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The Journal Spring 2022

2022

Spring

Joined up thinking  
The grief app  
A royal visit  
Ceremony of light

An introduction to Genealogists  
North West group meeting  
Pulpit: The Aberfan disaster, 1966  
Talking about death



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## editorial

### *Our relationship with death and the future of disposal*

Welcome to the spring edition of the Journal and the first for 2022! Happy new year to you all – at least I hope it will be given the last 2 years that we have all experienced.

With many people dying prematurely and in greater numbers in a short amount of time, the one thing that this pandemic has highlighted is our relationship with death. It is the most inevitable part of life but so many of us choose to ignore it – if we don't talk about it, it will never happen – and yet it still does. Death puts things in perspective. Those things we thought mattered soon have little relevance, and we start to really think about what is important to us. It is a moment for us to stop, to consider and to reflect.

Before I started working in this sector, I was much the same - although I have always loved walking around cemeteries and reading the inscriptions on headstones, I kept that to myself, as I could potentially be viewed as slightly weird! I am happy to say since then I have met many like-minded people and have come out of the "cemetery closet" so to speak!

We have been disposing of the dead for many centuries. Interestingly the method by which we do this hasn't really changed that much, we have just become more sophisticated at it. Essentially, we have always had two choices – burial or cremation. It is the rituals and customs we attach to death that change depending on religious and spiritual beliefs. Death is both feared and celebrated at the same time.

Moving forward to current times, with the ongoing crisis of global warming and climate change, all industries have been forced to look at their current practices and come up with alternative, greener solutions. The funeral and death industry are no different. For the first time the need and desire for more environmentally friendly and sustainable options has risen to the top of the agenda.

So, what are the alternatives? In recent times I have read about several disposal practices claiming to be more environmentally aware that could become common practice. Most of these are in its infancy and, although some are being used more in the USA, they are not yet legal or practiced in the UK.

We have started to see the first electric cremators being installed in crematoria as an alternative to gas. It is still early days, and it will be interesting to review the data with regards to energy consumption, cost and maintenance in real terms as time goes on.

The concept of Resomation or "water cremation" has been around for quite a number of years now. That concept is finally becoming a reality in the UK with the first Resomation

facility being given planning permission in Darlington. The application described this being the "next phase" in the evolution of our sector. The manufacturer claims it uses significantly less energy and emits significantly fewer greenhouse gases than flame cremation. It can help the industry improve its carbon credentials and meet the capacity challenges of a growing population, as well as offer more choice.

Then we have the concept of human composting. You may have heard terms such as Natural organic reduction (NOR) or Recompose and Precision Organic Dispersal. They are similar in that they look at the forensic management of natural decomposition. The breakdown of the body is powered by beneficial microbes that occur naturally on our bodies and in the environment. This together with natural plant material helps the body decomposition on a molecular level, resulting in the formation of a nutrient-dense soil.

There is also the first living coffin which I wrote about in the Spring 2021 edition of the Journal. The coffin, called Living Cocoon, was developed by a Netherlands-based company known as Loop, to serve as a more sustainable option for burials. The Loop Cocoon is the first living coffin created by nature, made of mycelium, the mat of fibres that forms the underground part of fungi.

Loop says, in collaboration with professors of the Delft University of Technology, it has been estimated to take 3 years to compost the human body with the Loop Cocoon compared to the current 10 to 20 years it takes in traditional coffins.

Then of course we have natural burial which we are more familiar with. This method returns the body to the earth in the most natural way possible, generally rejecting the embalming processes and using biodegradable coffins, buried at a shallow depth to help decomposition.

We do however have to proceed with caution. It is often difficult to prove green credentials due to a lack of independent data and what factors have been included (or excluded) like transport costs, or the cost of replacing parts etc to determine if something is as "green" as it claims to be. For us to be more environmentally aware we need to consider the whole picture from cars to coffins as well as how we actually dispose of the dead.

It will be interesting to see how these concepts develop and if any new innovative ideas are introduced. Let's face it they thought cremation would never take off and now 80% of the population choose it as a preferred method of disposal. I guess we will have to watch this space!

**Sofia Allana, Editor**

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## president's page

I would like to start by wishing you a very happy new year and hope that you all managed to have a lovely Christmas. So here we go again, as you read this it is now 2022 and yes .... Covid is still with us, will it ever be completely gone? I very much doubt it, but I am sure that one day we will look back on these past 2 years and realise that as an industry we managed to keep going despite everything that has happened and we should all be really proud of ourselves. I am sure you will all agree when I say that the commitment of my fellow board members and the officers within the ICCM not only to myself, but to all our members, has been amazing. The officers in particular have had to deal with some challenging questions during a time when regulations and restrictions have changed so quickly, but they have always ensured that we are kept up to date whenever needed. As the service manager for Southampton's cemeteries and crematorium, I am extremely proud and grateful to my teams for all their hard work and dedication during what can only be described as the most challenging times we have faced. On a personal note, I hope you don't mind if I take this opportunity to thank my bereavement team leader, Claire Hodges, without her continued support and friendship I could not have got through this difficult period of time.

At Southampton we were fortunate enough to be able to hold our Christmas celebration of life memorial service at the crematorium in December. It was also web cast for those unable to attend in person, however every seat was taken, and we had people standing, which highlights that people needed to be able to come along to remember their loved ones.

Again, we were unable to hold the usual Learning Convention, which is such a shame as it is always lovely to meet up with colleagues however, I would like to thank everyone who was able to join us once more for our 'on-line' 2021 AGM. Not being able to see who you are talking to is a very strange experience, but in my heart, I knew you were all there supporting the ICCM officers and Board of Directors which was very much appreciated, especially at this time of year when everyone is so busy. Usually, the ICCM awards and diplomas are presented at the awards ceremony as part of the Learning Convention and Exhibition. Although this could not be done in person, it was still lovely to be able to acknowledge the hard work of those who managed to achieve any studying and to also announce that one person, Kevin Watkins of Southend on Sea borough council, completed his diploma. Well done and congratulations once again Kevin, what an achievement.

Hopefully in 2022 we will be able to celebrate members' achievements in person. The photographic competition was a great success, having been on hold in 2020, 2021 had 40 members submitting 72 photos showing a vast range of subjects and styles which gave the board a very difficult job of judging and choosing a winner, so we decided to award three highly commended awards, and one overall winner. The highly commended were awarded to Rob Hoare of BCP Council for his photo of a Jay at North Cemetery, Bournemouth, Aaron King, also of BCP Council for his photo of Wimborne Road Cemetery, Bournemouth and Anita Fish of Wyre Council for her photo of the Wyre War Memorial Garden. The overall winner was Jeremy Lane of Fareham Borough Council with his photo of Crofton

Cemetery in Fareham, congratulations once again to all four of you.

During the on-line AGM, just before the webinar started, I gave my 2nd Presidential address which I would like to share with you for those who were unable to attend, it includes an insight of the visits that I have managed to attend in 2021:-



*Good afternoon everyone and welcome to our 2nd virtual AGM.*

*I can't believe that I will now be entering my 3rd year as President, COVID has certainly something to answer for!!*

*This past year I have managed to attend a few events. The first was a on a nice dry sunny day in July, perfect weather for a chauffeur driven ride, courtesy of Julie, in the Hampshire countryside to the re-opening of GreenAcres Heatherley Wood. We sat in the beautiful Meadow View Hall for the presentation and then wandered around the tranquil grounds which are divided into a range of different woodland and meadow areas. They have meandering paths and gorgeous flowers and lovely carved wooden benches and gates. I must add that they served us some very delicious canapes always an added benefit for any event.*

*I then had the pleasure of a train ride to London's House of Commons in September to join Martin and Julie at the All-Party Parliamentary Group for funerals and bereavement's annual report launch. I got to London a little earlier than expected and I walked along the South Bank of the River Thames, past the London Eye, over Westminster Bridge it was an incredibly warm day and very busy and I was not used to seeing so many people in one place. After making it through security we went into the lovely Westminster Hall with its impressive high ceilings. We were ushered through the building and Sir John Hayes gave a speech to officially launch the report. I must add they served us a delicious cream tea, I am sure you are all feeling a theme coming along 😊*

*On the 4th November myself and Claire, my colleague from Southampton crematorium, had the pleasure of visiting North Oxfordshire crematorium and memorial park for their service of dedication and official opening. We were greeted by immaculately dressed staff and seated in the most comfortable chapel sofa seats you can imagine. As I sank down, I thought, I am never getting out of this! The chapel was tastefully decorated with its mood lighting facility around the catafalque. We had an introduction from Vanessa Moor the manager and a very personal heart felt welcome from Howard Hodgson the CEO of Memoria Ltd, followed by prayers and hymns and the unveiling of the commemorative plaque by the Right Reverend Dr Steven Croft. We then moved to the Churchill Pavilion and ... I must add, you know what is coming ... there in front of us was a hot buffet! I choose a Mongolian lamb curry, it was delicious and for those that know me well, I also had a yummy mango*



cheesecake 😊. We were really lucky to have a personal guided tour of the crematory which housed the pioneering state of the art cremator which is fuelled by almost 100 per cent green electricity, the UK's very first green electric cremator. It was really interesting to learn all about how this cremator operates.

Codge and I were then delighted to accept an invitation from Bob Tomes, the National President of the FFMA (Funeral Furnishing Manufacturer's Association), who has worked for Colourful Coffins, an independent family owned business for many years, and his wife Shirley, to join them for the FFMA annual dinner at the Alveston Manor Hotel in Stratford Upon Avon. It was an opportunity to get dressed up and to see industry friends and colleagues once again. Established in 1939, the FFMA is the link between manufacturers and suppliers of goods and supplies to the funeral sector, their aim being to safeguard and improve the traditional standards of products and services that their members provide.

We welcomed in the new President Philip Halliday, Director at Wirral-based family firm Halliday Funeral Supplies and then ..... oh yes I can already hear you all shouting "more food" 😊.

On the 18th October the Department of Health and Social Care, and the UK Health and Security Agency, the old Public Health England, updated their guidance on funerals and commemorative events. The revised guidance considered the general requirements for self-isolation and how it related to attended events. This meant that there were no longer any legal limits on the number of people who could attend a funeral or commemorative event, such as a scattering, however each individual crematorium/cemetery were advised to set their own limits to manage the risk of spreading COVID-19 if spaces were crowded. So, it was time to move back in the seats that had been removed from the chapels. At Southampton we decided to try and keep the same sort of layout with little tables in between with small bottles of hand sanitizer, little tissue packs and a little flower vase on each one, we had received so many lovely compliments that we decided not to go back to the old all seats in a row layout.

DEFRA then announced a consultation inviting interested parties to give their views on the nine proposed amendments to the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 applied to groundwater activities and some related surface water discharge activities. We then held a really interesting webinar regarding this issue which provoked a lot of interest and comments including concerns from those of us that manage cemeteries. All responses needed to be submitted to DEFRA by Wednesday 22 December.

National Grief Awareness week will take place from 2nd December to 8th December. The annual event is by the Good Grief Trust, who are a charity that brings bereavement services, support organisations and helplines all together under one umbrella (their emblem) in one central database. The aim of the week is to normalise grief and get the public talking and to raise awareness of all aspects of grief and loss. I hope as many of you as possible are able to get involved with this important week. And as Christmas draws closer, we all think of our loved ones who are no longer with us and like so many of you, we as a

family will have a very special little man missing again from our celebrations. We don't always know what other people are going through as a family so I would like to share this poem with you, written by A van der Velden called *The Many Faces of Grief*.

Robert still cannot sleep to well, he's awake from 2am.  
Janet is the opposite and doesn't rise till ten.  
Sarah made a special card, for each and everyone.  
She did this sitting on the beach, while soaking up the sun.

Samuel went out to the shed, in the middle of the night  
He grabbed the axe and chopped the wood, until it was first light.  
George took out his little boat and sailed across the bay.  
We may be family, we may be friends, but we each grieve in our own way.

Peter flew off the handle, anything set him off.  
Pat put a message in a balloon and gently set it aloft.  
Tui simply went to bed and hid under the sheets.  
She couldn't bear to leave the house; it's now been several weeks.

Jean cleaned the entire house, from room to room she went  
Till the house was cleaner than it had ever been, and all her tears were spent  
Leo couldn't wash at all, he couldn't shower for days.  
We may be friends, we may be or family, but we grieve in different ways.

Mark just HAD to go to work to "take his mind off things"  
Melissa walked to the park at dusk and sat quietly on the swings.  
Bethany went down to the gym, she didn't do this for fun,  
and if that didn't help ease the pain, she'd head out for a run.

Patricia looks like nothing's wrong, that not a tear was shed,  
Plenty have been but no one knows, she only cries in bed.  
So please be kind and gentle when loved ones pass away,  
For each of us will be grieving in our own and special way.

Thank you everyone for listening. I know it's a bit early but, I wish you all a peaceful Christmas and New Year, I hope that there are no more lockdowns so we can all get together with family and friends and I look forward to being able to attend even more events and meeting everyone in person for my final Presidential address in 2022.



Unveiling of the commemorative plaque by the Right Reverend Dr Steven Croft at North Oxfordshire Crematorium and Memorial Park.



Three of the "Chain Gang" at the FFMA Annual Dinner (Photo courtesy of Alan Jose).

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

**Heather White, ICCM President**



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## in touch



**“Spring is the best life coach: It gives you all the energy you want, all the positive thoughts you wish and all the boldness you need!” Mehmet Murat ildan**

After a very difficult two years of the pandemic, are there signs that we are emerging from the dark into the light? From winter into spring? Can we look forward to a 2022 where we can get back to doing what we do best, supporting bereaved people through their loss by providing excellent facilities and services? Will we see the end to restrictions, and can we open our doors and our arms fully and welcome people back into close proximity to us?

I sincerely hope so.

Being a people-focussed sector, I know it has been difficult for members to close their offices to visitors; to limit the number of people who can attend a service, and to rely on technology to bring people together remotely rather than physically. To not be able to offer a consoling cup of tea or a comforting hug or handhold is alien to many of us. I'm sure though that these skills have not been lost, but temporarily put aside out of necessity. We may all be a bit rusty in our people skills due to lack of use for a couple of years, but, just like with riding a bike (allegedly) those skills will come back with a vengeance once we are allowed to use them again.



This is very much like the spring, when nature wakes up and starts to thrive again. I always get excited when I see the first snowdrop of the season. I was quite worried this year as I had seen no snowdrops before New Year's Eve, whereas they have been in full bloom by then for the past few years. It wasn't until the 14th of January that I saw my first snowdrop of 2022; as usual I got very excited and committed the moment to photographic history:

I marvelled at how this little flower had survived the harsh winter conditions and had forced its way out of dark, solid ground into the light of spring. Nothing was going to stand in its way; it was going to bloom and share its beauty with the world no matter what. On the day I saw this first snowdrop of the year, it was a bold, solitary figure, leading the charge to show that from seemingly harsh times, it is possible to thrive.



Only a few days later, it had been joined by dozens more, forming an army of snowdrops. En masse, these tiny flowers changed the landscape from dark to light, clearly demonstrating that spring is upon us. I see the humble snowdrop, accurately described by William Wordsworth as the 'venturous harbinger of Spring', as a metaphor for our current situation. Although we have survived for the past two years, we have been unable to bloom and be at our best. Don't get me wrong, you have all done an amazing job in keeping funeral services going, and I know that this has been at personal cost for many, with long hours, no holidays, worries about health etc forming difficult working and living conditions. But being able to get back to 'normal' and do your jobs without restriction will be the emergence we have been waiting for. We will be able to rebuild relationships with our communities, hold physical events that bring people together in person, and be able to speak face to face rather than screen to screen.

Although we had to take the decision to postpone the Education Seminar this year, we are hoping that other ICCM events will take place. We are planning an Environmental Seminar with our fellow organisations (the Federation of Burial and Cremation Associations, the Cremation Society of Great Britain and the Association of Private Crematoria and Cemeteries) in March; as the Editor has indicated in her editorial in this Journal, environmental issues are of great concern and we need to be addressing them as a matter of urgency. We are also making plans for the Learning Convention and Exhibition 2022 from 26th – 28th September at the Chesford Grange Hotel. Hopefully branch activity will also re-emerge, allowing members to meet and exchange ideas in all parts of the UK.

It could possibly seem a bit daunting to return to 'normal'. As the quote at the start of this In Touch indicates, let Spring be your life coach, and take from it the energy and positive thoughts to give you the boldness to be a snowdrop, and together we will be that army of snowdrops making a difference.

**Julie Dunk**  
ICCM Chief Executive

## fourth quarter accredited COTS & CTTS candidates

### Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme Courses October 2021 – December 2021

**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**

Steven Barchan <b>A</b>	Logan Hansford <b>A</b>	Dean Parry <b>A</b>
Mark Byfield <b>A</b>	Matthew Hargreaves <b>A</b>	David Pike <b>A</b>
Jake Cadman <b>A</b>	Peter Hayward <b>A</b>	Aleksandrs Pozdnisovs <b>B</b>
Michael Chapman <b>A B F</b>	Daniel Heath <b>A</b>	Billy Radford <b>A</b>
Stuart Clarke <b>A</b>	Dean Hopkins <b>A</b>	James Revill <b>A</b>
Michael Clement <b>A B F</b>	Mark Hutchinson <b>A</b>	Aaron Rhodes <b>B F</b>
Diane Collett <b>A</b>	John Jones <b>A B F</b>	Simon Ritchie <b>A</b>
Sam Colley <b>B</b>	Alan Keeley <b>B F</b>	Douglas Robb <b>A</b>
Mark Collins <b>A B F</b>	Christopher Kelly <b>A</b>	Scott Robertson <b>A</b>
Barry Cope <b>A</b>	Graham Loveridge <b>A</b>	Jaymz Robinson <b>A</b>
Christopher Denning <b>A</b>	Peter Lucking <b>A</b>	Matthew Robinson <b>A</b>
Cameron Docherty <b>B</b>	Peter MacDonald <b>A</b>	Paul Smith <b>A</b>
Kenny Donald <b>A</b>	T.Jay Marrocco <b>A</b>	Henry Snee <b>A</b>
Matthew Dovinson <b>A</b>	Gary Martlew <b>A</b>	Ewan Stewart <b>A</b>
Lee Edwards <b>A</b>	Ian McGinty <b>A B F</b>	Denis Thompson <b>A</b>
Edward Egerton <b>A B F</b>	Stephen McNicholls <b>A</b>	Willem Versluys <b>B F</b>
Gerson Esteves <b>A B F</b>	George Merry <b>B</b>	Michael Williams <b>A</b>
Peter Fisher <b>A</b>	Matthew Moses-Cook <b>A</b>	David Yeomans <b>A</b>
Keith Gregg <b>A</b>	Warren Musial <b>A B F</b>	Jamie Young <b>A</b>
Mark Guerin <b>B F</b>	Kieran O'Donoghue <b>A</b>	
Paul Hamby <b>A</b>	Tom Parrish <b>A</b>	

### Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme - October – December 2021

Ian Appleyard	Thomas Leigh
Lois Cole	Graham McGonigle
Toby Cunniffe	Neil Middleton
Ruslan Diduk	Phillipa O'Brien
Ben Edward	Neil Shirley
Wesley Gibson	Marcus Vickers
Aimée Goodfellow-Swaap	Rebecca Wild

**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.**

Aberdeenshire City Council, Amey, Banbury Town Council, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Chesterfield Borough Council, Dunstable Town Council, Enable NE Surrey Crematorium, Greenacres Group, Greener Ealing Ltd, Halton Borough Council, Hambleton District Council, Huntingdon Town Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Leeds City Council, London Borough of Croydon, Littleport Parish Council, Luton Borough Council, Mansfield District Council, Middlesbrough Council, Nottingham City Council, Portsmouth City Council, Pure Cremation Ltd, Rochdale Borough Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, South Tyneside Council, SW Middlesex Crematorium Board, Warrington Borough Council, Warwick District Council.



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## joined up thinking

*When it comes to post bereavement care who is best placed to provide information to families?*

In my article in the last edition of the Journal, I highlighted the lack of community involvement and support to families which has been noticeable with the reduction of ministerial involvement in funerals. This has provoked a number of conversations about how families are made aware of the information about the organisations that are out there to help them.

Each charity and organisation self-promote through the various channels now available to them whilst trying to keep advertising costs to a minimum so more can be invested in their main aims. Social media is hit and miss with those who use it as to whether they get linked in to the mail push or receive shared links from friends, not everyone looking for support uses social media or trusts all the information that they see on line. Not every charity gets corporate support to produce an advert for TV, radio, press or other media but continues to offer and provide the care and support to families.

When it comes to post bereavement care who is best placed to provide information to families? There are various groups that have been set up to provide this across the country but again people have to have heard of them to be able to make an approach.

How many of you have over the years explained to management and others that during the process of grief and loss, families first blame the GP or hospital for the death, then complain to or about the funeral director and finally the bereavement service teams as we are responsible for the grave/garden of remembrance, memorialisation or whatever else the target is? Because we are at the end of the line we are open to this for as long as it takes for the family to come to terms with the loss.

Whereas doctors and funeral directors are seen as professionals, we are seen as local authority workers and as such are not afforded the same level of respect. We are there for families to come back to again and again over the years, often taking the brunt of complaints that has nothing to do with us or the service we offer. The time spent with families and the hostility we face is not really recognised by anyone outside the sector.

However, this puts us in the ideal situation to maybe take the next step and start to fill the void and become more connected to the families who use our services and find the opportunities for the care and support we all need.

Should we as bereavement service managers be looking to make our service more approachable and provide contact information for people that need it? Is a list of contacts on a website or an annual remembrance service enough for our clients? How do we communicate with families at the time of need?

We rarely get the opportunity to speak to the bereaved family prior to the funeral and unless they have a question regarding a memorial, are booking a witness appointment or making a complaint, afterwards either. It is all too late and we become a reactionary rather than proactive in the process.

There are fantastic examples across the country where bereavement services have worked in the community, and I know that given the opportunity and resources there is so much more we could do. Connections with local schools provides pupils with a knowledge of the cemetery and the famous people and war graves contained therein, as well as wildlife and safety issues. We can also work with staff and pupils to provide explanations of what happens should a class member or parent die. Provide the opportunity for them to come and pay their respects and remove the stigma that surrounds death and get people to open up and talk. Work with local charitable groups building up a working relationship offering private tours of the crematorium in exchange for knowledge and contacts or even working parties.

I know from working with a number of managers across the north west, most of us put in a lot more hours for little or no financial reward and feel undervalued by the authorities but regard this as a vocation not a job and rarely miss an opportunity to talk to people about the work we do.

Most of the above was supposed to be included in my previous article and was intended to leave a question as to whether it was our place to fill the void and connect with the community. However, the day after I pressed send, I was involved in a meeting with nurses from the NHS Trust in Manchester with regards pacemakers which touched on work done by the bereavement teams at the hospitals. This conversation meant I knew I needed to amend what I had written as the door of opportunity had just opened.

Whilst there are the occasional phone calls between the crematorium staff and the hospital to check on pacemakers etc, there is normally very little interaction between us. I asked if the staff had an understanding of the work we do and if they had been to a crematorium? Would it help if they understood the process on our side and be able to explain things to families? Would it be an opportunity to connect the services and allow us to have direct contact and be able to guide families by providing information at the start of the process, and be able to provide answers to questions asked to the bereavement teams at hospitals?

It opened the flood gates on the conversation and was agreed that it would be really useful to enable staff to see the facilities and discuss the administration and family involvement from our side. This led to discussions about how the hospital teams speak with families often before any decisions are made about the funeral. They could advise them of the options available in the area and also give out literature regarding specific sites so families are aware of the limitations within cemeteries etc and make informed decisions on where to have the funeral. Nurses also speak with patients prior to operations so for example patients and families could be advised that by having the new style pacemaker inserted in the heart wall, there could be a possibility that cremation might not be an option in the future, again they can make an informed choice prior to the operation. By this point there was palpable excitement between all of us as we started to see the possibilities arising in front of us.

Meetings on a Greater Manchester wide scale would lead to introductions and being able to link the bereavement teams in each authority and with those where the majority of cross border work comes from. This would allow the hospital staff to increase their knowledge of facilities in the local area and develop a better understanding of how the needs of families would be catered for within each crematorium or cemetery and be able to advise the bereaved. Where necessary, families could be put in touch with the bereavement service teams with regards specific questions or to arrange to view facilities so they have a more informed view. Details of relevant organisations could also be handed to families at the point of first contact so they are aware and have the information should it be required.

To have a couple of meetings a year, maybe in preparation for the winter deaths and a spring review would maintain contact and develop the links between the services. It unites those who are working with bereaved people and enables us to have a wider understanding of the work we each do and how it interacts. This has to be a big benefit for all involved with the biggest benefit being for the bereaved families. There is the possibility of adding the Registrars of Births & Deaths into the mix, which would add further opportunities for communication with families if not prior to the arrangements then soon after and gives further direct links for support to be put in place. It also now adds those who have suffered a death in the community into the network. Yes it increases our workload as we establish the links and provide the necessary documentation and instruction to the relevant teams but should hopefully reduce the number of complaints and issues in the long run.

In the South Manchester Coronial district which incorporates three local authorities, we have operated on a similar vein, which was stepped up during the pandemic where the coroner, police, mortuary staff, registrars and bereavement service managers met on a regular basis. This enabled us to give an overall picture of the way we were each dealing with the situation and allowed us to understand and ease any issues in the process. Information can be disseminated across the services as required. This group will remain in place moving forward and was one of the real positives to come out of the pandemic.

Now link this in with the work we can do with the community and suddenly we have gone from the service at the end of the line, and therefore the ones who get the blame for everything to a key player in a hub where we become central to families in the supply of information and support.

**David Jennings**  
**Bereavement Services Manager**  
**Altrincham Crematorium**

## ymca together

*YMCA together opens UK's first memorial to honour those who have lost their lives through homelessness.*

North West charity YMCA Together unveiled the UK's first memorial to commemorate those who have sadly lost their lives whilst homeless.

The Homeless Memorial Garden is located in South Liverpool's Dutch Farm; a recreational space for service users of YMCA Together to engage in development activities around agricultural work as well as tending to animals including chickens and pigs.

The memorial provides a sanctuary to remember those known by YMCA Together while also celebrating the lives of people across the wider Merseyside area.

Chief Executive of YMCA Together Ellie McNeil said: "This year, YMCA Together celebrates its 175th birthday and as part of marking this milestone we have been developing a memorial garden for people who have died whilst homeless to provide a welcoming space for friends and families to come to mourn the loss of their loved ones and celebrate their lives.



"Every year, local councils around the UK carry out thousands of public health funerals to cremate or bury people when they have died in circumstances where the family is unable to be traced, or where no funeral arrangements have been made. In these circumstances the person who has died will be provided with a coffin and the services of a funeral director to bear them to the crematorium or cemetery with dignity. For members of the homeless community there is often no way to mourn the friend who has passed away and no place to go to remember them.

"Unfortunately, we see people in the homeless community lose their lives far younger than most – the average age of death for homeless women is 45 and 47 for men. This is arguably one of the most shocking health and social inequalities in our society. We want to ensure that these individuals are not just another statistic and instead that their memory is kept alive." The Homeless Memorial Garden was designed by the team at YMCA Together and its service users who have been involved in every element of the project. This collaborative process aims to aid wellbeing and offers a sense of closure alongside a celebration of life in a peaceful and reflective space at Dutch Farm.



The area includes a plaque wall commemorating the names of those who have died as well as providing a tranquil space for contemplation. The farm houses an abundance of vegetation to represent new hope while the YMCA Together community have contributed to 'yarn bombing' – a form of art that sees trees dressed with colourful knitted and crocheted decorations.

Ellie added: "This collaboration means so much to us and it's been heart-warming to see the people we work alongside take so much pride in creating a beautiful space to pay respect. Although the sentiment is a sombre one, we wanted to include plenty of life with trees and plants and an injection of colour to make this feel like a place of positivity that can uplift and provide optimism.

"It's important for us to not only honour people locally but beyond that too – it really is a place for everyone where they can feel solace from a difficult situation.

"Homelessness impacts thousands of people in the North West and unfortunately we are seeing this increase. As a charity, we would urge anyone who feels at risk to seek help to find a safe place to stay. We've seen first-hand the impact of good support, understanding and care and we want that for everyone who finds themselves experiencing challenges in their lives."

For more information visit [www.ymcatogether.org.uk](http://www.ymcatogether.org.uk)

**Danielle Baldwin**  
Head of Content

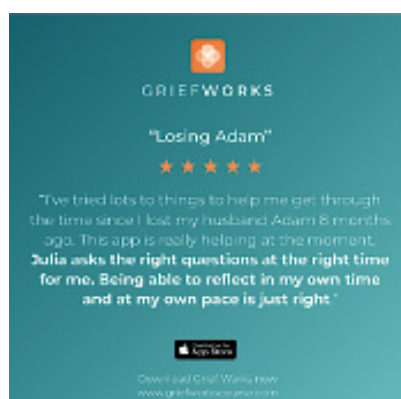
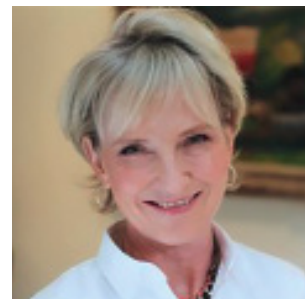
## the grief app

### The reason why I made an app for grief

With more than 4 million deaths due to COVID globally, and an estimated 8-9 people being significantly affected by each death, we're entering a "grief crisis" on a scale the modern world has not seen before. As health providers around the world are struggling to give professional and timely mental health support to the bereaved, we know that the longer a bereaved person struggles alone, the more likely it is they can develop complex grief. Research shows an estimated 15% of all mental disorders arise from unresolved grief.

Here in the UK, waiting times for a bereavement counsellor from the NHS can take up to 8 to 12 months. Grief charities are receiving more calls for help than their volunteers can work with in a meaningful way. Even those working in private practice now have long waiting lists and cannot meet the demand for help.

Then there are the people who aren't reaching out for help. For some, getting therapy is still seen as taboo, and even if it isn't, there can be an additional barrier; that people find it hard to actually access support for themselves. This is confounded by our ignorance about bereavement; unfortunately there's still a prevalent view that you should "just get over it" when someone close to you dies.



If there's one thing I've learned over the years of speaking with hundreds of grieving people, it's that grief cannot be "gotten over" without putting in the work and facing it. And the sooner that work starts, the better the outcomes.

This is why I was instantly keen when Nick Begley (former Head of Research at Headspace and CEO of Psychological Technologies) connected with me to create an app based on my book Grief Works. The book had been a success, but I always felt there was a gap between the experience of someone reading one of my books and actually receiving in-person therapy with me. The idea behind the app was to use technology to help people put the advice from the books into practice; it would be something they could engage with and reach for anytime.

We launched the app to the public this summer, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

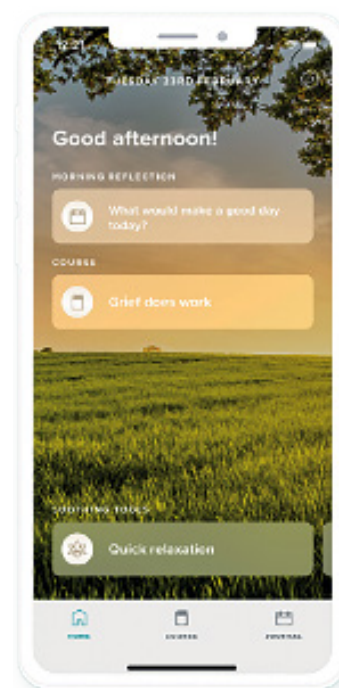
Finally, anyone undergoing the terrible experience of grief can access quality support with just the tap of the phone -- no waiting times or prohibitive therapy fees needed. And no one needs to know: the process is entirely personal and private.

The in-app experience is not unlike speaking with a bereavement therapist -- me. Guided sessions take you through all the common experiences of the bereaved — like regret, guilt, anger, how to deal with milestone dates like anniversaries -- while gently prompted self reflection exercises help you explore what's going on inside, and finally, to find your own, unique way to what I call "the new normal."

There is no one way to mourn, and it's certainly not a linear process. The structure of the app is such that you can dip in and out as you wish, be guided by the sessions chronologically, or do a 5-10 minute practice when you feel the need arise (even if it's at 3 in the morning!). This is really useful for someone grieving because oftentimes, they're so upset that they can't bring themselves to do any more than that. And that's totally fine.

We've also heard from users and clinicians who use the app alongside weekly therapy sessions, and they've found that it accelerates progress, because it can be used all the time, rather than merely once a week. The journal is particularly useful in these cases because it can be shared and discussed during therapy sessions.

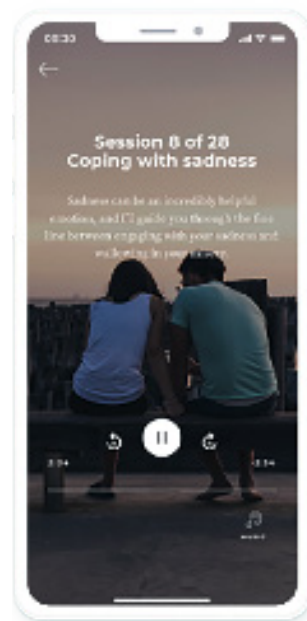
In an ideal world we wouldn't need this app at all. But given the real barriers to receiving quick, accessible and effective support, I'm so glad to be able to offer a resource that I really believe in. The app has been co-created with our wonderful user base, and we're always looking for more feedback to guide us into making it as helpful as it can be.



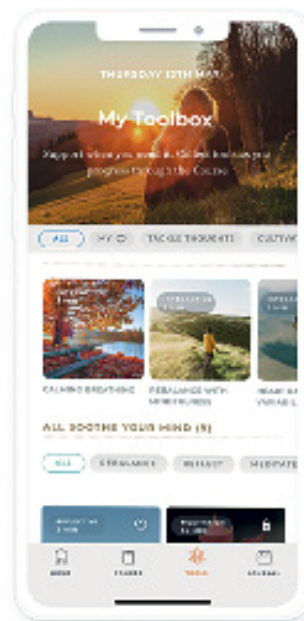
*Julia Samuel's newest grief app was created to provide 24/7 support for the bereaved.*



*In-app journaling gives users a convenient way to jot down feelings and thoughts whenever they need.*



*Julia gives helpful advice over 28 bite-sized sessions.*



*The app also contains more than 30 tools to turn to to help manage emotions that arise, for calming, or aiding sleep.*



*Interactive practices and daily check-ins help users digest what they're experiencing.*

So please do try it out (instructions for complimentary access to ICCM members below) and let us know what you've been finding helpful or share ideas of how we could better support you and your clients.

About the author:

Julia Samuel, MBE, is a Vice President of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and author of two best selling books on grief: *Grief Works* and *This Too Shall Pass*. As a leading grief psychotherapist, Julia has spent the last thirty years supporting bereaved families. She is the Founder Patron of Child Bereavement UK and was awarded an MBE for her services to bereaved children.

All ICCM members can receive a complimentary 3-month trial of the *Grief Works* app by emailing [feedback@griefworkscourse.com](mailto:feedback@griefworkscourse.com) and quoting your ICCM membership number.

If you interested in receiving print material about *Grief Works* to distribute to your clients, please contact [tina.chu@psyt.co.uk](mailto:tina.chu@psyt.co.uk)

**Julia Samuel**

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## Sands spring update



From all of us at Sands we hope you had a lovely break and opportunity to spend time with loved ones. We wanted to say thank you for all your ongoing support and commitment to ensure that no bereaved parent or family gets left behind. For so many families that have experienced baby loss, this time of year can be especially difficult. With so much focus on family and togetherness, winter can be anything but a celebration. Those living with loss can feel even more isolated and alone in their grief.

In 2020 it cost just over £10,000 each week to deliver our bereavement support services across the UK. We simply couldn't continue doing what we do without your amazing support and this month we want to share a special thank you to Jo Walker and her dedicated team at Cannock Crematorium who donated £15,000.

*"I am delighted to receive this generous donation from them, which will allow us to continue to save babies lives, provide vital bereavement support to families whose baby has died and improve bereavement care across the UK."*

*Our heartfelt thanks go to the families who have given their permission for the recycling of metal items, and to the crematorium staff who nominated Sands. We are very grateful for the support of local crematoriums and the ICCM's invaluable metals recycling scheme, which helps to ensure our work continues."*

### **Sarah Finnigan, Regional Volunteering Lead**

*"We are delighted to donate this substantial sum of money to Sands. Baby loss has a wide reaching, devastating impact on the lives of all those involved. We wanted to support the invaluable work of Sands to support anyone affected by the death of a baby and fund research to save babies' lives."*

*This donation has only been made possible because families, in those very difficult days following the death of a loved one, have made the selfless decision to consent for us to collect the metals following cremation."*

*We understand this is a sensitive subject and we want to extend our gratitude to those families who have enabled this to happen. Their consent is vital to the ongoing success of the scheme. We want those families to know that their decision has enabled Sands to help other bereaved families."*

**Jo Walker, Crematorium Manager**



### **Sands' mission**

As we embark on a new year, Sands is even more committed to our mission: making the UK the safest place in the world to have a baby. Sands has a proud history of working with other organisations, governments and healthcare professionals and NHS to transform the baby loss landscape and save more lives. It's thanks to our supporters and partners like you that Sands has been able to play a central role in reducing the rate of deaths from 17 babies a day in 2009 to 13 babies a day in 2020. <https://www.sands.org.uk/13-babies-a-day>

But there is so much more to do. It still means that sadly 4,533 babies were stillborn or died shortly after birth in the UK during 2020. If you would like to find out more about how your donations help us to save more lives, or if you are looking to support Sands, please do not hesitate to contact [Victoria.luk@sands.org.uk](mailto:Victoria.luk@sands.org.uk).

### **The Girl Before: A new TV series from the BBC**

Sands was delighted to support actors and the production team behind *The Girl Before* on the portrayal of Gugu Mbatha-Raw's character, Jane's, experience. We released a trigger warning alongside this, as it features stories of loss. For more information please follow this link: <https://www.sands.org.uk/about-sands/media-centre/news/2021/12/girl-new-tv-series-bbc>

*"We were delighted to be asked to support Gugu Mbatha-Raw and *The Girl Before* production team in their portrayal of the impact of stillbirth on Jane, the main character. Everyone who goes through pregnancy loss or baby loss will experience a uniquely personal bereavement journey but because we have been listening to and supporting bereaved parents and families for over 40 years at Sands we were able to advise the team on how this devastating loss could have affected Jane's inner life and relationships with the other characters."*

I hope her portrayal of Jane's grief will feel true to anyone who has been affected by the death of a baby and that our involvement will also help bereaved parents and anyone

who needs support know they are not alone and to find their way to Sands."

**Jen Coates, Director of Volunteering and Bereavement Support, Sands**

If you would like support, please visit <https://www.sands.org.uk/support-you>. From all of us at Sands, we wish you a happy new year and brighter 2022.

**Vicky Luc, Partnerships & Philanthropy Manager.**



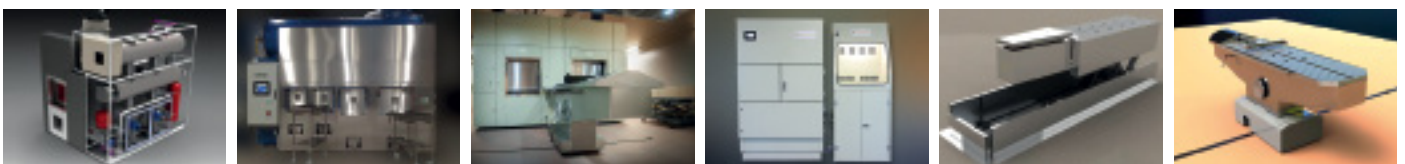
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




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**TGMS** offers an extensive range of services to support Cemetery Managers from inception of a cemetery development project through to practical completion.

## Stage 1




Feasibility study

-  EA Tier 1, 2 or 3 risk assessment
-  Site survey
-  Development recommendations
-  Liaison with the Environment Agency/SEPA



## Stage 2





Design

-  Development of conceptual designs
-  Detailed designs, specification and drawings
-  Assistance with a planning application



## Stage 3





Tender process

-  Production of contractual documentation
-  Despatch of tender packs
-  Analysis of tender returns
-  Appointment of contractor








## Stage 4

Project management

-  Management of construction works
-  Construction materials testing
-  Interim and final valuation certificates
-  Quality control throughout the project



**Contact us:**

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## going the extra mile

*In July 2019, after 10 years of working for local authorities as Assistant Manager / Manager of Bereavement Services I started working at St Georges NHS Foundation Trust as the Trust's Bereavement Services Manager.*

In December 2020 I received a letter, via our health records scanning team, from a couple whose baby had sadly died in 1967, aged 2 days old at St Georges. Their letter was requesting information regarding their baby's death and final resting place.

I immediately made contact with the couple and explained who I was and that I would try my best to find the information for them. I was honest with them and explained that there was a possibility that I wouldn't be able to find their son's final resting place.

They told me that over the years they had made several attempts to find out what had happened to their son as at the time of his death they had no involvement in deciding what would happen to him. But whenever they had previously contacted St Georges NHS Trust, they were told that there was no record of the mother on the system. This was probably because it was so long ago that the records would have been archived.

As you can imagine not knowing what happened to their baby was very distressing for them. I reassured them that practices have changed and parents are now able to make decisions about what happens to their babies.

With their letter they had included copies of their son's birth and death certificates. All deaths at St George's hospital come under Wandsworth registry office, so I immediately contacted Wandsworth registrars to see if they had any information regarding the baby's cremation or burial, but unfortunately their records did not go back that far.

I then contacted the Trusts local cemeteries and crematoria managed by Wandsworth, Lambeth and Merton Councils. I gave them all the information I had but none of them had any record of a burial or cremation for the baby.

I decided to contact our mortuary manager who was able to arrange access to the archived mortuary registers. We found the mortuary release register for 1967 - I checked each entry following the baby's date of death and found the entry that showed that the baby had been collected on 9th June 1967 by a local funeral director.

Because of the handwriting it was hard to read the name / signature of the funeral director, but it clearly said that they were based in Upper Tooting. As soon as I got back to my office, I Googled funeral directors in Upper Tooting but nothing came up that looked similar to the name. I called some of our local long established funeral directors and

after some lengthy discussions one was able to confirm the name of the funeral director who had collected the baby. But, unfortunately, the independent funeral director who collected the baby had ceased trading many years ago so I was unable to contact them to find out where they had taken the baby.



I got back in touch with the cemeteries and crematoria and asked them to search their registers for any bookings under the name of the funeral director that had collected the baby but again nothing was found.

I kept the parents updated and was able to reassure them that their son had been collected by a reputable funeral director and would have been given a dignified burial or cremation.

I couldn't give up looking for him so in March 2021, in a last ditch attempt, I contacted Streatham Park Cemetery in Streatham Vale. If I'm honest I wasn't sure that they would be able to help but it was worth a try.

After a couple of weeks and one gentle reminder from me they emailed me to say they had checked their records and that the baby had been buried in a public grave in their cemetery.

I was delighted to receive the email from the cemetery and I immediately called the parents. The phone call was quite emotional. I explained that their son was buried with three other babies, which I'm hoping has provided them with some comfort knowing that their baby was not alone.

I sent them details of the burial and a copy of the cemetery map and section.

Although they now live in Norfolk and are in their eighties, they are hoping to visit their son's grave, something they would never have had the opportunity to do.

A few weeks later they wrote to me thanking me for all my help. They said that they had almost given up hope of finding their son after all these years and that they are now reassured of his proper and respectful burial.

Having worked within the bereavement sector for many

years, it gave me the wider knowledge and experience of what happens after someone dies. I was able to use this, coupled with perhaps a bit of steely determination, to track down the final resting place of the baby, despite hitting many obstacles on the way.

I hope that we can work towards a more “joined up thinking” approach amongst the many organisations that are involved in the bereavement journey for families and use our combined knowledge to help those that need it. For this

family it was finally finding some sort of closure after a lifetime of grieving.

Following this my manager put me forward for a St Georges Trust 'Living our Values Award'. The Trust's values are: excellent, kind, responsible, respectful. I was proud to receive my certificate of achievement, but would always try to go that extra mile for any family.

**Margi Singh, Bereavement Services  
& Deputy Medical Examiner Office Manager**

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## you may think there's no-one, there's probably someone

*Nick Beetham discusses the importance of finding next of kin.*

In his last two articles (ICCM Journals Autumn and Winter 2021), Nick Beetham considered councils' duties when arranging funerals under s.46 Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 and the merits of tracing next of kin of deceased persons.

The expression “next of kin” has a strict legal meaning and describes a person or people who are either the surviving spouse\* or blood relatives of another - for our purposes deceased - person.

The rules are very generous. If there is no surviving spouse\*, the blood relatives under consideration range from the very closely related (children, grandchildren and so on) via the deceased's parents and then siblings of the whole blood (or, if none, of the half-blood) and their children, grandchildren etc, through the deceased's grandparents to the uncles and aunts of the whole blood (or, if none, of the half-blood) and their children, grandchildren etc. It's a very wide net - if you tot them up, you'll see there are eight classes whose members are potentially eligible to be next of kin in the legal sense.

Our experience over many years and thousands of cases is that even when friends and neighbours of the deceased confidently assert that “there is no next of kin” there almost always is.

The front page headline on the latest Municipal Journal tells us “Services feel the strain – pressure on public services as staff absences increase”. Self-evidently, councils' resources are stretched, with little time to make even rudimentary enquiries – and that's where the private sector can help. We have at our fingertips the tools and expertise to identify and locate next of kin of deceased persons.

Importantly for Councils, this makes it pretty much a given that they can contact next of kin who can, ideally, take on the funeral arrangements themselves or, if the funeral stays under s.46 PHA, attend and pay their respects. In all cases where the deceased has left sufficient estate, the funeral costs will be covered, whether arranged by the family, or if the council is reimbursed for a s.46PHA funeral.

It costs councils nothing to ask the question – “did this deceased leave any surviving next of kin?” The answer is almost always “yes”.

*\*or registered Civil Partner. Where spouses or Civil Partners have separated, a marriage or Civil Partnership subsists unless and until dissolved by Decree Absolute or Civil Partnership Dissolution Order. So even a surviving spouse or registered Civil Partner from whom the deceased has been long-term estranged can be next of kin.*

**Nick Beetham  
Business Development Manager at Fraser and Fraser.**

## a royal visit

*In January 2022 Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, visited Edinburgh Crematorium Ltd's Warriston Crematorium to thank the staff and the wider funeral industry for their efforts during the pandemic.*

The Princess Royal was met by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the City of Edinburgh, Councillor Frank Ross, the Rt. Hon. The Lord Provost and the Chairman of Edinburgh Crematorium Ltd, Rev Neil Gardner who then introduced her to members of staff and invited guests.

These included

- John Proffitt Chief Executive of Edinburgh Crematorium Ltd, who as past President of the FBCA, was also representing the wider burial and cremation industry,
- Mark Porteus President of the Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF),
- James Carcary the Scottish President of SAIF
- Andrew Brown Scottish President of the National Association of Funeral Directors.

Her Royal Highness was then taken on a 40 minute tour of the facilities, following which she planted a white cherry tree to commemorate her visit and to thank all of the staff and the wider funeral industry for their efforts during the pandemic.



*Plaque and inscription thanking the industry for their hard work throughout the pandemic*



*Cllr Frank Ross, Lord Provost and Rev Neil Gardner Chairman of Edinburgh Crematorium Ltd greet Her Royal Highness*



*Industry Representatives*



*National President of SAIF Mark Porteus*



*Scottish President of SAIF James Carcary*



*Scottish President of the NAFD Andrew Brown*



*Her Royal Highness Meeting the staff*



*Rev Gardner saying a few words*



*Tree planting*

**John Proffitt**



## iccm recycling of metals scheme



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



### May 2021 Recycling round up

December 2021 saw the ICCM/Orthometals recycling of metals scheme complete the final round of nominations and awards for 2021. The effects of COVID-19 were devastating for the funds of charities from all of the United Kingdom as well as vastly increasing demand for their services.

The huge excessive death toll also had a deep effect on cemetery/crematorium staff and the bereaved public. Only by the continued support of all these groups could the scheme have continued to build with such success.

It is, therefore, a delight that by the end of December we had broken more records for donations.

I also think that I'm never again going to sit at the desk and worry, *oh dear only a few nominations in, must remind people I've only got 50 forms.*

134 forms later and maybe we did something right, so that's the record on donation requests broken again and as everything's gone out via BACS not cheques, for the first time ever I'm not waiting on cheques being presented, lost or put safe. It's a nice feeling.

Let's do the statistics of it all as well, well I like statistics.

2053 separate nominations made since we began the scheme, donating a total of £13,486,000 to good causes. The December round added another £2,010,000 to that total – which is another record-breaking figure, and I don't think we'll ever break that one. Maybe we should hope that we won't as it was a lot of precious metals from the deceased.

However, if we do more pacemakers then we might.

Back to the stats. 584 different charities have been funded by the scheme and 334 causes have only had a single award, often the smaller causes and that is 57% of all the causes nominated. That's a nice spread of them.

In the December round we had new nominations for big breath - *Abbie's Fund, Abby's Hero's, Blossom Appeal – Colchester and Ipswich Hospitals Charity, Cradle Charity.org, Croydon Health Services Charitable Fund, Douglas Macmillan Hospice, Eastbourne Area Community Responders, Eastbourne District Hospital ICU Department, Edwards Trust Ltd, Help for Heroes, Home-Star Rochdale, Lakelands Hospice, LGBT Foundation, Miscarriage Information Support Service, MND Association - Yorkshire Dales Branch, My name's Doddie Foundation, North Bedfordshire Hospice Care Ltd, Over and Above - North Devon NHS Trust, Poppy Scotland Ayrshire, Prospect Hospice, Scotland's charity air ambulance, Smile for Joel, STARS Children Bereavement and support Services, The Ayrshire Hospice, The Candice Colley Foundation, The Market Place Leeds, The Norfolk Hospice, The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust Charity, The Swan Song Project, Three Ells Trust, Victim Support, Windmills, Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Charitable Fund and Young lives Vs Cancer.*

Some people will know these; if you nominated them, then you should do and for many of us they'll be new and shows how many good causes there are out there and how many new ones are set up each year to meet a need that hasn't been identified before.

Now the rolling top 10 of biggest funded causes through the scheme now stands as follows

- 1 CRUSE
- 2 Macmillan cancer care
- 3 SANDS
- 4 Marie Curie
- 5 Samaritans
- 6 Mayor's Appeals
- 7 Survivors of Bereavement by suicide
- 8 Alzheimer's society
- 9 Air Ambulance services England
- 10 Shooting Star (CHASE)

Once again from everyone at ICCM – to the staff of all crematoria, Orthometals, charity workers and most importantly the families of the bereaved. Thank you...



**Trevor Robson, ICCM Finance and IT Manager**

## iccm recycling of metals scheme



**Following the December 2021 awards of funds, the following press releases and information on charities have been supplied to support the scheme.**



### **Maidstone crematorium donates £15,000 to CRUSE**

Bereavement charity CRUSE will be benefitting from a £15,000 donation thanks to Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) crematorium Metal Recycling Scheme.

The money has been raised by retrieving metals from cremations. The team at the Vinters Park crematorium in Maidstone, in Kent, first gain written consent from bereaved families, then following a cremation any metals from knees and hips retrieved are stored safely and collected quarterly.

They are then taken to Sheffield for separation, sorting, and smelting and a high percentage of the higher-grade cobalt steel is sent to two companies that manufacture new orthopaedic implants. Any lower graded metal is traditionally recycled.

Hannah Yeomanson, from CRUSE, said: "This is an absolutely incredible donation and we are so grateful to everyone involved at Vinters Park crematorium.

"Such a significant donation comes at a very important time for CRUSE, as we are currently experiencing a huge increase in demand for our bereavement support services in and around Maidstone.

"This money will enable us to train new Bereavement Volunteers locally, to support bereaved people in the community through one of the most painful times in life, thank you so much again for this invaluable contribution, which will make a huge difference to so many people."

Cllr Simon Webb, vice chair of the communities, housing and environment committee at Maidstone Borough Council, said: "To lose a loved one is just so sad and stressful, CRUSE provide support to anyone who needs it and I couldn't think of a more worthy charity especially at this time of year. This payment will, I hope, go some way to providing a little comfort to someone who is in need of support at this very difficult time.

"It is heart-warming to know so many local charities have been helped through this scheme. It really is down to the generosity of bereaved families who make the difficult decision to consent to orthopaedic implants such as knee and hip replacement joints being removed from the ashes. We can't thank them enough."

The scheme is run by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) and since joining in 2013 MBC has donated £120,076 to bereavement-related charities. The donations started out as £5,000 and have steadily grown to this latest largest amount of £15,000.

MBC joined the scheme in 2012, prior to this, implants from loved ones used to be stored at the crematorium until there was a sufficient amount and would then be buried within the gardens of remembrance.

As this method of disposal has become less acceptable and like many other crematoriums in the UK and the continent, any metal residue found will be recycled unless the family wishes to make alternative arrangements.

The metals used for implants are special medical grade stainless steel, titanium, and cobalt chrome, which are all produced from non-renewable resources. In the future, these resources will become depleted and such metals will become less available for operations.

Therefore, this recycling scheme helps to protect the environment as well as saving resources and providing potential benefits for the living.

## North Devon Crematorium – Over and Above

A North Devon hospital charity, Over and Above, is the latest charity to benefit from the North Devon Crematorium's role in a national metal recycling scheme.

Today, (Monday 13 December), representatives from the charity were presented with a cheque for £15,000 from the proceeds of the crematorium's recycling scheme, which enables metals from cremated remains to be safely recycled. The money will be put towards The Fern Centre which provides support to those who have received a cancer diagnosis and their families.

Chair of North Devon Crematorium Joint Committee, Councillor Helen Walker, says: "We are thrilled to present this brilliant amount of money to our local hospital charity. This centre, which we are very fortunate to have in North Devon, allows cancer patients and their families access to information, therapy, counselling and other support as well as enabling them the opportunity to stay close to home through a difficult time. I'm sure the money will be well spent."

Over and Above Fundraiser, Julie Whitton, says: "We are overwhelmed with the generous donation from ICCM Metals Recycling Scheme. This money will help the team within The Fern Centre provide support to anyone who has received a cancer diagnosis and is living with and beyond cancer as well as their partners, carers and children. We are specialised in working with the grief and trauma that this diagnosis brings and this money will help us enable patients and their families to live as fully as possible and to manage the anxiety that they may face."

Over and Above is the registered working name of the Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust Charitable Fund. To find out more about the work they do, telephone 01271 311772 or email: [ndht.charity@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.charity@nhs.net)



*Left to right: Councillor Helen Walker, Mark Drummond - Bereavement (Crematorium) Manager, Julie Whitton Senior Charity Officer for Over and Above*

## Lewisham - St Christopher's

Thank you so much for your donation of £15,000 as part of the recycled metals scheme. This is absolutely fantastic and thank you for choosing to support St Christopher's. Your gift means so much to all the staff caring and supporting people across south east London when they need us most.

Over the last few months, we have been pleased to invite outpatients back to both our hospice sites for appointments, physio sessions and complementary therapy treatments. It is wonderful to be able to see people face to face at the hospice, after a year of having to provide much of our outpatient support online with staff working from home.

We've continued to care for people on our wards and our community nurses have been supporting people in their own homes by phone, video consultation and in person. No matter what happens we will continue to be there for people when they need us most - thanks to support from people like you.

Last year, the hospice also introduced a new service, Choose Home, providing care and support in Bromley and Lewisham so people can stay at home with their family in their final weeks rather than be admitted to hospital. Choose Home is provided by carers, registered nurses and trained volunteers who are supported by consultant nurses, clinical nurse specialists and doctors over phone and video.

Our Choose Home volunteers provide a listening ear, make a cup of tea and provide company for those living alone between care visits, drawing on the skills of our carers and nurses as required. Choose Home aims to improve people's quality of life, reduce isolation and help them to stay at home in familiar surroundings. We have received very positive feedback from patients and families for this new service. One daughter of a person we supported to die at home said: "your care assistants took my fear away".

Please accept our sympathy and thank you for thinking of the Hospice and the care we provide for others at this difficult time. Thank you for being part of this caring community and for being there for us while we continue to be there for others.

With best wishes

Carol Endericks  
Senior Fundraising Manager

## Sheffield Council - St Lukes

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your most generous donation of £15,000.00 to St Luke's. Your continued support and generosity will make all the difference to the care we can give to our patients in the future.

Each year we provide specialist care entirely free of charge to around 1,800 local adults who have a wide variety of incurable illnesses. This donation not only allows us to continue with the work we've been doing for 48 years, but it makes it possible for us to look at new, innovative ways of caring for our patients and their families.

We need to raise £7.5 million each year to continue to support the people of Sheffield. Only 25% of our income is from the NHS, the rest comes from our supporters through donations, events and gifts in Wills.

Thank you once again for your help and please do convey our sincere thanks to those involved; we simply couldn't continue in our work without supporters like you.

Yours sincerely,

Joasia Lesniak, Head of Fundraising

## North East Lincolnshire – CRUSE

UK bereavement support charity, Cruse Bereavement support, with the local Grimsby, Cleethorpes & Louth branch benefiting from a £15,000 donation from Grimsby Crematorium.

Cruse offer nationwide support to those experiencing grief after the loss of a loved one. The charity answers some 30,000 calls to their helpline each year and this year alone some 24,000 people have received support from the charity.

The crematorium, managed by North East Lincolnshire council, raised the money from its metal recycling scheme.

The scheme raises thousands of pounds from the sale of recyclable materials which are salvaged following cremations. These usually comprise of metal from the coffin and orthopaedic implants like hip and knee replacement joints.

Relatives of the deceased give their consent before the cremation and collection of metals goes ahead.

Branch manager and administrator at Cruse Bereavement Support, Lesley, said:

"This is a very welcome boost to our finances. It means we will be able to recruit and train new volunteers at a time when our resources have been severely stretched due to the increased demand on our service caused by the pandemic."

To get in touch with Cruse Bereavement Support, you can contact the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Louth branch on 07867 312658 (support-line), or email [grimsby@cruse.org.uk](mailto:grimsby@cruse.org.uk). The national website is also available: [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)- external site.

Councillor Stewart Swinburn, portfolio holder for environment and transport at North East Lincolnshire council, said: "This is the largest donation that we've ever made from this scheme and I'm really pleased to be able to present this cheque to another very deserving cause.

"Losing a loved one is incredibly tough and the impact of grief can really be profound. But with the right support on offer, you won't have to take on that journey alone."

Proceeds from the sale of recyclable metals have been awarded to charity every year since 2014, with a cheque handover taking place twice a year. Since 2014, more than £75,000 has gone towards supporting local and national worthy causes.

This donation is the largest of it's kind to be made from this scheme. Previously, the largest donation from the scheme was £10,000.



# It's time to change...

We're **100% committed** to producing **UK manufactured memorials** alongside our existing granite memorials.

We're committed to using **local companies** and **UK sourced materials**, including **Cornish Granite** and **Westmoreland Slate**, as well as porcelain and natural materials.

**Our in-house design and creative team** can provide options to suit all budgets to enhance any **Garden Of Remembrance**.



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## Epilog Sequel

The most comprehensive, flexible, and powerful administration system for cemeteries and crematoria

### Comprehensive.

Epilog Sequel has been developed over years in conjunction with experienced bereavement services staff, and is designed to handle any task any cemetery or crematorium needs.

### Flexible.

With over 50 separate modules, all designed and tested to work seamlessly with the core system, you can build the Epilog system you need.

### Powerful.

One powerful program to meet all of your needs, enabling you to deliver the very best in complete service and efficient management.

## DESIGNED FOR YOU

Epilog Sequel consists of a powerful core system and a robust collection of optional modules that service all aspects of crematorium and cemetery administration.

You choose the modules that you need.

Epilog Sequel's comprehensive core system caters for every task - with Epilog Sequel installed, you won't need to use another program. Send headed letters from its Word Processor, send emails, make bookings in its diary, generate reports for financial audit, create work orders; manage all your day to day tasks in one place.

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

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

### Clyde Coast Crematorium in Largs donates incredible sum to hospice

The cheque was handed over to Ayrshire Hospice chief executive Carla MacEwan by crematorium staff recently.

The donation came through its membership of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management's Recycling of Metals Scheme.

Crematorium manager Jennifer Hamilton, said: "It is wonderful to be able to donate this sum, especially at this time of year. We are very aware that the fundraising activities of our local hospices have been curtailed during the pandemic and yet their services have never been more in demand. Our heartfelt thanks go to each and every family who have given us permission to recycle metals following the sensitive cremation of their loved one.



"We are immensely proud of our participation in the recycling scheme and since we opened our doors in 2018 we have donated £73,000 to local hospices alone."

Carla added: "The funds raised will be used to continue to provide excellent care to patients with life limiting illness across Ayrshire."

Jennifer added: "Care, compassion, kindness and community are at the heart of everything we do here at Clyde Coast Crematorium. To be able to honour the memory of loved ones by supporting our community hospices is something that we are absolutely committed to, both now and in the future."

### Eastbourne Area Community First Responders - Eastbourne Borough Council nomination

Eastbourne Area Community First Responders is the latest charity to benefit from a metal recycling scheme, which has so far seen £87,000 donated to good causes.

Eastbourne Crematorium is a member of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) national metals recycling scheme.

The volunteers of Eastbourne Area Community First Responders are trained and dispatched by the South East Coast Ambulance Service to provide a first response to 999 emergency calls that are close to where they live or work.

Councillor Alan Shuttleworth, Cabinet Member for Direct Assistant Services, said, "The fact the responders can be on the scene so quickly can be lifesaving.

"Their task once on the scene is to manage the emergency situation until paramedics arrive and then form part of the team under their direction. It's a vital role requiring specialist skills and the ability to work under intense pressure.

"The award will make it possible for the responders to continue their lifesaving work and ensure defibrillators across the town are maintained for years to come."

Alec Stephens - Eastbourne Area Community First Responders, said, "On behalf of the Eastbourne Area Community First Responders (EACFRs) I would like to thank you for the wonderful donation of £15,000 to our organisation@.

This money will allow us to look after the Public Access Defibrillator (PADs) around our town for some considerable time as well as keeping the EACFRs doing what they do best, saving lives.

When the Eastbourne Defibrillator Partnership started in 2016 the biggest concern was the maintenance and upkeep of the PADs in our area, at that time we had only a few but we are now approaching 60 in Eastbourne, with new additions being regularly installed.

We are now in a much better position to continue our work.



## ten practical ways to green-up for cemeteries and crematoria

In a time of accelerating climate change, it is vital for all of us to find ways to reduce the environmental impact of our operations.

*"We are at a unique stage in our history. Never before have we had such an awareness of what we are doing to the planet, and never before have we had the power to do something about that."*

Sir David Attenborough

The bereavement sector is, understandably, conservative and traditional. However, many of those traditions developed through times when burning fossil fuels was not known to be an issue. But now we must make changes. Here are ten practical ways to green-up operations:

### 1. Go paperless

It's not just that we cut down trees to make paper, it's the carbon impact of processing, warehousing, retailing, and delivering all that paper to your office. Add on the miles travelled by the letters you write, and yet more miles and energy go into recycling the piles of waste paper we generate. Instead, put information online, where it's instantly accessible and searchable. Update your forms so that arrangements can all be made online and take payments by card or BACS to avoid trips to the bank with cheques and cash. Save trees while saving on office equipment costs, save time by being more efficient, save space, and save all those travel miles.

### 2. Invest in renewable energy

We have to end our addiction to fossil fuels. Recent instability in the global supply of gas has highlighted the vulnerabilities of gas users. Renewable electricity is the future, especially where power can be generated on-site, so it's a good idea to get on board now and reap the green benefits. Switch suppliers to those that supply green energy. Change your website hosts to one that is powered by renewable, green energy. Plan to replace ageing gas-fired equipment with efficient electric models. Evaluate electrically powered groundworks machinery. In fact, identify all opportunities to invest in more energy-efficient, less polluting kit, from light bulbs upwards.

### 3. Operate plant and equipment at optimum efficiency

Reduce warming-up cycles and plan batch cremations to achieve optimisation. Use smart technology to time peak energy consumption with troughs in demand, reducing energy bills and levelling out demand.

Consider digging graves in batches to optimise the use of machinery on-site and to minimise travel miles. This might mean investing in extra sets of shoring, lids and soil boxes.

### 4. Cut down on waste

By embracing paperless processes, you will have started down this path already. But look at other ways to reduce waste. Require funeral directors to label, collect and return plastic frames, trays and Oasis so that florists can reuse them in floral arrangements. Find ways to collect and use waste heat from the incineration process. One possibility might be to heat greenhouses to grow flowers on-site throughout the year - more on flowers later.

More radically, instead of burning highly decorative coffin after coffin, resurrect the old idea of reusable, decorative coffin covers. With minimal fuss, it should be possible to coordinate





and enable the return of the covers to the funeral directors and burn only the coffin liners/chargers to reduce the consumption of materials. A similar arrangement would be more difficult for burials, where the removal of the cover would be more public. In which case, coffins for burial should be sustainably sourced and locally made to minimise environmental impact.

### 5. Introduce a new policy on flowers

In consultation with local stakeholders, bring in a policy to reduce the environmental impact of all those cut flowers that are brought to cemeteries and crematoria. A sustainable flower is a fresh cut flower that is not treated with pesticides and can be found, grown, and sold locally. We need to end the flow of cut flowers flown in from Africa or grown in hot houses in Holland, held for weeks in refrigerated warehouses and transported across Europe in refrigerated lorries. So, produce a policy on flowers that requires flowers to be locally sourced and sustainably grown; require funeral directors or their florists to collect and reuse floral plastics and Oasis.



Where possible, provide on-site horticultural facilities that use waste heat from the incineration process or from compost heaps to grow flowers throughout the year. Rent this and a sales kiosk to a local, sustainable flower grower business. Provide a centralised location for the display of flowers and cards; this is particularly important where graves are unmarked and memorials no longer have vase holes. A beautiful example of this exists at Skogskyrkogården cemetery a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Stockholm, Sweden (photo by Hans Lindqvist - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28713625>).

### 6. Rethink memorials

Look at the memorials you offer or allow from an environmental viewpoint. Again, consult with your local memorial suppliers and involve them in adopting a new policy on memorials, which no longer permits memorials imported from the other side of the world. This is likely to mean a significant change in style. Consider procuring materials from local, ideally sustainable sources. Limit the size of memorials to consume less material. Include QR codes to link names to online tributes and grave location details.

Grouping memorials away from graves avoids the need for footings for headstones saving money and reducing the carbon impact. The environmental benefits can be further enhanced by managing the land as wildflower meadow or woodland grove.

### 7. Rewild your lawns

Organise mowing regimes to coincide with seasonal cycles, leaving defined areas to grow tall and seed after flowering and regularly mow only margins and paths. Promote and practise Plantlife's "No Mow May" campaign. Identify zones where you can allow biodiversity to flourish; cut paths around blocks of grass where native wildflowers and herbs are encouraged to grow tall. Your new, green florists will supply customers with approved native species of

bulbs and wildflower plugs to contribute to the local ecology. These have deeper roots than cultivated lawn grasses and sequester more carbon into the soil. The denser vegetation holds more water when it rains, refilling groundwater reserves and alleviating surface water run-off and flooding. The extra biodiversity is far better for wildlife.

### 8. Embrace wildlife

Find places to install bat boxes, bird boxes, beehives, bug hotels, ponds and log piles. Offer plaques next to them dedicated to the memory of people who'd have loved the creatures they protect. Invite local wildlife trusts to participate in projects and to offer expert advice. Provide information boards for visitors with links (and possibly subscriptions) to nest-cams or trail-camera footage. Label trees and shrubs with horticultural tags to identify what they are. Give people the tools to identify and understand what they are looking at.

### 9. Influence patterns of behaviour

One of the biggest factors that determines how green a funeral might be is travel. The number of miles travelled by all those who attend a funeral. During this covid pandemic, many have experienced reduced numbers at funerals and there has been an increasing number of unattended direct cremations. For some, it has been a revelation, and they have appreciated having just close family present. Webcams and streamed video have helped in these situations, especially where international distances are involved. Many travel-miles can be saved if families are made aware of the significant environmental benefits. We need to encourage the use of web-streaming facilities as an alternative to large funerals and long-distance travel. We also need to promote car-sharing.

Paperless processes certainly cut down the need to hand-deliver forms before burials or cremations. After a funeral, people will travel to visit a grave more frequently if there is a vase to fill with flowers and grass to tend; a low-cost, local grave-tending service that attends to multiple graves at one visit would certainly reduce travel miles. Another way to influence behaviour is to plug vase holes in memorials with decorative objects, as a substitute for placing fresh-cut flowers every visit. This could offer memorial masons a new opportunity to design and sell alternative mementos (ideally from local, sustainable sources).

### 10. Employ good public relations

Try using professional PR assistance to let the stakeholders and public know about any changes you intend to make. Present and publish your plans in simple infographic format and show the world the transformation you have planned. Supportive local politicians and eco-champions will be delighted to share the news. The wildlife trust you have involved will also welcome the opportunity to tell their members all about it.

Explaining the shared benefits is important. Provide information so that the ecological benefits of the options is plain to see. Do what you can to carry the stakeholders and politicians with you.

You don't have to do it all at once to make a positive impact. Every small step each of us takes to reduce carbon emissions will add up to a huge difference. Changing processes, implementing new technologies and getting everyone on board can take time - but now is the time for us, as a sector, to make positive changes to help save us from climate catastrophe.



## north west group meeting

*A report of the meeting held on 10th December 2021 at Kimpton Clocktower Hotel Manchester*

With what looked like a reduction in Covid numbers and the gradual unlocking by the government, we took the opportunity to arrange a proper old school meeting which we felt was long overdue.

Unfortunately, as the day drew closer, a few people had to withdraw due to operational issues or where some authorities were uncomfortable with staff attending meetings. Interestingly, we could all have met up afterwards in a pub and that would have been ok, but we are all aware of the politics this pandemic keeps raising.

Having decided that as there were enough people still prepared to come we continued with the meeting. Plotbox had agreed to act as sponsors and helped arrange the venue. The hotel is based in the old Refuge Assurance building, which is a big landmark in Manchester and the scene of a fight on the tower parapet in the film, *Hell is a City*. It is worth a visit to look at the architecture alone!



Having gone through the usual introductions and housekeeping, Plotbox took the floor and talked us through their current position and various systems that could be used as stand-alone units to help develop the service, such as diary systems and finance/invoicing and CRM. Having taken questions, we returned to service lead agenda items.

A discussion of filming and what we allow was raised by Salford. Due to the development of Media City with the BBC and other television and film companies, we are now the focus of the location managers looking for the perfect location for their scenes. We have seen regulars such as *Coronation Street* play three authorities off against each other looking to extract the best deal, certain drama series seemingly taking over an entire cemetery with gazebos with little regard to anyone wanting to visit a grave. Everyone had a different tact but it was felt that none of us were getting the best deal for the service out of permitting a crew in to film and there was a feeling that, in a lot of cases, it was not worth the reputational damage.

Next up was the ongoing issue regarding items on graves with an account by Lindsay Bryant from Stockport as to how they looked to try and reclaim and reinstate a lawn cemetery. This was based around the removal of unregulated kerbs and items placed on graves after complaints by families who had bought a grave on the understanding the area would be kept lawned. Work is still ongoing in Stockport but this is an issue we all face and trying to maintain an area is difficult enough without the emotive pressures placed on us by families on both sides.



At this point Mike Gurney from Tameside took the opportunity to formally present my ICCM Fellowship and thanked me on behalf of everyone in the AGMA and ICCM group for my hard work especially sitting in on endless meetings so they didn't have to! Mike said *"We are all so very grateful to Dave for the time and effort he puts in to support us all and to keep us updated with critical information from both the ICCM and other organisations. Dave goes above and beyond and we are all proud and delighted for him that he has been awarded this much deserved fellowship"*.

Talk turned to the large Muslim cemetery allegedly being planned to the north of Manchester. Whilst details are still vague, it was very well received as it would help relieve some of the pressure on authorities to allocate new burial sections when land availability is limited. This led to conversations around the cultural differences in burial requirements and how to fulfil them without ending up providing differing methods and possibly delaying the same or next day provision.

We agreed to keep a watching brief on various things that currently affects our service, such as alternatives to flame cremation, the introduction of Medical Examiners, especially with the community deaths and the CMA, amongst many other issues.

The meeting was brought to a close with an excellent lunch and with the rooms booked for the full day, there was plenty of opportunity for everyone to catch up and do some much needed team building in person.

The date of the next meeting is still to be arranged.

**Dave Jennings**

## St Helens council national grief awareness week 2021

Last year we participated in NGAW, and this year wanted to grow with the experience and idea to support families more. It also seemed to lend itself with this year's theme of spread some warmth.

We therefore collaborated with St Helens libraries and the friends of St Helens Cemetery Group, to support this year's event and agreed to hold 12 warm connections support cafes at each library at different times throughout the week, with one also hosted on an evening at the crematorium to support the bereaved.

The bereavement services team and volunteers from the Friends group attended some of the cafés where they could.

The council also lit the Steve Prescott Bridge orange in solidarity on the final evening, to join many other buildings nationally.

This event was a success and attended by some professionals who support the bereaved, the bereaved both recently bereaved and from two years ago. A group who met at one of the cafes have already met up again at the library in January and arranged another meet up for February, to provide support to each other.



The annual Tree of Remembrance Service also took place during this time and supported 80 people in attendance. It was nice to finally be back together for the tenth annual service.





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Memorial Safety is the first module in the SAMM 'Cemetery and Crematoria Management' family. It is supplied with a central diary system, extensive administrative tools and a communication centre that provides a simple and effective desktop hub. The highly intuitive mobile application is designed to operate on any smart phone or tablet.

Memorial Safety is only the first step. We are developing scalable modules to satisfy the wider needs of your cemetery, including asset management, interactive mapping, maintenance of burial records and much more besides.

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Mitigate the potentially costly and upsetting risk of damage to memorials when preparing neighbouring plots with our new modular protection system.

This system can be erected in minutes to shield the memorial stone and grave from potential damage caused by the movement or storage of soil from neighbouring excavations. The frame can be set up to shield the front face or the entire memorial, depending on risk.

Simple and cost-effective, this protector could return your investment as soon as it saves one memorial stone from damage!

### COLLECTION TRAY TROLLEY



Our new collection tray trolley has been designed in collaboration with crematoria clients, to improve technician safety when moving hot ash around the facility.

The bespoke metal trolley can transport up to six collection trays at a time, it is lightweight and on castors so it can be easily wheeled out of public gaze.

The trolley is heat resistant and steered at hand height via a short handle to the side.

Barry Ellis, of Agecroft and Peel Green crematoria in Salford and Dave Jennings from Altrincham Crematorium, Trafford have introduced the trolleys into their crematoria and found them to be a useful tool.

Barry's review:

**"I think it's brilliant to be honest and a good weight for moving around the crematorium. One of the key things is that it removes the need for the operative to be carrying hot ashes. They can simply place them in the trolley then leave them to cool before placing them in the transfer station."**



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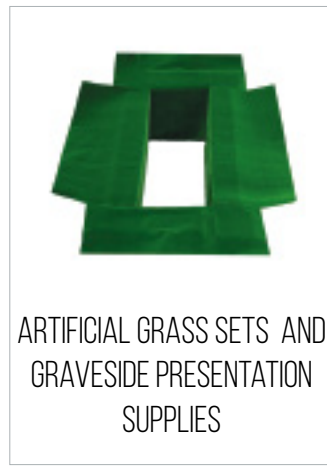
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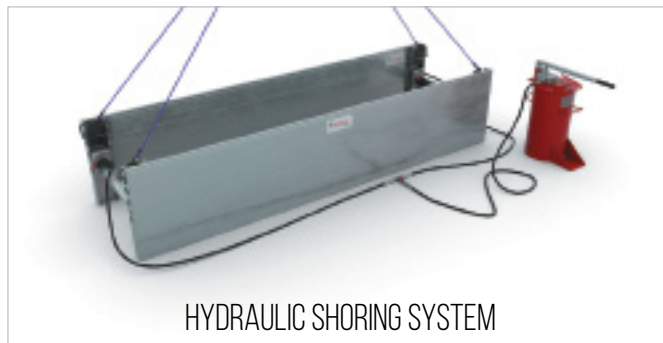
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# greenacres during national grief awareness week



*Greenacres spread the warmth to support the National Grief Awareness week and raise £2200*



*Good Grief Cafés at GreenAcres Parks during National Grief Awareness Week*





GreenAcres Parks across the UK fundraised for The Good Grief Trust and lit up their beautiful buildings in orange for National Grief Awareness Week in December 2021.

The week exists to shine a light on the impact of grief, all six GreenAcres award-winning cemetery and ceremonial parks were proud to be involved as they are only too aware of the need for early access to support for those who have been bereaved.

GreenAcres sees first-hand the impact of bereavement on families, and as part of its role providing personalised funeral services and resting places for people of all faiths and none in peaceful surroundings, encourages people to connect, talk about and share their grief.



As well as giving people the time, space and support to choose their loved one's memorial, GreenAcres wants people to feel supported and connected beyond the day of the funeral. Andy Tait CEO of GreenAcres commented:

"We recognise that the day of the funeral is just the start of the grieving process, and so we give family support services an even higher priority from that day on. Our aim is always to create a space for the living – a sanctuary where people can connect after the loss of a loved one. National Grief Awareness Week has become an important date in our calendar to ensure that conversation is happening."

The week culminated in GreenAcres raising an amazing £2200 from collections at their Christmas memorial services to support the vital work of The Good Grief Trust.

Monthly Good Grief Pop Up cafés run in all their parks for the benefit of the whole community. For more information visit: <https://www.greenacresgroup.co.uk/events/>

**Rebecca James**  
Engagements Relationship Manager  
Greenacres

## tales of a cemetery registrar

### Spring

Goodbye soggy socks and wind blown hair.  
Goodbye snowy paths and icy cold chairs.  
Goodbye the dark filled mornings as foggy days start.  
Goodbye early night falls and noisy milk carts.

Hello sunshine and warmer days ahead.  
Hello spring bulbs that bring hope instead of dread.  
Hello bright sunrise and stunning sunsets.  
Hello new beginnings and friends we've not yet met.

**By Anita Fish**



Development in Progress – March 2021

**CDS**  
Cemeteries  
& Crematoria

# From planning to completion, we're with you every step of the way.

For over 20 years, CDS has pioneered the development of cemeteries and crematoria throughout the UK and overseas.

You may know us as Cemetery Development Services. We have rebranded and expanded but we have made sure we retained all the core values and expertise that enabled us to build our market leading reputation.

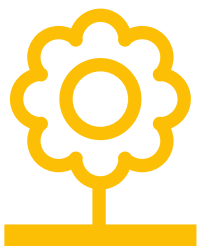
CDS are with you every step of the way from Feasibility Studies, Landscape and Concept Design through to Planning, Construction and Delivery, ensuring a seamless experience from inception to completion.

Our teams of highly qualified specialists - field surveyors, engineers and designers - are committed to creating beautifully landscaped

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

Our Green Agenda also ensures that our developments are environmentally friendly, offer reductions in emissions and pollution whilst helping improve biodiversity.

For more information on how The CDS Group can help, phone us on +44 (0)1525 864387 or visit our website.



## what is a dementia friend?

*A Dementia Friend is somebody that learns about dementia so they can help their community.*

Too many people affected by dementia feel that society fails to understand the condition they live with. Dementia Friends help by raising awareness and understanding, so that people living with dementia can continue to live in the way they want.

Those aren't my words but that of the Alzheimer's Society. The campaign has been running now for eight years and has helped raise awareness by creating in excess of three million dementia friends. The campaign is now running across the world with charities running their own schemes that copy the original one from here in the UK.

So why did I decide to go that little bit extra and become a champion? Having worked in social care roles for over thirty years within local government, I have seen how dementia can impact people's lives. Society still has a very negative view of dementia and those who have a diagnosis. They are generally seen as someone to have pity for, a sufferer.

Over the years I've had to deal with many complex cases, have had to make public health funeral arrangements where one partner has pre-deceased the other, but the surviving partner lacked capacity due to their dementia. I had no training, so had to just get on with it. Even so I tried to ensure that they were involved with the process as best we could.

It's easy to think that's it's the end for someone with a dementia diagnosis, but the truth is that it's not and many people still live well with dementia. There is more to the person than the dementia and that is one of the five key messages we spread. That's why I became a champion, to help people understand that it is possible to live well with dementia.

Our commitment at Finders International is that every member of our team will become a Dementia Friend and that we, as a company, understand the needs of people living with dementia. So, I have embarked on a mission to ensure all of our team have attended sessions, so that staff have that awareness when they are dealing with the cases that are referred to us. My mission also includes spreading the word to our partners and those we work directly with.

As a champion I spread the word, holding sessions, writing about the work of Alzheimer's etc. It's not a huge commitment but it's one that I am actively encouraged to make by my employers and it's one that I passionately believe in too.

So, if you commit to becoming a Dementia Friend what does it involve? You will basically take some simple actions such as visiting a friend/relative with dementia, being more patient in a shop queue, wearing a Dementia Friends badge. All simple actions but pull them together and you can see the change we all make working together.

Hopefully reading this will encourage you all to commit to becoming Dementia Friends. It's really simple, all you have to do is attend an information session and then commit to making dementia friendly actions.

We recently held some online sessions for local government staff and we will be organising more in the next few months.

You can find out more about these sessions by visiting our website: <https://www.findersinternational.co.uk/about/events-training-presentations/>

For more information on the work of Alzheimer's Society please visit their website, where you will find online information and support.

**David Lockwood**  
Senior Business Development Manager  
Finders International



# EPITAPH

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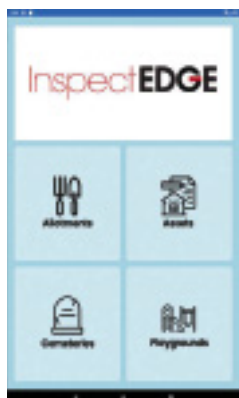
**Our cloud-based cemetery and crematorium administration software provides the state-of-the-art bookings and registration functionality, data security and ease of use that you have always wanted. By adding our HeritEDGE digital mapping and the InspectEDGE memorial inspections app, you can truly be in control.**

**The good news is that you can avoid a costly and time-consuming procurement process by using the Everything ICT framework to make a direct award to EDGE IT Systems for our Epitaph solution... see opposite page for details.**

## Epitaph

- Clearly display the current availability of your burial and cremation services
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- Hold and maintain all your statutory register and paperwork records in a secure digital format
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- [www.epitaph-solutions.com](http://www.epitaph-solutions.com)

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- Memorial inspections app supplied on ruggedised tablet
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- Take up to 4 photographs of each memorial inspection
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- Specify when to reinspect
- Record memorial location via optional GPS link
- Upload to Epitaph, Access database or Excel spreadsheet
- [www.edgeitsystems.com/epitaph/features/InspectEDGE](http://www.edgeitsystems.com/epitaph/features/InspectEDGE)

## HeritEDGE

- Digitised mapping of cemeteries and crematoria
- Online access for users via computers and portable devices
- Direct access to grave status and history by clicking on specific plots
- Publish the HeritEDGE link onto your own website for the public to search and print location maps
- Maps are created, maintained, and hosted online by our specialist mapping partner, Pear Technology
- We have over a decade's experience working with Pear's geo-referenced maps based on Ordnance Survey
- Live link with burial registers in Epitaph software
- [www.edgeitsystems.com/features/mapping](http://www.edgeitsystems.com/features/mapping)



## Easy Transition

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

Our team of experienced bereavement service practitioners and IT professionals are ready to provide a smooth and managed transition to Epitaph.



EPITAPH is the ultimate, cloud software for the management of cemeteries and crematoria.

## No More Need for Tenders

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

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

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

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

EDGE underwent a rigorous application and vetting process, modelled on public procurement best practice which covered all the usual questions concerning mandatory and discretionary exclusion from public contracts. Our application was reviewed independently by a committee of Everything ICT Directors and the CEO of E2BN (the framework contracting authority).

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

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

Full details can be downloaded from

**[www.epitaph-solutions.com](http://www.epitaph-solutions.com)**

**[www.edgelTsystems.com/procurement-framework](http://www.edgelTsystems.com/procurement-framework)**

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



# an introduction to genealogists

*Jo Lander explains the intricacies of a genealogist's work.*

## Introduction

Probate Genealogists, also known as Probate Researchers or even Tracing Agents, work with local authorities and other public bodies, finding the missing next of kin of those who die within their district boundaries.

Government good practice (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-funerals-good-practice-guidance/public-health-funerals-good-practice-guidance#section2>) on the use of genealogists by local authorities was updated last year. It confirms that there is no legal requirement for local authorities to identify next of kin but, where they do choose to use a genealogist, it stresses the importance of carrying out due diligence "to help ensure satisfaction with the provider".

There is some further information on this aspect a little later on in the article.

Often with little information to begin with, tracing in this sector can often be far from straight forward, with some cases involving crossing national and even continental borders. Even on cases where information seems initially plentiful, this can often turn out to be anecdotal and not entirely accurate.

Genealogists are therefore trained to simply follow the research, wherever in the world it takes them; whether that's the other side of the globe or just up the road.

## Tracing Next of Kin

The specialist work of Probate Genealogists can save officers a considerable amount of time, plus help expedite a case. Finding a relative also of course gives them the opportunity to plan a more personal funeral, plus enables the administering of the estate.

You might think that in this ever-connected world that we live in, finding next of kin would be relatively straight forward, yet this is often not the case. People forget to update their contact details when they move residence or drop off electoral rolls and other official databases. In more extreme cases, people simply don't want to be found.

In addition, there can often be historic disputes too which can further hamper locating relatives. On rare occasions, some people do not want to hear about estranged relatives, even about their demise. This is a fact of life in a world which deals with death.

In cases where there is no valid will in place, a Probate Genealogist's work can become particularly important, as it can often be unclear as to whom is entitled to inherit assets. In fact, according to analysis from established genealogy firm Anglia Research, this is a particularly prevalent issue due to the COVID-19 pandemic, showing that up to two in three deaths last year in the UK was intestate.

The research work undertaken checking family trees and verifying entitled beneficiaries can save local authorities valuable time and resource, and ensures that they have made reasonable efforts in finding relatives.

Most genealogy firms will provide their services free of charge to the public sector, with any fees earned through reaching agreements with any next of kin located.

## Genealogists Expertise

The expertise of a genealogist lies in locating and correctly applying historical records to identify individuals. This is not something that can be done from a quick Google search.

A select number of Probate Genealogy firms have been around since 1970's and before, and that type of experience

and exposure simply can't be replicated. To become proficient in tracing people takes years of practice; building up knowledge and learning best practice methods from more experienced colleagues.

The importance and relevance of Probate Genealogists is ever increasing, but it surprises many to learn that it is an unregulated industry with no particular entry requirements. Therefore, reputation and professionalism are key, and whilst many firms have suitably qualified staff undertaking the work, not all do. Therefore, care should be taken in selecting a suitable genealogist to instruct.

### What should I Look For?

Genealogists should be diligent and discerning, with the ability to act discreetly when working with a local authority. Any public bad reputation risks tarnishing the local authority by association.

Any self-respecting Probate Genealogy firm will have a clear and professional looking website which will detail their services. Look for case studies and testimonials on the website. Externally, you could also view online review platforms such as Google My Business or Trust Pilot. Firms need to be able to walk the walk, as well as talk the talk.

Some will even have dedicated Public Sector web pages, detailing exactly what services they offer, and this will likely be a really good source of information. Any that mention fairness campaigns in the public sector should be on your shortlist.

On a more general business level, being fully compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation is non-negotiable, but is the firm also ISO900 registered or even a signed-up member of the Good Business Charter?



And whilst Professional Indemnity insurance isn't a legal requirement, a firm that doesn't have this cover should in all honesty be avoided.

### Accreditation

Accreditation is another big consideration – is the genealogist a member of a professional body? Do they have legally qualified staff with qualifications achieved via the Professional Paralegal Register or CILEX? These are important points to ponder and can point to both the size and perhaps professionalism of a firm.

On a more specific level, is the genealogist a current Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management member and will therefore have participated in training sessions run by the ICCM? Look out for those with a customer or client charter too.

So, next time you are faced with a not-so-straight forward case, don't be afraid to instruct a reputable Probate Genealogist to carry out the heavy lifting for you. Just make sure that you have undertaken your own due diligence first.

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

**Joe Lander**

**Business Development Manager  
Anglia Research Services**



Greenbridge Bespoke Mausolea

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## ceremony of light

*A spectacular light show at the SANDS Memorial Garden at Norse Road Cemetery and Crematorium, Bedford.*



On the evening of Sunday October 19th, the SANDS children's garden was spectacularly lit up to commemorate all of the children and babies who have been laid to rest with us at Norse Road cemetery and crematorium.

The ceremony was the brain child of Mr Paolo Barbarisi who is himself a grieving parent.

The intention of Mr Barbarisi's considerable efforts were to highlight the SANDS garden for those who are less aware of it and also, to deliver a message of respect and love to the lost children, infants and babies who have been laid to rest in our care.

Dusk had just begun to settle in when Mr Barbarisi and his colleagues arrived, setting the scene beautifully for the ceremony to begin.

Mr Barbarisi and his colleagues positioned and set the lights very effectively to maximize the visual extravaganza that the evening promised.

It was now time to "flick the switch", so to speak.

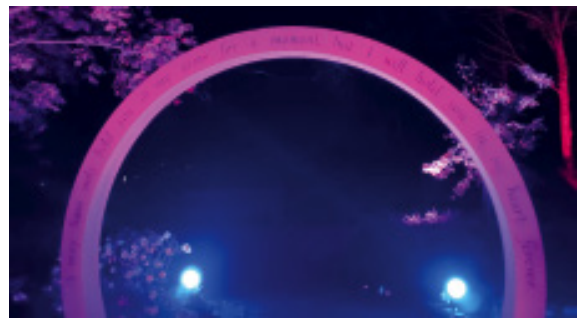
The lights came on and "WOW!"

The SANDS area was transformed into a neon wonderland as if by magic, to the amazement of the bereaved families who had attended.

All of those who attended the ceremony commented on the beauty of the garden and light show, and of the emotional feelings that had been induced by the evening in general.

The ceremony was deemed as such a success that we will be making an annual event of the "Ceremony of Light" for many years to come.





**Roddy McGinley FICCM (Dip),  
Bereavement Service Manager, Bedford Borough Council.**

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A sublime design, high-quality finishing and craftsmanship come together in our Odyssee urns, part of the exclusive FP-Originals collection. A special line of products that have been sketched, designed and produced by Funeral Products themselves. Memorial items that find their inspiration in the artistic aspects of Dutch Design.

The Teardrop has a robust yet gentle design, giving it a luxurious look. Its abstract shape completes the 'drop' design, symbolising a tear which intimately is linked with a final goodbye. A high-quality and above all fair product. Made with love, to pass on with love to those to those who are no longer here anymore.





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# deceased online

Deceased Online is the only national database dedicated to statutory burial and cremation records. Millions of burial and cremation records are available for the general public to search on [www.deceasedonline.com](http://www.deceasedonline.com), supplied from local authorities and private cemeteries and crematoria from all over the UK - and we can help you.

- Deceased Online handles the complete service of scanning, digitisation, indexing, uploading, and hosting of cremation and burial records on its own website.
- Our website has registered users in 95 countries in all 7 continents, and revenue is generated 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
- Deceased Online works with data from any information management system.
- All bereavement services staff for each of the contributing authorities/data owners are able to access records on the DOL website free of charge 24/7, making it convenient and easy to access your historic records.
- All website hosting, development, updates, regulation compliance, enquiries, payment and refunds management are managed by Deceased Online.

Hosting your records in Deceased Online is beneficial in a number of ways. You'll generate revenue from your records. Your records are digitised and therefore preserved. The data we provide from your records is suitable for use in any management system, or even just in spreadsheet format. Providing 24/7 online access for your records to the public will save your staff time. We have unrivalled specialist knowledge and experience to sensitively interpret burial and cremation records, including all aspects of data protection compliance.

### **No Budget? No Problem!**

Deceased Online are currently offering earn out schemes, whereby Deceased Online will recover the amount of the quoted cost of the project through the pay per view revenue until the amount is paid, from which date the owner of the records will begin to receive revenue. Get in touch to find out more.

Tel: +44 (0) 1536 791 568 Email: [info@deceasedonline.com](mailto:info@deceasedonline.com)

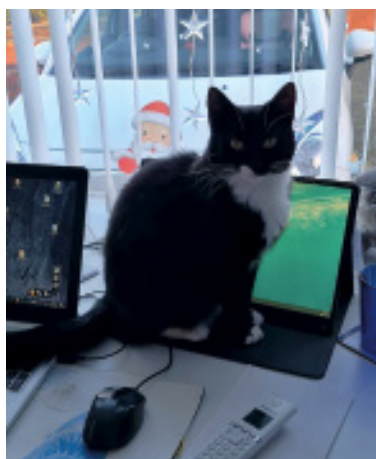
[www.deceasedonline.com](http://www.deceasedonline.com)

## in touch - up north



The really odd thing about writing a piece a few months in advance, is that little question in your head going, “what’s going to have happened since writing this?” Now pre 2020 it would be, well probably not much. Then of course Little Miss Pandemic and Mr COVID, rudely came along, inviting Little Miss Lockdown and Mr Restriction to town.

Thankfully, due to Mr and Little Miss Vaccination, things were gradually getting to a slightly better level, but by the time I re-read this I’m not sure who will have joined the party!



I’m hoping that we’ll have all finally got around to doing the physical Happy New Year’s celebrations missed from 2021 or at least some of them.

Even in a changed office (now downstairs out of the loft) some problems remain at work Flo (Felis Catus)

### **Specialist skills**

- Catching mice, birds, voles and shrews
- Purring loudly
- Keeping humans warm
- Looking cute

### **Known office skills**

- None

Going with optimism for the new year a good bit of housekeeping seems sensible, and this is where you can help us.

If like so many people, in the past year you have moved house, jobs or email providers then we would love to keep in touch with you. I know there are more important people to tell, however, spare us 5 minutes please and let me know - trevor.robson@iccm-uk.com and we’ll make sure your Journal gets to you as well as membership newsletters and all important updates.

We’ve also been good at checking how our courses have been going with feedback. If you’ve attended one and given us feedback, then thank you very much, it has been really positive and useful. Our trainers know that a screen to stare at and talk to can be a bit different to a human being in front of you, but if it works then it’s a positive. Guess what, we’ve had lots of positives and the comments help us tweak things where needed. Again, we ask for 5 minutes of your time for this and if survey monkey is right, then it says it takes 5 minutes to do.

### **Memberships**

It’s the most wonderful time of year... I’ll be sorting out the membership renewals – just to clarify, ICCM subscriptions for 2022 – 23 will run from 01/4/2022 until 31/03/2023 - bills will be issued after the 1st April 2022 and if your employer pays your bill then please send me a purchase order and I will be able to process it that way.

At this time the Board have not indicated a change in fees so they’ll be –

£95 for an associate member

£110 for a fellow or full member

£95 for a parish or town council

£160 for an associate corporate member and finally

£455 for a Local authority or private cemetery or crematorium

### **Final house-keeping – our social’s**

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Please also remember if you’ve missed a webinar then “ICCM TV” is on catch up <https://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/iccm-webinars-on-covid-19-issues/>

Really you can’t get away from us even if you wanted to! A belated happy new year, take care and possibly actually see you in person in 2022 little Daddy Pig logic might be good for us in 2022 and beyond??

Wishing you all Seasonal greetings and a happy New Year.

**Trevor Robson**  
ICCM Finance and IT Manager

## highgate cemetery competition

### *The results of competitions to landscape Highgate Cemetery*

Highgate Cemetery has announced the results of two open competitions to ensure its captivating site is conserved and enhanced for future generations. They attracted leading practices with some of the most creative and internationally recognised expertise in their fields.

The first competition was to find the best practitioners in landscape design to develop a landscape masterplan, and the second was to find an architect-led team to investigate projects to preserve and enhance the historic structures and improve facilities for staff and visitors. This was all based on a comprehensive conservation plan by Alan Baxter Ltd completed in 2019.

The winners were landscape architects Gustafson Porter + Bowman and Hopkins Architects. 'We were impressed by the work and thought that all the entrants put in, but the winners stood out', said Martin Adeney, Chair of the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust. 'Both practices demonstrated a level of sensitivity and respect for the Cemetery which is fundamental to the success of any plans. They appreciate the long-term nature of the project, whilst also bringing the experience and the technical expertise we need. Public feedback from the online exhibition of shortlisted landscape submissions has been shared with the winning teams and we look forward to many more formal and informal opportunities for people to engage with our plans as they take shape.'



Gustafson Porter + Bowman (GP+B) showed how working with the historical and natural character of the Cemetery will ensure that visitors can enjoy a tranquil and peaceful experience with a mixture of shady glades and more open grassy meadows. Their approach to planting and trees aimed to create a resilient and sustainable landscape for future generations. To protect against new diseases - such as ash dieback - a mix of planting will be explored, increasing biodiversity on the site and widening the range of ecological systems which can be supported. The team will look at ways to link the landscapes of both sides of the cemetery sympathetically and to frame and enhance some of the historic vistas towards St Paul's and central London.

The GP+B team is led by founding partner Neil Porter who said: 'We are looking forward to building a relationship with the local community, extracting and sharing Highgate Cemetery's wealth of stories, and implementing an 'experience plan' for a sustainable future.' Other members of the team include Jo Thompson Landscape & Garden Design, Max Fordham, Bartlett Tree Experts, Donald Insall Architects, Tim O'Hare and Ashgrove Ecology.

The second competition focussed on built structures, both existing and potential new ones. Hopkins Architects will use condition surveys to inform a careful programme of repair and conservation. Their new work will celebrate the gravitas, unique history and rich symbolism of the site.



Balancing the functional requirements of a working cemetery with the demands of an increasing number of visitors, they will be asked to design improved facilities for grave owners, volunteers and staff, and unlock the potential for enhancing the visitor experience. Ideas are at a very early stage and will be considered as part of the wider master-planning for the Cemetery.

Hopkins Architects has, over the last forty years, completed many award-winning projects, both in the UK and internationally. The practice specialises in contextual yet modern design for historical or sensitive

locations, with an approach that is deeply rooted in an understanding of place, and local and cultural needs. Some relevant examples are Norwich Cathedral Refectory, the Alnwick Garden Pavilion and Glyndebourne Opera House in Sussex.

The lead for Hopkins is Principal architect Simon Fraser, who lives near Highgate Cemetery and has a keen interest in the historical layering and meaning of cities and places. He said: 'We are delighted to have won the Highgate Cemetery architectural projects competition. Our approach will celebrate the gravitas, unique history and rich symbolism of the site and balance the functional requirements of a working cemetery with the demands of an increasing number of visitors.'

Other members of the team include Webb Yates (Structural Engineers), Skelly & Couch (Services Engineers), West Scott (Heritage Consultants), and Nick Perry Associates (Principal Designer).

As plans develop we will keep you informed.

**Ian Dungavell**  
Chief Executive at Friends of Highgate Cemetery

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## full circle

*Suzanne Ruggles speaks about the founding of Full Circle Fund Therapies.*

### Why did you decide to set up your charity?

In the 1990s I had a successful London based design business, my clients included royalty, ambassadors, and Hollywood actors. However, in 1996 I was diagnosed with Lupus (SLE), an incurable, potentially fatal autoimmune illness. My consultant informed me that the cause was not known but he said unequivocally, it was certainly exacerbated by stress. He added, 75% of illnesses are stress-related and urged me to find a way to control my stress. I asked him for guidance on where to go or who to contact but he replied: 'I have no idea'. I had no idea either at that time. I had no skill set for managing my stress or my now deadly diagnosis.

Stress or its impact on my health had never been on my radar before. Realizing that if I didn't have my health, I didn't have all of my life. I made the decision to concentrate on what my doctor had told me and started from scratch to learn what I needed to manage my stress levels in the hope that I could find a way to co-exist – at least - with this illness. I researched, explored, and received a few therapies. My blood tests began to show what I already had begun to feel within myself; my symptoms were easing and concurrently, I felt more peaceful and more in control.



This new state of wellbeing led me to a fascination in the mind-body connection, and in due course to study Health Psychology. My newfound interest in the science of relaxation and positive psychology led me to undertake two trips to Harvard Medical School to hear firsthand the research work of Dr Herbert Benson MD and his team. This was where I first came across the science of the Relaxation Response and research into the beneficial effects in the brain after meditation and Mindfulness. Eventually I received a Master's in Health Science from St George's Medical School, University of London.

### About Full Circle

In 2001, I set up my first project for St George's University Hospital, London – one of Europe's largest hospitals. The project was the first of its kind in the UK and was focused on the haematology unit. The aim was to support blood cancer and transplant patients who endure months in isolation rooms undergoing intensive chemotherapy. I could see also at that time that there were many other brave patients who didn't have a cancer diagnosis but who had equally devastating diagnoses, but who did not have access to this project (as it was, at the time funded only for cancer patients). I knew the importance of this work and that it should not focus on one illness or just one patient group, instead, I have always believed it needs to be accessible equitably in the NHS and crucially at the point of most need – wherever that need is. It didn't take long for our project to expand to oncology, paediatric medicine (including a pioneering project for ex-premature babies who have had multiple surgeries) as well as paediatric and adult intensive care and neuro rehabilitation.

We specialise in funding highly skilled integrated medicine practitioners who, prior to Covid-19 provided around 2000 free treatments a year to extremely sick children and adults. At the start of Covid-19, we took our know-how online, partnered with global experts in resilience, mindfulness and nutrition so that we could continue to support hospitalized and shielded patients and their carers and of course to support NHS staff during the crisis too. Our Wellbeing Hub has to date, supported over 10,000 people in its first year.



At the heart of what we do is to acknowledge the 'whole person' at the centre of medical treatment. In the Full Circle approach, we are not looking at a patient with a collection of clinical tests for a life-threatening diagnosis. We see the whole person and work from there to support their mind and body with the aim of strengthening their resilience to endure the many rigors that may lie ahead. The more intensive the treatment or more life threatening the diagnosis, the more important this aspect of our work is.



We believe it is essential – to keep a patient feeling human. We work closely alongside our many medical and nursing colleagues who share our ethos and it is they who call for Full Circle to be present in the care of their very sick patients.

We offer a choice of evidence-based and evaluated mind-body interventions which include clinical massage, reflexology, reiki, mindfulness, Relaxation Response breathing techniques, clinical hypnotherapy and visualization. Our role is to help that person reconnect to where they can experience a sense of stillness and then to locate within themselves an often profound and enduring sense of calm. To a frightened, embattled spirit, already coping with the uncertainty of a life challenging illness, as well as enduring pain and complex side effects, these moments of deep calm can be transformational. We call this state 'remembered wellness' and we witness the impact of this on our patients' lives daily.



Full Circle has something special about it; it seems to attract just the right people at just the right time. Even in times of great challenge we find a way. This is why we were so thrilled to receive the support of the ICCM and to receive your immensely generous donation of £10,000. Your support came just at the most critical time as we begin to bring our team back, safely, onto the wards. Receiving your donation has allowed us to plan for this and imminently we will be restarting our Covid-era service on the paediatric wards with a specific focus on teenagers with life-limiting eating disorders, children with Sickle Cell Disease and those coping with trauma and recovering from neurosurgery.



Wellbeing focus in hospitals is not just for patients (although that is so vital) but it is urgently needed for NHS staff too. Our expertise in wellbeing has never been more needed. Before Covid we have always believed NHS staff wellbeing is central to the care of very sick patients, and have found ways to support them but it is even more vital now because of the pandemic and we are determined to reach as many NHS Trusts as we can to offer them our support at this critical time in the NHS.

We are uniquely positioned and have the know-how to bring the right expert people who, with us, share the same values and ethos that whole person support for the most sick in our hospitals and for those who are caring for them. This whole person care is undoubtedly one of the most essential aspects needed in today's healthcare. This is why we are so incredibly grateful to the ICCM for your generosity which enables us to continue to plan for, and deliver, the sort of care that makes life worthwhile for those who need it most.

**Suzanne Ruggles**  
**Founder and CEO of Full Circle Fund Therapies**

#### **About the Founder.**

Suzanne Ruggles was a celebrated designer before a diagnosis of Lupus (SLE) changed her life's direction. Her experience led her to study the science of mind-body medicine in the UK and US and led her to establish an award-winning hospital project at St George's Hospital, London. Six years later in a near-death experience caused by bacterial meningitis, she understood firsthand the importance of caring holistically for the most vulnerable patients, and why this is needed in modern healthcare. Suzanne is an author and lectures widely in schools, universities, conferences and has presented her work to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Integrated Medicine.

Suzanne's memoir *Coming Full Circle: A Journey to the Edge and Back* (2019, Balboa Press, part of Hay House), is available on Amazon and all good bookstores.

## company news

### welters® organisation worldwide

As we finally start to emerge from the cold winter weather, we continue apace with our on-site product and systems installations, as well as advancing our manufacturing facility to continue to provide our products on a supply only basis.

From our vast selection of burial chambers to our Made in Britain Environmental Rock products, our installations provide practical and aesthetically superior solutions within the bereavement industry and beyond.

Our chambers range in size from small cremated remains options to single, multiple and extra-large interment full body systems. They can all be installed with or without one of our many available stone memorials options.

Please visit our website ([www.welters-worldwide.com](http://www.welters-worldwide.com)) or email us directly ([admin@welters-worldwide.com](mailto:admin@welters-worldwide.com)) for further information on our products and services and to find out more about our Made in Britain philosophy.

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### Columbaria Company

Following up on our promise “A time to change” we are currently manufacturing, along with our local suppliers, a new range of UK manufactured memorials for both indoor and outdoor.

These will be both sustainable and cost effective and will compliment our current granite memorials. Using both Cornish granite and Westmoreland slate as well as porcelain we hope to be in a position to showcase these from spring onwards. Our creative design team are working tirelessly to produce new innovative products for the gardens of remembrance including a range of UK manufactured rose, daffodil and poppy designs all of which can be inscribed on sustainable materials.

Our “Forget You Not” concept is proving very popular so please feel free to ask where we have these in situ around the UK. We are currently working on bespoke designs for memorial walls also using sustainable products. The first “Blossom” tree will be installed early spring/summer and these can be installed both indoors and externally onto walls.

Our website is constantly being updated so please visit [www.columbaria.co.uk](http://www.columbaria.co.uk)

THE  
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COMPANY

## company news

### Memoria

#### **The changing face of funerals in the U.K.**

Innovation was creeping in, the pandemic has really changed people's attitudes.

Since the beginning of this century, many of the crematoriums and cemeteries around the country were gradually beginning to look at modernising and introducing new technologies to meet the changing attitudes of the public towards traditional funeral services.

The pandemic has undoubtedly fuelled the advance in this and Memoria Funeral parks around the country have taken the initiative and created some stunning facilities offering every conceivable option and turned the basic funeral service into a warming, affordable celebration of life service.

Families across the U.K. have embraced this and it is now becoming standard in knowing that you can choose the location you want to hold the service at, choose the length of time you want the service to run for, choose your own music and pictorial displays, have options on stunning 5g projections and colours of LED lighting and have the highest quality of streaming options nationally and internationally to share the service with whom you choose to.

Delays in staging end-of-life services have become less and less acceptable and the actual arranging of a funeral service has become a much more streamlined process, with the government introducing changes at the outset of Covid-19 that allows families to exchange documentation electronically and families now have access to talk to someone about their circumstances 365-days a year.

Memoria has also fully recognised the local communities that surround its beautiful facilities, and this year are holding several events and introducing a plethora of cultural options to support the diversity in our towns and cities across the UK.

In their North Oxfordshire grounds Memoria introduced the country's first electric operation that has reduced the carbon footprint by 95%, in North Hertfordshire they are installing stunning private gated family burial gardens and Mausoleums. At their South Leicester memorial park, they are installing a Hindu Shrine for the local Asian community, and they have extended the burial choices at many of their facilities.

Across this year Memoria are staging several events to mark the very important commemorations we will see throughout 2022.

At their North Oxfordshire grounds and at Memoria Barnby Moor in the East Midlands on 14th and 21st May, there will be 7pm commemorative services to mark the 40th anniversary of the Falklands conflict in 1982, where 255 British soldiers lost their lives. The Military wives will be in full voice, supporting services delivered by the Bishop of the Armed forces, there will also be a soloist, a bagpiper and a bugler will take us into the spring sunset at each event.

During the summer, they will be unveiling 11 platinum jubilee gardens to commemorate Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 70-years on the throne. These very special afternoons will have live contemporary music and a wonderful buffet in the safety of the open air and gives everyone everywhere a chance to recognise Her Majesty's achievements and join the celebrations at local level.

And finally, Memoria continues to extensively support national and local charities, this year will see funding to Macmillan Cancer support exceed £300,000 and they are making significant contributions to Child Bereavement UK and many other smaller local charities close to their communities.

For full details of everything happening at Memoria across the UK please visit [www.memoria.org.uk](http://www.memoria.org.uk)

MEMORIA 

## company news

### Plotbox

#### What's on Your Mind?

Two years since our world changed we wanted to understand what bereavement services providers - the often forgotten frontline - have been most focused on. In speaking with customers and industry professionals, three themes emerged: **Tech and Transformation, People and Processes, and Operations and Planning**. Here is a very brief snapshot:

#### TECH AND TRANSFORMATION

##### "What is digital transformation?"

Digital Transformation has become something of a buzz phrase, and unquestionably, the pandemic has changed how services and business interact with their customers.

In its simplest form...digital transformation is, "the adoption of digital technology by a company to improve business processes, value for customers and innovation."

For many, change can be daunting, however in our experience, where organisations had previously been considering upgrades to their current systems, this 'nice to have', was becoming a 'must have.'

#### PEOPLE AND PROCESSES

##### "How can I save time?"

Time. There is seemingly never enough of it. We're often asked how organisations can become more efficient. A common thread is the amount of time and effort required to do simple tasks, Quite often, that can be as a result of operating multiple systems, inefficient workflows or an over-reliance on manual tasks.

With a single, integrated system, tasks can take a fraction of the time. Changes don't need to be huge straight away - single, simple changes such as removing an unnecessary task, automating a step, or digitising a form can help.

##### "What do I do with all this paper?"

Very often, we see organisations that are heavily reliant on paper. Deceased records are often captured in old, delicate ledgers. Paper maps are quickly deteriorating and are sometimes of questionable accuracy. Burial instructions for grave diggers for example, are sometimes printed and delivered to teams. All of this is time consuming, and prone to error in a setting where mistakes can not only be difficult for the families, but also increase the risk of legal action.

It can be heartbreaking to hear about loss of records or maps due to fire or water damage etc., and it is at those times, that the importance of having data stored in the cloud becomes clear - ensuring it's backed up, protected and easily accessible.

#### OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

##### "How can I manage my inventory more effectively?"

Another common 'pain point' of using disjointed legacy systems is a low confidence in data, making it nearly impossible to be sure of available inventory. Operations teams have been telling us that managing available inventory continues to be a significant challenge for them - and specifically the complications it poses for the audit process.

Being able to view data on what's selling and where is an important consideration for operations teams and knowing exactly what you have available may become even more important as burial spaces become more scarce.

For more, visit: [www.plotbox.io](http://www.plotbox.io)



## achievements and awards recognised - afternoon tea!

### *Covid, What Covid!*

We at Nene Valley crematorium are very proud of not only getting through the worst of the Covid-19 lockdown with little impact on us because we adopted a “can do” approach, but what we as a team managed to achieve during the external chaos happening around us.

Our achievements including:

Success in being selected to receive The Northamptonshire Rose Award, raising our Bereaved Charter **Gold** Award position by 6 points, presentation of a £10,000 donation to our chosen charity from the recycling from metals scheme, and finally four team members passed their cremator technician training scheme certificate (CCTS).

So how do you celebrate all this in one afternoon, well, once we were allowed to dip a toe in the water, our events and commemoration assistant (me) organised a wonderful traditional afternoon tea with special guests and team members - because of restrictions at that time we were only allowed to have 30 people in attendance.

**Rose Award** - our awards ceremony started with the Northamptonshire Rose Award. This was to be presented by the High Sheriff of Northamptonshire. However, the day before the presentation the High Sheriff received a positive covid test and sadly was unable to attend (that Covid still trying to get in our way). That was not going to stop our afternoon of celebrations. Our very own Councilor David Brackenbury (portfolio holder for bereavement services) stepped up at the last minute and gave us a brief rundown of what the award was all about, how we had been nominated and finally how we were chosen to receive such a high honor, which primarily was for keeping people safe during an unknown and fearful time, balanced against complying with the law/guidance, but from a pragmatic “bereavement-led” approach. We are very proud of this award and were named by dignitaries as the unsung heroes of the pandemic.



**‘To recognise those who have worked tirelessly as part of the COVID-19 response effort, Northamptonshire County Council, alongside the High Sheriff’s office and Lord Lieutenantcy launched the ‘Rose of Northamptonshire’ award scheme in October 2020, to recognise the county’s ‘unsung heroes’ of the COVID-19 pandemic.’**

**Bereaved Charter** - Our business adheres to the ICCM standard, and processes and our aim is to keep to the highest standards as governed by the Charter for the Bereaved– our bespoke “standards” policy supports us with this. Nene Valley crematorium has only been open for five years and in our first three years we went from bronze status straight to gold status, bypassing silver, which we were over the moon to have achieved this is such a short space of time. We are always doing our best to keep to the highest standards so when we were told we not only kept our gold standard award, but had improved our position by 6 points, we knew this was something else to celebrate, because we could have achieved so much more had that Covid not been in the way!

We enjoy working through the various sections of the Charter to improve “standards” and service provision year on year for bereaved people. We support this by including a team target within our individual annual

performance development review process. This award was presented by the chief executive officer (CEO) of the ICCM, Julie Dunk, to our own manager Tracy Lawrence. Tracy was immensely proud and honored to receive this award on the team's behalf and said how proud she was of her team and expressed this was a one hundred percent team effort.

### Recycling of metals

**scheme** - The CEO then moved on to tell us all about how the ICCM recycling of metals scheme was started and how the metals are collected. The scheme was started in 2006 and has raised just over £11 million pounds so far. The money raised in this scheme is then distributed between its members. This year we were given a huge sum of £10,000 to give to a charity of our choice. This year we donated our cheque to Marie Curie because of their support to the crematorium at a former open day event, and because one in two of us will suffer from this unforgiving disease. It is likely that we all must know of someone who has it, or died from it 😞 Our chair for the board of directors, Councilor Paul Bell felt privileged to present the cheque to a nurse in attendance - we were thrilled to have three nurses come along to our afternoon tea, who were very emotional when telling us how the money would be spent and how they have struggled during the pandemic as they have not been able to do any fundraising of their own.



**CCTS certificate** - Finally, but by no means least, it was our turn to celebrate our own personal successes. The ICCM trainer for cremating, Mathew Crawley, would have loved to come and present these awards but due to family commitments he was unable to attend as were two of our own staff. The CEO stepped up again to the lectern to explain what is involved with the CCTS certificate. As one of the candidates myself, I can tell you at the age of 64 I would never have thought for one minute that I would have been able to pass because it had been a long time since I was at school. But with the help and support of the team and my mentor Tracy Lawrence, I got through it, and passed! The CEO presented me with my certificate, and Richard Porter (team member) received the same certificate on behalf of Phill Castree who unfortunately was on holiday.

We all then transferred from the ceremony hall/chapel to our outside courtyard area, where we reconvened to experience the afternoon tea. It was very civilised and pleasurable, with much chatting over tea, drinking from china cups too, "standards" 😊 but that covid did restrict us to eating from individual boxes. There was debate over, is the star attraction of any afternoon tea pronounced, scone or scon – what do you think? For fun, answers to enquiries@nenevalleycrematorium.co.uk and finally, the sun shone on us too 😊



**Kathleen Walker**  
Events and Commemorations Assistant

## talking about death

### *A community event in Newport South Wales*

We are two PhD students George Gumisiriza and Sam Hooker based at the Centre for Death and Society (CDAS) at the University of Bath. George conducts research into body repatriation among African Communities while Sam conducts research on caring for the body in the home after death. Our early career research is in the UK context.

We believe it is important to engage the community in conversations around death and dying. Notably, talking about death seems to create social cultural anxieties across diverse communities. Is it taboo to talk about death? Has the current Covid-19 pandemic made it easier for people to talk about death in the UK?

Considering these questions last summer, we hosted a community event in Newport South Wales. It was funded by the ESRC Southwest Doctoral Training Partnership and hosted by Cwtsh, a local community library and arts centre. In two sessions held a fortnight apart on Wednesday the 28th of July and the 11th of August, members of the Newport community came to discuss Death, Funerary Practices and Cemeteries.



The group was small due to Covid-19 safety measures, but the discussions were lively and animated. During the event attendees made comments on it “not being a British thing to talk about death” yet many thought death is something we should be talking about and reflecting on. The daily reporting on Covid-19 losses has probably made death sound more familiar than before.

Two observations could be made by the end of the sessions. Firstly, that attendees were not scared to talk about death (in fact they seemed to rather enjoy it) but they often waited for others to start the conversation rather than initiate it themselves. Secondly, that it is easier to talk of the death of others or death in the abstract than it is to talk about our own death, with “I” or “We” coming into limited use. These were important observations in relation to questions that potentially inform our individual research work.



Session 1 looked at the “bizarre” death of the British poet and novelist Thomas Hardy. He wished to be buried in his local church yard in Stinsford, Dorset near the graves of his parents and first wife (Cox, 1968). Yet, due to his fame there was also a desire from some for a state funeral at Westminster Abbey. Therefore, a strange and extraordinary compromise was struck wherein his heart was removed prior to cremation and buried at Stinsford, while the ashes were interred in Poets Corner during a national service at the Abbey (Jalland, 2010). The discussion therefore centred on how fame can be used to defy the wish of the deceased.

In the second session Western/Welsh funeral practises were compared to Afrocentric Perspectives on death. Parallels were drawn between the Welsh funeral practices of the 19th-20th Century and contemporary African funeral practices. For example, there is a shared belief in death omens including the howling of the Welsh *ci corff* (corpse dog) and the fox bark close to a home among some African societies in Africa.

Both sessions included a screening of Arnos Vale Cemetery’s ‘A Place to Remember’. A series of exhibition films that take you through the transformation of the Bristol site; through time from a reconstruction of the Victorian Cemetery to the valuable green community space that it is today. After seeing these films participants were keen to speak to leaders about getting more done to rejuvenate local cemeteries.

We welcome ideas for future talks or collaboration.

### References

Cox, S., 1968 Concerning Thomas Hardy: a Composite Portrait from Memory. Eds Barber, D.F. London: Charles Skilton Ltd.  
Jalland, P., 2010. Death in War and Peace. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## pulpit: the Aberfan disaster, 1966

*The Aberfan disaster was the catastrophic collapse of a colliery spoil tip on 21 October 1966.*

The Aberfan tip had been created on a mountain slope above the Welsh village of Aberfan, near Merthyr Tydfil, and overlaid a natural spring. A period of heavy rain led to a build-up of water within the tip which caused it suddenly to slide downhill as a slurry, killing 116 children and 28 adults as it engulfed Pantglas Junior School and a row of houses. The spoil tip was the responsibility of the National Coal Board (NCB), and the subsequent inquiry placed the blame for the disaster on the organisation and nine named employees.

There were seven spoil tips on the hills above Aberfan; Tip 7—the one that slipped onto the village—was begun in 1958 and, at the time of the disaster, was 111 feet (34 m) high. In contravention of the NCB's official procedures, the tip was partly based on ground from which water springs emerged. After three weeks of heavy rain the tip was saturated and approximately 140,000 cubic yards (110,000 m<sup>3</sup>) of spoil slipped down the side of the hill and onto the Pantglas area of the village. The main building hit was the local junior school, where lessons had just begun. Five teachers and 109 children were killed in the school.

An official inquiry was chaired by Lord Justice Edmund Davies. The report placed the blame squarely on the NCB. The organisation's chairman, Lord Robens, was criticised for making misleading statements and for not providing clarity as to the NCB's knowledge of the presence of water springs on the hillside. Neither the NCB nor any of its employees were prosecuted and the organisation was not fined.

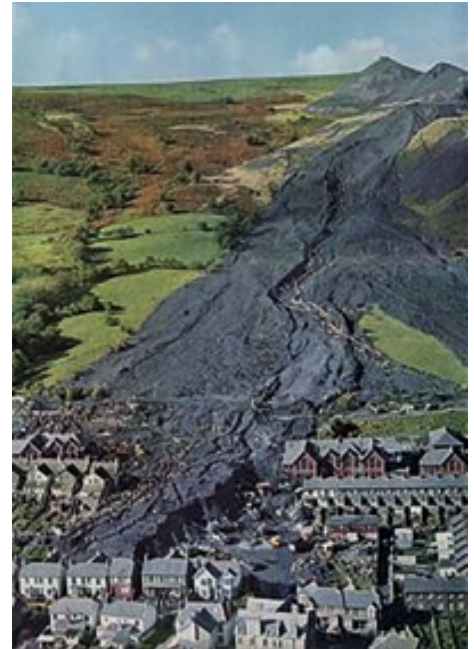
The Aberfan Disaster Memorial Fund (ADMF) was established on the day of the disaster. It received nearly 88,000 contributions, totalling £1.75 million. The remaining tips were removed only after a lengthy fight by Aberfan residents, against resistance from the NCB and the government on the grounds of cost. Clearing was paid for by a government grant and a forced contribution of £150,000 taken from the memorial fund. In 1997 the British government paid back the £150,000 to the ADMF, and in 2007 the Welsh Government donated £1.5 million to the fund and £500,000 to the Aberfan Education Charity as recompense for the money wrongly taken. Many of the village's residents suffered medical problems, and half the survivors have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder at some time in their lives. (From Wikipedia).

My wife Marion and I went to The Brecon Beacons on 21st October, 2021 to spend a few days with our son Toby and his wife Mell and their daughter, Ash. Mell announced that the day was the 55th anniversary of the Aberfan disaster and suggested we drove the short distance to the former school site to pay our respects and see what was happening to it now.



Memories of the chaos came back to me. I had been just 20 years old in October, 1966, and I remembered painful images of the site. The shock of what happened returned to my mind and I was unable to prevent my tears for much of the visit.

The school buildings were eventually demolished and the site was made into a memorial garden (below) and is a peaceful, calm and respectful place for visitors, both members of the families affected by the disaster, local villagers and others, like our party, who just wanted to share their grief for a while and ponder the whole disastrous event and everything







*The dedication of the memorial garden feels mature and sadly accepting of what could never be put right.*

shine and are very clean, and present a shattering memorial to everyone who died, after no fault of their own, but as a result of the National Coal Board failing to take responsibility when they realised that the water springs presented a life-threatening risk to those in the village below. Nor did they act immediately to remove the other colliery spoil tipped above the village, in what is a shocking failure to face up to responsibility.

The world-wide request for support presented the village with a large amount of money, none of which could, of course, restore the loss of so many lives. A lot of negative fuss was made of the fact that so many people sent gifts of toys to the village.

A sense of the ridiculous was in the air at what was seen as a useless or even insulting set of gifts. After some consideration, I decided that these gifts of toys represented a vision for the future for the children who survived. Life goes on, and they needed to know this and the gifts were a gift of life being precious and on-going, even for those who lived through such a tragedy and survived.

On the other hand, we must be aware that members of the families of those who died and other villagers who were affected by grief are known to have suffered deep depression. Some, sadly, have taken their own lives as they were unable to face life, normal life, as the disaster increased in its profound enormity. For these people, suicide was the sad conclusion of life, and I regard this as the true and ugly inheritance of the National Coal Board's failures both before and

that has happened since 1966. On the one hand, it was satisfying, warm and pleasing. On the other hand, the tragedies, grief and anger were also very present if not quite visible to the discerning eye.

More shocks were soon to be seen.

Behind the school site is the village communal graveyard. It is on a very steep slope up to where the colliery spoil tip would have been.

The sight of the traditional grave stones contrasted amazingly to the graves of the children and adults who died in the disaster. It was a shocking and moving sight. Fifty five years later, the graves still



after the disaster, which in 2021, is too late to correct and make good the loss which so many people have endured. I will end with a quote from an article in the Smithsonian Magazine of 15th November, 2019,:

“Jeff Edwards’ primary school teacher had just started the day’s math lesson when an ominous rumble sounded in the distance. “The next thing I remember was waking up,” he later recalled. “My right foot was stuck in the radiator and there was water pouring out of it. My desk was pinned against my stomach and a girl’s head was on my left shoulder. She was dead.”

Over the next hour and a half, the then-8-year-old Edwards struggled to breathe as his classmates, trapped under a torrent of liquefied coal waste, cried out around him. With every passing minute, he said, “they got quieter and quieter, ... buried and running out of air.”

Around 11 a.m., someone spotted a tuft of Edwards’ blonde hair amid the rubble. A fireman used a hatchet to free the young boy from beneath his desk, then passed him along to safety via a human chain. Edwards, the tenth child rescued that morning, would be the last survivor pulled from the debris.”

The contemporary colour photographs are © Toby Van de Velde.07917 798089

**Neil Richardson**

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

iccm branch secretaries, contact details

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## Cemetery of the Year Awards 2022



The **FREE** to enter competition will once again run in **2022** from **31 March until 31 July and** open to any Burial Authority (Cemetery or Churchyard) within the UK.

There will be **£1000.00 prize money** awarded to the (Gold) Award winning entry in each category.

The categories of cemeteries are –

- A. Large burial grounds above 10,000 graves
- B. Small/medium burial grounds up to 10,000 graves
- C. Parish, Town and Community councils
- D. Natural burial ground provider

To enter the competition simply log onto the CYA website at – [www.cemeteryoftheyear.org.uk](http://www.cemeteryoftheyear.org.uk)

The Cemetery application form is simple to complete and allows the applications to be marked objectively with pre-defined points allocated in each section. This will allow feedback to be given to each entrant showing not only their overall competition marks but also how they can improve and develop their cemeteries.

The best entries will receive notification in writing that they have reached the short-list of finalists.

The Gold Award Winning Cemetery in each category will receive **£1000.00 prize** money as well as a ‘Cemetery of the Year 2022 Gold Certificate’ along with a CYA press release that can be used to promote their work and achievements.

Runners up, in each category, will receive a ‘Cemetery of the Year 2022 Silver Certificate’ and a CYA press release.

The Cemetery of the Year Awards Competition is designed not only to improve standards within Burial Grounds but also to encourage compliance with legislation and encourage best practice with information and support from leading Burial Authority Organisations.

### Last Year’s Winners 2021



**Category A.** Large Burial Grounds above 10,000 graves  
**Gold** – Philips Park Cemetery



**Category B.** Small/Medium Burial Grounds up to 10,000 graves  
**Gold** – Memoria Kirkleatham Cemetery and Crematorium

The Cemetery of the Year Award 2022 has been supported and endorsed by –

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

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# Obitus

## Positive bereavement experiences

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**Sam Rees AICCM**

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## cemeteries are a great home for an ethical funeral director

*The story of finding a new home for Poppy's, an environmental and community friendly company.*

At Poppy's, the fresh approach we take to funerals means we want our clients to feel welcome, considered, empowered and supported in our company and in our physical environments. We want people to have a memorable, meaningful and beautiful experience and we want our spaces to play their part in exceeding our clients' expectations. So on the search for a permanent and beautiful headquarters for Poppy's in 2015, we had many questions about how we might achieve this in our physical spaces. How do we transform and raise expectations about the experience of organising a funeral? How do we make people feel safe and confident? How do we quickly build a trusting relationship when our clients are naturally scared, vulnerable and disempowered? How do we work against the cliché of funeral directors, and particularly mortuaries, as scary or closed places? And above all, how do we create a beautiful space for the dead that is inspiring and inviting?

There were important logistical considerations too. We knew our dead clients needed to be on site with us. I believe the worst of the horrors in the media (and which we see in practice at other mortuaries) regarding poor care for the dead stem from the traditional silo-ing of mortuary workers from funeral arrangers. If you are collecting people who have died all day every day and you don't get the opportunity to 'place' them in the communities of those who love them, people start to lose the sense of purpose behind their work. To me, this helps to explain the widespread culture in the sector of talking about and sometimes acting disrespectfully towards the dead.

So we were clear we needed a beautiful mortuary space on the ground floor with good access and parking, and inviting client rooms and office spaces for our living clients and teams. And it all needed to be together. In a busy city like London this was a challenge. Over a number of months we saw many, many, many sites. Beautiful shop-fronts with no provision for our dead clients. Large, logistically well placed industrial estates were unwelcoming for the public and the team and did nothing to help us lift the concept of death care as the special and beautiful work it so clearly is.

### Finding the perfect site for Poppy's HQ

It was amidst a sense of growing frustration that we heard of an opportunity in Lambeth Cemetery in Tooting - two recently renovated buildings were available following years of no or limited use. The match was immediate. It made so much sense. The first building, a gatehouse, gave us three beautiful, light rooms to welcome our clients with additional space upstairs for our team to work. The second building, a stunning 19th-century burial chapel, had of course been designed with regard for the dead as its founding principle. It was full of light and fresh air. Logistically it was also ideal. The doors were wide and welcoming to stretchers and coffin deliveries too.



Of course there was work we needed to do to make the spaces habitable. Our natural approach to our dead clients means we didn't need or want the chapel to feel unnecessarily clinical nor to smell of chemicals. So we laid down laminate wood flooring to feel as homely as possible. We installed a sink for hand-washing and built some free-standing coffin storage. And we wanted to give careful consideration to the experience of others in the cemetery around us. We built simple wooden screening around the doors of the chapel to protect the view of bringing people who had died into the building. And wonderful green-fingered members of our team designed and built stunning plant boxes around the screening to make it even more beautiful.

We've been in the cemetery for five years now and it has been such an all round success. Two historically important buildings which otherwise were being little or completely unused are now kept warm and in good condition. Our clients can come somewhere peaceful, natural and beautiful. They can park if they are driving. They visit us in the Gatehouse where we have plenty of space. The meetings can take the time they need to take. If friends or family want to spend time with the person who has died, we walk them thirty metres to our chapel mortuary where we have a welcoming, neutral room where they can be together, decorate coffins, hold impromptu intimate ceremonies and religious rituals.



*Poppy Mardell*

## Being in nature

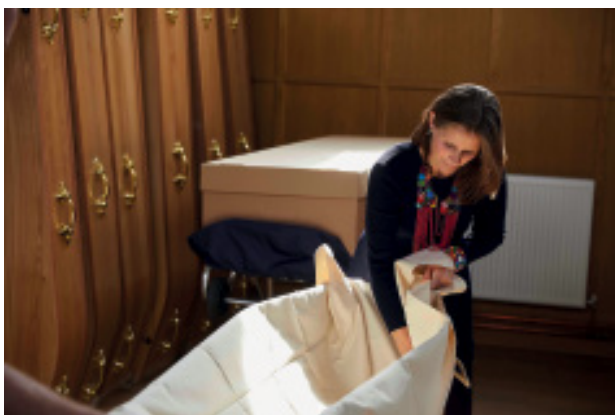
Most of us are aware of the growing body of evidence which shows how we need to be in nature to nurture our mental as well as our physical health. One of the great highlights of being in the cemetery is access to our natural environment. Our work as funeral directors is inherently emotional and it can be so helpful to take a walk after a difficult conversation - leaning into the comfort of our natural surroundings can be nurturing and sustaining. It's common for our team meetings to be a walk outside where we join the foxes and squirrels as our neighbours. It's also an opportunity for us to check in with the cemetery staff and people in our community who visit the cemetery themselves.

## A mortuary like no other

All of our spaces at Poppy's are stunning but the housing of our mortuary in the 19th-century burial chapel really is like no other. Most funeral directors consider their mortuaries as places to keep the public away from. At Poppy's, we chose to give our most beautiful, light-filled space to the dead. We did this both because it is our gentle, thoughtful, natural care for our dead clients which sets us apart, and also because we know how influential the physical environment is on the quality of the care given. When our team cares for our dead clients, they do so in a space that feels beautiful, thoughtful and special. The mortuary must feel welcoming, safe and considered for our clients and for our team.



## A relationship based on values



Much of the success of our headquarters in the cemetery has been built on the relationship we have with Lambeth Council and the cemetery itself. We are a progressive, ethical company and we take our impact on our environment and community very seriously. We see Lambeth Council as a partner rather than as a traditional 'landlord'. This means we communicate well and often. We take the long view on our tenancy, investing in the buildings and caring for them thoughtfully, often taking actions that prioritise our community, the environment and the buildings themselves over and above making or saving money. Our drive towards B Corp accreditation means we are often looking for ways to lessen the impact of our buildings and our work on the planet. An interior design project we are shortly to launch will see us replacing strip lighting with energy saving LED lights, replacing the gas boiler with electric. We are already on the front foot thanks to Lambeth's

commitment to using renewable sourced electricity. We recently completed an accessibility audit to see how we could better welcome our community to Poppy's and will be investing where we can to deliver those important changes. More broadly, as an ethical company it feels so good that our rent goes towards the local authority rather than a private landlord.

We have worked hard over the years to develop our relationship with people who work in, visit or simply love the cemetery. We have neighbours opposite who live in an additional gatehouse and we look out for them as they look out for us. We think of the fabulous Lambeth Council cemetery team who work so hard to care for the cemetery as an extension of our crew.

## Looking towards the future

We have ambitious plans to grow Poppy's so that client-centred, transparent, environmentally conscious death care can be available to many more people. We believe our ethical model is well suited to working in partnership with cemeteries who have buildings that lie unused. If you are a London based cemetery who might like to talk to us about it, please do get in touch on 020 3589 4726 or email [enquiries@poppysfunerals.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@poppysfunerals.co.uk). If you're an ethical funeral director considering this as a model, we'd really encourage it. Because the physical environments in which we provide death care matter hugely and this can be a partnership based on incredibly strong values.

## Devizes sands baby memorial statue

*Teresa Steele discusses the commissioning of a baby memorial statue*

Devizes Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SAND's) support group was set up in 2015 by Myself Teresa Steele and Sue Nash as a sub branch of Swindon Sands to help support bereaved families within the Devizes and surrounding areas. The first project our group wanted to do was to have our very own baby memorial statue to remember all the babies who didn't get to stay.

Our group made the decision that our statue was to be situated within a public park rather than a cemetery. As we felt that it made it more accessible to all especially for those who did not have their little ones buried nearby or for those who lost a long time ago where stillbirths and neonatal deaths were not spoken about as openly as they are now. With this in mind we contacted Devizes Town council to see if this would be something they would allow. Once we were given the go ahead by the town council our fundraising efforts then kicked off. Our group held cake sales, sponsored walks, a back to school disco with silent auction as well as a raffle to raise the funds needed for the statue. We had an idea about the design of the statue the next task was to find someone who could help us to make our vision a reality. With the help of a very good friend of mine Paula Winchcombe from Winchcombe funeral directors she put me in touch with Dennis Millington of Greenbridge Designs and after various meetings plans were drawn up and submitted to Devizes town council for approval. After a few resubmissions with altered designs we finally had approval from the town council for the statue that has now been installed in Hillworth Park Devizes. The statue was installed April 2021 and due to Covid restrictions the official unveiling was held on Sunday 12th September 2021.



*Devizes Sands Baby Memorial Statue unveiling 12th September 2021.  
Photo by Liz McAnaw*



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