which anyone can leave their home: with whom they can meet or mix; and which businesses can open or must remain closed. Like the non-statutory guidance, the restriction regulations are subject to continual change. When writing this article, the Restriction Regulations are already on their fifth iteration, with perhaps several more to come. It would be pointless to try to provide a clause-by-clause summary of the Regulations as they currently stand, because that summary would be out of date almost as soon as it had

been written. The difference between the Restriction Regulations and other non-statutory guidance is that contravention of the Restriction Regulations is a criminal offence for which the police can issue fixed-penalty notices starting at £100 for a first offence and doubling for each subsequent offence up to a maximum of £3,200.

Even under the recent lock-down, burial grounds were exempted from closure. Cemetery and crematorium chapels could still be used for funerals. But crematoria had to be closed save for funerals or burials, although a later amendment meant that the restriction did not apply to grounds surrounding a crematorium, including any burial ground or garden of remembrance (**Regulation 5**). The general close-down of hotel accommodation also did not apply to accommodation for someone who needed to attend a funeral (**Regulation 5**). But anyone attending a funeral or visiting the grounds of a cemetery or crematorium would still have to comply with the restrictions on movement and gatherings contained in **Regulations 6 and 7**.

Under **Regulation 6**, a person may leave their home to attend a funeral of someone in their household or a close family member. A friend of the deceased may also attend but only if there is no-one from the household or close family member who is able to attend. It is also permissible for someone to visit a burial ground or garden of remembrance to pay respects to a member of that person's household, a family member or friend. However even when **Regulation 6** allows someone to leave their home to attend a funeral or to visit a grave or a garden of remembrance, it must be assumed that the restrictions on gathering contained in **Regulation 7** would still apply except when someone is actually attending a funeral.

Whilst a burial or cremation authority could be held criminally responsible if it deliberately allowed its assets to be used in contravention of the Regulations, primary responsibility for compliance with the restrictions on movement and gatherings contained in **Regulations 6 and 7** rests entirely with the individual. It is about everyone taking personal responsibility for their own conduct. All that burial and cremation authorities can do





Paperless Administration with Epitaph

Writing anything in advance of publication is a dangerous proposition at present; we are told that we are heading towards a 'new normal' but what that actually means is anybody's guess. We're told that over 80% of people do not want to return to the 'old normal'; there is a determination that the sacrifice that we have made over the last months leads to a better way of doing things in future. In the working environment this necessarily involves the increased use of IT and more, the use of emerging technology of which many of us were previously unaware.

Many of us are in a position where long needed change in the way we use IT has now been forced upon us. This is a good thing but obviously has to be done carefully and in a considered manner. As a customer focussed IT company, we at EDGE both have to look at our own organisation as well as trying to understand what our clients will need in the 'new normal'. We've accommodated short term needs such as pandemic diaries but have to have one eye on medium term practice.

The concept of the paperless office has been around for many years and has generally been greeted with cynicism. However, in the age of remote working, its time has surely come. Where possible we must develop systems where the physical presence of either data or personnel is unnecessary. Data needs to be securely available from the cloud; personnel need access and the ability to share and collaborate. We need to look at all our practices that involve the passing of paper.

Do gravediggers really need a paper dig order, or do we provide them with a portal where they can access their directions on their phones? Do we really need to see a physical 'Green' form? Do we need to tear off the return and post it to the Registrar? In Epitaph, there is now the facility to receive the Green form as a .pdf file, attach this to the booking, enter the details and then to immediately fire off a confirmatory email to the Registrar. We believe this should be the 'new normal'.

Another thing we have learned whilst we sit at home working is that using video calls not only lets us see our colleagues and clients, it improves the quality of the communication. That old adage about communication being 90% non-verbal is blatantly right. Where software such as Microsoft Teams wins, is the ability to not only video conference but also to share screens and collaborate. The integration of Microsoft 365 with Teams, VOIP and the new Rooms feature for Teams, for instance, offers us huge potential for adapting to the new normal and having some control over how we shape it.

What all of this does, is present us with opportunity. We believe that this is the time to fundamentally review everything we do; we may not even have a choice in the matter. As a company we've been privileged to assist our clients in this process. We have the tools needed and the knowledge to tailor them to individual requirements.

If you thought we just did Epitaph, think again.
Ian Quance

is to ensure that they comply with their own particular responsibilities under the regulations and advise members of the public as to theirs.

When it comes to non-statutory guidance, the starting point for cemetery and crematorium managers, has to be the **'COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the Coronavirus pandemic'**, published 18th of May, 2020. The guidance aims to balance the needs of the bereaved to mourn appropriately, whilst minimising the spread of Coronavirus infection. It explains the exceptions to the current stay-at-home guidance, which apply to the death of a member of the same household, a close family member or a friend. Recommended actions include:

- Restricting the number of mourners, to ensure a safe distance between individuals;
- Alongside the funeral director, chapel attendant and funeral staff, the only people able to attend should be members of the person's household; close family members; or (if close family members or other members of their household are unable to attend), close friends; as well as a celebrant of choice, should the bereaved have requested this;
- Mourners to follow advice on social distancing when travelling to and from the funeral;
- Mourners who are self-isolating, only because someone else in their household has symptoms, but who are not symptomatic themselves, should be helped to attend a funeral in-person, should they wish to do so, but with processes in place to minimize the risk of transmission;
- Mourners who are clinically vulnerable or in a shielded group should also be facilitated to attend and, with processes in place to minimize the risk of transmission;
- Any mourner showing Coronavirus symptoms should not attend the funeral as they would pose a risk to others. In those circumstances, remote participation should be considered.

Mourners are advised not to take part in rituals or practices that bring them in close contact with the deceased. Where there are aspects of faith which include close contact with the deceased, that contact should be

restricted to those who are wearing personal protective equipment under the supervision of someone trained in the use of that protection. In particular, vulnerable and extremely vulnerable people must be advised to have no contact with the deceased, such as washing, preparing or dressing the body.

As well as exercising due diligence to minimize the spread of Coronavirus, burial and cremation authorities have particular employer responsibilities as regards their own staff and contractors. It is then about making an adequate risk-assessment.

Like NHS staff, cemetery and crematorium operatives most at risk are those whose work brings them into immediate contact with the deceased, even though that body may be enclosed within a coffin. But not all coffins are the same. What about a wicker coffin? It is why it is necessary to drill down into the next layer of non-statutory government guidance as contained in, **'Guidance for care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed Coronavirus'**, also published 15 May, 2020. This advice is designed to assist people who are required to manage the bodies of deceased persons during the Coronavirus pandemic and has been developed to ensure that:

- The deceased are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect;
- People who need to come into contact with the deceased or who work in services providing care for the deceased are protected from the infection.

The guidance makes it critical that non-clinical professionals handling the deceased are informed if the deceased presents an infection hazard, so that they follow the appropriate infection control guidance, particularly with regard to aerosol generating procedures which may be undertaken by a funeral director or others.

Much of the guidance is for pathologists and funeral directors. However there is one section which is particularly relevant for mortuary staff, pathologists, pathology technologists, funeral directors and embalmers. It states that any member of staff who develops Coronavirus symptoms should be sent home and stay at home for at least seven days from the onset of symptoms.

If a member of staff lives in a household where someone else is unwell with Coronavirus symptoms, then that staff member must remain at home and not leave the house for 14 days in line with stay-at-home guidance. Anyone working with the deceased should follow guidance on social distancing in the workplace and maintain other recommended hygiene.

Employees should ensure that they are aware of their employers' procedures regarding personal protective equipment and that they have been trained in such use and are using it correctly. Employees should remove any protective equipment and contaminated clothing when they leave a dirty work area and should not enter a clean area in their PPE.

Drill down one more layer and we come to the 65 page HSE publication, '**Managing infection risks when handling the deceased**'. Unlike the general guidance previously referred to in this article, the HSE document provides detailed scientific and technical information about the management of infection risk.

As the document was published in 2018, it pre-dates the current Coronavirus emergency by more than a year. But even though it is not COVID-19 specific, its content has a familiar tone with its reference to frequent handwashing and personal protective equipment. Of particular importance to cemetery and crematorium managers are **paragraphs 239 to 260** of the HSE publication, which deals specifically with precautions which need to be taken during exhumation to prevent the spread of infection.

Where on-site exhumation is undertaken, arrangements should be put in place to clearly demarcate all the clean and dirty areas and provide washing and decontamination facilities on-site. This will enable employees to wash and place contaminated clothing, waste etc on-site before leaving or moving to clean areas, such as offices.

A risk assessment should take into account the likelihood of exposure to blood and body fluids and contact with the deceased during exhumation. Rest and meal breaks should be taken away from the main work area. Staff and contractors should remove any personal protective equipment and contaminated clothing when leaving a dirty work area and not enter clean areas wearing PPE. When exhuming soil from burial sites, the soil that was removed immediately above and around the coffin should be replaced first.

Where there are mass exhumations, quantities of coffin

waste should be securely bagged and sent to landfill. But it is acknowledged that mass exhumations will generally be from old burial grounds where the infection risk is low and where landfill disposal will usually be appropriate. Testing of soil samples for microorganisms is necessary only where the risk-assessment indicates a higher risk of contamination. Disinfectants are likely to be soaked up in the soil and rendered ineffective, so their use may present a greater chemical hazard than the benefits they are intended to achieve.

There is one final group of people whose health and safety needs to be addressed during the Coronavirus emergency. These are the outdoor crews. The grave-diggers. The maintenance workers. The stone-masons. For them there is the 30-page non-statutory guidance contained in, '**Working Safely During COVID-19 in Construction and Other Outdoor Work.**'

Published 11 May, 2020, this guidance for employers, employees and the self-employed, is one of a series of non-statutory guidance notes covering every part of industry and commerce in the UK. Like other non-statutory guidance, its recommendations are similar: maintain social distancing; avoid face-to face working; reduce the amount of interaction between workers; frequent handwashing.

Though surprising, industry guidance does not generally recommend the use of face-coverings or other personal protective equipment above that protective equipment which would normally be worn in the particular trade. Again, there is the mandatory risk assessment and the need to identify any workers classed as vulnerable or extremely vulnerable who require special protections if they are unable to work from home.

Each of these industry-specific guidance notes recommend the display of notices to assure staff that the recommended risk assessments have been carried out and the required precautions taken.

V. Charles Ward,
ICCM Company Solicitor and Legal Writer

Note: that the law and guidance referred to in this article applies specifically to England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own territory-specific law and guidance to which reference should be made.

Please note this is correct at the time of writing but may have been revised at the time of publication. Please check current status on the ICCM website or with ICCM officers.



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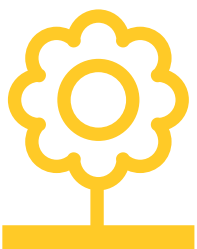
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SOBS



A letter from the Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide charity in response to Mathew Crawley's valiant fund raising efforts.

SOBS is a registered charity which is the only national organisation that is user led, offering those bereaved by suicide, specialised, local, free peer support which is underpinned by rigorous quality standards and serves more than 8,000 beneficiaries each year in England, Scotland and Wales. We provide a continuum of services ranging from a national telephone helpline to local area support groups for beneficiaries over 18 years of age. Our organisation also works closely with, and helps shape, the systems that impact upon the adults and families in our community who have been affected by the loss of a loved one, friend or colleague to suicide. You will find our organisation involved in diverse areas such as; mental health, telephone support, local area support groups, positive personal development, education and training, agency advice and community events, adapting to a new way of life.

All evidence shows, and in particular that of those who have been bereaved, that suicide is an intense form of grief that can last for many years and carries with it many complexities of guilt, shame and stigma. To address these needs we currently operate a national helpline, self-support groups and international web-based community forum, we also have a number of conferences, retreats and support days for survivors. Increasingly our organisation is being recognised as a focal point for information and contact on the subject of suicide by many organisations and professionals.

Our mission is to assist at-risk and vulnerable beneficiaries, 'survivors' throughout the United Kingdom, in becoming capable and hopeful adults, by providing a supportive environment where they feel comforted, respected and listened to, as they strive to meet the demands around a death by suicide. Suicide recognises no social, ethnic or cultural boundaries - neither do we.

The funds that ICCM officer Mathew Crawley raised during his efforts to walk from Warrington to Warwick, have allowed the organisation to train our volunteer coordinator to the level of T4T in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).

The ASIST T4T is a five-day residential course and is the first phase of becoming a Registered ASIST Trainer. During the first two days of this train the trainer course, you will experience (or re-experience) ASIST as any participant would. An appreciation of the participant's perspective is essential to your success as a trainer. The rest of the week is spent learning how to train ASIST by participating in coaching sessions and rehearsing parts of the course yourself in small groups.

The course is very intensive and candidates will need to be free of other commitments during the week including the evenings.

It is organised and delivered by experts in training people to train ASIST from LivingWorks.

Once the T4T training was completed we were to provide ASIST to our Group Facilitators and helpline volunteers.

The 2-day intensive, interactive training has aided attendees who deal with the aftermath of suicide to recognise those who may have suicidal thoughts. All participants were requested to provide feedback, some comments made; "As a group leader, it made me much more aware of the vulnerability of our group attendees and consider their well-being after leaving our meeting." "It has helped me on a personal basis to know how to go about approaching a person who appears depressed/suicidal." "I feel better equipped to deal with any potential situation where an individual may have suicidal thoughts or plans to kill themselves." etc. The training has achieved its goal in giving the helpers in their community the skills to be ready, willing and able, to prevent the risk of suicide.

The stigma which unfortunately is still attached to suicide brings feelings of discrimination and loneliness that can affect the mental health of the bereaved. The risk of suicide is reduced if more people are able to identify those who are most vulnerable and showing low esteem. It is estimated that for every completed suicide, on average 8 people are affected. If each attendee can aid intervention of 1 suicide during their time volunteering for our organisation, the wider benefits to the community are, a family member or close friend will not be affected with all that is associated with suicide bereavement of a loved one and its impact.

The funds also allowed us to recruit a Samaritans trainer to deliver an event on how to deal with suicidal conversations.

Managing suicidal conversations will show people how to confidently approach somebody in this situation and the most effective types of responses. The Samaritans deliver this course to a range of individual organisations and to Local Authorities as part of their suicide prevention strategies.

The amount that Mathew raised was an amazing £17,113.40 and from the remaining funds we are intending to repeat both of the training events, once we are out of the current lockdown crisis and going forward, to continue to provide volunteers with the tools that will help them support survivors.

Thanks again Mathew for everything you are doing in support of our charity.

company news

Plotbox

PlotBox, the international death care management application focussed on helping cemeteries and crematoriums operate to world class standards, announces the appointment of Andrew Clark as Chairman of the Board. Andrew Clark succeeds Interim Chairman Graham Paterson who held the post for the past year.

"We are delighted to welcome Andrew to the Board during this period of exciting growth for PlotBox," said Sean McAllister, PlotBox CEO. "Andrew brings an incomparable wealth of experience and strategic vision to the business having led one of North America's largest death care operators, Park Lawn Corporation from July 2013 to March 2020. With the scale of operation and speed of growth Park Lawn Corp achieved under Andrew's leadership, his appointment is a particularly strong endorsement for PlotBox."



"I am delighted to have the opportunity to join the Board of Plotbox." said Andrew Clark, Chairman of PlotBox. "My career has been devoted to building businesses across a number of sectors. Each of these opportunities has begun with a strong core offering that is underpinned by an exceptional team. PlotBox possesses both of these characteristics, and I am looking forward to working with Sean and his team through this period of growth."

Andrew brings to PlotBox 10 years of death care industry experience, having transformed Park Lawn Corporation from a Toronto-based business with only six locations into Canada's largest deathcare operator, with over 200 locations across North America and an enterprise value of nearly \$1 billion. Prior to Park Lawn, Andrew built a successful hospitality and tourism business which was merged into a large privately held travel management firm. In addition to PlotBox, Andrew is currently a Director of Andlauer Healthcare Group (TSX: AND) and has previously been a member of the Board of Regents at Mount Allison University and a member of the Board of Governors at the Sterling Hall School.

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in touch - up north, think about your new "normal" day

I think we have now gone from day 35 of the Covid-19 year to about day 135 of it. On the positive side it's now less than 6 months to Christmas and they haven't managed to cancel all of that yet.

To everyone that has spent far too much time working from home – join the ICCM club – it seemed a little odd nearly 14 years ago when I started doing it and everyone else is now finally catching on to what it is like. The bad news for you all, it takes about 6 months to get used to and hopefully people will be able to do a little less of it by day 180.

While we haven't managed to have any anything that really resembles an old "normal" day, it has got me thinking about what we now accept as "normal".

Firstly, an important point for anyone that knows psychology - normal is a bad word to use. There is an interesting article in Psychology Today that explains the myths of normal and how this can have a psychological impact on us. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/busting-myths-about-human-nature/201403/why-normal-is-myth>

So far this year, everything has been turned on its head – even without the outbreak of Covid-19 the Black Lives Matter movement has led to protests over statues, bands changing their names, TV series being dropped or edited and apparently nearly every comedian apologising for older jokes. A thing that does strike home at times is that things happen for whatever reason and they make us who or what we are today, so again what we class as "normal" is just the current state.

"History is written by the victors" – a quote attributed to Winston Churchill is very apt. As it states, it doesn't mean that the winners record everything exactly as it was, but they can put their interpretation on things – history is how they want you to remember it.

So, in our new almost rebooting world it now seems – much like a remake of a movie – it does need a little pause for thought. Do we need to wipe the whole slate clean, delete everyone that may have made an error, say things were always terrible and apologise all the time?

At times it almost seems that this is the right thing to do. Ban what was wrong, correct things based on our new views and set ourselves on a new "normal" path.

However, what happens if we have already been doing this and maybe, just maybe we need to be slightly more careful in throwing the baby out with the bathwater??

We accept that things weren't always right in the past based on our new morals. For example, in our industry the funerals and attitudes of people who died with HIV have changed greatly since the 1980s.

We accept that people have more rights to different styles of funerals, and we offer a choice that we didn't before. We

also accept that how we talk to people is different to the past.

We talk about customers, where in the past it may have been mourners, we treat each funeral as the most important event, and we don't ever try to make people feel like production line process. This is where we are now, but its only through change that we have achieved this. We can say that the service offered to the bereaved, our customers, has improved because we know that things were not always the way they should be.

If everything were already at the gold standard, there wouldn't be a need for ICCM's Charter for the Bereaved. It does exist, and it still needs to exist, because times change and the standards and morals we offer, or should offer, can change, and get better. There is always room for improvement!

So, what has all of this got to do with you? A thought you might well be thinking – be patient I'm just getting to that.

What we need to think about is that the past is the past. However, as humans we must accept it, not always endorse it, but surely don't forget it or pretend it didn't happen. Perhaps most importantly we should learn from it. Things go wrong for us at times but if we make a mistake, then we need to accept it and improve for the future. Some past ideas are good, some we can change when we can, and some we consign to history to learn from as mistakes, but they happened.

We work in an industry that is surrounded by the past lives of our customers, all of us literally live with the past, but it's what we take forward that people will see when they are at their most vulnerable.

The experiences of 2020 have not always been good, but if you're reading this then you've got this far.

So, a new "normal" for us all? Definitely not, because it's never been normal in the first place and neither have any of us.

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.

Trevor Robson
ICCM Finance and IT Manager

we winged it and it worked

Or how 9 ½ Authorities worked together to battle the Coronavirus



The AGMA (Association of Greater Manchester Authorities) Bereavement Group was set up over 15 years ago to enable the managers in Greater Manchester to share information and came into its own over best value.



The group now consists of nine of the ten authorities and also includes St Helens because... well it just wouldn't be the same without Sonia..

Periodic meetings continued for a few years before fully re-establishing itself about 5 years ago with regular meetings sponsored by our partners in the industry.

Word spread and we began to attract authorities from beyond Greater Manchester so we evolved into the NW Bereavement Managers Group which in turn led to a working partnership with the ICCM to form the NW branch.

Behind the meetings was the group email which enabled people to tap into the wealth of experience across the region and ask questions and get assistance with any issues. This has been invaluable.

Whilst the larger group took on a life of its own, the AGMA group grew stronger and closer in the way we worked together. The emails were added to by a WhatsApp group and what started out as a group of colleagues has become a group of friends.

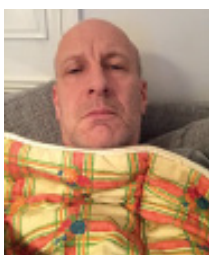
As the virus started to take hold we took the decision that as a group we would work together and stand together. This meant sharing information and plans and agreeing that we would be consistent in what we were asking from the funeral directors.

The biggest issue we faced was that our "forgotten" services were now being pushed to the fore and everyone suddenly became an expert in bereavement services deciding how services should be run without the courtesy of liaising with the experience of existing bereavement services managers.



As bereavement professionals, whose aim is to support families through the worst time of their lives, to suddenly having to shut our offices and not be permitted to work with the bereaved in our community, was very difficult as it went against everything we are here to do.

We did a quick count up and established that between the service managers across the 10 authorities we had 252 years service in bereavement which even with our addled brains could work out this is an average of 25.2 years each, which is a pretty impressive knowledge bank so we thought we knew what we were talking about.



(Mike Gurney - Tameside)

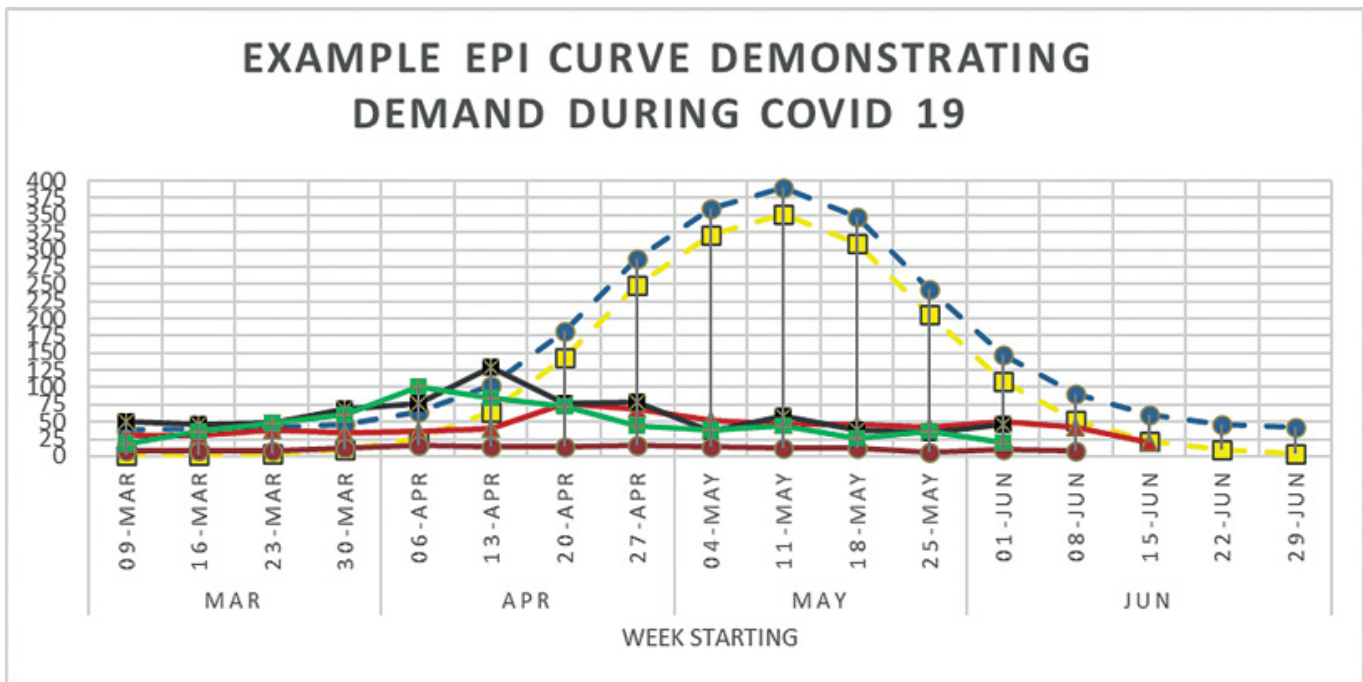
As you can see.. This guy makes up most of those years..

We were given figures of expected deaths to give us sleepless nights

Blue – Predicted deaths (peaking at just below 400),

Yellow – Covid-19 predicted deaths,

Black – actual deaths registered in one Borough (peaking at 125), Green actual deaths of residents in Borough, Red – Actual cremations (peaking at 75), Brown – actual burials (peaking at 20).



Figures were broken down week by week and the predictions across each authority highlighted the gaps in reality and the contingency plans and all sorts of scenarios were spoken about. Fortunately none of them came to fruition.

As issues arose such as staffing levels, closure of cemeteries, offices and toilets, machinery malfunctions etc plus the ever increasing number of mourners, we worked through them together.

With social distancing some chapels could accommodate larger numbers than others. We agreed to work to the smallest chapel size so that no one would get swamped by extra bookings and reduced the risk of families trying to travel across greater Manchester because more mourners could attend. To put this in context, the distance between the crematoria at the widest points is only 25 miles north to south and 20 miles east to west and 14 crematoria within the catchment area so not significant distances to put people off travelling for that extra few mourners.

We therefore agreed to restrict attendance to 10 immediate family members.

To maintain consistency this was the same number for those at graveside.

There was a sudden increase in working groups being set up with input from all and sundry and demands for information on numbers of bookings (this was all retrospective and not what we had coming up which was confusing because surely you would need to see what was facing us not what we had already completed) and how we were dealing with certain aspects of the ever changing and totally undefined guidelines/regulations coming from Government.

Someone had the bright idea we could assist funeral directors by allowing them to submit any questions they had and expected us to work miracles by answering them... when has anyone ever managed to solve all funeral directors issues?

By working together we have been able to maintain a level of service across Greater Manchester that has met demand.

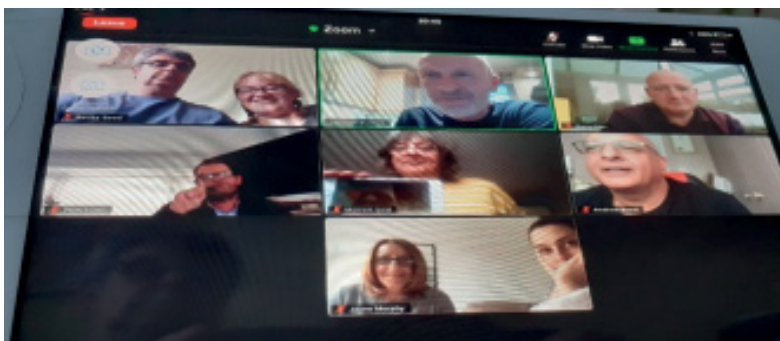


We may have struggled at times with various issues but the unity has given us confidence in how we are facing the challenges.

Overall by sticking to this united front, we have found that we all rose in numbers proportionately rather than some authorities taking the brunt of them by allowing additional mourners etc so were just about able to cope. Having the support network has helped maintain our sanity. It took until week 3 before someone said "is anyone else worried?" And the flood gates opened and once again we all knew we were on common ground.

The humour has not stopped flowing and the ability to laugh at ourselves and the situation we found ourselves in has helped to combat the frustration.

One of the biggest challenges was that of IT when all of a sudden we had to become experts in Zoom, Google Meets, Teams and countless other platforms we had never heard of let alone used. Now you needed to take account of where you positioned your camera, what people could see or hear in the background and also what part of you was actually on screen for others to see. Getting someone to screen share became a new form of entertainment in itself as we tried to explain the process as someone was clicking everything in a vain attempt to get the file on screen.



The Zoom meetings, emails and WhatsApp groups became the new norm and were a massive help to us all but they also allow us to check in on with each other and you notice when people go quiet or their behaviour changes. A quick phone call or email to make sure all is ok works wonders. We know because we all made and received quite a few calls.

We decided to have a weekly quiz night – no talking shop, just the opportunity to get together and have a laugh. These have been a very important part of our working week and

hopefully we will maintain them as we move forward.

We are so lucky to have found ourselves in a situation where 10 such like-minded managers have become friends more than colleagues and work in tandem in the way we do.

We titled this article as "we winged it" which felt like we were at the start but looking back we don't believe we did. In the absence of leadership or guidance from above, the group pulled together magnificently and made tough decisions based on sound knowledge, experience, common sense and a pride in the service we all offer.

Instead of ducking issues and tough decisions in what really are unprecedented times: this group grabbed the bull by the horns and got stuck in. Maybe 'winging it' doesn't give us all the credit we deserve.

We have survived wave one and are more prepared for the next one should it come our way. It has proven that working together is vital to maintain the service and also to preserve the last semblance of stability and mental health of the managers and staff.



Oh and the occasional bit of humour and stupidity goes a long long way too.

David Jennings
Bereavement Services Manager, Altringham Crematorium

my journey through the pandemic

A lot of people have asked me how I was coping with the lockdown and my response has been what lockdown.

The entire funeral sector has been in the forefront and sadly this has really not been recognised. We fully appreciate the NHS being recognised but at the same time, in my view the government should have acknowledged the critical role played by our sector. If we had not played our part effectively, you would have had much longer delays in burials, critical storage issues and families being deprived of burials taking place in accordance with their beliefs and wishes.

When the Covid 19 bill was presented, I remember there was so much alarm as councils were given the authority in legislation to dispose of the deceased in whatever manner they deemed fit. This raised huge concerns in faith and non-faith communities. There were headlines that people will be buried or cremated against their wishes and this resulted in absolute panic within communities, none more so than the Muslim Community.

This became even more of an issue when there were press reports that suggested bodies were being piled up high in mortuaries or in make shift storage areas in mosques. This painted a very bleak picture for the community.

For our community we had to come up with a strategy to deal with our faith requirements under very difficult circumstances.

We had to consider the following:

- Quick burials
- Ritual washing
- Storage facilities
- Family participation
- Final prayer
- PPE

We produced guidance for our community immediately in terms of what to do with the preparation of the deceased taking into account the guidance given by PHE. We quickly realised that burials within 24 hours was not going to happen. Storage facilities would be an issue and above all participation from families would be difficult. We had to manage the expectations of families that they will not be able to meet the strict requirements of our faith fully. However, this was a pandemic and our scholars had given rulings that allowed us the flexibility that was required.

What challenges did we face?

Quick burials – Normally we would be burying within

24 hours wherever possible. This was not going to be the case for a number of reasons (delays in paperwork, collection and burial space).

Storage – Most of the hospital and public mortuaries were full and the additional storage spaces were either not in place or locations which were very far from the place of death.

Preparation of the deceased – It is a fundamental requirement to prepare the body before burial and the very mixed messages being received at that time both from PHE and the medical profession did not help.

Final Prayer – This is an obligation. Without this the burial cannot take place.

Quick burials – The registrars and most of the bereavement offices were very good but because of the sheer volumes, there were delays. At the height of the pandemic the delay in burial from date of death was 7 days but that was for a very brief period of time. Cemeteries were at first very slow to react in terms of increasing their capacity. We, at Gardens of Peace, being the largest dedicated Muslim Cemetery in the country, stepped up to the challenge to ensure that burials could take place as quickly as possible. Under normal circumstances we would do around 3 – 4 burials a day. We started to increase this to 8 burials a day to ensure that the delay in burial was kept to a minimum. This was not enough and at the height for 2 weeks we increased our capacity to 20 burials a day. This helped to reduce the burial waiting times to a minimum and the most families had to wait was for 3 days. It was our desire to ensure that every family was given an opportunity to attend the funeral and witness the burial. We wanted them to have closure. At one stage we had contemplated mass burials, but fortunately this was not necessary and we had taken a conscious decision that we would only resort to that if the death figures became unmanageable. We had geared our resources to undertake if necessary, 30 burials a day. We hired additional diggers and equipment and suffice to say that we had no help from the council except providing us with numbers for contractors who could assist us with the digging at a cost.

Preparation of the deceased – This was a very difficult area. We had people in the hospital saying that you should not touch a Covid 19 death; it should remain in a sealed body bag and immediately needed to be taken for burial. We worked tirelessly with PHE and other

experts in this field and determined that we could actually wash the body as long as sufficient safety precautions were taken and the appropriate PPE was administered. The default position from some of our scholars, as well as scholars from other faiths, were that, although it a requirement to wash, under these circumstances, this requirement could be set aside.

However, I personally did not feel comfortable with this although it was a perfectly reasonable ruling under the unprecedented circumstances. I took the view that if it was my father or my mother, would I deprive them of this very fundamental requirement when it could be performed with the necessary precautions. I therefore, personally undertook the first Covid 19 wash with the help of my two staff members all wearing appropriate PPE. After having done about 10, we felt that this could be done safely and produced a guidance nationally for our community which was adopted by the Muslim community in the country. We were responsible enough to place a caveat that if anyone felt unsafe or are not confident or did not have the appropriate PPE, they should not undertake this task.

In the end I carried out personally over 100 such washes over the 3 month period and two weeks ago I had both the normal as well as the anti-body test done and thankfully both were negative.

What this pandemic did do for our community was that the younger generation of volunteers stepped up to help with this process as people over the age of 60 were specifically excluded from performing this function. Traditionally in both the Muslim and Jewish community elderly people carry out this important function.

From the 13th March till the end of June we carried out 360 Covid 19 burials. In a month we would normally expect 85 burials however during this period the total number of burials we handled was approaching 700.

Attending the funeral and burials – This was the most difficult aspect of the whole process. We had to restrict to maximum of 5 people from the family to attend. This was really difficult for the families as they had to choose the 5 people. However, at the same time, they were grateful that they could attend and perform the final prayer, which normally is conducted in a mosque but now was being offered at the cemetery before the interment took place and the family could witness the actual burial, although they could not really participate due to the safety reasons.

Families missed out on seeing their loved ones at the hospital, could not participate in the wash and preparations and some could not even attend the burial

as they were in isolation or had symptoms. As the cemetery was closed for visitors for much of the period, this had a serious impact on families.

I still recall two incidents which I cannot forget. One was where we had to bury a doctor who was in the front line (contracting Covid 19) and since her husband (a doctor as well) and her child were exposed to her whilst she was in hospital could not attend the burial. This was very traumatic and even sadder was the fact that this family had no immediate relatives in this country and only close work colleagues attended. However, with the aid of technology we were able to live stream the burial to the husband.

The second was a mother and daughter both contracting the virus and dying with a week of each other. Fortunately, we were able to bury them near each other. Can you imagine what the families were going through?

Post the pandemic our community, like every other community will need bereavement and mental health support.

We are ready, but we pray that it does not happen, for the second wave. The main lesson we have learned is to remain calm, focussed, and ensure the safety of your staff and people attending the burials. The government guidelines whilst helpful should not be the only consideration. People should do their own risk assessments as every place and area is different.

We should learn lessons in terms of there being adequate PPE for our sector, clear guidance from the government and more importantly consistency throughout all the services so that there is only one message. Now there are statistics available to identify areas which are more vulnerable, as well as better protection for the BAME community who are more prone to the virus.

One aspect which has been a blessing throughout this pandemic is the death registration process. This has worked brilliantly.

My thanks to all to the staff at the registration offices, the coroners and their team, bereavement and mortuary staff in hospitals and all the frontline staff who worked tirelessly to ensure that the process was as smooth as possible with the minimum of delays.

Without the support from our community and all the volunteers, we would not have been able to cope.

Mohamed Omer
Gardens of Peace Muslim Cemetery

keep calm and wash your hands



In March, Coronavirus changed the way funerals were delivered, not only in the UK, but all over the world. Initial PHE modelling of 500,000 additional deaths, projected the potential for huge operational challenges for the whole funeral industry.

Merseyside Resilience Forum

Merseyside Resilience Forum (MRF) began its structured response to the pandemic, and we began our journey with the establishment of a Death Management Cell (DMC) to manage the impact of the projected increase in deaths. The cell was made up of various response partners from Merseyside Fire and Rescue, Merseyside Police, Local Authorities, Funeral Directors, Armed Forces, NHS and PHE.

The aim of the Death Management Cell was to support the Merseyside Resilience Forum and its terms of reference in order to cope with the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Cell will seek to provide support when normal operational procedures fail.

Some of the partners were not fully familiar with the death to funeral process so we broke down the key components of the route from death to final repose. Whilst I recognise this will not be the same in all regions and there will be factors which influence this such as cultural requirements, Merseyside's generic 'mortality pathway' is shown in the flow chart on the next page.

We used the flow chart to analyse our current provision and identify potential areas of stress or failure, this quickly identified key issues such as:

- We didn't have enough mortuary capacity for projected death rates.
- We didn't know the capacity of the funeral directors in the area.
- The current time slots available for burial and cremation were not sufficient for the projected death rate.
- The potential loss of 20% of a specialised workforce due to the virus.

In order to keep the DMC effective the member numbers were limited, and an additional cemeteries and crematorium and funeral director's cell was formed to ensure the effective communication to and from the DMC. We also decided that this should be a Merseyside response and welcomed our colleagues from Greenacres Rainford into the group.

Nationally there were various approaches to similar shortfalls and pressures which saw developments of huge standalone mortuary facilities or additional mortuary capacity at hospitals to ease the pressure on funeral directors and burial and cremation providers. In our initial analysis we had plans to develop a large mortuary facility however this was discounted as the pressure on the mortuaries eased after Easter.

Additional temporary mortuary storage for some of our hospital sites were awaiting delivery from the Cabinet Office but would not be operational until April or early May. The death rate increased rapidly as we approached the peak of the pandemic during the first week in April, and mortuaries were rapidly reaching capacity.

The Portakabin systems arriving from Cabinet Office were not going to meet our urgent need and the availability of additional storage systems from other suppliers was limited. Following a few long days and numerous telephone calls and emails, we

were lucky enough to procure some temporary storage, however, this was still not going to be installed until after the Easter break.

The Easter Bank Holiday was around the corner, and the closure of facilities would only compound the issue, therefore urgent action was required.

When we looked at how we could ease the pressures on mortuary storage, by improving transition to the next stage of the process, we felt this would be the easiest and most cost effective way forward, we called this the mortality pathway.

Short term use of some of the MRF Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) Nutwell emergency fridge systems (pictured below) provided some important capacity over the Easter break, however this had still not given us the capacity we needed, we needed the help of our Funeral Directors to get through Easter and maintain the mortality pathway.



Funeral Directors

The next stage of the mortality pathway was to move deceased for the mortuaries to the Funeral Directors as quickly as possible, to ensure that mortuary space was retained. It was important that all deceased released for burial and cremation were collected by the funeral director promptly, mortuary teams were already busy with the increase in deaths therefore needed support.

Police colleagues in the DMC stepped forward to support the mortuary teams, they quickly implemented a 7 day contact point for the mortuaries and funeral directors. The officers contacted FDs on a daily basis advising them of deceased which had been released and feeding back to mortuary teams when the FDs would be taking the deceased into their care.

The funeral directors reacted well to this unusual contact method, collecting deceased promptly and freeing up essential capacity in the mortuaries over the Easter Bank Holiday period. We were conscious that funeral directors also had a limited storage capacity, therefore, it was important that the next phase of the pathway offered the opportunity to book and deliver funeral services in a timely manner.

Burials and Cremations

With limited mortuaries and funeral directors reaching capacity it was essential that funeral time slots were available to maintain

Death Management Process



the mortality pathway. I wrote to all burial and cremation providers in Merseyside to ensure as a group, we offered the best service to the funeral directors and the bereaved of Merseyside.

We introduced a range of amendments to increase the time slots available, including; reduced service times, extending the working day, Saturday and Sunday time slots, extra cover for faith funerals and Bank Holiday services. Timeslots for Merseyside quickly increased by over 200 and this was also aided by most of the providers opening on bank holidays if required. Weekly consultation with funeral directors ensured that we added resource where it was needed.

We managed to maintain the mortality pathway at the peak of the pandemic, keeping the waiting times down to a maximum of 3 weeks. Weekend opening was not used to its capacity which would have aided the waiting times but this may have not been a bad thing as it gave time for staff to carry out maintenance work and take some time off. We continued to offer these additional time slots even when the extra storage capacity was commissioned in the hospital mortuaries as we felt it was more important to keep the waiting time at a reasonable level.

Government Guidance and Legislation

I'm sure that you will agree, Government guidance has been challenging to say the least, the lack of accurate modelling at the beginning of the pandemic gave rise to a wide range of responses and tactics. As we hit the peak of the pandemic communications from Government gave a confused message to the bereaved with restrictions varying from 20 mourners, to no mourners allowed at all in some areas. Social distancing had a huge impact on funeral provision, from the registration of the death, funeral directors services, face to face meetings, completion of documentation, and the restrictions on mourners attending the service.

Operationally the guidance presented challenges in all areas of the process, safely handling the deceased for funeral directors and mortuary staff, the cemetery and crematoria staff managing services, the office staff receiving paperwork, shortage of PPE, coffins and body bags, additional cleaning and provision of hand sanitiser.

Reporting

I think we will agree that the constant demand for data was a frustration to us all. Several agencies asking for slightly different data or reports were very time consuming at the height of the pandemic. Resilience forums were asked to gather data from funeral directors, this proved to be and still is a challenge nationwide. When asked what number of refrigerated and unrefrigerated storage they had, one FD replied 'sufficient'!! I hope in the future that the statisticians engage with the industry so that we have a better understanding of why they are using the requested format for collecting data, and the industry can advise of how and when during a working day, week or month that data will be available or change.

Private/Local Authority Partnership

At the peak of the response St Helens crematorium was fully booked for up to 3 to 4 weeks despite opening extra times, opening at weekends and bank holidays. To try and reduce this waiting time in the St Helen's area, St Helen's Council and

Greenacres Rainford formed a partnership where St Helen's Council guided funeral directors and families to Greenacres when they were fully booked. Greenacres tends to be considered by funeral directors as a burial facility, however, they have a superb new chapel in beautiful natural landscape where they can provide a cremation service. This partnership has been very successful and has expanded the availability of cremation services not only in St Helen's but in the whole Merseyside area. When the cremation service has taken place at the Rainford chapel the coffin is sensitively transported by Greenacres team to a local crematorium for cremation. The death management cell fully supported this partnership as it increased the available timeslots for the area at the height of the pandemic, it also offered the bereaved and funeral directors an alternative option.

Recovery

First of all let's all take a breath, step back and celebrate a job well done in unprecedented circumstances, you didn't think I wouldn't shoehorn in the 'U' word somewhere did you? Look back and reflect, what went well, what didn't go so well, what delayed us delivering services, and what extra support would have been useful. What will the new norm look like? Well, who knows? And will it look the same for all regions of the UK going forward? Definitely not.

Merseyside Bereavement Team has evolved from the Cemeteries and Crematoria group of the DMC, we have all agreed as managers to continue our group working together to develop and improve bereavement services for the people of Merseyside. We are concentrating on Coronavirus response for the time being working together easing out of Lockdown, implementing Track and Trace, and the introduction of suspended services such as burial of ashes. We are also looking longer term to preparations for the potential impact of a second wave, the annual impact of winter flu and making sure we are all fit and well following the past 16 weeks.

We are also looking at how social distancing may have changed the way we engage with the bereaved and user groups. Do we want to continue to receive electronic applications? Should the 'greens' be sent directly to the burial or cremation authority? What is the real value of Zoom, MS Teams or Skype in a funeral situation and where does social media fit in?

How do we manage people's expectations moving forward? Is our customer relationship process fit for purpose, and how do we engage with the customer effectively? Were they able to access our service during the pandemic and are communications delivering a consistent message to the bereaved? How agile is our customer service? Can they access information electronically? Can they book, pay and submit applications and orders electronically?

In the future we intend to carry out joint procurement for supplies and services which we all use. We plan to review all our memorial masons licensing schemes and have a Merseyside approach to make this easier for masons in the area. We also plan to have a range of generic Merseyside bereavement policies and processes which will offer generic similarities to service delivery with specific additions dependent on the site.

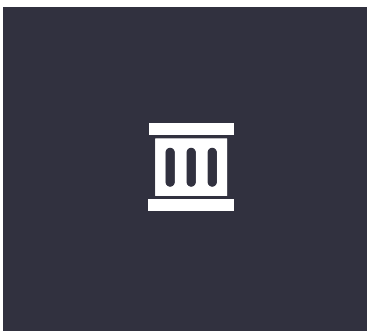
Alan Sheldon
Bereavement Service Manager, Liverpool City Council



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“Granart have been creating bespoke memorialisation schemes for more than 30 years.”

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BRAMM REGISTER

The BRAMM Scheme was set up in 2004, followed by the release of the new British Standard 8415, to help Burial Authorities and Masons understand the requirements of the legislation and improve standards. The British Standard has been updated three times since then, and it is extremely important that Cemetery Managers and Masons are aware of the changes.

BRAMM has equal representation on its Management Board by Burial Authorities and Independent Memorial Masons, it also works with the Bereaved and does not represent one part of the industry.

It is by far the largest register with nearly 500 companies and 750 registered fixers working to current BS 8415:2018 standards. This is an important part of the scheme which ensures both Masons and Cemeteries receive vital information on ongoing changes to legislation.

To ensure compliance all BRAMM Masons are inspected at regular intervals and are also subject to Continuous Personal Development (CPD) that every fixer is required to complete every 3 years (it was previously every 5 years). This is a requirement that ICCM, FBCA and SLCC have very strongly insisted upon.

The BRAMM website is open and transparent to the public and all Burial Authorities, it has no need to have a login.

BRAMM also has a FREE technical advice service for Masons and Burial Authorities as well as access to the BRAMM Blue Book. The BRAMM Newsletter is published four times a year to our registered companies and supporting burial authorities. For a free copy just complete a very simple form on the BRAMM website, under Burial Authorities – join now – it's ALL FREE.

All Cemetery Managers have a responsibility to ensure compliance to BS 8415 and are legally accountable for any memorial work undertaken in their Cemeteries – Can you afford not to be a BRAMM Cemetery?

The BRAMM Register is the only memorial fixing register recommended and endorsed by ICCM and ALL Burial Authority Associations. It is also provided FREE to all Burial Authorities.

If you have any questions concerning memorials in cemeteries please don't hesitate to send us an e mail – bramm@bramm-uk.org or call us on 01452 346741.



pulpit: tragedy averted in Belgian Congo

A glimpse at a brave attempt to serve the people of Bolobo as a medical Missionary, which almost ended in tragedy.



In the summer edition of the Journal, 2020, I reported on the strange stories emanating from the graves of two sailors in the village cemetery of Burton Bradstock in Dorset. Another reason for my wife Marion and I to visit Burton Bradstock cemetery is that Marion's parents are also buried here, and they too have a moving story to tell. They died in 1986 and 1990 respectively, but the simple information on the headstone, just a few yards away from the two Seamen, doesn't do justice to the qualities and values that were motivating them in their life, at the start of the 20th century, nor does it acknowledge the daily risks which they faced.

Ralph Stanford trained to become a Doctor at the London Hospital in Whitechapel, and as a young man, he had a vision of using his skills and knowledge to bring health and support to some of the people of this world who needed it most. He became a Medical Missionary with the Baptist Missionary Society and went to The Belgian Congo, as it was then called, to be a medical doctor at Bolobo, a village with a medical centre some 500 miles up the Congo River. The Society funded his training as a medical student which proved to be a critical support. Going to the Congo, learning French, and leaving family behind, was a brave and self-sacrificial decision, and Ralph concluded his first three years very successfully, returning home

for a break, or furlough as it was called, but was busy preparing to go back to Bolobo for a second term of three years. This time, he took with him Frieda, his very new wife and a whole new phase of life started for them, including the birth of Peter, their first child, in Bolobo.

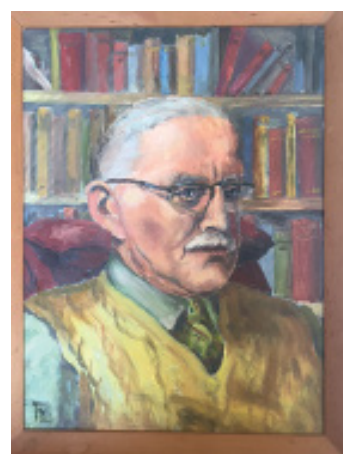
Frieda was an alumna of the Froebel Institute, a college which produced some fine educationalists and artists. On the right is a stunning painting of the scene at Bolobo as the ship arrived to deliver its cargo and passengers. Marion's mother Frieda told us how she came to paint this picture of the Congo River at Bolobo. The journey to Africa was by boat, in those days, and as they travelled up river and approached Bolobo, Frieda had a sudden and irresistible urge to paint the scene. Her painting equipment was in the ship's hold, and so inaccessible, in the immediate term, but she looked around and found some brown paper and a red ink pen and just drew the scene, on the spur of the moment. The effect is stunning, and I am pleased to say that this art decorates the wall of our house to this day.



The Congo River at Bolobo, 1931



Frieda Stanford at her easel surrounded by her artwork, c. 1960.



Frieda's portrait of her husband Ralph



On the death of her parents, Marion gathered a whole range of documents and artefacts from their house, and without realising it, she brought home a file of letters which had been written from her parents in Bolobo, back to the family in England. In 2016, Marion “re-discovered” the letters and arranged them in a book and published them, privately, much to the amazement of the current generation of grandchildren, and much to the interest of the Baptist Missionary Society Archive, the Regent's Park College, Angus Library and Archive, which is now a part of Oxford University.

The letters reveal personal issues, of course, but also provide some direct insights into the history of the 1930s and how Europeans found ways of living alongside Africans, offering them medicines and all sorts of advice.

Here are two photographs of Ralph and Frieda’s house in Bolobo. On the lower photo, you see their “Boys”!

Here is an extract from Frieda’s letter home dated 2.3.31:

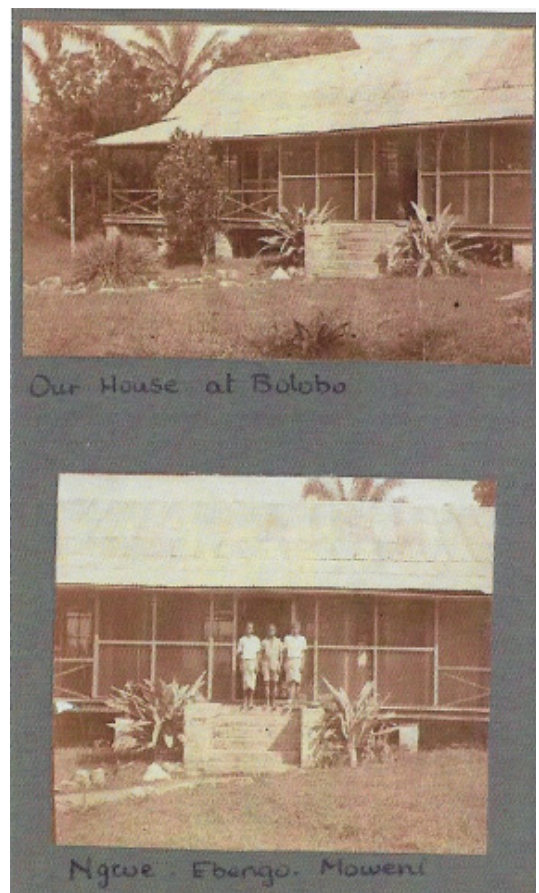
“Now I will let you have some household news. The Bedroom boy is getting into trim & washes out the bathroom crocks, & generally tidies round fairly decently. But my word! they do scamp the dusting. I go round & examine all the chair legs etc, & make ‘em do it again under my nose! They will learn in time! I have all the rooms swept & dusted daily and one room scrubbed so that all the house is scrubbed once a week. There are the 3 living rooms & with the bathroom & ‘auntie’ that makes 5. Saturday is a half holiday, so it’s all hands to the pump, & a general clear up before dinner.

Cooking is progressing, but we have some funny accidents. However, Moseli makes the bread & bakes it without me going into the cook-house so that’s not bad at the end of one week is it? He does it very nicely, & I find that the capacity to teach is my most invaluable asset out here! He also kills, plucks, & de-entrails (!) & cooks the fowl & its attendant vegetables without any assistance from me now. Fowls turn up every other day at least. There is a very nice vegetable in season now, called ‘lelence’, which looks and tastes like a round pale skinned marrow, with pips inside & all. Then there are sweet potatoes & egg-fruits which look like tiny marrows about 5 or 6 inches long, growing in a cup like an acorn.

Yesterday we had goat, & for lunch I roasted a bit, & then made a pie with some l’d boiled, for dinner. I made the pie in the Pyrex dish that fits in a silver stand, and Ralph & I went for a little walk while the boy cooked it. It was just done beautifully, & I said ‘put the pot in the stand’ & before I could stop him, he turned the Pyrex upside down & emptied my beautiful pie through the bottomless stand & onto the table! What do you think of that? I could have wept, however we both laughed afterwards & managed to rescue enough to have dinner off.”

Culture clashes were, of course, inevitable, but happiness was achieved until early in Ralph’s second term of missionary activity. He grew ill and all medical advice and treatment failed to return him to health. Frieda rightly feared that he would soon succumb to whatever the disease was and die tragically.

Life-saving help was suddenly at hand as an American woman doctor who specialised in African diseases visited Bolobo and after several blood tests, diagnosed sleeping sickness. Ralph had been bitten by a Tsetse fly in his first term in Africa, and the impact was now aggressively showing itself and threatening his life. The Doctor gave him appropriate medicine but also advised him to leave the tropics as soon as possible in order to keep him alive. So Ralph, Frieda and baby Peter packed up and returned to the sea and headed home for England. It was only just in time. On the voyage home, Ralph





could hardly walk and Frieda was very worried. However, once home, the treatments started to show improvements and Ralph went into a long period of recovery before he was able to contemplate working again. Happily, he found a post as a GP in Bridport where he worked until retirement, bringing up a family of four children on West Street, in a house which provided space for a Doctor's Surgery and a Waiting Room, as well as space for family life. (see left. The house is now a Post Office.)

In a strange and disturbing interview with those responsible for managing the Baptist Missionary Society's activities, Ralph was challenged to explain how he was planning to repay the money which the Society had spent funding his training to become qualified as a doctor. Feeling quite shocked and distressed at the unfeeling and aggressive nature of such a question, knowing as they did that Ralph came close to losing his life in Bolobo, Ralph

stood up and spoke to the Committee, saying "I will repay every penny!" And he then walked out and did indeed repay the full amount eventually. A shocking story indeed.

Among the graves in Burton Bradstock village cemetery, as opposed to the churchyard, alongside the Sailors from 1915 and Marion's parents, we found the grave of Marion's Auntie Winifred Stanford (1897-1985). Winnie was the sister of Doctor Ralph Stanford, and she also became a Baptist Church missionary serving first in Kenya and then with her brother in the Belgian Congo. However, her life seemed, to me at least, somewhat a depleted experience. Her anticipation of death led her to decry any attempt to memorialise her life. She declared that her grave was not to be marked with her name or any other information about her, and she just wanted to rest in peace and, in effect, to be forgotten by this world.



Ivory artefacts, some hand-carved by local Bolobo African residents, brought home to England in 1931



Aunty Winnie's grave today

I have some sympathy with this point of view, but Marion's parents couldn't really cope with this during their life-time and when Winnie died in 1985, they had made a wooden memorial bearing Winnie's name and details. The choice of wood was to try and fulfil Winnie's wishes. Wood would quite quickly deteriorate, leaving no information about the occupant of the grave. And when Marion and I arrived at the cemetery in 2019, some 35 years later, Winnie's wish was clearly to be found accomplished. The wooden memorial was now devoid of information, lying flat on the ground, and her grave was just an anonymous plot in the cemetery. Winnie's wishes, were, in fact, now being observed, and Marion and I stood quietly and remembered her, and acknowledged her modesty and accepted the reality that in fact, all our lives will in due course be forgotten, apart from the famous few who have hit the headlines, for good or ill, during their lifetime. It felt good, and I reflected that when my time comes, I would like to have my ashes buried in an unmarked place. I too would like to have no memorial, no name or dates on my burial place. Just being dead is good enough.

Sands is here to support you

COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on both bereaved families and NHS staff. We can only imagine the pressures facing you and your teams too, at your crematorium and across the ICCM network in the UK.

We want you to know that Sands is here to support you.

Find out about all the support and information we offer, including our free national helpline, at <https://www.sands.org.uk/support>.

Sands' free helpline phone 0808 164 3332 and email helpline@sands.org.uk

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We are thankful to each member of the ICCM who has supported Sands through donations and for nominating Sands as the beneficiary of the ICCM's Metal Recycling Scheme. We would especially like to thank Altrincham Crematorium for donating £5142.65 and to the team at Breckland Crematorium for their amazing donation of £10,000. Daniel Brett-Schneider, Director of Income & Engagement at Sands, said:

"We are delighted by the wonderful support of your teams and communities across the ICCM network. Thanks to your ongoing commitment to Sands, we are able to continue working with and supporting anyone affected by the death of a baby, improve bereavement care and fund research to save babies' lives. Right now, your support is more invaluable than ever as we adapt and accelerate delivery of our support services to families and NHS staff during uniquely harsh challenges."

Your donations are invested into Sands' support services to benefit communities across the UK. Our work with each local Sands support group in your area ensures everyone has access to our free helpline and bereavement support resources.

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 with your fundraising. Email: Victoria.luk@sands.org.uk, Telephone: 0203 897 3470, Sands: www.sands.org.uk



vintage visits: Altrincham Crematorium

I spoke with David Jennings, Bereavement Service Manager, who said that he knew the Leyland Beaver from the Vintage Visits section of the Journal and he didn't envisage any problems. As I approached the porte cochere I also did not see any problems as the clearance appeared to be over 9 ft.

However, as I got beneath the concrete structure, I saw two huge lights in the centre so I steered as close to the pillars on the left hand edge as I could. It was certainly a case of keeping left was the right course of action. One family member suggested that the roof of the Leyland Beaver almost cleaned the glass.

Whilst the service was taking place, I measured the clearance under one of the lights and found it was 8 ft 6 inches, whereas the height in the centre of the cab is 8 ft 5 inches.

Had I known this fact before hand I would never have attempted what I did and I would have reversed under the far end of the porte cochere. However, it all worked out fine and despite my need to always plan out every part of a funeral, sometimes I need to go with the flow.



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surviving the first wave of COVID-19

Obitus work with over half the UK's crematoria – with the first wave behind us, Managing Director James Crossland reflects

With the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic now behind us and funeral numbers thankfully a little lower than we'd expect for this time of year, many of us have a little breathing space. After an incredibly tough few months for everyone working in bereavement, including the team at Obitus, this gives us a chance to get some rest, prepare for the forecast "second wave" and winter, and also reflect on what went well, and what we'd do differently next time.

What went right?

Overall, I remain so proud of our team for everything we achieved. At the height of the pandemic we had over 180,000 people each week watching live webcasts, a 60% increase in average music requests per crematorium, and about 300 extra phone calls each day. Before the pandemic the majority of our communications were with other professional bereavement users (crematoria, funeral directors and officiants), but within weeks of the lockdown starting over 95% of the people using our website, emailing or calling us were members of the public watching webcasts.

In the middle of that whole challenge for our operational team, our install team helped 33 crematoria across the UK who decided to start working with Obitus – some choosing a specialist AV provider for the first time.

With so much happening and things changing so fast, we also knew proactive communication was going to be so important. Throughout the pandemic, I think we did a good job of maintaining regular, open and honest communications with all our stakeholders. We've definitely not been flawless, and we're always conscious that every issue, no matter how small, affects a family in some way. However, we've managed to handle the vast majority of this increase very well, and we've received an overwhelming amount of praise and gratitude from so many people across the bereavement sector.

A webcasting transformation

In normal times, music and visual tributes are our core services, with webcasting being a minor optional extra to allow a few family and friends who live across the world to watch a loved-one's service. Webcasting was never meant to replace being part of the congregation, yet during the peak of COVID-19, for many it was their only option.

This meant we saw an enormous increase in not only the number of services we webcast, but also in the number of people watching each service. At peak times, we had over 350 times more people per day watching funerals via our live webcasting system than before COVID-19.

Some technical challenges...

This huge increase in webcasting demand put enormous pressure on our systems, way beyond what they were originally designed for. Our technical team worked hard, doing a brilliant job of anticipating most things before they impacted any services. We did have a couple of website issues during April, simply due to sheer volume. We know how important webcasting became for families and the impact any issues had on them.

Importantly, the design of our system meant everything was still recorded, so we could apologise to the small number of families involved and get the recordings back online quickly for families to watch again.

Most importantly, once we identified the cause of the issue, our technical team worked around the clock to improve our systems to handle the higher demand. That improved resilience meant we ran a virtually flawless webcasting service from the end of April onwards. Before these issues, our website had worked almost perfectly for years, and we're determined to maintain that fantastic record going forward.

Some localised challenges...

What was an acceptable internet connection before the pandemic suddenly looked pretty poor once webcasting demand ramped up. The internet connection at the crematoria controls not only the quality of the live webcast, but the speed with which we can get the recordings back online. When demand was low this didn't matter so much, but with some crematoria having back-to-back funerals all day long, all of them recorded, and a slow internet connection, there simply wasn't enough time to get all the recordings back overnight before the next day started.

With so much changing so fast, it was sometimes difficult to keep up and to realise the impact of this at some crematoria and warn crematoria and funeral directors. It's a great strength of our team that they're problem-solvers, and they work around issues to deliver the best service they can. But this was also a weakness because they masked a problem which was beyond our control. This meant that our team were sometimes dealing with the emotional call from family members when the real cause of problem was out of our control. Again, this is something we've learned from and we've now made all those affected crematoria aware of this challenge and we are supporting them to better prepare for the future.

Recruiting more quickly

A mistake I made was being too slow to increase the size

of our team because we didn't anticipate how much busier we'd get as the pandemic went on. Recruiting new people takes time, both "days" from when you start to when they're up and running, but also "skill" in that existing colleagues have to stop doing the day-job and spend time training new people. So if the peak was going to be short, I initially took the view that the best strategy was for everyone just to work harder! As it happened, the peak went on for a lot longer than any of us could have imagined. We started recruiting later than we should, that was my decision and I'll put my hands up to that. In the end we've taken on 20 new colleagues – a 50% increase – to deal with all the extra demand. Hindsight is a wonderful thing!

Back to normal

I'm writing this on the morning of 23rd July, and we've been comfortably "back to normal" and on top of everything since mid-June. We were very open during the peak that we were delaying making some DVD and USB orders during the height of the pandemic, but we're currently dispatching 3 times more every day than we're getting new orders for, so we'll soon be completely on

top of this again.

Supporting our customers with their infrastructure

We've learnt from everything that's happened over the last few months and adapted to a new way of working. Although we hope it doesn't happen, we're confident that the processes we've put in place and the changes we've made would negate a lot of the challenges we've faced over the last few months should a second wave hit.

Throughout the pandemic we're proud to have successfully delivered our service to so many families, especially webcasting. We plan to continue doing this for as long as it takes to see the back of COVID-19. We're committed to making sure that every funeral venue in the UK has all the hardware and support they need to offer this service to their families. Again, I thank everyone within Obitus, plus all the crematoria, funeral directors and officiants we work with for being so supportive. We're here to help you so it's great to know you're there for us too.

James Crossland,
Managing Director, Obitus

THE ETERNAL LIGHT

The Fuego urns are the newest addition to the Funeral Products Originals collection. Memorial items that are part of this exclusive collection are designed and produced by Funeral Products themselves. Designs that translate the wishes of families into a loving, tangible memory.

A lasting memory of a loved one; this perspective was the source of inspiration for the Fuego collection. Memorial items handmade from clay with elegant shapes, a representation of the eternal flame which is inextricably linked to numerous cultures and religions. Each urn has its own specific symbolism, which makes every Fuego urn a piece of art, with different special meanings based on religion, tradition, and spirituality.



the funeral frontline

For most businesses, the outbreak of Covid-19 has had a profound impact.

It will take time for most to recover once the virus has been defeated and things return to normal. However, the funeral industry wasn't shut down by coronavirus unlike so much of British and world industry. Nevertheless, it has had to face immense challenges and react to them while remaining efficient, kind and considerate to those bereaved families it serves.

So funeral, cremation and cemetery workers in the UK have been very much in the frontline of our national fight with the coronavirus. They are undoubtedly unsung heroes doing very valuable work which all too often goes unrecognised - as to show them going about their sterling work is unlikely. TV programmes doing this would have spread a national depression in a way that showing the efforts of NHS workers; other care workers; volunteers and even bus drivers did not. However, this lack of media acclaim shouldn't cause anyone to doubt the utter dedication of our profession and its people.

The death rate in April was significantly inflated. This was caused not just by the direct effects of the virus but because people also died at an increased rate due to a low death rate earlier in the year - caused by a mild winter; a necessary concentration of resource on the virus and perhaps the ill avoiding hospitals out of fear of the virus?

The pandemic's effect on the national death rate brought out the best in the funeral industry's diverse areas' desire to work together with all crematoria, cemeteries and memorial park's reporting splendid levels of cooperation between funeral directors, clergy, celebrants and everyone that is either indirectly or directly involved in the end of life process.

So, the funeral industry, including most municipal crematoria, pulled together to agree on allowing reduced numbers to attend services, provide protective equipment for colleagues on the frontline and introduce a comprehensive emergency compliance manual to ensure everyone's safety. This very well co-ordinated and professional approach meant that most locations across the UK continued to operate in a way which allowed restricted numbers to safely attend services.

Bereavement is the price that we must all pay, whatever our faith, for loving and being loved. It would be wrong to claim any positives from such a period of inexplicable tragedy, but perhaps this balanced focus on loss and grief, regardless of race, skin colour or religion will have shown to the country just how losing a loved one is equal. The pain feels exactly the same and the funeral industry should take enormous credit for being able to accommodate every culture across our country in accordance with their beliefs and non-beliefs.

Undoubtedly many lessons will have been learned as we battled with Covid-19 and yes, the funeral industry has shown remarkable foresight and resilience in helping people at the worst moment of their lives. The many years of dedicated experience amongst representatives of this industry, was of crucial importance during these difficult days.

So, whilst we rightly salute the staff in our hospitals and care homes, and while it must be understood that we are unlikely to see funeral workers on our TV screens, we must never lose sight of what an incredibly professional funeral service industry this country has.

We at Memoria, like other providers in the UK, are rightly very proud of our colleagues and how they have not just maintained the superb service they have always delivered but have continued to do so despite these unprecedented and difficult circumstances.

Frank Meilack
Director of Community Engagement, Memoria Ltd

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the journal

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Founded 1913
Incorporated 1958
England & Wales Register Number 610299