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The Journal Summer 2020

2020

Summer

The Coronavirus Planning  
Going the Extra Mile  
Education Seminar 2020  
A Funeral Director's Perspective

Webcasting in Lockdown  
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# the journal



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## editorial

### A big Thank You to you all - the Forgotten Emergency Service

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Journal. It is quite unbelievable how life, and death, have changed in such a short space of time. The coronavirus struck silently and quickly. The ripple effects began immediately and morphed into the current tsunami that we are now trying to manage. Every day, we wake up to a different scenario. The speed of it all is overwhelming.

In amidst such troubling and surreal times a lot of attention has been placed on the brave NHS workers battling against this virus, risking their own lives to help others and rightly so. The priority must be to save lives. However, the sad reality is that not all lives can be saved and what we are witnessing is the death rate rising daily. This is being reported on every news channel, chat show and radio station- the awareness of our own mortality and those around us, has never been so heightened.

So why is it then that there is one vital group that is not being mentioned in discussion and is noticeable in its absence – the funeral sector. These are the people on the opposite end of scale, that are left to deal with the loss and raw grief of those families affected by this. Maybe it's because, by nature, death is something people don't talk about and there is something in the saying "ignorance is bliss"! But by acknowledging it and saying it out loud, it somehow makes it real.

Whilst our sector is used to dealing with difficult emotions, supporting families during difficult and stressful times, our role normally involves making a terrible situation bearable in whatever ways we can. We are not used to saying "no" or denying the bereaved a simple request. It goes against everything we signed up for. Unfortunately, due to the reality of the circumstances we find ourselves in, we are forced to instead restrict funeral service rituals and attendance, unable to offer comfort, stand apart and witness the devastating loss felt by those who are able to say goodbye.

In truth, the reality of the coronavirus pandemic means the funeral sector is going to get even busier with staff facing increased workloads and stress levels. Despite this, as key workers, we carry on and do the best we can to make sure that we deal with the increased numbers of cremations and burials coming through our gates and treating those that have died with dignity

and respect. I personally have spoken to many members who are trying their best to manage their sites, look after their staff, implement new legislation, home working, new ways of working, whilst still desperately trying to look after the bereaved. It's no mean feat when we are all scared, feel slightly exposed and, for some, have personal experience of people we know that are fighting the virus.

We have witnessed the construction of temporary mortuary facilities and seen the introduction of local pandemic plans being enacted. Even as I sit here writing this, I can't help feeling like we are in some strange movie with a fantastical storyline that you would never quite believe could happen if you were watching it.

So, with that being said, I, personally, and, on behalf of the ICCM Officers and board of directors, who themselves are managing sites, want to say thank you for your hard work, dedication and commitment. I applaud you all, together with the kindred organisations who we work so closely with – the funeral directors, mortuary staff, ministers and celebrants as well as those other services that keep us going – the music and webcast providers and the engineers who come out and fix the equipment so we can carry on. Thank you for coming together at such a difficult and challenging time. You truly are the 4th emergency service.

Please remember we at the ICCM are here to support you in whatever way you need. Please use us, together we can get through this.

Please note some of our emails are being directed to junk or spam folders, or are being intercepted by IT systems and are not reaching the intended recipient. Please check your junk or spam folders to make sure you are receiving enews, or if you have emailed one of the officers and haven't received a reply.

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**Sofia Allana**  
Editor

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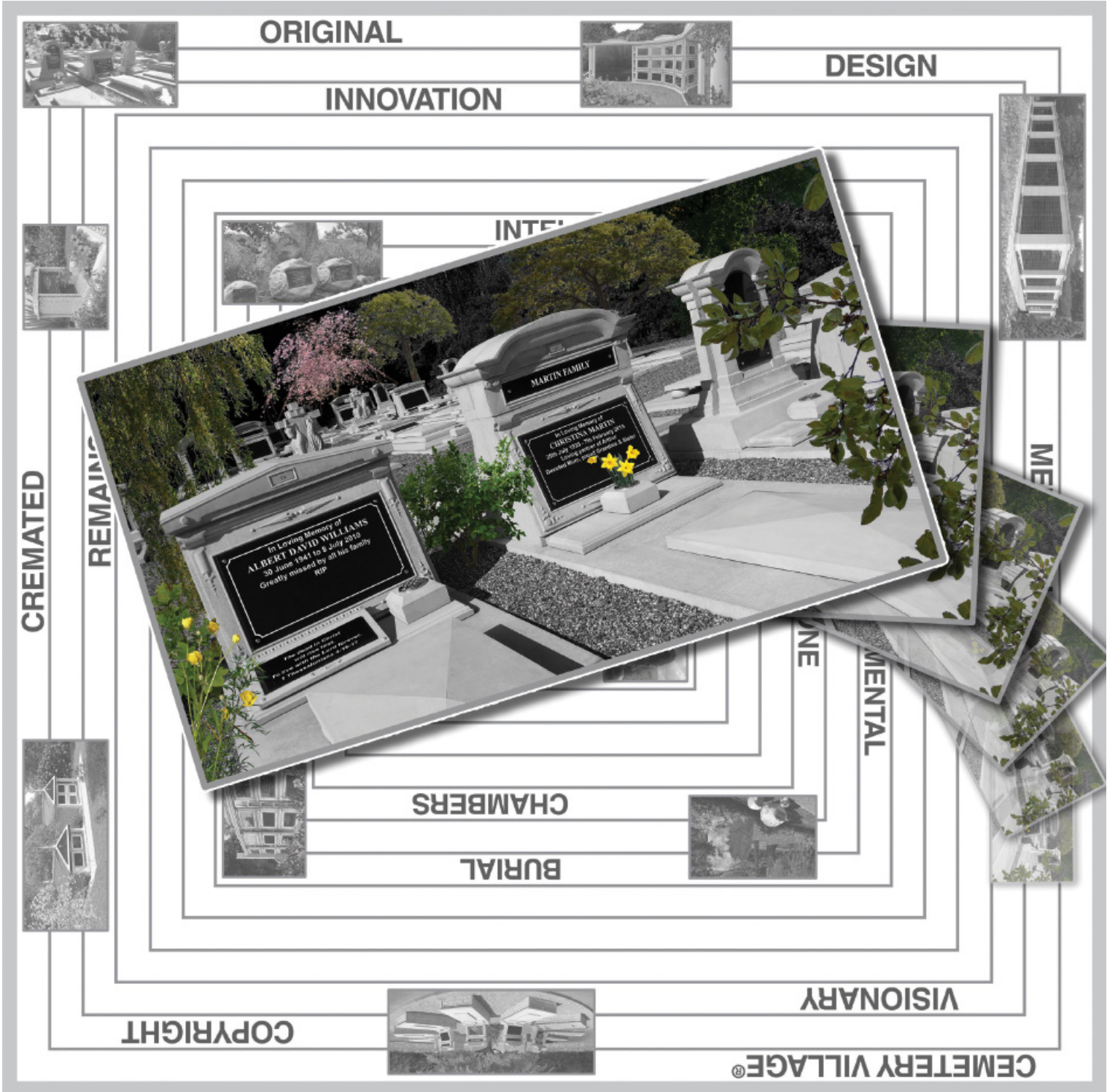
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## president's page

So where do I start? last time I wished you a Happy New Year and welcomed in 2020, little did I know when I wrote my last page that the next time I would be desperately hoping that you are all well and safe.

I said I was hoping to attend as many events as I could during 2020, now I am making sure that I stay away from as many events as I can, such a very sad situation.

So let me start with a little cheer by updating you on what I did manage to do just before the outbreak hit the UK. Codge and I went to join Jim Auld and his wife Daryl in Scotland for the SAIF (Society of Allied Independent Funeral Directors) banquet and what an absolutely wonderful evening we had celebrating the end of Jim's year as President of SAIF. We listened to The Glasgow Phoenix Choir sing and all joining in with "Thank you for the Music", watching everyone attempting their Scottish dancing accompanied by the Stravaig Ceilidh Band - we did not have a clue what they were doing and it looked like neither did they! Everyone was all over the dance floor but Codge and I enjoyed sitting and watching and laughing along, it looked very energetic, too much for us. Jim's chosen charity was Breast Cancer Now and a wonderful amount was raised during the evening. We attended the induction the following morning where Jim handed over to Mark Porteous and we watched a hilarious video that they had shot within the Grand Central Hotel, it had us all in stitches and ended the conference nicely.

Whilst in Scotland we managed to explore the sights of Glasgow town with a spot of shopping, visited the Glengoyne Distillery where we got to sample the whiskey and see how it was made. They had already started taking precautions there by asking all visitors to wash their hands before entering. We then ended the day by visiting Dumbarton Castle, the views were fantastic although it was very chilly as the day drew to an end. We boarded our flight back to Gatwick the following day and already things were starting to change, everyone was keeping their distance, using their hand sanitisers and many were wearing masks, some in full white suits!! It was certainly a strange sight and we were glad to be heading home.

So what followed after that, the first week emerged and mass gatherings were banned there was still a lot of people out and about even though we were being told to keep 2 metres apart and to wash our hands for 20 seconds. So along came all the funny Facebook and WhatsApp posts, although things were beginning to get serious people still had their sense of humour.

Panic buying started ..... Who knew so many people had the runs!!!!

Tuesday 24th March 2020 and our Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced the "lockdown" – only go out for essential shopping and medicines he advised, only go out to exercise once a day, or to go to work if you were unable to work from home, and as many of us cannot work



from home, it was back to work the next day with the uncertainty of what would happen next.

Sunday 5th April 2020 and our Boris is admitted to hospital with persisting Covid symptoms, he was later moved to the intensive care unit as his symptoms worsened.



Apps like FaceTime, House Party and Zoom have enabled families to chat together instead of visiting, which is wonderful for those with family that they are unable to see. Many of you know how much my grandchildren mean to me and I miss them dearly, so FaceTime has become part of our lives more and more. I even managed to play dolls with my youngest granddaughter Elsie-Mae, however I found myself lying "in the cot" on the top floor bedroom of her dolls house; she had placed her mum, Fern's mobile in there, it was lovely to hear her little giggles and laughter as we played together and it was light relief from all the worry and tension of the week I had at work.

What's happening at Southampton Crematorium – we first saw the reduction in the number of people who could attend, we started with 50 and now we are down to just 10! The seats were taken out and those left were moved apart, the chapels looked empty, the hymn books were removed and the waiting areas shut.

Sanitising has taken over ..... the place has never been so clean and our hands have never been so dry and sore so out comes the hand cream.

Two of our Bereavement Service Officers, Kat and Ellie have frantically been training with Lee our Senior here at the Southampton Crematorium for their cremator operator licences, and what a brilliant job they are doing.

Everyone has pulled together, and not just my staff here at Southampton, but everyone across the country, the ICCM Officers have worked tirelessly to ensure we have all received up to date legislation as quickly as possible even though the government have been reluctant to give clarity, we have all had to interpret the guidance in our own ways; what does a "modest number of friends to attend" really mean?? A funeral is an upsetting time anyway but to be unable to attend is devastating for all concerned. We have all tried our best and we must continue to do so .... There is always light at the end of the tunnel and one day we will look back on this as a distant memory in the past and at least we will know that we all did our best to ensure the safety of everyone. Before my brother died I remember he said in one of his letters to me "life is not a rehearsal, we only get one go at it", - how true that is .....

Please everyone follow the government advice and keep safe. My best wishes and love to all of you and your families and I hope that we can all meet up again soon.

Stay Safe

**Heather White**  
ICCM President

## forever in our hearts

### Our front cover image, meet the Artist

To mark these unusual and difficult circumstances we are all facing, we wanted to do something different for the front cover of this edition's Journal that reflects the times we are currently living in.

The ICCM team searched high and low for the right image, but when we saw this, we instantly felt that this was the one. After contacting the artist, Kimberley Thomas, she generously agreed to allow us to use it. It became clear from Kimberley's art that her motivation was influenced by personal circumstances. This is her story.

Kimberley Thomas is an illustrator whose studio is currently in Somerset, where she moved after 17 years of living and working between Ibiza and London. During that time, she worked as a freelance product designer for the Gadget Shop, Selfridges and designed for all the top names in Ibiza, as well as owning The Bedroom – the only sex shop designed for women in Ibiza.

All of this was brought to a halt when a battle with breast cancer made her put exhibiting her artwork on her bucket list.

Her first solo show at Ibiza's exclusive Atzaro was such a resounding success that she decided to survive the cancer and has carried on exhibiting in New York, LA, Ibiza, Barcelona and London.

Kimberley Thomas' work has a strong narrative and is often sprinkled with a pinch of humour; this, combined with her strong graphic style, has built her a large group of collectors around the world.

Her work is a mix of traditional pen and ink, markers, and watercolour.

Kimberley says "Having cancer, my father dying and losing my brother in an accident, made my relationship with death a comfortable one, art was always a way to express that for me.

One of my first exhibited pieces 'F\*\*K off I'm a'ving a cup of tea' (An old woman giving death the finger) was sketched originally on the back of my hospital form whilst having chemotherapy. It was so widely received with such love that it made me realise that art can really make a difference in people's lives during the hard times. It was also part of the Sutton House National Trust's life, death, whatever exhibition, curated by Louise winter, funeral director and owner of Poetic Endings Funerals.

To date I have received so many messages from people whose loved ones or themselves were facing death, saying "your art broke the silence and we can now talk about my death "or just a simple "thank you". It gave me strength. These messages are so important to me as an artist.

For this reason, I have recently made a second in the series, this time for men, called 'P\*ss of I'm aving a pint'.

When the Grenfell Tower tragedy occurred I painted a remembrance piece called Forget me not. It was auctioned to raise money for the survivors. More importantly in my view, it was projected on to the wall during a local school's memorial for two children whose lives were lost. This, I hope, gave the children a different visual of the tower that they had to see every day, plus they were able to write messages on postcards I had printed. Helping people with my art in a time of grief is so important to me.



So, during lockdown when R.I.P. messages started appearing on my feed, I realised I wanted to draw something to help the loved ones of those lost. Also, to take them away from being a statistic and hopefully try to bring back their humanity.

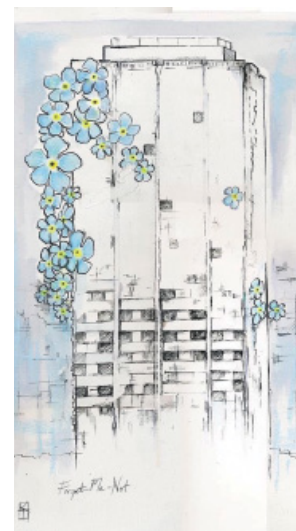
Pictures of the Covid 19 always looked like a dandelion clock to me, and as breath seemed to be the main thing affected by the virus the two melded in my mind into the artwork Forever in our Hearts.

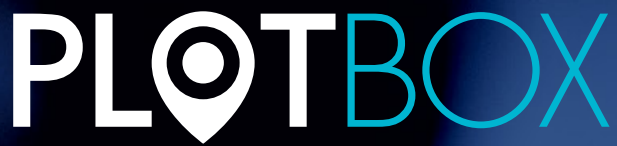
I have already received some wonderful messages from people who it has helped with their grief. I will be sending them each a free artists proof and funding the cost of this by selling a signed limited edition print which can be purchased by contacting me direct, either through my website, Facebook messenger, or on my Instagram account"

Website: [kimberleythomasart.co.uk](http://kimberleythomasart.co.uk)

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# Bereavement Services Reimagined.

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## in touch



I never thought I would be writing this In Touch during such strange times. Although many of us working in bereavement services have been involved in planning for pandemics before, such as avian and swine flu, they have not materialised on a large scale. We have adequately coped with a higher than average death rate due to seasonal flu and other underlying conditions, the last time being in 2017/18 when there were 49,410 excess winter deaths. Cemeteries and crematoria then would have had plans in place to deal with increased demand, including longer working days, weekend working, shift working for their teams, and arrangements with neighbouring facilities for sharing of resources if required.

On 12th February this year the ICCM posted in the Recent Posts section of the website:

‘Although we are not currently or expected to be in a mass fatality situation, it is a timely reminder that any mass fatality and/or emergency plans should be reviewed regularly and kept up to date.’

The post contained links to a paper on pandemic planning that Ken West had delivered in 2006, but which contains good advice relevant to any pandemic, and a pandemic plans checklist the ICCM had developed based on that paper. Hopefully members were able to use these to help ensure their own plans were in place to help face the coronavirus pandemic.

This post was prompted by a news release from the UK Government about the growing concern about the pandemic, but at that stage there was no suggestion of the lockdown and social isolation that we are currently under. The post prompted a phone call from a journalist who appeared to be under the impression that we knew more than we were letting on – if only that was the case! Had we had more prior knowledge about how the pandemic was going to affect all our lives, we may have all done things differently.

For example, I would have brought forward plans to visit my family who I hadn't seen since before Christmas and who I might now not get to see for many months. I would have given my friends an extra hug and told them how important they are to me. I would have taken more time to cherish the last social gathering I attended, which was a village Gardening Club meeting where we had a talk on hedgehogs by Hugh Warwick, who we had had the pleasure of hearing at the Learning Convention and Exhibition in 2019 (see TJ Summer 2019, Vol 87 2). And I would have bought shares in pasta and toilet roll companies!

I'm sure that there will be many investigations into the response to the coronavirus and some criticism of the way that things were handled. Some of that criticism may be warranted, but I hope that whoever is appointed to carry out any investigations takes into account that this was uncharted territory for all involved. Yes, we have dealt with high cases of influenza before, but not this particular virus that is much more easily transmitted in the community.

One thing that I am certain would not be found wanting in any

investigation into the response to the coronavirus is ICCM members' resolve to face the situation head on and to continue to do their best for bereaved families. None of us had ever faced the situation where attendance at funerals was limited, or that our premises had to be closed except for funerals. This is contrary to our very nature and all that we are trained and committed to delivering – a high standard of care for bereaved people.

In the early stages of the pandemic we were bombarded with new legislation and guidance from the Government, some of which was confusing to interpret. At that stage it was clear that cooperation between all the organisations representing what the Government were calling 'deceased management' was needed like never before. The ICCM, FBCA, APCC, Cremation Society, NAFD and SAIF therefore formed a coalition under the banner Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG) to form one voice to speak with Government departments. DMAG are currently meeting daily via video conferencing, and are regularly joined by representatives from the Ministry of Justice, Department of Health and Social Care, Cabinet Office, Scottish Government, Welsh Government, Northern Ireland Executive, Public Health England and any other Government departments that require the skills, knowledge and experience that DMAG possesses.

Via DMAG, the ICCM promotes the work of its members, and seeks to find answers to queries and solutions to issues to help them do their jobs to as high a standard as possible in these constrained times. The ICCM has also adapted its own working methods to enable officers to work from home whilst continuing to provide a high level of support to members through the issuing of timely guidance via e-newsletters and the website, as well as answering hundreds of email and phone enquiries each day. Unfortunately, we are not able to deliver COTS training during the lockdown period, but we have managed to put measures into place to ensure that CTS candidates can still be examined whilst maintaining full compliance with our accrediting body, BTEC. We are delivering a weekly webinar to keep members informed and provide another platform for asking questions and sharing experiences. We are currently looking at options for delivering training courses online in case we are unable to go out and deliver training for some time. We want to be there for you when you need us.

Despite the difficulties and the many tragedies that this pandemic has delivered, you, the people on the frontline of caring for deceased and bereaved people, have excelled. You have been creative, compassionate, selfless, stoic and resilient. I'm sure you have faced many challenges, both professionally and personally, but you have met them with fortitude and have kept on delivering the best possible service that you can.

Every Thursday night the country is urged to clap for key workers.

ICCM members, we clap you every day.

Thank you.

**Julie Dunk**  
ICCM Chief Executive

## under the spotlight....

Welcome to our new feature “Under the Spotlight” – asking 20 questions for 2020! Throughout the year we will be getting to know the people that have been elected to sit on the ICCM Board of Directors.

**This edition we are getting to know our President, Heather White, a little better...**

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

I had been working within Occupational Health for Southampton City Council on a part-time basis whilst my youngest child Fern was still in nursery school. I was browsing the council's jobs and saw a vacancy for a “Technical Assistant” for bereavement services and thought it looked interesting, applied and was offered the position to start the next week. The bereavement administration was all undertaken from rooms above the Registry office in Southampton; “you will be working in the ‘dead centre’ of town” was the comment I was given from my work colleagues. I have never looked back since; it was definitely the best career decision I ever made.



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

As the Service Manager/Registrar for bereavement, I am responsible and accountable for leading the cemeteries and crematorium teams for burials, cremations, scattering of remains, sale of memorials and PHA funerals. My role as the registrar is to ensure that all the burials and cremations are undertaken in accordance with legislation and regulations and to ensure that records are maintained – sounds just like a well worded job description ☺ - in other words the buck stops here.

### 3. What do you find the most challenging?

Well recently delivering and ensuring that everyone understands all the different regulations that have been put into place during COVID 19. Before it would have been ensuring that the expectations of everyone who attends a funeral is met – however now that seems a really insignificant challenge, as we are dealing with that on a daily basis.

### 4. What made you apply for Deputy President?

I thoroughly enjoy all the posts that I have held within bereavement services including all the different challenges and I wanted to be able to bring the same enthusiasm and commitment that I show to my job to the ICCM. I have met a lot of wonderful people “my work family” and learnt a lot through the programme of education that the ICCM provide and I wanted to help to promote this, but also to show to everyone that we can all make a difference no matter what position you hold within the industry.

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

I enjoy the opportunity of being able to contribute in helping to make a difference to the industry by supporting ideas and ensuring that every one of my colleagues both from local authority and private crematoria and cemeteries are supported and informed equally.

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

Ummm COVID 19!! What was I working on before .... well the facelift of our crematorium building; we have lots of ideas and the money, we are now just waiting to get “back to normal” so we can proceed, and I cannot wait.

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

At the moment – lots of things and too many to list. I don't think there is anything that I would really change as such, I think there are lots of things that local authority cemeteries and crematoria could do but are unable to achieve politically – however I think it would be nice if the sector as a whole was recognised more for the great services that they provide.

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

Oh I can answer that very easily – cremated – why? because as I am sure many of you know I really absolutely hate slugs and the thought of being stuck in the ground forever with them yeeek!!!

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

Other than a really rich millionaire so that me and Codge (my husband) could have a house on a tropical island, I think it would have to be one of my grandchildren, in particular my granddaughter Elsie-Mae so that I can sit and do nothing or play and be waited on by my daughter Fern – payback time ☺

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

There was one day when I didn't have any teleconference calls and I was able to leave work early and sit in the garden with a cool alcoholic drink.

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

Not one question in particular, but they always start with – “Are we allowed to ………”

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

Not particularly in the next 5 years, as it will mean I am getting closer and closer to retirement!! I am looking forward to being able to visit my mum and dad, my children, my grandchildren and my friends and give them all a huge big hug .... miss them all dreadfully. After that my holidays.....

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

Is the lockdown over?

**14. Who inspires you to be better?**

My husband, who supports and encourages me with whatever I do.

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

Now that is difficult, as I think I tell everyone everything about myself, for some of you it may have been the slug one earlier, however you may not know that I was in the Black and White Minstrels as a tap dancer – well Southern Black and White Minstrels anyway and I was only about 9.

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

Definitely rush out and visit my family – practicing social distancing (obviously).

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

Make sure in late 2019 that you stock pile as many toilet rolls and hand sanitisers so that you have enough in 2020.

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

My iPhone or maybe a gun!!

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

Games to play with the grandchildren.

**20. What would you want your epitaph to be?**

She laughed, she loved and she lived.

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## education seminar 2020 student reports



### ***'What a great way to spend time away from the workplace but work so hard'***

Kevin Watkins – Assistant Operations Manager, Southend Borough Council

As a new student wanting to make a start on the ICCM diploma, I cannot think of a better way to get going.

Setting off from Southend after lunch on the Wednesday to the Hillscourt Centre near Birmingham, collecting all my bits together and loading the car not really knowing what to expect. I travelled through the rain and sleet and arrived just before 3pm. Really good journey. Signed in at reception only to be made aware the bar didn't open until 6pm ☹️ Off to my room a disappointed Kevin. Unpacked my clothes and turned on the television.

The time for a well-earned beer arrived, so I went to the bar and was very surprised by the cheap bar prices, so I had a couple!! I had a nice meal and went back to my room.

Thursday approached and I started to get nervous with the thought of not knowing what to expect. Trying to eat lunch when you're nervous isn't good. I spoke to a few people that I knew which made me feel much better. The opening seminar was really interesting with speeches from Julie from the ICCM and Sue from the Stratford Business School about how the seminars were set over the coming days. Things were starting to get easier. After lunch we split into our groups for the different subjects and met the tutors, by this time I had calmed down and was ready to go.

My group tutor was Mat Crawley focusing on the Cemetery Management module. We had the smallest group only eight of us. I introduced myself to my partner James who was from Clacton, his first time at the seminar as well, so we were both in the same boat.

Mat set the plan for the rest of the day, at this point I thought HOW MUCH WORK? We set about our tasks and



*Cemetery management tutor Mat Crawley*

once we got going we were fine, plenty of chat between us, discussing what we do at Southend compared to what he does at Clacton and then compiling our answers.

Computer problems – Lesson learned have a backup plan! We worked on assignments until about 5.30pm.

When we headed back to our rooms, a quick shower and change and in the bar for evening meal and then Blue Donnebaer's quiz. This is no normal quiz, forget about general knowledge and think 1, 2 or 3. BUT it's fun and a laugh, not too serious with good company and making new friends along the way. The evening meal was excellent, really good food with a good choice too. Back to room after a couple of beers by now I was really tired.

Friday – this is where the hard work begins. Starting with breakfast at 7.30 am and then off to our groups at 8.30am to finish assignment 1 and get moving on with assignment 3. This didn't sound achievable BUT believe me, a long day was well spent! Stopping for regular hot chocolate breaks and the occasional pastry or two ☺️, and lunch of course. We worked hard together until 6pm, the bar was calling and after another excellent three course meal, it was time to complete the quiz. Time for bed I thought.....

Saturday – Breakfast wasn't until 8.00am, then off to complete assignment 3, with only the morning to go, it was going to be tight but we made it. We then went back to the main hall for feedback sessions given by ICCM and Stratford Business School.

Two assignments done and two distinctions, I was very happy ☺️

Just to sum up my first Education seminar.....  
These are the important things to remember.

- Everyone started at the beginning
- Everyone is so friendly and willing to help
- Excellent food
- ICCM and tutors are excellent
- Exhibitors are always happy to give advice

It was almost disappointing to leave on Saturday afternoon for the journey home!

So, would I go again? YES To make new friends, see old ones, have good fun and get my assignments done.

# FUNERAL PRODUCTS AND TERRYBEAR – SYNERGY AND PARTNERSHIP

The new Funeral Products brochure will be published in April. As with each edition, the collection of memorial products features several new products. Our new line of brass products in particular is sure to impress. Peter Biemans (Funeral Products) and Terry Commerford (Terrybear) explain how this new line was developed.

Funeral Products carries an extensive selection of urns and cremation jewellery for loved ones and pets, crafted from materials such as brass, ceramics, glass and bio. Biemans: 'Throughout our fourteen years in retail, the aspect of corporate social responsibility has been a core theme within our organisation. Our range exclusively features products with a high level of quality. A twofold concept: the products are of the highest calibre, produced under good working conditions and terms of employment.'

## Click

When Terrybear and Funeral Products had the opportunity to meet and started to realize the synergies we have with each other. Both of the companies are leaders of memorial items in their respective markets. Peter and Terry can call themselves true self-made men who know how to get things done. Biemans: 'There was an instant click. Just take a look at the way in which our businesses operate. We both believe in long-term, personal relationships. Not only with our clients but also with our staff, suppliers, and other stakeholders. We both take social responsibility seriously. Funeral Products worked on the establishment of projects in the fields of healthcare and education or to stimulate the local economy.'

## Perfect Match

While Terrybear has some distributors in Europe it also realized that they need broader reach and local knowledge to serve the market well. Terrybear believes Funeral Products has a strong position in Europe, The United Kingdom and Ireland that can help serve the specific needs of these countries as each of them has its own regulations and requirements.



'To serve Europe, The United Kingdom and Ireland as markets, we were looking for a strong partner that operates with the same mindset. This search ended when we met Peter and his team.' says Nikki Nordeen, Sales and Marketing Director of Terrybear. Terrybear is the leader in design and service for the North American market, which has shown healthy growth with each coming year and increasing demand for modern commemorative products. While this is the beginning of the relationship, Biemans is optimistic that we will continue our partnership and explore what we could do together in the future. Biemans: 'Our partnership doesn't stop there. By using our strengths, expertise, and experience, Funeral Products is launching its own line of innovative, high-quality brass products. Designed by our own in-house designer and produced by the Terrybear craftsmen.'

## More than Sales Alone

Naturally, the organisations' financial health is of importance to both entrepreneurs, 'but there's more,' says Commerford. 'We're also giving back to society. Our company in St. Paul (Minnesota, US), for example, has seven hectares of land. We dedicated part of our land to be used as a community garden for our staff and neighbourhood to grow fruits and vegetables. We regularly donate and support non-profit organizations. Terrybear CEO Lavina Lau served as a board member on few non-profit organizations including Global Rights for Women, an international organisation dedicated to creating legislation to protect women against any violence. Furthermore, the factories that manufacture our products have grown strongly over the years, just as we have. This era has witnessed an increase in employment and prosperity. "Terrybear's culture is to do great things for our customers, our staff, suppliers and communities", says Terrybear CEO Lavina Lau. This is music to Biemans' ears. 'I feel the same way. It's really unique to have such a strong connection. We strengthen one another in many areas, which is why I'm glad we found each other.'



## **"Attending the education seminars has helped me achieve my ICCM Diploma (with honours) in a much shorter time"**

Peter Haley, Assistant Bereavement Services Officer, Allerdale Borough Council

As someone who has only worked in bereavement services for four years I have been amazed by the level of support

It doesn't seem five minutes since I started my ICCM Diploma and attended my first education seminar but four years and six modules later saw me driving the 200 odd miles from West Cumbria to Hillscourt for my last seminar from the 27th to 29th of February 2020.

After an easy drive in good weather I arrived at Hillscourt soon after midday to a warm welcome from Julie Dunk, Blue Donnebaer, Mat Crawley, Sue Gull, Marc Gisborne, Peter Roper and Ben Whitworth. Though the number of students this year was lower I was pleased to see a number of friends from my previous seminars, including Sharon Smith, Andy Bond and Catherine Carr. It was great to see new faces too and the room soon filled with chatter as we discussed where we were from and what modules we were studying.

Hillscourt is a great venue for the seminar with comfortable rooms, good food, a spacious convention centre and a well-stocked bar. More of which later.

Moving upstairs into the main room we were introduced to the tutors and divided into study groups for each module. I had hoped to study the entrepreneurial opportunities module but unfortunately it wasn't available, so I began the marketing essentials module with my partner in crime Sharon Smith. It was great to work with Sharon again as we had worked together on the burial law module at my first seminar and this would be our last module. Our aim was to complete the whole module and diploma over the three days.

Sharon and I completed our first assignment by late afternoon and while our tutor Marc was busy with other students, we cracked on with the second assignment. Working in pairs or threes is great as you can share ideas as you work through the assignments and with the guidance of the tutors you can work through them far quicker than at home or work as you receive immediate feedback. Thank you Sharon for your typing skills!

During the day there are plenty of opportunities for breaks with a cuppa, to stretch your legs and visit the exhibitors downstairs.

We stopped work around 5.30pm and checked into our rooms. My room was in the old part of the hotel and while it was small it was perfectly formed with a comfy bed and of similar standard to a Premier inn.

Later on, people gathered in the bar for a drink before dinner (we had chosen from the menu earlier) and to catch up on how everyone was doing with their studies. Dinner was a social affair with large and smaller tables, and everyone enjoyed a three course meal before returning to the bar for part one of Blue Donnebaer's legendary quiz.

As this was my fourth seminar I knew that the quiz would feature many obscure questions with multiple-choice answers and with Blue's declaration of 'my quiz, my rules' the quiz commenced in both a light hearted and competitive atmosphere. At the end of the fourth round we found that we hadn't done as well as we thought we would and found ourselves in joint last place with 19 points. As only five points separated first and last places, we felt we could do better at part two of the quiz on Friday night.

Friday morning started with a full English breakfast (you have to keep your strength up!) and Sharon and I continued our work on the second assignment with the guidance of Marc. We were able to finish the assignment by lunchtime and start on the final one in the afternoon. By late afternoon it dawned on us that we were close to completing our last assignment and therefore the whole diploma, something which seemed so far away four years ago. By 5pm we were able to submit our last assignment to Mark, pack up our laptops and relax before the second round of the quiz.

After another nice dinner we all met up again in the bar for the quiz and it was clear that everyone was again in a competitive mood as a team of three who were now reduced to just two declined the offer to join another team



*Blue, quiz master*

as they were leading after the first round. With the lure of many bottles of wine as prizes (kindly donated by the exhibitors) we upped our game and performed much better in the final four rounds and managed to finish joint second, winning four bottles of wine between us.

Saturday morning dawned (no doubt with sore heads for some late-night revellers) with another cooked breakfast and Sharon & I feeling a little lost as we didn't have any work to do. We went upstairs to the main study room and were pleased to learn from Marc that we had received full marks for our three assignments (two distinctions and one merit). We had finally finished it all!

Around 10am Sue and the other tutors led a roundup of how everyone was doing with their studies. Some people had nearly finished their module, some had finished and moved onto a second module and two lucky people had finished the whole lot! We all gave each other a round of applause and then had the obligatory group photo (beware, Julie Dunk prowls the seminar with camera in hand so don't be surprised if you see yourself in the next issue of the Journal).

It was with a mixture of relief, happiness and sadness that we said our goodbyes to the tutors and students and left Hillscourt for home, Sharon heading south to Maidstone and I heading north to Cumbria. Both of us were proud of what

we had achieved and were looking forward to receiving our diplomas from the President of the ICCM at the next Learning Convention.

As someone who has only worked in bereavement services for four years I have been amazed by the level of support available to me from the ICCM and from fellow students and colleagues across the country. No question is too stupid and there are always plenty of people happy to advise you on the best way forward. It is clear that we all have similar problems and that we are all proud of the services we provide no matter how large or small the organisation we work for.

Attending the education seminars has helped me achieve my ICCM Diploma (with honours) in a much shorter time than if I was just working at home or work and I would like to thank all the tutors, students and exhibitors I have met and worked with over the years for your support, hospitality and friendship. I am very proud that I achieved distinctions in all seven Diploma modules with support from my ICCM/ bereavement services family.

I would also like to thank my employer Allerdale Borough Council and my manager Ruth Carr for their support throughout my Diploma studies.

See you all at the next Learning Convention!

### ***"My first experience at an ICCM Education Seminar 2020"***

Mark Higson, Senior Crematorium Technician at the City of Lincoln Council Crematorium.

From meeting new people, to the knowledge you gain and great advice you receive from all the tutors, it was a great experience from beginning to end.

I recently had the privilege of attending my first ever ICCM education seminar (to study crematorium and cemetery Law). I was very nervous and somewhat anxious to say the least, as I don't really class myself as an outgoing kind of person.

Upon arrival with my work colleague and boss, we received a very warm welcome and immediately noticed how friendly everyone there was, people would come over and say hello and introduce themselves which to me was a massive help, also not to mention the fantastic food spread and drinks which had been laid out for us all.

Not what I had expected really, I felt a huge sense of relief and that sense of fitting in was there from the off.

After refreshments, we were taken up to the study room and all the tutors and exhibitors introduced themselves officially. We then were put into study groups and the tutor for our

group came over and really put us at ease. Our tutor was Kate Davidson and she informed us she was there to help any way she could, and I cannot say thank you to her enough as the help and feedback we received was fantastic.



Over the course of the seminar all the tutors were on hand to help, answer questions and give guidance where they could. It really was such a lovely atmosphere.



I must admit I was all for distance learning and thought that maybe there was no need to attend the seminar as I could keep in contact with my tutor via E-mail and complete my module that way.

How wrong I was....

The time I spent there was invaluable, as I mentioned before the help from the tutors, the help and ideas from students and group members was fantastic, the fact we could brain storm and bounce ideas off one another was a massive help. In an evening we had a quiz which was put on by Blue Audio Visual Ltd. This was a great opportunity to really get to know people and just relax. I had never had such a sense of togetherness as I had here.

I have made so many friends now, that all work in the same industry as myself, whereas before I went to the seminar there was only really work colleagues I could talk to regarding work matters that would understand what I was on about, whereas

now I have friends across the UK that I can talk to and contact when needed.

I would really recommend that anyone thinking of going to the education seminar that they do, and anyone that thinks maybe distance learning would be ok I would just say please reconsider.

I cannot stress enough how much of a help this seminar was. The knowledge I have come away with is unbelievable.

From meeting new people to the knowledge you gain and great advice you receive from all the tutors it was a great experience from beginning to end.

So I just want to conclude with a huge thank you to all involved at the ICCM (Julie, Matt, Mark, Sue and especially my tutor Kate) all the exhibitors and of course quiz master Blue.

See you all next year.

---

## **"My First Seminar as Law Tutor"**

Kate Davidson

I hope that the format of the Seminar meant that they could make as much progress as possible whilst learning from their colleagues.

When I was asked to step in as Law Tutor at the recent Education Seminar, I was really thrilled to be able to help. I had very fond memories of my time as an ICCM student, and particularly of the wonderful camaraderie and support network that I enjoyed at the annual seminars.

However, I had perhaps forgotten the intensity and hard work that goes into those weekends – and I can't say enough how impressed I was with all of the Law students who I was fortunate enough to work with – to say they worked tirelessly would be a massive understatement! They certainly kept me busy!

It was my first year tutoring at the Seminar, which was a little daunting at first – I wanted to be able to provide a good level of support when needed but I also really wanted to encourage the group to learn lots and get as much out of the weekend as possible. It actually turned out to be a fantastic learning experience for me too, lots of questions that got my grey matter going and lots of opportunities for me to provide (hopefully!) helpful feedback and direction as the students got stuck into their assignments. It was also a brilliant opportunity to

catch up with industry friends and colleagues, old and new, and lovely to see lots of suppliers supporting the event, too.

I was so proud that all of the group completed their whole Law module during the Seminar, an amazing achievement, particularly in this module, often considered to be quite a daunting and challenging one. I hope that the format of the Seminar meant that they could make as much progress as possible whilst learning from their colleagues – and judging by the really excellent assignments I am confident this was the case!

So – a big well done Law group – and thank you for making my first Seminar as Law Tutor really memorable!







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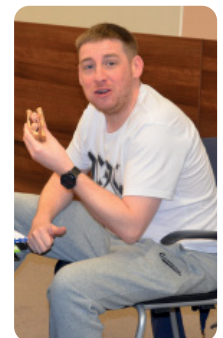
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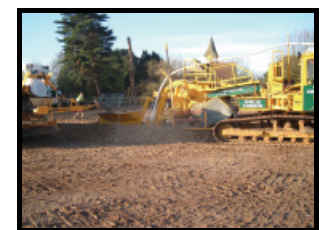
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## ICCM education seminar - the class of 2020



### 47 Students, 5 tutors, 5 exhibitors, ICCM Chief Executive attended (not all pictured)

#### Students

Amanda Barnsley, Andrea Martin, Andrew Bond, Arief Hussain, Astrud Matanle, Barbara Ward, Ben Jenkins, Catherine Carr, Darren Dickens, David Jennings, Deborah Balsdon, Elaine Schendel, Fiona Ross, Gabriella Paterson-Griggs, Hayley Waller, Holly Mortimer, Jacqueline Landy, Jane Matheson, Jo Boxall, John Hollings, Josef Loxey, Julie Carter, Julie Wilson, Karen Jeckell, Kelvin Taylor, Kevin Watkins, Lawrie Dinwoodie, Lesley O'Reilly, Linda Hartard, Liz Hall, Luke Smith, Mark Higson, Matthew Brook, Natalie Ball, Peter Haley, Rachel Spruce, Radi Szabat, Richard Barker, Richard Brown, Sam Gritt, Sarah Philbin, Sean Alcock, Sharon Middleton, Sharon Smith, Stephen McCracken, Sue Tolley, Tracy Lawrence

#### Exhibitors

Blue Donnebaer - Blue Audio Visual Ltd, Ben Whitworth - The MazWell Group, Angela Long - Wesley Media,  
Peter Roper - The Columbaria Company, Kodie Mills - The Columbaria Company, Keith Walters - Walters Organisation Worldwide,  
Jackie Bazeley - Walters Organisation Worldwide

#### Tutors

Kate Davidson, Linda Barker, Marc Gisborne, Mat Crawley, Sue Gull

## and last but not least...

The ICCM would like to acknowledge and thank the Education Seminar 2020 sponsors and exhibitors, pictured below, who also kindly donated prizes for the quiz: Blue Donnebaer, Blue Audio Visual Ltd  
Angela Long, Wesley Media; Ben Whitworth, The Maxwell Group; Jackie Bazeley and Keith Welters, Welters Organisation Worldwide; Kodie Mills and Peter Roper, The Columbaria Company.



The ICCM would also like to acknowledge and thank SBS tutors for their hard work and invaluable input:

Kate Davidson, Linda Barker, Marc Gisborne, Mat Crawley, Sue Gull

Thanks also to ICCM Administration Officer, Julie Callender, and ICCM Chief Executive, Julie Dunk, for arranging the Seminar and dealing with all the details.

*The Quiz night*



*Quiz winners Barbara Ward and Matthew Brook with Blue Donnebaer*



## grief in a pandemic

### How you can help protect yourself emotionally

There's been a lot of talk in the media about the "frontline" in this pandemic mostly focussed on the unfolding challenges in the NHS and not for the first time a whole, highly significant group of people have been ignored - you - which is why I was thrilled to be asked to write this article.

I'm Carole Henderson, Managing Director of Grief Recovery Europe. You may have seen me speak at a couple of the ICCM conferences - I help people move beyond death, divorce and other losses using The Grief Recovery Method. This happens to be the only evidence-based grief programme in the world. I know from my work with thousands of bereaved people the key role the funeral plays in the healing process. I also know the scale of the impact when something goes wrong or fails to happen in that process.

In Grief Recovery we define grief as the conflicting feelings following a change or end in a familiar pattern of behaviour. A definition which very neatly sums up the situation we all find ourselves in right now. When I say conflicting, I mean having both positive and negative feelings all at once and why grief can feel so overwhelming. Normally we feel one thing at a time - angry or frustrated or happy or relaxed so when we feel lots of different things within the space of minutes or seconds it is very different.

It might be for example that 1 minute you're proud to be able to do your bit in helping people be buried or cremated with dignity and respect and the next minute scared stiff that doing your job might expose you to a potentially lethal disease with the evidence of that potential right there at work!

So, you might find it helpful to know that what you are experiencing emotionally right now is genuine grief. A completely normal and natural response to loss of any kind. This includes loss of normality, loss of safety, loss of confidence as well as all the other loss you may more usually think of as a grief event such as a personal bereavement.

We are all in the same boat but we are all experiencing the storm differently.

We are all unique and so our grief is unique. You or your colleagues may be having to deal with these exceptional work challenges on top of trying to look after elderly parents or worry about them in their care home. You may have been bereaved, experiencing marital breakdown, be watching your teenage children come to terms with their exams being cancelled. Everyone has their own challenges which is why



*Carole Henderson*

so much of the "advice" can seem irrelevant or even patronising.

#### **Living Through Lockdown, a 5-Point Plan**

We've tried to come up with some practical tips you can use no matter which boat you're sailing. The plan is published in greater detail on our website if you want to read more on this.

1. Acknowledge everything
2. Be present
3. Be emotionally honest
4. Have an open heart
5. Say goodbye

#### **1. Acknowledge Everything**

If you are feeling scared right now, think about what you can do about it. The answer is probably nothing. Just acknowledge it, say to yourself 'Ok, I'm feeling frightened, and that's perfectly normal.' If you're feeling sad, or frustrated, acknowledge it and let it go. If you're struggling to get past your feelings once you've acknowledged them, have a shower, get dressed or go for a walk.

The easiest way to explain this is thinking of a trip to an aquarium. In the first tank, a shark swims right up to where you're standing. Sharks are scary and it might make you jump. The next tank has some tropical fish in. Your thoughts might go to thinking about how pretty they are. The next tank has sting rays in. Most of the time they're harmless, they look like they're smiling, but you know they could zap you!

Acknowledging everything means having your thoughts one at a time (moving from tank to tank) and getting to the point of them being in the past and you being in the present which brings us onto point 2.

## 2. Be Present

We all spend so much of our lives time travelling, we barely notice it. Travelling into the past with our thoughts to find things to beat ourselves up with, or regret, then projecting ourselves into the future to worry, creating stress, anxiety and pain, much of which could be avoided if we simply stayed in the present.

Yes, we need to go to the past from time to time – that's where fond memories and useful lessons lie. Yes, we need to go to the future in order to plan and there can be pleasure in anticipation. Joy however is found in the now, in noticing what is happening right this second, experiencing emotions as they happen then letting them go to move to the next one.

Even if it sounds easy, many of us find it challenging to identify what we are feeling. Since we are taught to avoid or ignore unpleasant feelings, or we're numbing out with our phone, a glass of wine or raiding the fridge, we may not be conscious of what we're feeling in this moment. Sit down and try to identify what is going on inside - remembering that it might not be what we expect.

Numbness, listlessness, irritability, or a general feeling of anxiety are very common things to be feeling right now.

How can you be present? Stand outside if you can, or open a window if you can't go out. Close your eyes. Take notice of what you can now hear. Birds, insects, cars, no cars. Then breathe in. What can you smell? What can you feel with your fingertips? You might notice that bird song gets louder, scents get more noticeable, your skin becomes more sensitive to the breeze or the fabric under your fingertips. You are now in the present moment. Find yourself time travelling again? Bring yourself back to the now by refocusing on your senses and surroundings again. Yes, it might take some practice -so don't give up on your first attempt!

## 3. Be Emotionally Honest

A quote used in the Grief Recovery Training "Love is the product of truthful communication" and whether we are talking romantic love or any relationship when we're emotionally honest everything works better. For example, "I have a lot to do I would really appreciate you taking the rubbish out" is less likely to cause an argument than "why do you never take the rubbish out?"

The first is what your feeling is on the matter, the latter is a criticism. If you try to stick to what is true for you and express it, you are more likely to be heard.

Being emotionally honest means using feeling words to express what is going on with you first. Another example:

"I hated maths too when I was at school. Unfortunately, even though you don't want to, you still have to do it." Tell the emotional truth about yourself and people around you will know where you are at.

I love you'; 'I'm very proud of the person you've become'; 'Thank you for the sacrifices you made for me'; 'I always love spending time with you; I'm frustrated I can't go dancing'; 'I'm scared I'll get ill'...

## 4. Have an Open Heart

Now that you are well-placed to say everything that you want to say, listen with an open heart to what the people you care about have to say to you.

The Grief Recovery Method teaches us how to listen and comfort others without trying to fix, analyse or explain (or change the topic back to ourselves!). Instead, we use the image of being a "heart with ears" – offering our full presence and listening with care and patience. If, and when we do respond, we do so without offering judgement, analysis, or criticism. Rather than telling someone we know "exactly how they feel", we can instead acknowledge their feelings "sounds like you've really been through it".

By offering a friend or family member your full presence and a listening ear, you are offering them the best support and comfort you could possibly give – the chance for them to speak about their feelings with emotional honesty without the fear of being shut down or offered platitudes.

## 5. Say Goodbye

When you speak to someone on the phone, it's normal to end the conversation with 'see you soon' or 'see you later.' We'd urge you to make sure you say 'goodbye,' and 'I love you' and 'I miss you' (if they're true and honest statements for you to make) to those you care about as frequently as you can at the end of your conversations. In the opening paragraph of this post, we told you that COVID-19 does not discriminate. Saying goodbye at the end of every conversation means that in the event something awful happens, you at least got to say 'goodbye'.

### Next steps

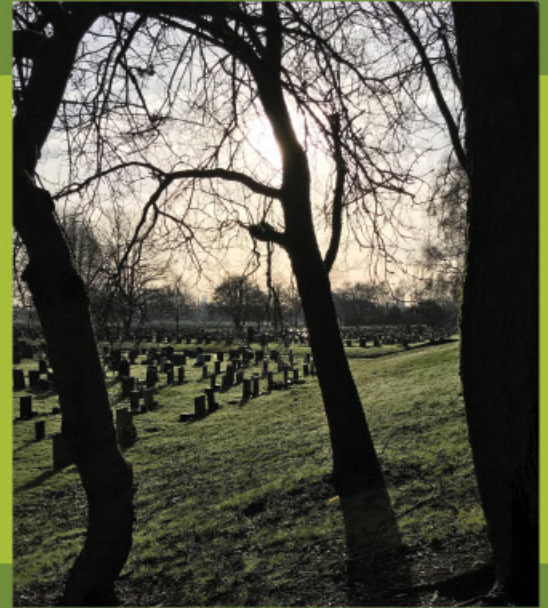
If this article has unearthed grief and loss feelings that you need help or support with, please know we are here for you. You can start by reading more of our articles; download our free ebook "a guide to loss"; buy a copy of the Grief Recovery Handbook; find a Grief Recovery Specialist who can help you move beyond any loss, or learn how to become a Grief Recovery Specialist yourself.

**Carole Henderson, Managing Director of Grief Recovery Europe.**



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## death café at Poole Crematorium

### Let's talk about death

"Why on earth would you want to talk about death or even dying...such a morbid topic for conversation." – words largely expressed by some when confronted with the opportunity of attending the first ever Death Café event held at Poole Crematorium on Thursday 20th February 2020.

Since working in bereavement, all 3 years of them and counting, I am astounded by how little families are prepared when someone who is significant to them in life passes away. Their death expected or unexpected can cause a range of emotions which for some can be overwhelming. With broken hearts many are unsure of what to do, where to turn to or just simply carry on putting a 'brave face' on matters while struggling to come to terms with their loss.

In order to live well, we need to consider dying well. And that's where the talking and the sharing comes in.

Grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss of any kind. The problem is that in the past we have been conditioned to believe that these feelings of grief are abnormal and unnatural. It is natural for each and every one of us to grieve for the loss of someone or something that mattered to us in life. Grief is a powerful emotion and is often neglected and misunderstood.

Something that I believe is perpetuated by families not willing to open up and talk about death and dying. I have been unfortunate to observe the breakdown in some family relationships as a result of this reluctance to talk about death – in most cases when making the funeral arrangements for their loved one. This has led to strongly worded arguments in front of staff and on occasion to staff having to intervene and separate family members intent on causing grievous bodily harm to each other. This in turn can lead to estrangement and bitterness and affects the mental wellbeing of those that are grieving and those that care for them. If left unchecked, this can lead to far reaching consequences, can hinder emotional and physical wellbeing leading to possible depression and anxiety. There are many support groups that do great work in supporting and providing comfort to those that have suffered a bereavement and help them to regain some sense of new 'normal' in their life following the departure of someone that no longer physically inhabits their day to day existence. Whilst important, this deals with the aftermath of a death – hours, days, weeks, months and years following a death. Research has shown that those who openly talk about death while living, are better equipped to recover from grief following a bereavement.

As I write this article, we are in the midst of a national and global emergency health crisis. COVID19 has arrived and is living amongst us. An unseen and unheard 'terrorist' that strikes at the

very essence of our everyday existence. Social distancing and lock-down is something that is now very much a part of our everyday lives and may continue to be so for the foreseeable future.

Bereavement and grieving are difficult enough without added complications. Social distancing and government restrictions on public gatherings has led to a reduction in the number of mourners that can physically attend a service. It is upsetting for me and my staff at Poole to see families hurting and unable to comfort each other during an emotional and distressing time. Mourners are now invited to attend services virtually. Something that I know will never replace the physical need of attending a

service, to providing and seeking physical comfort from each other. The power of a hug, a kiss, a touch, words of comfort expressed in person should never be underestimated. These restrictions will undoubtedly compound that sense of loss and may well hinder the grief recovery phase for the family. Many families up and down the country and across the world are suffering indescribable grief following the death of many from COVID19. We have all seen the powerful images on TV and read the words in newspapers and on social media encapsulating the heartbreaking misery of someone greatly loved, being left to die

alone in hospital. The doctors, nurses and carers are doing an incredible job under extreme circumstances and despite their best efforts cannot be there in person alongside every patient that dies. Not having that opportunity to be comforted by family members, a hand held, a kiss on a furrowed brow a few words of comfort as they take their last mortal breath. This can lead to profound misery for those left behind, bearing the guilt of 'not being there' when they believe it mattered most. In addition to this, families are not being able to provide that final goodbye moment in the way they may have wished to pre-COVID19 with restrictions now in place for the attendance at services, with some establishments insisting on having no service at all. This can add to that abject feeling of letting their loved one down in some way.

This has made me think even more of the death café event, the many discussions that took place amongst those that attended. To those I spoke to, those I listened to and those I observed. The evening was hugely rewarding for me and my team, and for those that attended, having never attended a Death Café event beforehand.

The Death café movement began in the UK in 2011. Started by Council worker Jon Underwood who held the first official British death café in his home at East Hackney in London. He got the idea from the Swiss model Café Mortel invented by sociologist



Bernard Crettaz, the popularity of which gained momentum in the Noughties and has since spread to various European countries. Jon was also responsible for inspiring the first Death Café event to take place in America. The objective of the movement is to 'increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their 'finite' lives'.

Many people have a particular problem talking about death. As a child I recall occasions in my family even to this very day where 'death' is very much a taboo subject and anyone daring to talk about the subject would invariably get shouted down with 'don't talk like that!' or "if you say it, you'll make it happen". You can imagine the thoughts and feelings of some of my family members when I decided to take a sudden career change by working within the bereavement industry. My mother, to this day still can't quite fathom where she went wrong!

A survey by the charity Dying Matters reveals that more than 70% of us are uncomfortable talking about death and that less than a third of us have spoken to family members about end of life wishes. Despite this reluctance there are encouraging signs of interest from people who are keen to explore death. Death Cafes provide a welcoming environment where talking about death is natural and comfortable, without judgement or agenda and are always free of charge to those who attend.

In December last year, I met Ellie Brooks of Wildflower Ceremonies for the first time during a familiarisation visit to Poole Crematorium. Ellie is a Sacred Celebrant who serves people of all faiths or none within the community by facilitating ceremonies for all different occasions. She describes herself as a 'Treasurer of Stories' – 'what is a funeral if not a life story?'. That really resonated with me. She had been asked to officiate at a funeral service to be held at Poole Crematorium – her first such funeral at the site. When she arrived following introductions and the guided tour, we got talking about death (as you do) and people's various responses to grief and bereavement. At the time, my mother in law had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and had weeks to live. I was explaining to Ellie my husband's reluctance to talk about his mother's 'final journey'.

It was then that Ellie mentioned she had facilitated at a recent Death Café only down the road in Broadstone which had been attended by 25 people – a good turnout by all accounts. That got me thinking, why not hold a Death Café at Poole Crematorium – a place synonymous with 'death' and seen as a 'final resting place' for many loved ones that have passed through our doors. Ellie was hugely supportive and encouraging and agreed to facilitate the event if we agreed to host it. Ellie provided all the promotional material and coordinated the online bookings which is something I insisted on due to health and safety concerns and our duty of care to anyone using the facility. Two weeks prior to the event, Ellie submitted an article in one of the local newspapers promoting the event, with online ticket booking available. That's when it really took off. Something he later told me was to do with 'acceptance' that his mother was dying. Talking about it would mean acknowledging what was to happen.

Poole's chapel has seated capacity for 80 and 120 with standing. We initially limited the attendance numbers to 80 with a view to

providing a 'behind the scene' tour of a working crematory. At best we expected 15 to turn up. What we didn't expect was the overwhelming response we received. All 80 spaces were booked with more than 30 on a waiting list. We anticipated a drop out rate, so in actual fact 50 people attended on the night. Still a large number, and I understand a record attendance for any death café event that has been held on the south coast. We were asked to hold a second date for those on the 'waiting list' which we agreed to do.

Myself and my colleague Sharlene Nixon share an equal fascination and commitment to the death management process that makes up part of our day to day role. We view our position as being uniquely privileged in that we are there to provide a service that makes a difference to the family of those that come into our care. However, Sharlene takes this fascination a step further. She has a very impressive 'Death Collection' of memorabilia and paraphernalia dating back to the early 19th century which includes an extensive collection of Victorian post mortem photography, an embalmers kit, an abundance of death jewellery to name just a few items of great interest and historical value. Sharlene did not hesitate in volunteering to help host the Death Café with myself and didn't take much persuasion on the suggestion of exhibiting part of her death collection on the evening. This proved to be a real conversational piece of the evening amongst those attending and helped forge a framework for discussions later on how societal response to death has changed from then to now.

Having been a funeral director of 16 years standing, Sharlene decided to take a different direction in her bereavement career by applying for the role of Trainee Crematorium Technician at Poole. In June 2017 she was appointed and in March 2018 was accredited with the ICCM's Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme qualification having passed her theory and practical crematory exams. Sharlene together with Mick Thorpe, Katrina Webber, Karen Pennington and Sue Cornell (Poole's A Team) have been a tremendous support to me since coming into post in February 2017 and continue to provide an outstanding service to all that use Poole Crematorium.

Following various discussions between myself, Sharlene and Ellie we agreed the format for the evening. Whilst the fixed chapel pews and catafalque detracted from the café style ethos of the event, Ellie and her husband were able to provide a variety of items to help 'decorate' the chapel – tables were erected covered with checked table cloths, LED tealights and pillar candles were prolific throughout the chapel and we played a 'pre-approved' playlist of suitably selected music through the Obitus music system with appropriate images displayed on the two 65" screens within the chapel. When arriving, people were greeted by the words "Welcome to Poole Crematorium" emblazoned across both screens.

Doors were opened at 6:30 pm for a start time of 7 pm. Ellie had the invitation list prepared in advance and people were asked to sign in as they arrived through the chapel doors. Anyone not on the list were unfortunately advised that they could not participate but were offered the opportunity of being included on the waiting list for the next date. Teas, coffees, and hot chocolate together with scrumptious cakes (kindly donated by BCP Council)

were made available to all with a minimum donation of £1 asked by those drinking and eating. This was well received. Following introductions from myself, Sharlene and Ellie, three tour groups were organised and undertaken in the crematory. Before each tour of the crematory began, the groups were advised that no photography or use of mobile phones were permitted during the tour. A little bit of history behind cremation was given to each group with the knowledge of the group tested throughout the tour. Each group was taken through first to the holding area where the coffin is transferred following committal and then into the charge end section of the crematory. An overview of the design of the crematory equipment and its component parts were given and the cremation process explained. Each group was then taken to the 'raking out' end of the crematory where the process for raking out and cremulating was explained. We were fortunate to have the kind permission of a family to show the cremated remains of their loved one as part of the tour prior to cremulation.

Explanation of the recycling of the metals collected was also given. Each group was then given the opportunity to ask questions. What was somewhat surprising was the comments on how clean, airy and light the crematory was. To some they thought that the area would be dark, dingy and damp – akin to a 'torture chamber'! Other questions ranged from "will my ashes be kept separate from other people's?", "is the body cremated inside the coffin", "how long does it take to cremate", "what is a water cremation?".

The feedback from those after the tours was hugely positive with particular emphasis made on the dignity and respect they felt was shown to the deceased when they came into our care – something they never really believed would be the case. At best I think the tours were reassuring for them, paved the way to ask questions they felt they would never be 'brave' enough to ask normally and led to some very interesting discussions afterwards. I believe it was important for them to know that their loved one and themselves would be treated with the utmost respect and to help dispel some of the myths surrounding cremation. Some I spoke to afterwards confirmed that until that evening they had not really thought about what they wanted for themselves in terms of burial or cremation, and that the tour and discussions had reassured them to the extent that they were happy to go down the cremation route when their time comes. It was also uplifting to hear from some who were 'dragged along' with a



Liz Hall (L) with celebrant Ellie Brooks and Crematorium Technician Sharlene Nixon (r)

friend or family member actively supporting the evening and would definitely be attending another. There was a real mixture of people from all ages and

backgrounds that attended. There were people there that were fortunate to have never experienced a bereavement, to those that were terminally ill or had family that were in end of life care, to university students that were there through intrigue and fascination.

Despite the seriousness of the discussions, there was a sense of relaxation (after the initial awkwardness) amongst the group discussions. I also felt that by talking about death and dying that all pretense disappears, and authenticity and honesty tends to prevail amongst strangers that are not judging, not criticizing but there to listen, support and encourage.

A lot of the discussions that I was privy to focused on the importance of having conversations with their family about what they wanted for themselves when the time comes. The message that came through abundantly clear at the end of the evening was that talking about death should be viewed as a positive thing and that as many people as possible should be encouraged to having those conversations with family about what they wanted in order to 'die well' as opposed to not 'dying well'. To some this could be simply a few sentences regarding whether burial or cremation was their preferred choice, what type of service they would like, the music they wish to have played, to where they wanted their ashes to be scattered.

Attendee Stuart Grewcock said: "The evening was so enlightening. It was really good to hear other people's thoughts on death – a real eye-opener and a comfort to find somewhere you can talk about your own thoughts without any stigma. If anyone is thinking of attending a Death Café, I would absolutely recommend it."

We asked all our 50 guests to complete a feedback survey. The results reported more than 90% of those who attended felt reassured about what happens to deceased people being cared for by the crematorium, and 100% of guests surveyed agreed that they would want to attend another Death Café.

After the event, Ellie said: "I believe the number of attendees at the Poole Crematorium Death Café have set a record for the biggest Death Café held yet in Dorset, I can't find evidence of any other where so many people have attended – it was certainly a record by far for a Wildflower Ceremonies Death Café, it just shows how needed the service is."

I can in all honesty say that the evening was a resounding success and one that I hope will help many in the community in the days, weeks and months to come as we battle through the COVID19 emergency.

We have promised those on our waiting list that once the current situation de-escalates, we will certainly hold a further Death Café event. After all we as a nation have gone through in the last few months, I suspect that waiting listing may be longer.

To find out more about Death Cafes please visit [www.deathcafe.com](http://www.deathcafe.com).

**Liz Hall**  
**Bereavement Services Manager (BCP Council)**

# New After-Cremation Memorials

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- Green granite leaves
- Low-cost, income generating options
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## webcasting in lockdown

The Obitus team support nearly half the UK's crematoria. James Crossland explains how the lockdown and changes to funerals have affected their operations.

Without a doubt, it's been the hardest 6 weeks of my career. As funeral volumes have sadly risen, so has demand for music. Although visual tribute demand is down, webcast demand keeps on going up. Our support team have never handled so many phone calls. And on top of the rising demands, we're still out every week installing our service in new crematoria, helping to take the pressure off funeral directors and bereaved families.

We were lucky. We were a week or two ahead, anticipating what was to come. I'd been carefully following news of the virus and lockdowns in China and then in Italy, so we'd already reviewed our Business Continuity Plan in preparation. This meant that we spent those first couple of weeks, as the lockdown ratcheted up, dealing with the unexpected rather than the basics. But as fast as we've adapted, needs have changed and we're straight into dealing with the next challenge.

### Working from home

The most immediate concern was transitioning almost our entire 40-strong team to remote working. Technically we could do it, we knew that. But there are so many subtleties we hadn't even considered. Our team would normally spend all day talking to each other about the needs of specific services, which becomes a lot harder when you're no longer just a few feet away. Some of the practicalities too, like receiving deliveries of music CDs or vinyl or shipping DVDs or USBs, becomes a lot harder when you're not in the office. It was in our BCP to reduce our music service if we needed to, but we were determined to keep going. As with many other challenges, we've found ways around. Each day, our music team are processing more music requests than ever before from home, only to be met with even more the following day.

Different colleagues have dealt with isolation in different ways, too. Some have thrived, while others have clearly struggled, and it's harder to help and support them when you're not



there. Personal lives have also been affected, particularly where relationships at home have become strained. Some of us have at-risk relatives we're understandably concerned about.

Some have become ill themselves, and some have sadly been affected by personal bereavements, too. It takes its toll, and we're all doing our best to be there for each other, even if we're not in the same room.



### Webcasting

In normal times, webcasting is an important, but relatively low-demand service and our system was designed to handle that level of demand. Webcasting is also by far the most complex service we provide. A successful webcast relies on many systems working correctly, some of which are within our control, and many are not. We hadn't originally designed the system to quickly scale to handle hundreds of webcasts to thousands of people each day — the system didn't need to be able to do that. But now

it does. Fortunately, we were able to move quickly, with our developers working round the clock to meet these changes in demand and address the technical challenges that accompanied it. In the last 6 weeks, I'm pleased to say we've delivered almost every webcast without issue, mainly thanks to the tireless work of our team.

**Family members**  
Not only has the

percentage of funerals using webcasting gone up, but the number of family and friends watching each funeral has risen enormously, too. These numbers are often even higher than the capacity of the crematorium's actual chapel. Our webcasting system has meant that most people are able to view the service with ease — funeral directors are given a username and password to share and our website is straightforward to use. However, we've still seen a huge increase in family members calling us for help — mainly from those who are simply less familiar with computers. The typical problems we encounter each day include people who can't hear webcasts (often they have no speakers, or the volume isn't turned up on their device), their username or password isn't working (they've often been given it incorrectly) or they can't get on our website (but it transpires they cannot get on any website). So their problems are often their own rather than the specifics of our service. But nevertheless, in their moment of distress, it becomes our job to help them and we're doing just that.

### Engineers

While our whole team has worked hard, I'm particularly proud of our AV engineers who've chosen to continue



travelling to crematoria across the UK to support our customers. They're taking extra precautions to protect themselves and crematorium staff, and are dealing with various unexpected challenges along the way. Our normal supply chains for AV hardware have been severely disrupted, and we've had to find alternative suppliers for all sorts of basic components, including keyboards, cameras and cables. Accommodation was an early challenge too, with many hotels cancelling our bookings. Our engineers came up with a creative solution and are now travelling the country in campervans (one each, of course). They seem to be having a lot of fun in them, and can't help but feel a little envious.

### Empathy from all

It's worth noting that despite the clear challenges across the service, there's been a real "we're all in this together"

attitude from across the bereavement service. Even with the enormous pressure so many are under, there seems to be an added layer of empathy to our interactions with so many partners, including funeral directors, officiants and crematorium staff. As increased volumes means the pressure has built, this has certainly been welcomed by our team. I thank all those we work with for being so supportive.



### Charity

The lockdown has put everyone's finances under pressure, but we still want to do as much as we can to support the national effort. We made a commitment at the beginning of April to donate money from each webcast to charities helping frontline NHS workers. Last week, we were enormously proud to make a one-off £12,000 donation to Meals for the NHS. This money will help to provide 2,000 proper meals to NHS staff at our local Royal Hallamshire and Northern General hospitals here in Sheffield for the next two months. We're going to continue supporting charities wherever we can as the fight against coronavirus continues.

### Conclusion

I'm writing this on the evening of Sunday 26th April. I feel this is important to mention because, with the speed at which things are changing, who knows where we might be by the time you're reading this (and if you are, thank you for making it this far!).

Like any organisation operating in unprecedented circumstances, we do have our challenges. But as things stand, I think we're managing pretty well. We're helping more people now than ever before, and I remain enormously proud of our team for how they've pulled together and risen to the challenge.

I hope, for everyone's sake, it's not long before the death rate falls again, lockdowns are eased and we can start returning to some form of normality. I look forward to seeing you all on the other side.

**James Crossland,**  
Managing Director, Obitus



## a funeral director's perspective

Jim Auld, SAIF past president reflects on current events

On the weekend of 13th – 15th March I relinquished my term of office as President of SAIF: The National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors. It was a privilege to represent SAIF during the last twelve months, particularly amongst the kindred professional associations and it was a pleasure to welcome your President Heather White to Glasgow. The weekend in Glasgow will, I think, be remembered by those who were there, as last weekend before lockdown. During my year, I felt that we as funeral directors do not interact enough with the cemeteries and crematoria we work with. I sometimes think funeral directors see the crematorium and cemetery staff as the enemy and vice versa. I really would like to see us working closer together because at the end of the day what is most important to both of us is the bereaved that entrust us to give their loved ones a caring and professional farewell and appropriate support.

The last six weeks have been challenging to say the least for the whole country and as funeral directors we have been challenged, we have learnt to do what we do in an entirely different way than we have ever done before. It is alien for us not to see the families that we care for face to face. We have also had to change the services that we provide for families from the removal of limousines, the lack of face to face appointments, and the restriction of numbers attending the funeral to name just a few. However, our attitude and empathy towards families is still there, although in a different role. I own a small family business doing just less than two hundred funerals a year in a semi-rural community of around twenty-five thousand people, in the west of Scotland. At the start of the crisis I was the first funeral director locally to withdraw the provision of limousines. I immediately prepared a letter that we could hand to families if we were at a death in the community or email them about how our business was operating during this time, along with how cemeteries and crematoria were running locally as well. We also sent this letter to all our local clergy and celebrants so that we are basically all singing from the same hymn sheet. I firmly believe communicating clearly with the families at all times has been a great help to how we have coped.

The registration of deaths procedure changed at the end of March with medical certificates of cause of death being emailed by the GP or the hospital, to the registrar. The registrars then contact the family and register the death over the telephone, sending the form 14 to the funeral director to pass on to the cemetery or crematorium electronically. This has been an important step and, in many ways, has eased the burden on the registration service. I remember well, January 2018, when we waited days for a registration appointment and I never thought we would have a month as busy as that ever again. Instead, registration is taking place so much quicker as the registrars are working from home and not relying on booking an office appointment in the council buildings. Last week, for example, we had a death in the community at 12 noon and by the time we brought the deceased into our care at 2:00pm the registrar had registered the death and the funeral was booked by 3:00pm.

It has really been about managing throughput. With only eight people attending our funerals locally, families are not having to wait on relatives to arrive from abroad to attend services, so funerals are actually taking place quicker than what they would in normal circumstances. Funerals have changed in themselves and are no longer the celebrations of life. They have become poignant occasions of farewell. One of the most poignant and personal funerals for me was a ninety-one-year-old gentleman whom I had known for most of my life. His three children and their spouses were in the chapel, his grandchildren and their partners and his great grandchildren lined the street that he had lived in for over 60 years, as we drove by. I felt enormously privileged to take his coffin into the crematorium that morning but felt profoundly sad that his grandchildren weren't there, and, in some ways, I felt I shouldn't have been there.



I have personally arranged in last week more funerals than an average month. I have arranged all the funerals myself over the phone and on the day of the funeral I have been there personally to meet the family, so that at least there is a feeling of continuity. I have read much on social media about the funeral sector being the forgotten people of this crisis. I don't agree with this, the number of messages I have had from families I have looked after in the past saying they are thinking about me and my team and the staff at the crematorium or cemetery are going through, has been quite incredible. I don't think we are forgotten. I also don't do what I do for recognition, I do it because it is a vocation not a job and I feel I can make a difference. What I have been amazed at has been the acceptance of all my bereaved families of the restraints imposed on them and the concern for the crematorium and cemetery staff and us. I have found it truly humbling to see the public show respect to a hearse by pausing and bowing their heads as it passes and we personally have tried to choose an appropriate route to allow neighbours or friends the opportunity to remember at a social distance.

We are all learning in this and there will be more changes as the weeks and months move forward but I know we, as funeral, cemetery and crematoria professionals will have given our all and more for the families we have looked after. It is our duty as funeral directors to keep everyone safe and support our cemetery and crematoria staff to keep funerals happening safely.

As for the mental strain on us all I think that is an article for another issue and for another author. Stay safe and stay strong and we will meet again.

**Jim Auld**

## a day in the life of a crematorium caretaker/cleaner



### “little things”

Working part-time, (as I am semi-retired) I could not wish for a better job. I get to help make a difference to families and friends on what is one of the worst days they could have, by ensuring that all the “little things” are taken care of.

A lot of effort goes into the upkeep of a crematorium and I am just part of a team that makes it all work smoothly, the goal is to make it happen without making it obvious – if I’m not noticed at all, I know I’ve done my job – I just blend in.

My job starts at the main gate as I drive onto the site, noting any litter at the entrance and within the car park, progressing to check that all exterior lighting is working and in good order. Once the building is opened a check on the number of services that are happening on the day is necessary as this informs the planning for the day and the week ahead.

If we are holding an early service, my priority is to inspect the ceremony hall/chapel where the sweeping of the floor and mopping to remove footprints from the previous day. I then check the seating is all aligned, and the service books are in place (not now though!). The little things are important: to ensure that the placing out of water jugs and glasses and tissues are in place for those attending the services and the ceremony leaders; that the curtain and voile are hanging neat and tidy, and a final dusting of all surfaces. It is important that I look at everything through the eyes of those visiting.

With the current health crisis it is even more important to make sure that everything is cleaned to a high standard and maintained throughout the day, the toilets are cleaned between services, as are the seats and other hard surfaces in the Chapel/ Ceremony Hall to make sure everything is as safe as possible for all visitors.

After the services begin, I move to look at the wider grounds, tidying up the memorial areas, removing dead flowers and cleaning the memorial wall and pillars, making note of any maintenance that may need doing during the coming week. And it is my responsibility to manage flowers left on the coffin by placing these in vases for display in the crematory to commemorate those we cremate, and a respectful nod to those resting in the cold store.

I also coordinate all the personal items left on coffins by recording these items for subsequent transportation to charity shops – we carefully select the shop that best relates to the condition the deceased had died from. It’s our “little” way of taking care of the those “little things” by permitting the items to travel with the coffin, and then sensitively disposing of them to avoid a storage (and certainly not an emission problem) whilst giving to others, because experience has shown that the families and friends do not want the items back.

I work with an extremely friendly team that has made me feel welcome and helped with a completely new job role. It has had its challenges for me, but I know that I made the right choice in coming to work here. I love working outside and inside and have been fully supported by the management team.

When working outside in the Anniversary and Wendelburie memorial gardens, I get to meet family members putting out flowers or just having a walk around and will often stop for a quick chat with them.

As I say, at the end of the day, it’s the “little things” that matter to us all.

**Ian Mannion**

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

iccm branch secretaries, contact details

### **Northern: Graham Harrison**

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## GreenAcres eternal gardens saff burials

### GreenAcres approach to dealing with the COVID-19 deaths in the Muslim community

The Funeral Industry is undoubtedly facing unprecedented times due to COVID-19. It is encouraging however to see the bereavement sector pulling together to face these challenges, ensuring teams are protected, whilst continuing to provide an empathetic service to bereaved families.

GreenAcres believe in a collaborative approach with bereavement professionals, specialists and communities including faith groups, in finding solutions that are both caring and respectful for families at their time of need.

Sadly, the number of deaths in the Muslim community due to COVID-19 is increasing rapidly, with London reported to be one of the largest hit areas in England. Eternal Gardens, a sister organisation of GreenAcres, based in Chislehurst (which forms part of the GreenAcres Kemnal Park site) has seen a sudden increase in burials, with the demand now more than 10 times higher than usual.

The Islamic faith requires that the burial of the deceased takes place as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours. With a national shortage of grave diggers and growing demand, GreenAcres as a group has pooled its resources to support Eternal Gardens but has still found it near on impossible to deal with the demand. The time delay in burials has understandably left the community devastated by the reality of COVID-19.

Being one of two recognised dedicated Muslim cemeteries in London, the Eternal Gardens team led by Asif Hassanali proactively approached Islamic Scholars seeking to find a resolution to the situation and meet the faith's requirement for an immediate burial. Following discussions Eternal Gardens developed and introduced the Saff burial method to help the Muslim families in a timely manner.

A 'Saff' grave meaning 'in a row' in Arabic, measures 10 metres x 2 metres. With the expertise of Cemetery Design Services, Eternal Gardens have now been able to design

graves of this nature. This not only ensures the digging process is efficient by taking half a day to dig with a mechanical digger, it also ensures respect and dignity for the deceased. Four of the Saff graves have been completed so far with a further six planned if the needs of the community require them.

Surrounded by wood and earth, each Saff grave allows for 10 deceased to be buried at the same service, with individual natural chambers created, as per Islamic ritual.

Each deceased will be buried in a shroud (where permissible) with their faces turned towards Mecca, in keeping with the faith.

In keeping with social distancing guidance, family members have been limited to one representative to attend, with the Imam (a faith leader) and the Funeral Director alongside members of Eternal Gardens, all present to witness the burial and carry out the service. Following the burial, the team will take pictures of the grave with the temporary marker, showing the individual grave number and name, and send it to the family once all the graves have been backfilled.



Richard Gomersall, Special Projects Manager at Eternal Gardens said:

'A large number of the funerals we are dealing with are due to COVID-19 and we simply cannot keep up with demand by burying people in individual plots. We worked with Islamic scholars to see how we could speed up the number of burials and agreed on the Saff graves, which are in accordance with the requirements of Muslim faith. We respect the needs of the community and are proactively caring for them to try and ease their suffering.'

The GreenAcres and Eternal Gardens team will be available to assist members of the industry to better understand the Islamic practices and guide the cemeteries around the UK to help the community in such an unprecedented situation.

## funeral diversity

The end of life service, or funeral has rapidly changed during the course of this century, with many modernisms being introduced to end of life services.

As we head through now the twentieth year of the 21st century more and more sophisticated technologies have been installed, mainly in the private sector. What has become clear is that the general public has grasped these options and they are quickly being both accepted as part of an end of life service option, more importantly being embraced and found to be of much comfort.

There is little doubt that the end of life services across every culture has altered dramatically. Those who have been on the frontline in our industry for any length of time can clearly see that, which makes it all the more staggering that a government body may well actually legislate against what people at the most difficult time of their lives, actually want.

At the CBCE in Newcastle two years ago, following a survey of over 5000 families who had experienced the loss of a loved one, over 90% of those interviewed clearly stated that the most upsetting feature of a crematorium service was the feeling of being rushed or crowded out by either the family prior or the next service being squeezed in behind their own. Yet it seems with those facts very clear the CMA feel that 45 minutes, if imposed is more than adequate?

Memoria were the first facilitator to introduce a minimum one-hour service time, this was very quickly applauded and subsequently families, funeral directors and celebrants have been able to experience a service that is both befitting and comforting at such a difficult time. Plasma screens where you see pictures of a loved one's life whilst listening to the music that was important to them, became the norm. The option to stream across the world to those unable to attend a service has been hugely successful as we strive to provide

an option that facilitates families with relations across both the country and the world.

More recently, we have introduced a very sophisticated chapel lighting option where you can choose if you so wish, the colour of lighting that is special to your loved one and family, at the point of committal, as well as being able to project a special image over the catafalque. In less than 12 months over 40% of families have taken up this option, proof if ever it was needed that we live in rapidly changing times, where peoples' attitudes to death have changed and their needs much altered.

The introduction and success of Death café's has been remarkable, people now talk openly and share their experiences of loss. Churches and religious organisations, now seeing people's needs have altered are listening to their congregations and their needs. The public are increasingly choosing colour or colours, you see old fashioned buses, motor-cycle hearses, bicycle hearses, dove releases, dancers and piping or flute bands marching into the grounds.

These and many other modernisms which continue to grow in number are very clear and living examples of what families want when celebrating the life of their loved one. All of these wonderful options take time and investment, they are here and available and people are asking for them.

Let's hope that by the time any government body tries to enforce change that they have properly understood peoples' needs, like those who actually provide these amazing services.

**Frank Meilack – Director of Community Engagement, Memoria Ltd**



## vintage visits: Campdown Cemetery St. Austell

As part of my due diligence before a St. Austell funeral I was taken to the site of the grave in Campdown Cemetery to determine if anything was required to get my 1950 Leyland Beaver as close to the grave as possible.

The width between the entrance gates had already been measured by Paul Bourton funeral directors and the 9 ft 5 inches clearance after a 90 degree turn off a narrow road would require the correct method of approach, spinning the lorry on a sixpence, which has been performed many times before.

The night before the funeral I walked into the old part of the cemetery which dates from 1901 and was made aware of the narrow roadway into the newer part which was opened in 2001. It was pointed out that graves of children, some plots marked and some not marked, lay close to this road, which was less than 8 feet wide. I asked Stacey Lambert, funeral director, if one of the Paul Bourton staff could watch me as I drove across the road in the morning and stop me if any tyre of the Leyland Beaver, which is 7 feet 6 inches wide, should be moving towards the edge of the tarmac.

It was a sunny March day and the views from the new part of the cemetery were magnificent with the sea visible beyond the trees. The cemetery was very tidy and there no evidence of any litter or plastic waste being blown onto the site.

Campdown Cemetery has a number of Commonwealth War Graves which include three soldiers from The Indian Army who on Friday November 22nd 1940 were on a training exercise when tragically a tree fell onto their tent killing Ghulam Nabi and Muhammad Gul instantly with Warrant Officer Hasmat Ali surviving two days before passing away.

The photograph demonstrates that the tyres of Leyland Beaver kept to the roadway and there were no problems getting out of the site. Earlier in the day there was a problem, however, getting into site with the Leyland Beaver, which was not caused by the narrow gateway. The delay was caused by the DVLA lifting a car with no road fund tax off the road at a location very close to the cemetery entrance.



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## vintage visits: Yeovil Crematorium revisited

I first visited Yeovil Crematorium on June 16th 2011 and I had asked the funeral director, who was in the site everyday, to measure the clearance under the porte-cochere. He told me on the telephone that I would have no problems, however, just as we were coming through the gates it transpired that he had never actually measured the clearance.

As the funeral director was paging the Leyland Beaver towards the crematorium, we came around the corner and the porte-cochere was just in front of us with a sign which clearly said 2.5 meters. Now 2.5 meters is about 8 feet 2 inches and with my lorry being 8 feet 4 inches high I started to worry, however, the clearance looked bigger than the sign indicated.

Suddenly the heavens opened and there was a torrential rain storm. In order to protect the coffin I slowly edged forward and with everyone behind the window in the office shaking their heads and waving their hands I chose a path that was between the lights. After the coffin was removed I measured the height beneath the porte-cochere and found it was 9 ft 2 inches, 2.79 meters.

So, on my next visit to Yeovil Crematorium I simply asked if the roadway had been resurfaced or if the lights had been changed and Paul Rayson, Manager, returned my call. Yeovil Crematorium was in the middle of a refurbishment and Paul told me some of the new features which will transform the use of an existing stained glass window. All I could see on the day was the extension to the car park which is almost finished.

The porte-cochere is very wide and there was plenty of space for the bearers next to my nearside roller and also ample space for me to get out of the cab. In my opinion it is easier for a family to enter a building when they are not funnelled into a tight area, a feature that exists in some crematoria.

After the coffin was off-loaded I enquired where the flower area was, Katherine Cole, Chapel Attendant, Gardener & Cremator Technician stepped forward and walked to the corner showing precisely where I should go.

The site was exceptionally clean and it wasn't evident that major building work was taking place.

On leaving the site I was on Preston Road and on the right side of some major road works that were taking place in Yeovil.



## pulpit: the mystery of sailors' war graves

### Burton Bradstock villages connection to the sinking of HMS Formidable

Having a strong connection to Burton Bradstock through the fact that my wife Marion and I were married in the village church there in 1968, I am always pleased to visit Dorset and Burton Bradstock in particular.

I am always pleased to visit Dorset and Burton Bradstock in particular. It is set apart from Bridport, but somehow feels a part of the whole sea-side, harbour and river environment of the Bride Valley. The Beach, part of the lengthy Chesil Bank which stretches from Portland Bill to Bridport harbour, is just a few hundred yards away from the church, and mainly stony but beware of the cliffs! Beautiful though they are, they are also dangerous because of being subject to sudden collapse. Stay clear!



*HMS Formidable © IWM (Q 38891)*

Whilst researching who was buried in the village Cemetery in Burton Bradstock, Dorset, recently, I came across the following information from Ray West, of the Bride Valley Royal British Legion.



“For the past six years I have had the privilege on behalf of the Bride Valley Branch of The Royal British Legion of placing the memorial crosses on the War Graves in the Cemetery in Shipton Lane. What has puzzled me is the fact that two of the graves were members of the same ship "HMS Formidable" but the men's names do not appear on any Roll of Honour memorials in the Bride Valley. Their graves stand next to each other they are: -



*GH/16398 Pvte R.M.L.I. A.J. Clapham H.M.S. Formidable 1.1.1915*



*298357 F. Mead Stoker 1st Class R.N. H.M.S. Formidable 1.1.1915*

Continuing his article, the author writes:

“Whilst browsing a Dorset Life magazine in a dentist's waiting room recently all was revealed. H.M.S. Formidable, a pre-Dreadnought battleship launched in 1898 and commissioned in 1901, was out in the channel off Start Point when the New Year of 1915 was welcomed in. She was heading towards Portland Harbour awaiting the raising of the boom at first light when a torpedo struck at about 2.20am hitting No. 1 boiler room on the port side. Then at 3.05am the second torpedo hit her. Then came the third bang caused by the magazines blowing up. 71 survivors took to the boats and despite the high seas and intense cold 48 managed to reach Lyme Regis. Many of the casualties were washed up on the beaches and presumably the two in the Burton Bradstock cemetery were washed up on Burton Beach. We are told that many are buried in Lyme Regis churchyard.”

The Imperial War Museum offers further information: -

“During the early stages of the war HMS Formidable served with the 5th Battle Squadron. The squadron was based in the



English Channel to guard against possible German invasion and, after a period at Sheerness, they relocated to Portland in December 1914. On Thursday 31st December 1914, the squadron was conducting firing exercises off the south coast. Unknown to them, they had been spotted by Rudolf Schneider, the commander of the German U-boat U-24. Biding his time he tracked the squadron and at 2.20am, New Year's Day 1915, a torpedo struck Formidable and she immediately began to take on water. Standing orders dictated that if submarines were detected, unaffected vessels must make for port immediately and Formidable's sister ships made for Portland.

The two light cruisers Topaze and Diamond stood by to take survivors, but any hopes that the ship might be saved were dashed when a second torpedo struck just after 3am, sealing Formidable's fate. The crew abandoned ship, but in rough weather several of the ship's boats were lost. It is even alleged that a piano was thrown overboard as a makeshift raft.

HMS Formidable finally sank at 4.45pm. Most survivors were picked up the following morning at sea, although one lifeboat wasn't found for 22 hours. Some boats managed to row to shore, but many men died of exposure before they could be rescued. Of the 780 strong crew only 233 survived. Among those lost were Captain Loxley and his dog Bruce (see illustration right) who were last seen on the bridge. Bruce's body was later washed ashore and is commemorated by a headstone in Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens in Dorset.



**BRUCE**  
 Airedale Terrier  
 who stood till the end  
 with  
 Captain Loxley RN  
 on the bridge of  
 HMS Formidable  
 when sunk by a torpedo  
 30 miles from Portland  
 January 1st 1915

Bruce's body was washed up  
 below Abbotsbury Castle



The website of the Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens supplied the photograph.

A life-belt from HMS Formidable was washed up on the Dutch coast during the First World War and presented to the Imperial War Museum in 1920. The life-belt has been connected with Ordinary Signalmen Walter Ernest Melluish, who was only 18 years of age.

At the wreck site, Formidable lies upside down on the seabed, almost cut in half by a large hole towards the bow. However, the vessel's thick armour means that most of the hull is still intact. The wreck is designated as a Controlled Site under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986, meaning that diving on it is prohibited.

Many of the townsfolk brought food and blankets. Others took men into their homes to rest and recuperate, while those needing medical aid were sent to hospital. The dead were placed in the entrance to the cinema, a part of the old Assembly Rooms, and a local Inn also provided support, The Pilot Boat Inn, Lyme Regis (pictured right as it was in the past).

Many victims of the sinking of HMS Formidable were received at The Pilot Boat Inn. Mrs. Atkins, the landlady, took in as many drowned sailors as possible and they were laid on the stone floor of the basement.

Astonishingly, her dog Lassie drew attention to one victim, Seaman Cowan, who had been laid on the floor and presumed drowned. Lassie started licking his face. After sometime the sailor revived and lived to tell the tale. As a result, Lassie was awarded two animal medals in



© Rick Ayrton 2018

*A diver examining a six inch gun on the wreck.  
Photograph c. Rick Ayrton, 2018.*



*The Pilot Boat Inn, Lyme Regis. as it was in the past, and as it is today*

recognition of her extraordinary perception and subsequent vital action! She was quickly and respectfully described as "Doctor Lassie"!!



Oddly, there is no reference to her ending, but she deserves a big cheer for saving Seaman Cowan.

He returned to the Pilot Boat Inn on several occasions to thank Lassie!

Going back to the Burton Bradstock village cemetery, to be truthful, I felt very moved by the sight of the two stone graves of men who probably had little or nothing to do with Burton Bradstock, or Dorset, yet here they lie, so many years after their untimely deaths. I wondered if their families had even ever come to Burton Bradstock to pay homage to these sailors, but there are no records of such things.



I hope so.

Sadly, the ravages of war are seemingly endless and timeless.

**Prebendary Neil Richardson**

## surreal times

Dr Kate Woodthorpe looks at the possible consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on our industry

I am writing this over the Easter weekend, as the sun beats down and we receive the news that the PM has been discharged from hospital. We are three weeks into the lockdown and by all accounts the peak of Covid-19 has not yet been reached. By the time you read this I have no idea what will have happened in this extraordinary moment in our global and national history, so what I say here may well be substantially out of date.

If the predicted peak goes on for some time, there will be huge pressure on funeral directors and crematoria as they manage a high number of deceased individuals. I suspect PPE will be a big issue in terms of protecting staff when handling recently deceased people who died with the virus. There will be massive knock-on effects for funeral services (if they are not outright banned), for income, for overworked staff. These very human issues will – I hope – be addressed and resolved by the time you read this.

The consequences for a population who have not had opportunity to see the dying person, view their body, nor attend a funeral service or any other kind of ritual to acknowledge the death, console others and say goodbye to the deceased will also likely be significant. At the time of writing, the uptake of virtual services or wakes is increasing, which is unsurprising given the ease of phone-to-phone or computer-to-computer video conferencing. But this technological potential excludes a significant number of people who do not regularly access technology, namely those in their 80s and 90s. As a group that will be shielded due to their age, how they will be included in emergent rituals during the lockdown remains to be seen. This pandemic may thus exacerbate social differences and inequities that were already there: for some it will serve to move them faster towards online and alternative mourning opportunities and go some way to normalise direct cremation and/or online funeral rituals. But for others it may be devastating, ostracising and disenfranchising.

Given this, what the impact will be on grief, and grief for different groups of people, is less clear. It is being postulated that millions will have PTSD after this pandemic, or complicated grief, or prolonged grief disorder. While I am sure these medical theories resonate for a reason, I am hesitant in over-pathologising a response to an experience. This is an unprecedented moment in modern history, for which no one could have mentally or emotionally prepared. We, all of us, share a collective lack of experience in dealing with the impact of a pandemic such as this one on our everyday lives, or living with the death of someone we know (and even love) from this virus. There is no 'normal' right now.

What we do know is that one hundred years ago significant turbulence from the effects of World War One, both in terms of human cost but also economically, plus a flu pandemic, meant that how death was handled within families and across a population changed. Pat Jalland has written about this in an excellent book called 'Death in War and Peace: a history of loss and grief in England, 1914-1970' and I can't recommend it highly enough if you want to understand a bit more about how perceptions of death and experiences of grief are shaped by economic, political, and social events. A century ago, such widespread death impacted almost every family in the country, and as a result funerary ritual and emotional expression became quieter, more sombre and solemn, and private. Will we see a similar shift as a result of Coronavirus? Will we see similar public acts of commemoration this autumn?

After this pandemic has passed, in 2 years' time, and in a time of relentless pressure for productivity in the workplace and the liberation of unlimited personal expression online, I hypothesise that there will be a similar societal shift in perceptions of death and grief. There will be a re-invigoration of appreciating the preciousness of human life and the planet; more efforts will be made by individuals to ensure that their bodies are healthy and that their environment is too. Another impact, I suspect, will be a lot of clambering to claim the biggest grief or loss within the pandemic – something which we can see right now in the media as they shine a spotlight on the tragedy of specific individuals who have died – in terms of their age or occupation (nurses and bus drivers to name but two).

And finally, I think that there will be public mourning for the deceased of Covid-19, whether that is a day of remembrance or a statue, and acts of thanks for those frontline workers who kept the country going. At the time of writing this recognition has not reached funeral directors and cemetery and crematoria staff; I sincerely hope that you are included within this in the future for what you are doing right now.

**Dr Kate Woodthorpe**  
Senior Lecturer  
Centre for Death and Society, University of Bath



## Staying Safe and Epitaph

**The team at EDGE appreciate the challenges that you are facing on the front line, and we are doing whatever we can to support you during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

As Epitaph is cloud based software, our clients have been able to continue administering their crematoria and cemeteries as normal, from wherever and whenever they need to. Be that at the office, crematoria, cemetery or from home.

Our pandemic booking diaries are on standby and can be activated by our clients if they need to increase the number of funerals. Typically, over 55% of Epitaph funerals are booked online by funeral directors.

Although we have dispersed our staff to their homes to keep them safe, we are able to provide a normal service to our clients because we are 100% cloud based including phone and video conferencing.

Epitaph is a software as a service (SaaS) that ensures all our clients are always on the latest version

of our software, and EDGE are responsible for the backups, disaster recovery and server upgrades which we take very seriously. Our data centre in Coventry is monitored 24x7 and it is backed up to the cloud, every hour. Epitaph is underpinned by a 3rd party service that guarantees Epitaph to be operational within 2 hours of either a disaster at the data centre, or, a catastrophic event eliminating the EDGE team. If the SaaS Escrow is activated, Epitaph clients have 60 days to implement 1 of our 4 Escrow options, which range from downloading the data and Epitaph software with a 1 year license to switching to a hosted solution with a 3rd party together with the Epitaph source code and a perpetual license.

Meanwhile as an experienced IT service company the team at EDGE would be pleased to assist anybody that needs to be able to work remotely.

We wish you well and look forward to assisting you... perhaps by a video call until it is safe to meet face to face again.

## test your knowledge



### This Edition's theme: Cremation

This edition of Test Your Knowledge focuses on cremation. See how many you can answer correctly – the answers can be found on page – answers are given on page 53 (no cheating!)

#### Question 1

Can you cremate 2 people in the same coffin?

##### Answer

A – Yes

B – No

#### Question 2

Can you cremate a coffin which has a set of human ashes within it?

##### Answer

A – Yes

B – No

#### Question 3

Can you cremate without a coffin?

##### Answer

A – Yes

B – No

#### Question 4

On the cremation form 1, if someone states that a family member has an objection, can you proceed?

##### Answer

A – Yes

B – No

#### Question 5

On the day of the funeral, the applicant for cremation hasn't turned up for the service, can you proceed?

##### Answer

A – Yes

B – No

#### Question 6

Is it a legal requirement to check the coffin nameplate before it is taken into the chapel?

##### Answer

A – Yes

B – No

#### Question 7

Can you give the ashes to someone other than the applicant?

##### Answer

A – Yes

B – No

### Question 8

A mother carrying twins experiences problems in her pregnancy, is told one of her twins has died at 22 weeks gestation. She goes on to deliver both her twins at 31 weeks gestation. The other twin lives for 2 hours but doesn't survive. What paperwork would you expect in this case?

### Question 9

Can you accept body parts from someone whose body was cremated elsewhere?

#### Answer

A – Yes

B – No

### Question 10

Can a pet be cremated with the deceased in the same coffin?

#### Answer

A – Yes

B – No

## under the radar

It's October 2017 and Disney have just launched their latest animated feature 'Coco'. Its release is met with great fanfare and Director Lee Unkrich's film, which is vibrant in its depiction of a Mexican child becoming aware of his family's cultural heritage in its relationship with the Day of the Dead, is about to raise \$800 million plus at the box office.

Leap forward to March 2019 and Ricky Gervais has just premiered his new black comedy drama 'After Life' on Netflix to critical acclaim. After Life tells the narrative of Tony Johnson, a depressed and suicidal journalist who is trying to adapt following his life being turned upside down after losing his wife to breast cancer.



We therefore have two completely separate attempts to bring grieving, loss and our relationship with death to the forefront of mainstream entertainment. There have been many films before that have

highlighted grief such as 'P.S I love You', 'The Lovely Bones' and 'We Bought A Zoo', however for Disney to be taking this issue to a targeted, younger audience, and for an internationally successful comedian such as Gervais to choose to highlight the after effects of losing someone and the darkness that can follow, are both bold moves which could be suggested as commendable in their efforts.

It is noticeable however that despite their attempts, it can be quite difficult to note critical reviews that are in support of the content of these mediums. They have both been successful in their own genres with general reviews and financial performances backing this up. But it seems that we may have missed a perfect opportunity to promote the concepts of these particular examples of entertainment. It could be pondered how many grieving children that are currently struggling with the loss of a parent for example, may benefit from watching Coco and understanding a little more their own feelings, frustrations and fears.



Whilst it is accepted that everyone is different and that these examples may not be the best fit for all, I am keen to use this platform to gently highlight how useful they may be in our day to day roles in seeing grief from a different perspective.

In short, if you haven't seen them already, maybe give them a watch if you have some spare time; I would love to know our members' feedback or if you have your own examples of how understanding grief is being approached in different ways and means.

**Mathew Crawley,**  
ICCM Technical and Member Services Officer

The CDS Group are a fully integrated multi-disciplinary service provider. CDS are committed to the Green Agenda in all elements of design, engineering and planning, to deliver a seamless experience from inception to completion.

### Cemeteries & Crematoria



CDS are a team of highly qualified and dedicated specialists - field surveyors, engineers and designers - with an outstanding network of partners including architects and construction consultants. This enables CDS to offer an unrivalled service in the design and development of cemeteries and crematoria.

We are committed to creating environments that provide tranquility for visitors but also offer excellent commercial value and facilities that can be managed and operated on a day-to-day basis at minimal cost.

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- Design and development
- Drainage management
- Project management
- Mausoleum development
- Groundwater Risk Assessments

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- Groundwater monitoring
- Contaminated land
- Drainage management
- Land regeneration
- Project management

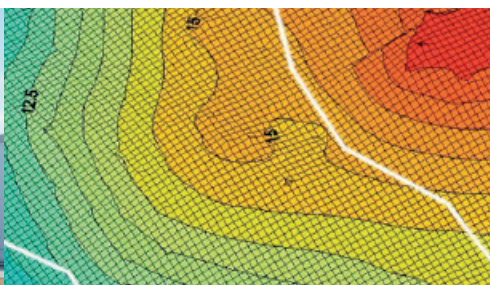
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The CDS Group have an in-house team of planners, designers, drainage engineers and environmental consultants who can provide an unparalleled capability in ensuring the highest level of project delivery.

CDS offers extensive experience in the development and delivery of parks, sports grounds and public open space. Innovative ideas and technical expertise can help to transform tired and old areas of land into new and vibrant open spaces for local residents and wildlife to enjoy.

- Parks and open spaces
- Sports grounds
- Sports facilities
- Country parks
- Project management
- Drainage management





Greenbridge Bespoke Mausolea

# Greenbridge

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## the BTEC accredited ICCM crematorium technicians training scheme (CTTS)

### *A member update*

In an unprecedented period which has seen so much change within our working practices, the ICCM have taken similarly uncharted steps to ensure that our members have been and continue to be able to provide their cremation services with fully qualified staff in line with their permitting requirements.

In a move to embrace current technology and provide uninterrupted provision of practical assessments, email and video calls have facilitated the streamlining of the overall CTTS process.

Until such a time that Government restrictions are lifted, we would like to reassure our members that we are, and will continue to be, adopting these processes in order that each candidate is able to complete their qualification without detriment to the syllabus that they must complete as set out by our awarding body, Pearson.

In order for Crematorium Managers and Mentors to understand the current processes, the key changes are:

- Upon completion of the candidate's written assessments, these can be emailed to Julie Callender at the National Office, along with the completed, signed Mentor sheets.
- The work will be marked within 72 hours, and the ICCM practical assessor will be notified.
- The assessor will contact the designated person at the Crematorium to arrange the practical assessment to take place over video call and at this stage also request:
- Photographic ID of the candidate to be provided
- An appropriate phone number for the candidate to be assessed on, and signal strength in the crematory to be tested prior to assessment.
- The assessment is then completed, and an immediate decision of pass or fail is provided to the candidate and site Manager.
- Email confirmation is then also provided as authority that the candidate can cremate unsupervised until receipt of their official certificate arrives with the candidate.

In a change to standard assessments, adopting these immediate changes has ensured that all candidates have, on average and limited by site specific service conditions, been assessed and informed of their outcome within a week of submitting their written assignments.

The feedback thus far has been positive from both candidates and their site Managers and Mentors and the ICCM is proud that they have been able to provide this uninterrupted service in the current climate.

We will, as always, endeavour to assist members wherever we can in all forms of training during this current period, therefore if any member has a current training query, please forward these to Julie Callender at the National Office where we will be able to assist with your enquiry.

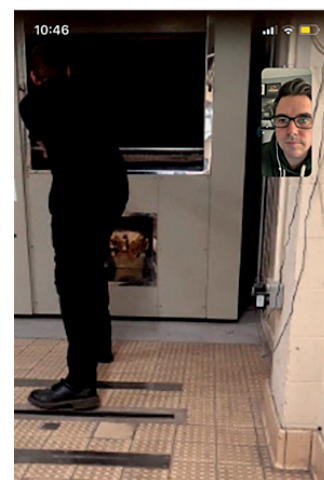
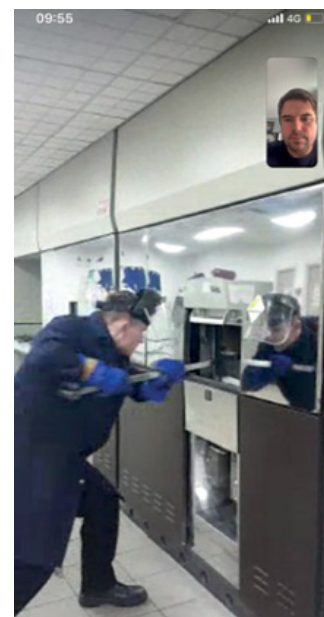
#### **Member feedback:**

'I found it to be a good way of assessing people for the test in the current pandemic we are facing whilst keeping the assessor and student at a safe distance rather than face to face contact.'

**Luke Smith - Bereavement Services Officer  
Salford City Council**

'I could not have been any happier with how the test day went, I thought the way I was examined was excellent, and I could not of asked for anymore from the ICCM'

**Ronan Sutton – Crematorium Technician  
Stoke on Trent Council**



## company news

### Cemetery Development Services

CDS Group continue to grow! The CDS Group known by many as Cemetery Development Services Ltd have re-branded to the CDS Group and continue to grow in the Local Authority market sectors, specifically in cemeteries, crematoria, parks and open spaces. We have published our Green Agenda initiatives and are committed to assisting councils in their carbon reduction schemes to hit their targets to combat the carbon crisis in our designs and through our environmental management team.

With this growth, we are delighted to announce that we have been acquired by Darwin Alternatives through their Bereavement Services Fund. Darwin are a fund management business already known for their acquisition of the multi award winning GreenAcres Group which has a portfolio of six cemeteries across the UK. Focused on long term business investments, this acquisition ensures the CDS Group are able to provide our clients with highest levels of professionalism and personal service whilst continuing to grow and invest in provision of design and development services to the public sector within their open spaces and environmental departments. To find out more please go on line to [www.thecdsgroup.co.uk](http://www.thecdsgroup.co.uk) [www.darwinalternatives.com](http://www.darwinalternatives.com) [www.greenacresgroup.co.uk](http://www.greenacresgroup.co.uk)

C  
D  
S

### Gower

For a variety of reasons, including the retirement of some key people, Gower has not recently been able to provide its delivery and support services to suit the requirements of its clients.

**GOWER** Consultants

As a result, Manuscripti, the specialist scanners, who have worked with Gower for many years, have got involved, and now own a controlling interest in the Gower companies.

The businesses are now well resourced, the Gower personnel have been retained, and additional experienced IT staff have been engaged.

Jamie Burges-Lumsden, Manuscripti MD commented:-

“We are very keen to re-engage with our Gower clients to make sure that they are supported as they would wish, and also to make them aware of all of the upgrades and improvements that we can offer. We are still in the process of training and re-training, which is progressing well, so we hope to be in touch with everyone in the near future.”

Jamie can be contacted on:- [jbl@manuscripti.net](mailto:jbl@manuscripti.net)

### welters® organisation worldwide

Massive investment in advanced tooling for manufacturing response. Due to the continuously increasing demand in our production throughput to serve the



industry in these most challenging times, welters®

**welters®**  
ORGANISATION  
WORLDWIDE

organisation are increasing their capabilities in production to the extent that output is enhanced through technology to enable our support to the market place to be appropriate to current need.

Output increase in response to requirement has received investment increase to facilitate real capability from all UK manufacturing expertise.



## Supplier with 100% Reliability

- *We supply crematorium and abatement equipment.*
- *We handle the complete package from design to completed installation.*
- *Planning a brand new site? We have the experience and resources to make it a reality.*
- *Looking to install new equipment into an existing building? We have many flexible solutions.*



## Allround Service

- *24 hour standby, 365 days a year*
- *Remote real-time diagnostics and support with chat function*
- *Avoid long delivery periods with IFZW extensive spare parts stock*
- *Continuous further development of technologies*



## The World Around Us

- *Long-standing commitment to environmental protection*
- *Our abatement equipment meets strict emission limits*
- *Our manufacturing process is organised to minimise environmental impacts*

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Tel.: +44 1403 713310  
[www.ifzw.co.uk](http://www.ifzw.co.uk)  
[info@ifzw.co.uk](mailto:info@ifzw.co.uk)

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## in touch - up north



*JRR Tolkien words from Gandalf to Frodo - So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.*

Oddly relevant at the time of writing this article on day 35 I think it is of the new normal world.

I've previously mentioned the issues of GDPR and keeping in touch with people and how the ICCM have managed to navigate the changing world of information and data. Well who would have thought that all that would come back around so quickly and be so relevant.

In the past 5 weeks, we have tried to update members as much as possible and broken our own record for social media posts. The record hedgehog's 2.5K views has been surpassed and nearly 3,000 people saw or shared our guidance at the start of this pandemic.



I think around 50 people have checked on their newsletter status and a lot of the old GDPR demons have been fixed and Mail Chimp is probably due at least a bunch of yummy bananas for all the mail outs! The response rate of this again thankfully has increased.

ICCM will always do its utmost to keep all members informed via Facebook, Mail Chimp and the website. If you don't think we are reaching you, please let us know and we can work out why.

On some lighter notes of things.

### Membership fees for 2020/21

The Board of Directors are delighted to announce that retired professional members will now have their subscriptions at no charge. If you are soon to retire or have just retired and wish to remain in membership, then simply let me know and your status will be converted.

The Board felt that this small act would benefit people who have given their time to serving the bereaved and help maintain their link to the sector.

### Recycling update

The issues of Covid-19 have affected so many things that it seemed sensible to end the current recycling round early. A new round will be opened once something approaching normal circumstances occurs again. Any causes that were nominated will or will have already received funds from this shortened round.

### Staying in touch

Whether its via Facebook, Twitter or Mail chimp newsletters, you can sign up and stay in touch - there are many ways to keep updated with these or via the website.

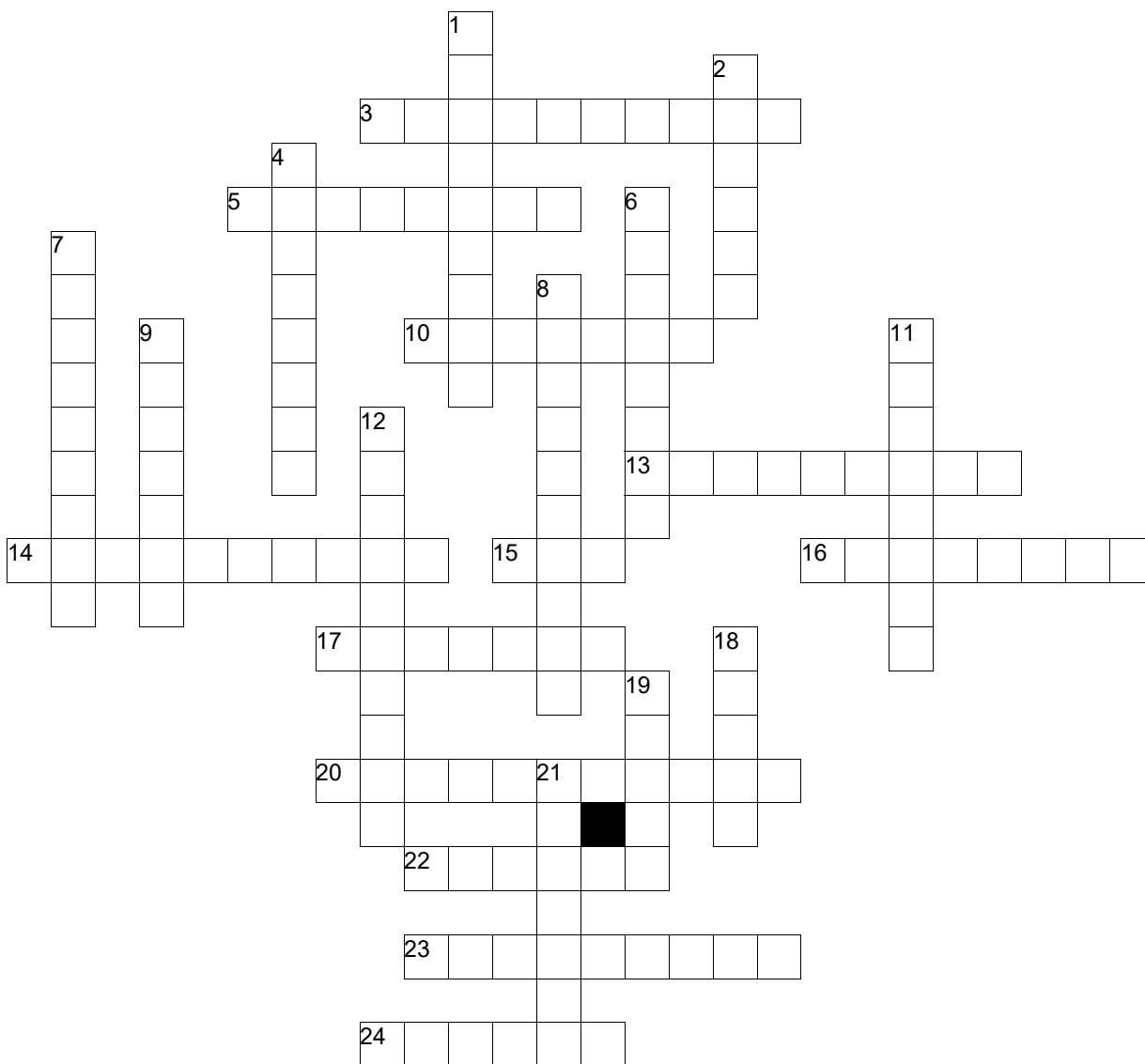
As ever drop me a message at – [trobson@instituteceemandcrem.com](mailto:trobson@instituteceemandcrem.com) to make sure you and your colleagues are signed up.





## take a break

We know you are all working extremely hard so for a bit of light hearted fun why not take a break, enjoy a cup of coffee and see if you can complete the following puzzles – we have started with an easy level to get started!



### Across

- 3. Ash Processor
- 5. A place that stores the dead
- 10. Inquest conductor
- 13. Exhaust gas
- 14. A decorated bier the coffin rests on during a funeral
- 15. A vessel to place cremated remains
- 16. Death Notice
- 17. A corpse
- 20. Made Holy
- 22. To place the coffin in the cremator
- 23. The ritual placing of a corpse in a grave
- 24. A place of Worship

### Down

- 1. Process of incineration
- 2. Burial Box
- 4. Funeral attendees
- 6. No longer alive
- 7. Official record keeper
- 8. Autopsy
- 9. Burial Ceremony
- 11. A structure erected to commemorate persons or events
- 12. What is another name for disinterment?
- 18. Cremated Remains
- 19. Burial Place
- 21. Solemn Procession

## wordsearch

I spy with my little eye something you see in a cemetery...

I N S C R I P T I O N P V V C T F  
 L E V O H S S R E N R U O M Z A U  
 V N U I F P A F O T R O S M Q U N  
 E X O B L I O S W R R H D C Z L E  
 K Z F K X X V I S R O E I J J H R  
 T Y D B E H N E G R K J E P G E A  
 R S X S L E V T I J Z F L S G J L  
 E S O V H A Z N L S E E N G A F D  
 G S E H R R G V R U P D I P E S I  
 G A M G G S D E X A A D K A L T R  
 I R A P T E W R H W I V K E O A E  
 D G T Z X O S C R G L F C G S N C  
 E U T S L U P E B W E A Z L U D T  
 V O I F L Y A S L F B C Y H A P O  
 A C N S J T K W O R Q N L M M I R  
 R L G D H P Q L I I Y U T A F P Y  
 G H E A D S T O N E L J O T Y E Q

|         |             |          |           |        |                  |       |
|---------|-------------|----------|-----------|--------|------------------|-------|
| Chapel  | Clay        | Digger   | Flowers   | Foxes  | Funeral director | Ghost |
| Grass   | Gravedigger | Graves   | Headstone | Hearse | Inscription      |       |
| Matting | Mausolea    | Mourners | Shoring   | Shovel | Soil box         |       |
|         | Standpipe   | Topsoil  | Trees     | Vault  | Wreath           |       |

## scrambled up

See if you can unscramble the words - all related to our day jobs

- TEOMMRIACUR\_\_\_\_\_
- TOURYSATT ENRCOADTIAL\_\_\_\_\_
- CNTPAILAP\_\_\_\_\_
- BTENMAETA\_\_\_\_\_
- MAECERTD ANRMIES\_\_\_\_\_
- AERGDVARY\_\_\_\_\_
- CMAELID EEREERF\_\_\_\_\_
- AENLTBECR\_\_\_\_\_
- LSOEIUINM\_\_\_\_\_
- IETEGRRS\_\_\_\_\_

## answers to test your knowledge

### Question 1

**Answer: A Yes** – there is no legal prohibition to cremating two people in the same coffin, as long as this is at the request of the applicant for the cremation. Both the ICCM Guiding Principles for Burial and Cremation and the FBCA Code of Cremation Practice highlight the importance of treating people individually. The ICCM Guiding Principles however states:  
A number of cremations have taken place where two related deceased persons were within the same coffin. Whilst such requests are rare they are not unlawful.... The same applies to both burial and cremation.

The FBCA Code of Practice states:

Each deceased person given to the care of the Cremation Authority shall be cremated separately. Exceptions may be made for instance in the case of mother and baby or twin children providing that the next of kin has made a specific request in this regard.

If the applicant requests it, and the coffin containing more than one person can be accommodated in the cremator, there is no good reason to refuse such a request.

### Question 2

**Answer: A Yes** – although it is not recommended as it may be difficult to fully recover the ashes at the end of the cremation. It is better to combine sets of ashes following the cremation, if this is what the family desire.

### Question 3

**Answer: A Yes** – Coffins aren't a legal requirement for cremation - a deceased person can be cremated in suitable shroud.

### Question 4

**Answer: A Yes** - providing the medical referee has made any necessary enquiries and is satisfied with any explanation, and has authorised the cremation.

### Question 5

**Answer: A Yes** – as long as the authority has a signed Form 1 from the applicant and the Medical Referee has authorised the cremation, the applicant does not have to physically attend the funeral.

### Question 6

**Answer: B No** – it is not a legal requirement but one of best practice

### Question 7

**Answer: A Yes** - providing you have written authority from the applicant. It is good practice to ask for identification from the person collecting the ashes to ensure that it is the person nominated by the applicant who collects them.

In addition, The Cremation (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 states:

In exceptional circumstances the cremation authority may at their discretion release the ashes to someone other than the applicant or the applicant's nominee. The Ministry of Justice Guidance to Crematorium Managers states:

There may be times when you are contacted by a person who is neither the applicant nor their agent with a request that the ashes be returned or disposed of in ways that are contrary to the instructions of the applicant. You should only consider returning or disposing of the ashes other than as instructed by the applicant in exceptional circumstances such as where the applicant was responsible for the death of the person who was cremated or in the case of the cremation of a child where the applicant had abused the child or their parent(s). Where the applicant for cremation died before giving any instructions on what should happen to the ashes you may consider taking instructions from the applicant's executor or the administrator of their estate.

It is not expected that the option to exercise this discretion will arise very often since a case in which there are exceptional circumstances will be very rare. We would recommend crematoria take legal advice before acting in a way that is contrary to the instructions of the applicant.

### Question 8

**Answer:** The twin that died at 22 weeks but was delivered at 31 weeks is classed as a stillborn – its status is defined at the time of actual delivery not estimated time of death in the womb.

The definition of "stillborn child" in England and Wales is contained in the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 section 41 as amended by the Stillbirth (Definition) Act 1992 section 1(1) and is as follows: "a child which has issued forth from its mother after the 24th week of pregnancy and which did not at any time breathe or show any other signs of life"

For the other twin, the death should be registered as normal as the baby lived for 2 hours.

### Question 9

**Answer: A Yes** - providing the correct forms are obtained.

### Question 10

**Answer: B No** - the permit to cremate only allows you to cremate human remains.

## the coronavirus planning

### *The impact on cremation and burial services*

I am sure that very few people in the UK gave very much thought to the early reports in January of this year concerning an unpleasant Flu type virus that was having a big impact in a city in China that most people have never heard of, Wuhan.

Wuhan, the sprawling capital of central China's Hubei province with a population of 11 million people, is a commercial centre divided by the Yangtze and Han Rivers. The City contains many lakes and parks, including expansive, picturesque East Lake. Nearby, the Hubei Provincial Museum displays relics from the Warring States period, including the Marquis Yi of Zeng's coffin.

Even as the reports that the city of Wuhan and Hubei Province were put in "lock down" began to fill the news bulletins, there was an air of all this is so far away. Only when we began to hear the term "self-isolating" regularly and saw pictures of busloads of people being put into quarantine having travelled from Wuhan to the UK, did we really begin to take notice. Then there was the strident message about washing our hands carefully and regularly- could something really be happening here?

Following this, the speed at which we seemed to find ourselves really threatened with Coronavirus came as a real shock to huge numbers of the UK population. Of course as we now know the decisions by the Government to effectively "lock-down" the UK with shops, cafes, restaurants, pubs and bars and then schools and colleges all closed and people being told to stay indoors unless absolutely necessary, became reality.

The bereavement services industry along with funeral directors, coffin manufacturers and so on have always been taken rather for granted by the public. Not very visible except for when a bereavement affects individual families (even though we know that there are around 11000 deaths a week in the UK) and in some Local Authorities the crematorium and cemeteries have been low down the pecking order for investment and new facilities.

The Local Authorities have however always been responsible or Local Resilience Planning and Local Resilience Forums (LRF) have over the years in different parts of the country had a role to play in disaster planning which may affect their local area like a jumbo jet crashing on a housing estate for example, and this type of planning has necessarily involved the Local Authority, Police, Fire Service and the NHS. For many years I took part in regular "exercises" that were designed to test how things would work under certain disaster conditions.

A pandemic plan was always part of the LRFs responsibility, and all crematoria and cemeteries will, I am sure, have one even if it is a bit dusty. It has been so many years since there has been a major outbreak of disease, the most recent flu pandemic the world has seen was the 2009 swine flu pandemic which lasted from early 2009 to late 2010 and was believed to have infected around 700 million to 1.4 billion people - around 11 to 21 per cent of the world's population

but the UK was only mildly affected. The number of fatalities from the illness, which originated in Mexico, is believed to be between 150,000 and 575,000, meaning the virus had a relatively low mortality rate.

There have been years when there have been higher than average deaths from flu but nothing that in the UK has required planning on the scale that we now see to cope with the predicted number of people who may die as a result of the Coronavirus.

We all hope very much that the initial predicted number of deaths is not realised and that more modest numbers of deaths will result. However, against the background of a "lock-down" for all but key workers, an NHS that is stretched and as of today (8th April) coping with a very much higher than normal number of ICU admissions, we see large Nightingale Field Hospitals being constructed at the Excel in London and in Birmingham and Glasgow and other cities. In addition to these hospitals we also see that the Government have commissioned considerable additional mortuary provision.

I am very pleased that the professional organisations representing the bereavement services and funeral sectors are working closely together and have formed the Death Management Advisory Group (DMAG) so that a co-ordinated response can be made to Government in answer to how this pandemic will be managed and also to advise the Government on what measures need to be taken.

The organisations that are working closely together in DMAG are National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD), Society of Allied Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF), Association of Private Crematoria and Cemeteries (APCC), Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM), Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA), Funeral Furnishing Manufacturers' Association (FFMA) and The Cremation Society.

We have already seen differences of opinion between cremation authorities regarding how many mourners should be able to attend a funeral service with numbers ranging post lock down from 25 to 5 and quite a number of crematoria have stopped offering a service for grieving families and are accepting direct cremations only.

There are already additional pressures on some crematoria and considerable pressure in some parts of London for burials and the LRFs are beginning to put plans in place in case the numbers of deaths increase significantly. The Government, and we, I am sure, are hopeful that the social distancing measures introduced will have helped to flatten the curve so that crematoria and cemeteries across the UK can cope.

As I write the total number of deaths attributed to Covid-19 has exceeded 10,000 which is indeed a very high number but at the time of writing the figures showing excess deaths has not yet been made available which will in time put the numbers of deaths into a better perspective.



Being part of a free society means that there will be differences of opinion and it is interesting that the Governments of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are not all giving exactly the same advice but what we as cremation and burial authorities, and as individuals, must continue to do the best that we can to serve the bereaved. Many families are having not only to cope with their grief at the loss of a loved one, but have also in many cases, had the pain of not being able to be with them in their final days and hours and in addition have the prospect of only very close family members allowed to attend the funeral, or in many instances now, unable to attend the funeral either.

We as burial and cremation authorities in particular, must do what we can post coronavirus to provide the opportunity for families to hold private memorial services for those who wish to arrange these, and organise public memorial services for others at our crematoria and cemeteries.

So far during the first month of the pandemic, Westerleigh has been able to offer families all the usual service times and options including webcasting, but has, after consideration of

Government advice, restricted attendance to close family members with a maximum number of people able to attend a service to 10.

In order that there is a clear understanding of how all our 34 sites are coping during the pandemic in terms of staff sickness, availability of PPE and many other factors, the operations team has had three conference calls a week, led by Kate Davidson our Commercial Director, and these have, and continue to be, invaluable.

It is over 100 years since the Spanish flu outbreak in 1919 and the coronavirus pandemic is certainly the biggest challenge that we in the bereavement sector have faced during the last century. I am proud that we as dedicated professionals working not only together as crematoria and burial authorities, but also closely with our funeral director colleagues, will continue to work as hard as we can for the bereaved during these difficult times.

**Alan José FICCM**  
Westerleigh Group Ambassador

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## Kate Davidson joins Westerleigh

The Westerleigh Group is delighted to announce that Kate Davidson has joined the company as Commercial Director where she will lead the operations side of the business overseeing the portfolio of 34 crematoria and some 20 cemeteries located across England, Wales and Scotland.

Kate began her career in the bereavement sector at Stourbridge Crematorium, operated by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council as an Administration Assistant where she found that she enjoyed the different disciplines that are so important in providing a successful and caring service to the bereaved. Kate moved on to join Dignity and worked at Telford Crematorium. Here, Kate's drive and enthusiasm for the Industry led to her becoming more involved with the wider management of the portfolio of 46 sites that made up the Crematorium and Memorial Group.

Kate studied for the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Diploma which she completed in a relatively short time and was awarded the highly coveted Eickhoff Medal for outstanding achievement in all modules.

Kate also more recently found time to study for her Executive MBA at Warwick Business School where she achieved a Distinction for the Masters.

For the past two years or so Kate has been working closely with the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities as Lead for the fully revised Crematorium Compliance scheme which was formally launched at the House of Lords last year. Kate is also a Tutor for the ICCM Law Module.

Kate is one of the leading personalities within the burial and cremation sector who has shown that with hard work and determination it is possible to reach a pinnacle of the profession and is real role -model for youngsters, especially young women, who wish to make a rewarding career serving the bereaved and helping to make a difference to people at a very difficult time in their lives. With the celebrating of women's achievements on International Women's day (8th March) it seems appropriate that Kate has taken on her role with Westerleigh, the leading developer and operator of Crematoria in the UK.

Kate says: "I am really excited to be joining Westerleigh as Commercial Director and I look forward to leading my colleagues in providing a first class service to the bereaved through our sites across the UK".



**Alan José FICCM**  
Westerleigh Group Ambassador

## keep updated....



### Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG)

With the coronavirus pandemic dominating our lives, any updates have focused on this, with changes taking place, what feels like, daily.

The bereavement sector is represented by several organisations, covering both funeral directors and those who manage, provide and work in cemeteries and crematoria. The major organisations have combined to work together to develop a consensus approach to the many challenging issues which now face the sector and have formed The Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG). These include representatives from the following organisations

- The Association of Private Crematoria and Cemeteries (APCC)
- Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA)
- Funeral Furnishing Manufacturers' Association (FFMA)
- Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM)
- National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD)
- National Society of Allied & Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF)
- The Cremation Society

DMAG have set up a dedicated website [www.dmag2020.org](http://www.dmag2020.org) detailing guidance and updates on legislation.

### Guidance

#### The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 – Closure of Crematoria and Burial Grounds

On 21st April 2020 the Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care, signed the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

This clarifies the position in England relating to the closure of crematoria and burial grounds. The new regulations remove wording relating to burial grounds in paragraph 5(8), and adds a sub-paragraph, (8A), stating that paragraph (8) does not apply to any grounds surrounding a crematorium. Paragraph (8) and (8A) now read:

(8) Subject to paragraph (8A), a person who is responsible for a crematorium must ensure that, during the emergency period, the crematorium is closed to members of the public, except for funerals or burials.

(8A) Paragraph (8) does not apply to the grounds surrounding a crematorium, including any burial ground or garden of remembrance.

This means that burial grounds and gardens of remembrance may remain open. However, the burial or cremation authority or company can make the decision to close them or limit access for health and safety or operational reasons.

The Amendment Regulations also address the reasons that people may leave the place they are living during the emergency period:

#### Restrictions on movement

6.—(1) During the emergency period, no person may leave the place where they are living without reasonable excuse.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1), a reasonable excuse includes the need—

(g) to attend a funeral of—

- (i) a member of the person's household,
- (ii) a close family member, or
- (iii) if no-one within sub-paragraphs (i) or (ii) are attending, a friend;

(ga) to visit a burial ground or garden of remembrance, to pay respects to a member of the person's household, a family member or friend

#### 19th April 2020 - guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic – Government advice issued

On Saturday 18 April 2020 Robert Jenrick, Local Government Secretary, announced at the Government's daily press briefing that he is 'asking councils to keep open or indeed to reopen cemeteries and graveyards', and that the Government will publish further guidance on funerals.

The further guidance was published on 19th April 2020 and the link can be found on our website at [www.iccm-uk.com](http://www.iccm-uk.com). Despite not mentioning the closure or otherwise of crematoria and cemeteries, there are some key changes that will need to be taken into consideration.

Key highlights of the revised guidance include:

- the bereaved are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect
- mourners and workers involved in the management of funerals are protected from infection

Venue managers should:

- restrict the number of mourners who attend so that a safe distance of at least 2 metres (6 ft) can be maintained between individuals
- the size and circumstance of the venue will determine the maximum number that can be accommodated whilst also facilitating social distancing, but numbers should be minimised as far as possible. Venue managers may set caps on numbers in order to ensure this
- only the following should attend, alongside the Funeral Director, Chapel Attendant, and funeral staff:
  - members of the person's household
    - close family members
    - or if the above are unable to attend, close friends
    - attendance of a celebrant of choice, should the bereaved request this
- mourners who attend should be signposted to the advice on social distancing and that they should not attend the funeral if they are unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- venue managers should ensure that handwashing facilities with soap and hot water and hand sanitiser are available and clearly signposted
- venue managers should ensure that processes are in place to allow a suitable time to clean and disinfect the area in which the service has taken place both before and after each service, paying attention to frequently touched objects and surfaces, using regular cleaning products
- venue managers should consider how to manage the flow of groups in and out of their venues to minimise overlap between different groups and allow for adequate cleaning
- venue managers should maximise ventilation rates of the premises by opening windows and doors where possible
- Local Authorities should ensure funeral arrangements and numbers of attenders are consistent with this guidance.

The Guidance also allows for mourners to attend even if they are self-isolating due to a possible case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their household, or if they are extremely clinically vulnerable. This new allowance is subject to those mourners following the precautions outlined in the Guidance.

Anyone who is showing symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) (a new continuous cough or a high temperature) should not attend the funeral due to the risk that they pose to others; remote participation should be considered, for example live streaming.

The Guidance also states:

To ensure that organisations managing funerals are able to cope with the increased number of deaths, **it is important that funerals are not delayed**. We understand how difficult this will be for the families and friends of lost loved ones, however the current guidance will be in place **for the foreseeable future for the safety of the public**.

### Electronic Forms

The Cremation Regulations 2008, as amended, provides for crematoria to accept forms electronically. The Ministry of Justice has issued guidance to cremation authorities and crematorium managers that details what is required for the electronic submission of forms. These are forms 1-13.

Any electronic communications must be via a secure system and not a social media app, for example. The Guidance requires that forms come from a reliable source. Should somebody completing the forms give misleading information, the onus will be on them and not the cremation authority. Before authorising a cremation, a Medical Referee needs to check and be satisfied that the forms have come from a reliable source; if so, the forms would be deemed to have been signed and the Medical Referee can accept them.

### Registrar's Certificate for Burial or Cremation (Green Form)

The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Commencement No. 1) Regulations 2020 enables Registrars to send the disposal certificate electronically to a cemetery or crematorium. The Deputy Registrar General issued initial Guidance on this subject. The guidance states that

- It is not envisaged that scanned documents should be received via a third party.
- Disposal forms can be completed manually and scanned or photographed for onward sending. Registrars should engage to find an email address for the relevant authority (local burial and crematorium authority); which could be a local authority shared mailbox (as long as the relevant person at the crematorium or cemetery can access it) as well as an address for returning counterfoils.

After the emergency period, arrangements should be made to have all original forms sent to the register office to be processed in the normal manner. (Members are advised to check with their local register office if this is required for counterfoils).

The relevant authority is either the burial authority or the crematorium where the funeral is to take place however depending on the circumstances the Green may also be copied to the relevant funeral director (as long as arrangements have been made for secure receipt company mailbox etc).

### Changes to the Cremation Forms

On 26 March 2020 the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, signed the Coronavirus Act 2020 (Commencement No. 1) Regulations 2020. These Regulations relate to the Coronavirus Act 2020, and effectively 'switch on' the provisions that could only be enacted by separate regulation.

In England and Wales, a confirmatory medical certificate (Cremation Form 5) is no longer required for cremations. A Medical Certificate (Cremation Form 4) and an Authorisation of cremation of deceased person by medical referee (Cremation Form 10) are still required, together with an Application for Cremation (Cremation Form 1), and a Registrar's Certificate for Disposal or a Coroner's Certificate (Form 6) .

The requirement for form Cremation 4 to be completed by the attending medical practitioner is suspended. Any medical practitioner can now complete form Cremation 4, even if they did not attend the deceased during their last illness or after death, if the following conditions are fulfilled:

- The medical practitioner who did attend the deceased is unable to sign the form Cremation 4 or it is impractical for them to do so and,
- A medical practitioner has seen the deceased (including audiovisual/video consultation) within 28 days before death, or has viewed the body in person after death.

Examination of the body is not required for completion of form Cremation 4 if the deceased was seen by a medical practitioner (including audiovisual/video consultation) in the 28 days before death.

### Scotland

On 21 April 2020 the Scottish Government published Coronavirus (COVID-19): local death management – statutory guidance for local authorities. The Statutory guidance relates to Schedule 28 of the Coronavirus Act (2020) which introduced new powers for local authorities and government to support the resilience of local death management systems, and step in if they become overwhelmed.

They also published **The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2020**. This clarifies the position in Scotland relating to the closure of crematoria and burial grounds. The new regulations remove wording relating to burial grounds and burials in paragraph 9, and adds a sub-paragraph, (9A), stating that paragraph 9 does not apply to any grounds surrounding a crematorium. Paragraph 9 and 9A now read:

*(9) A person who is responsible for a crematorium must ensure that, during the emergency period, the crematorium is closed to members of the public, except for funerals where reasonable measures are taken to ensure that a distance of two metres is maintained between every person on the premises of the crematorium during the funeral (other than between two members of the same household, or a carer and the person assisted by the carer).*

*(9A) Paragraph (9) does not apply to the grounds surrounding a crematorium, including any burial ground or garden of remembrance.*

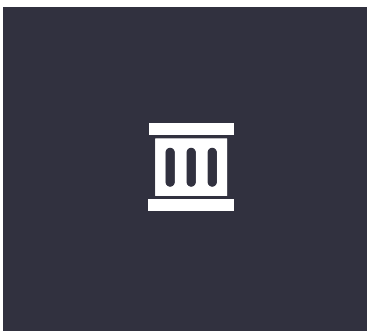




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## **Burial authorities**

The Regulations do not require burial grounds to close to the public.

Public access to burial grounds, where that is normally permitted by the burial authority, can continue. Access remains at the discretion of the burial authority.

## **Application for cremation – emergency legislative provision**

The UK Coronavirus Act 2020 allows Scottish Ministers to suspend the effect of certain provisions in relation to the making of an application for cremation, and the handling of ashes following a cremation. The provisions that may be suspended are in the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 ("the 2016 Act") and the Cremation (Scotland) Regulations 2019.

On 8 April 2020 the Scottish Ministers published a determination, in exercise of the power contained in paragraph 8(1) of schedule 14 of the UK Coronavirus Act 2020.<sup>7</sup>

The determination provides that section 49 of the 2016 Act is not to have effect in relation to the signing of a declaration in an application for cremation made under the 2016 Act. This means that the offence in section 49 of the 2016 Act, in relation to the provision of incorrect or misleading information in an application for a cremation, is now suspended.

This emergency provision came into force on Wednesday 8 April 2020. This change will remain in place until revoked by a subsequent determination of the Scottish Ministers under schedule 14 of the 2020 Act.

It is not permitted for a funeral director to sign a cremation application form on behalf of an applicant.

If an applicant cannot sign a cremation application due to adherence to NHS advice on staying at home, social distancing or shielding, a supplementary form has been produced for use by funeral directors and cremation authorities to ensure arrangements can continue and an audit trail of this action captured. This is set out below.

## **Application for cremation – supplementary form**

Due to the current pandemic, where a funeral director is unable to receive a signature from a person listed in sections 65 or 66 of the 2016 Act to complete an application for cremation, a supplementary form can be supplied to ensure arrangements can proceed.

This can be accessed via the Scottish Government website.

## **Application for burial**

Application forms for burial are the responsibility for each burial authority.

Confirmation of lair ownership is required before progressing an application for burial. If not done so already, processes should be examined to take into account the impact that NHS Inform advice on social distancing may have for applicants (e.g. documents provided electronically from applicant and/or funeral director).

Required signatures may also be difficult to obtain during the current pandemic due to adherence to NHS Inform advice. Burial authorities should consider, if they have not done so already, creation of an appropriate supplementary form or other method that satisfies their requirements for burial for use by local funeral directors/applicants

Further information is available on the Scottish Government website.

## **Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)**

### **Extension of market investigation**

16 March: The CMA has decided to extend the statutory deadline for the funerals market investigation by 6 months.

The deadline for responding to the working papers published on 20 February is suspended until further notice.

The CMA will publish an updated administrative timetable in due course.

## going the extra mile...thank you

A section of the Journal dedicated to the people in our sector who have gone "the extra mile" to help and support in these difficult times.

It is hard to believe that all those years of sitting in meetings discussing how we would cope if we ever had to deal with mass deaths, putting together an emergency plan that we never really believed we would actually need, has now become a reality.

It has been an extremely difficult and challenging time for all staff working within our sector. Not only are we navigating our way through a maze of changing legislation and adapting to new ways of working, we are also still trying to give a service to the bereaved the best way we can, given all the restrictions in place.

It has been heart-warming to hear of the thoughtful things that staff working on sites have done to offer some comfort to those grieving families where self-isolation and self-distancing measures have been imposed.

Some sites have creatively used technology to put together videos, photographs and a map of the cemetery to show families what grave spaces are available so they can still have some choice when selecting a grave as physical selections are no longer allowed.

Additional service times have been offered to families to accommodate their needs and free webcasting is in place at a lot of sites that have the facility. Some staff have even offered to video burial services on their phones so that it can be circulated to those that were not able to attend. Future use of the chapel is also being offered, free of charge, for those families that wish to hold a memorial service later. Where visiting has been restricted staff have offered to place flowers on graves on their behalf and take photos, emailing these to families to give them some comfort.

At the time of writing, those sites that can, are still trying to offer some sort of service, rather than none. Even with having to limit numbers on attendance and enforce social distancing, staff are ensuring that the chapel is being cleaned and wiped down in between services in order to protect, as much as possible, anyone using their facilities. Graves are still being dug, grass is still being cut and all administration is being carried out, just to make sure that funerals can still go ahead.

It has been pleasing to see that there has been a fantastic amount of collaborative working with different regions setting up their own forums and WhatsApp groups to share information with industry colleagues as well as to offer support during those stressful moments!

So, at a time where we may feel a little invisible perhaps, please note that you have not gone unnoticed. What you are doing will no doubt help those families through their grief at such a raw time in their lives. It is sometimes the little things that have the most impact.

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### Thank you Gemma!

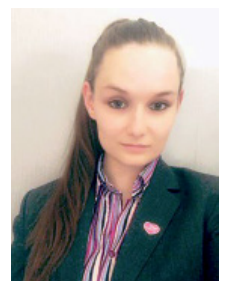
I would like to offer a good news story were one of my staff Gemma Thornton our bereavement service administration apprentice, volunteered to go over to Tameside Council and help out as they had hardly any trained staff available due to the covid-19 and through self-isolation. They had issues with IT that meant the staff could not work from home. They needed someone with BACAS experience to take bookings and input the crem forms.

Gemma selflessly offered to go over to Tameside while they put something in place. Gemma worked in an office which had been prepared especially for her so she could adhere to social distancing while covering the administration duties.

Gemma work at Tameside for 2 days until the IT issue was resolved.

I think this shows the dedication of our staff to help each other out in a crisis and Gemma definitely went above and beyond to assist colleagues in their time of need.

**Barry Ellis**  
Bereavement Services Manager, Agecroft Cemetery



## Thank You to Adur & Worthing Council

Thank you to my amazing and resilient team, you've adapted to the punches that Coronavirus has given us and stood up to the challenge brilliantly.

Whether that be accepting of the need to work longer days and hours, adapting to daily changes, working through problems and coming to work with a positive approach. Making the cemeteries and crematorium grounds well kept and welcome open space for visitors.

I've really appreciated your contributions and couldn't imagine working with a better team, I recognise at times it hasn't been easy.

Andrew Keay, Darren Leng, David Peters, Gary Harvey, Gary West, Gary White, Hannah Morgan, Howard Whelan, Jon Pace, Julie Dunsmure, Karen Parsons, Mario McMurrin, Michael Reeves, Peter Cain, Robin Smith, Sam Gritt, Steve Baker and Tiffany Fletcher

To the resilience team of people adding their weight to technician's roles, office roles and management roles, 'the backup crew'. At the start of this nobody knew what to expect and we were all a bit scared. So, thank you for stepping forward into unknown territory. You can't know what reassurance it gave my team that we had the support of so many people from Adur & Worthing Councils. We were so worried we would be on our own and that was not the case.

Amanda Strommings, Amy Newnham, Ann Phillips, Ben Milligan, Beverley Rayner, Bob Cliff, Clare Halstead, Dave Steff, Dave Thomas, David Currie, Gabrielle Peak, Gillian Polat, Helen Blakeborough, Jo Vickery, Liz McCarthy, Matt Marchant, Michael Lavender, Pauline Freestone, Peter King, Phil Jones, Philippa Reece, Rob Cook, Sally Etheridge, Sarah Gobey, Teresa Bowley and Tommy Broad

To Martin Hosier and his team who at a very early stage recognised they could help reunite the bereaved and the ashes of their loved ones. They identified they could help bereavement services by delivering the ashes to local funeral directors and enable families and the ashes of their loved ones to be reunited. This was when everything but funeral services were permitted to take place.

### Facilities Officers

#### Martin Hosier and Will Kennaby

One of the positive, unintended consequences of Covid for Bereavement Services has been the unexpected synergies between our team and the specific expertise of resilience team members. One of those synergies that deserves mention is the contribution of the Parks and Foreshore team and their manager Philippa Reece. Philippa worked alongside me being a beacon of positivity, while blasting through barriers. Her reactive team have helicoptered in to tackle the estate and think ahead to the spaces bereaved will benefit from after Covid.

### Reactive Team

Peter Whish, John Barnett and Dave Austin

### A few special mentions ...

To the ICCM for always being on hand for answers and support; to Dr David Mannings, who graciously keeps supporting us; to Mark Whitfield and Lloyd Harris for sourcing PPE when it seemed an impossible task. To my fellow neighbouring crematorium and cemetery managers who collectively supported each other when few others understood the pressures of the job. To Philippa Reece for just being an all round bad-ass.

Thank you one and all. It is an honour to work alongside you.

**Kate Greening, Bereavement Services Manager, Adur & Worthing Councils**

## Big Thank You goes to the staff at Arnos Vale Cemetery

I would really like to say an incredibly huge thank you to the amazing team at Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol. When the announcement was made to stay at home and save lives they quickly adapted. They postponed talks and tours, looked after our wedding couples and created new workspaces at home. Right now, we are open for burials, graveside funerals and for mourners who wish to visit loved ones. Every day they display kindness, generosity, empathy, and solidarity. As CEO, I couldn't be prouder.

**Ellie Collier - CEO**



## Greenacres Group

GreenAcres Group comprises 7 cemeteries and ceremonial parks. Five of these are in and around London including Eternal Gardens, our sister park serving the Muslim community, 1 in Norwich and 1 in Merseyside. The unprecedented COVID-19 crisis has meant the whole bereavement sector adapting to the challenge. In order to protect our teams to maintain service levels, we at GreenAcres have moved to a split shift system so that if one colleague develops symptoms of COVID-19 it does not mean we have to self-isolate the rest of the park team. We have been deeply humbled by the dedication and adaptability of our entire team to ensure that we continue to provide our families and partners with funeral services whilst adopting these new ways of working. Therefore, it is a difficult task to pick out individual colleagues, but we would like to recognise three of our colleagues who exemplify these qualities.

### Maureen Coulson – Marketing Manager

Maureen joined GreenAcres in 2013 and supports the group with a wide variety of marketing activities to support our families in their time of need. Not only has Maureen continued with her day job but has also stepped in to work 3 days a week at GreenAcres Epping Forest. Her knowledge of the business means that she is acting Park Manager during the 3 days at Epping and also working as part of the team to deliver services to our families. Maureen proactively offered to support the Epping team despite the impact it would have on her own workload. Since taking up these added responsibilities, she is managing both her roles successfully.



Thankyou Maureen.

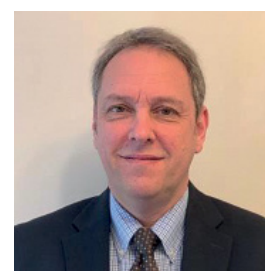
### Melissa Goodwin – Business Improvement Manager

Melissa joined Greenacres at Kemnal Park in 2018 as a Customer Service Adviser. In January this year she was promoted to her current role to help all of our parks to maintain and improve our service offering to our families. Melissa's partner works in the NHS and she has been working from home and home schooling her young family since the government guidelines of self-isolation and social distancing were announced. Melissa has been supporting her local park with telephone enquiries and service bookings remotely and has shown her incredible persistence through her work with Bromley Council and the London Resilience Forum. She has sourced PPE for all of our parks and additional gravediggers for Kemnal Park. She also personally supervised a weekend deep clean and sterilisation of Kemnal Park.



### Andy Wyles – Park Manager GreenAcres Colney

Andy joined GreenAcres Colney on 2nd March this year as the new Park Manager. His 12-week induction plan which was to take him around our business meeting the teams and learning the ropes was overtaken by the current crisis. He has adapted fantastically well and has put in place our new split team operation whilst gaining the trust of the excellent Colney team and building relationships with our local Funeral Director community. He is already an active participant in the local resilience forum representing GreenAcres. The amazing feedback from our families even during this crisis confirms that our park in Colney is in safe and very capable hands.



## Nene Valley Crematorium – Thank you Tracy Lawrence!

I want to take this time to mention that our Manager and Registrar Tracy Lawrence has been working flat out to keep all of the staff and funeral directors who work with Nene Valley Crematorium up to date with the many changes to the guidance we have had to deal with. Without her leadership in this current situation we would not be in the position we are now. We are proud to say that within our restrictions at this difficult time we have still had the families, friends and our colleagues across the bereavement sector in our minds at all times to make the very best of this situation we find ourselves in.

Tracy has shown that always being on the front foot has really kept us all going to the best of our abilities.

So from all the team at Nene Valley Crematorium we would like to thank Tracy for all her hard work and dedication.



## Saying Thank You to all the Staff at Islington & Camden Cemetery Services

Islington and Camden Cemetery Service (ICCS) is a shared offer between both local authorities offering a range of burial options across 3 sites, one of which also has a Crematorium.

Throughout this challenging time the team have consistently demonstrated their ability to add value to everything that we are doing with dedication, creativity and resourcefulness. To mention individuals would be to undervalue what I believe has been a collective contribution. This is why I would like to shine the spotlight on the team, as this has truly been a fantastic effort by all.

### Service Delivery Team

Our bereavement officers have shown great agility in adapting to new ways of working in a constantly evolving environment. Service changes designed to keep everyone safe and adhere to government guidelines have meant at times they have had to give some really difficult messaging to mourners. This has been handled with care, sensitivity and understanding; recognising the impact this has on families having lost a loved at such an uncertain time. They have also been really pro-active in offering solutions to ensure we maintain the best level of service possible to show respect to our customers.

### Burial Operations Team

The increase in services has meant an even more efficient approach to grave preparations works has been required. This has been implemented and carried out successfully with a collective spirit to 'get the work done'. The burial operations team has been instrumental in allowing us to respond to demand pressures by increasing our daily service provision, also helping others in the chain like funeral directors in the process. All this has also been achieved whilst facilitating training for re-deployed resources, who also deserve a mention for stepping up to support the service.

### Cremations Team

Despite the significant increase in services, our cremation technicians have responded by maintaining a service provision that, outside of any enforced service changes, has continued to operate like business as usual. The team have always taken pride in the efficient way they work and to see this continue so effectively in the current climate is outstanding and a testament to the high standards they work to.

### Premises Management Team

During these times it is paramount that teams understand that the demarcation lines of roles and responsibilities cease to exist. The premises team have typified this approach and stepped in to support the whole service where required. There is so much they have done but key contributions include sourcing PPE, additional vehicles and storage solutions. Training and induction of staff, facilitating burials and supporting corporate responses, feeding into both London and nationwide groups.

Thank you everybody for your contribution.

**Wayne Woodrup**  
Head of Islington and Camden Cemetery Services

## Woodlands Crematorium and Cemetery, North Lincolnshire

A huge thank you to the whole team at Woodlands in Scunthorpe who continue to go the extra mile, act selflessly in the face of significant challenges and who care. The team have worked incredibly hard during difficult times and under immense pressure with some unfortunate staff absences to cover. The team spirit continues to be great and new staff members have been outstanding.

The grounds look stunning thanks to the grounds staff continued hard work and dedication. Staff from other areas of the council have been of great help manning the gate to ensure social distancing, especially whilst the crematorium grounds were closed.

**Sherie Newbould**  
Group Manager – Strategy & Client Services  
Operations North Lincolnshire Council



### **Thank You to Lambeth Bereavement Services**

The coronavirus pandemic has taken lives and our sense of normal life. There is a real sense of the post-Christmas period coming into work – you know the one – that feeling where you don't know what day of the week it is, everything is upside down and you are eating everything you can get your hands on (once you have queued outside the supermarket of course).

All cemetery, crematoria and funeral staff have been working above and beyond with very little rest and no end in sight for at least seven weeks now – I want to just use this opportunity to thank my team at Lambeth. We are a small team and we cover Lambeth Cemetery and Crematorium, Streatham Cemetery, West Norwood Cemetery and Crematorium, public health funerals for the borough and manage our own simple funeral package without a funeral director.

We are cremating, digging graves, answering phones, collecting deceased, managing referrals from nursing homes and now an exhumation! – And that is just this morning.

I have been able to implement a system to allow for rest and respite but as we all know in this industry even before we are reacting to a pandemic– the work never stops.

The bereavement services officers have risen to the challenge magnificently– Rose Thompson and David Walden.

The team in the crematorium – Joseph Adamczewski, Stuart Mackay, Andrew Smith and Fred Young are working with sheer dedication to ensure all mourners are safe at the services.

The burial team have worked together to offer as many burials as we can a day and dealt with all of the changes, plant issues and gate work with true diligence – Oslan Kelman, Barry Plaistow, John Rourke, and Alfie Smith.

The bereavement supervisors are going above and beyond to keep the service running, and to jump into any gaps in the wider team without any complaint – Richard Delves, Brendan Fisher and Sam Greenman.

This is a sincere thank you to all of you – from me, from Lambeth and from the families we care for.

**Jacqueline Landy, Bereavement Services Manager**

### **Thank you from Wigan**

I'd describe the current situation as a war like effort, as we stand in awe of the lead by other front line staff especially in the NHS we have to reflect on the sterling job by many unsung heroes in the public sector. Wigan Council staff consolidating behind our new addition to the Wigan behaviours of 'Be Kind' which set the scene for how we deal with the challenges coming over the hill.

Within bereavement services the lack of accurate projected numbers, the hourly changing advice and guidance from multiple sources although aimed at helping, ultimately creating confusion and frustration, thank goodness for our Council strategic leads and our developed local e-mail networks and WhatsApp groups.

Personally, I would have lost my mind without the support, advice and understanding of my colleagues from the Greater Manchester authorities sharing information, interpretations and courses of action.

Locally the additional challenges of ensuring staff safety through social distancing whilst still delivering a critical service creating a logistical nightmare, BUT as expected staff with bereavement services rise to the challenge with flexibility, understanding and an active contribution to the contingency planning. The surprising thing for me was the support received by other colleagues outside of the bereavement industry, street scene operatives, estate caretakers, admin staff from other sections of the council volunteering to move across to support burial and cremation capacity.

One of the greatest ongoing challenges I find is the monitoring and sustaining the health and wellbeing of staff, I found that regular contact and a little light relief in the dark times serves to lift the spirits, who would have thought that a 'TikTok' video circulating on social networks of someone dancing to a well-known record would offer that moment to smile or laugh before a return to the serious stuff.

Just when you think you've seen it all and nothing else will surprise you, you receive a WhatsApp from your boss, a poem supporting the NHS staff that caused the colleagues in the office around to cry, WOW. The day after the poem goes viral, gets picked up by Radio 5 live, is read by Christopher Eccleston and hits the national news. If you've not yet experienced the poem, then google Matt Kelly Poem. This just goes to show that local authority workers are not just good at their days jobs but have some very special hidden talents. Remember we are all special.

**Andy Bond, Bereavement Service Manager Wigan Council**



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**Andy Bond**  
Bereavement Services Manager



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**Mark Drummond**  
Manager/Registrar



"The system is clean simple and easy to use for both our staff and customers alike. We would recommend Obitus without hesitation."

**Craig Law**  
Business Manager

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## Melbourne Parish Council would like to say Thank you to their Sexton - Robert Holman.

Robert is a full time employee doing a superb job of looking after the cemetery; we have received many comments about how well the cemetery is maintained and how considerate he is to relatives and friends when making the arrangements for interments. He continues to do a fabulous job of maintaining the appearance of the Cemetery.

The current situation has tested all of us and differing ways of working have had to quickly be thought of and implemented and during the early stages of the pandemic, Robert has worked closely with myself to establish workable safe methods for visitors to be able to visit their loved ones and for interments to take place. We have worked with the local funeral directors to establish how to ensure Government regulations of social distancing are adhered to and Robert has suggested and introduced many practical changes to the interment procedures which, whilst an inconvenience to him and his working methods, allows relatives and friends of loved ones abiding by the limited number of graveside mourners, the best possible service and level of respect in the current circumstances.



The Cemetery has a public footpath cutting across the cemetery and along one side and with a permissive path down its centre; in the early stages of the lockdown with limitations on time and places to exercise, the cemetery became the focal point for local residents to exercise in, cycle and to walk their dogs; the volume of visitors to the cemetery increased significantly, yet not through visiting loved one's; it was treated as a recreational open space. The safety of those paying respects, of those attending interments and of staff, became a major concern. Despite Robert appealing to those coming to the cemetery to be respectful and to observe Government Regulations; the situation continued, and such was the concern that the Parish Council made the decision to close the cemetery through temporary fencing. Robert erected this fencing himself as no contractors were available. The cemetery was reopened on 20th April and Robert removed the fencing. Whilst the cemetery was closed, various people asked Robert to look after their family graves; he has done this with pleasure and without a grumble; he has spent time ensuring that these headstones were washed, cleaned, he has weeded the plots and removed dead flowers.

As the restrictions continue, with the cemetery open and the area being used for recreational purposes again, despite requests not to do so, some people are angry about the smaller measures that remain in place in the cemetery to ensure the community's safety. Robert has received many of these complaints as he is on site and visible, he has taken the time to listen and to explain calmly why such measures remain. Some have accepted the situation, others have not. Whilst some have been unreasonable, angry, rude, even abusive, he has maintained a consistent approach, he is delivering a high level of service whilst trying to keep everyone visiting the cemetery, safe. He has been a friendly ear to those who are visiting due to loneliness and those who are finding the stay at home restrictions hard. For some people he is the only person that they see during the day; he is not too busy to stand at a distance and have a chat, even though he has more than enough work to do.

Work has not been easy in the day to day practical terms of maintaining a cemetery and carrying out interments during CV19, but it has also not been easy to see relatives, their friends and members of the public in further distress due to the restrictions or to receive complaints when the purpose is to achieve public safety. Robert has selflessly suggested and helped to introduce changes, he has spent extra time explaining the situation and continues to try to accommodate the wishes of the members of the public where possible, a difficult balance. He is selfless in his actions to retain high standards, to deliver a service to the public and his hard work deserves recognition.

**Jacqui Storer**

**Clerk, RFO and Cemetery Manager - Melbourne Parish Council**

## Positivity, hope & remembrance at Southwark

We are remembering every deceased we have served since the 23rd March with a light a feather, with the name and date of their service on a white ribbon (discrete) clipped to a heart peg, we place them at the start of every day.

We advise families that we are remembering their loved one, we are also keeping a register of the names both burial and cremation, we will invite families to a service when in recovery, the light up a life will be displayed there with a roll call of the deceased and the families will have an opportunity to share a memory.

*Light up a life, keep your memories shining bright*



### Thank You Chris Shaw – Northwich Town Council

I would like to say thank you to Chris Shaw, our Town Clerk of Northwich Town Council.

Chris is working tirelessly to keep us all safe and do what he can to help staff and community.

Our office staff now work one at a time in the office or from home to ensure that we continue to offer our services to the community and also direct residents to the correct agencies when they have any issues.



Our cemeteries remain open with increased safety measures implemented for our staff, funeral directors and members of the public. Open space remain open with notices now present on all our sites reminding users of social distancing guidelines, play areas still remain closed and will do until we are told otherwise from government.

Chris offers advice and help to other local Councils regarding any issues they might have. All outside staff have all the PPE they need and are working independently following government guidelines, we have introduced additional safety measures, staggered start times and remote working using IPADs instead of face to face instruction.

We have donated a freezer to the Northwich Isolation Support group which will then be donated to Cheshire Without Abuse afterwards along with gloves and sanitiser for their volunteers. Sanitiser and gloves were also donated to Deli-Thyme, Northwich and his volunteers. Stock from our Park shops (due to go out of date as shops are currently closed) have been donated to the staff at Northwich Infirmary and Leighton Hospital.

We are working with CW&C, Rotary, now Angels and also co-ordinating pickups from Roberts Bakery for volunteers.

These are all measures Chris Shaw has put into place to do what he can to keep everyone safe and help where he can along with running the Council best he can at this difficult time.

### Liza Clansey – Assistant Clerk Northwich Town Council

### A Westerleigh Hero – Rodney Clark -Ward

At Westerleigh, we are constantly reminded of the staff who go above and beyond to help the bereaved. During the coronavirus situation, we have been humbled by the efforts of our colleagues at our sites. On this occasion, we focus on one man, whose support and assistance extends across three of our sites and who time and time again, has gone above and beyond in his care for the bereaved.



Rodney's official job title is Crematorium Assistant. Rodney's role, however, is much more than that. On any given day, Rodney can be found tending the grounds at Cromer, escorting families into and out of Chapel, helping out in the kitchen at neighbouring West Suffolk Crematorium, processing paperwork in the office, or looking after the deceased in our care. "I don't see this as a job, I see it as an honour. I see it as looking after the families, carrying out last wishes of the deceased and giving them the dignity and empathy that they deserve - which is what Westerleigh stand by."

Before starting his career with Westerleigh three years ago, Rodney made the decision to sell his hotel and retire when the opportunity at Cromer Crematorium arose.

When asked how it came to be that his role varies so much, Rodney said: "There's only three of us at Cromer and we do everything. We all know how to do everything and we're a tight knit team. None of what we do is possible without the team or without our Manager, Sam."

It seems that Cromer's camaraderie extends even further to neighbouring Crematoria belonging to Westerleigh, as Rodney (being a qualified chef) has been able to help out in the kitchen at West Suffolk Crematorium, an hour and a half down the road from Cromer.

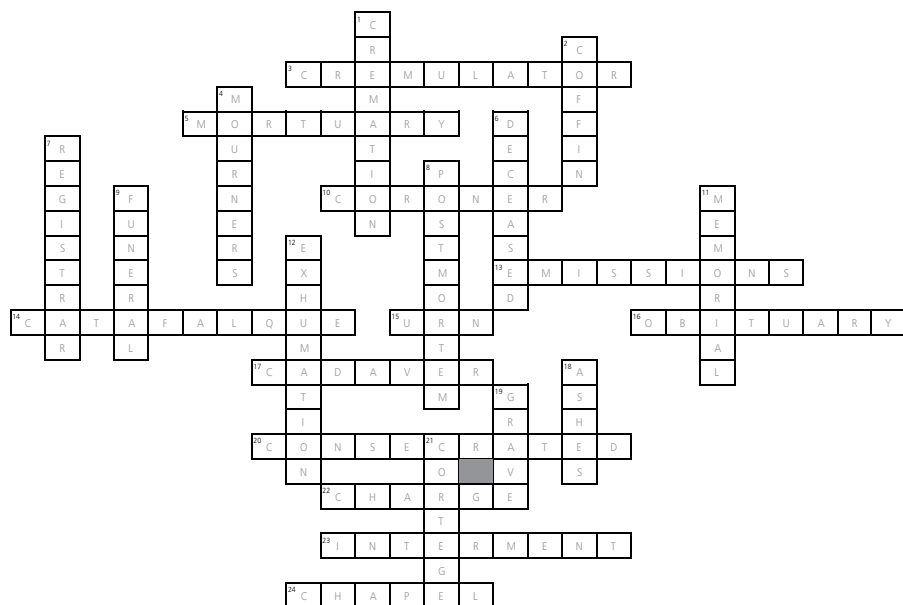
His willingness to travel and support other Westerleigh Crematoria doesn't stop there as recently, Rodney drove 3.5 hours to West Berkshire Crematorium to help fill in for a fellow colleague who needed a break when there was no one else to step in. Since the closure of many hotels due to the coronavirus situation, Rodney volunteered to drive his caravan all the way from Aylsham to West Berkshire and remains close by, allowing his colleague the chance to catch up on sleep, see his family and to just take a break.

Tales of unsung heroes delivering exceptional care during these difficult times are becoming increasingly ubiquitous and this is just one of those tales. Thank you to Rodney and thank you to the rest of the Westerleigh team for all that you do in caring for the deceased and the bereaved.

# take a break answers

Answers to the puzzles in this edition of the Journal

## Take a break solutions



- Across
- 3. Ash Processor
  - 5. A place that stores the dead
  - 10. Inquest conductor
  - 13. Exhaust gas
  - 14. A decorated bier the coffin rests on during a funeral
  - 15. A vessel to place cremated remains
  - 16. Death Notice
  - 17. A corpse
  - 20. Made Holy
  - 22. To place the coffin in the cremator
  - 23. The ritual placing of a corpse in a grave
  - 24. A place of Worship

- Down
- 1. Process of incineration
  - 2. Burial Box
  - 4. Funeral attendees
  - 6. No longer alive
  - 7. Official record keeper
  - 8. Autopsy
  - 9. Burial Ceremony
  - 11. A structure erected to commemorate persons or events
  - 12. What is another name for disinterment?
  - 18. Cremated Remains
  - 19. Burial Place
  - 21. Solemn Procession

## Word search solutions

I N S C R I P T I O N P V V C T F  
 L E V O H S S R E N R U O M Z A U  
 V N U I F P A F O T R O S M Q U N  
 E X O B L I O S W R R H D C Z L E  
 K Z F K X X V I S R O E I J J H R  
 T Y D B E H N E G R K J E P G E A  
 R S X S L E V T I J Z F L S G J L  
 E S O V H A Z N L S E E N G A F D  
 G S E H R R G V R U P D I P E S I  
 G A M G G S D E X A A D K A L T R  
 I R A P T E W R H W I V K E O A E  
 D G T Z X O S C R G L F C G S N C  
 E U T S L U P E B W E A Z L U D T  
 V O I F L Y A S L F B C Y H A P O  
 A C N S J T K W O R Q N L M M I R  
 R L G D H P Q L I I Y U T A F P Y  
 G H E A D S T O N E L J O T Y E Q

- Chapel, Clay, Digger,
- Flowers, Foxes, Funeral Director,
- Ghost, Grass, Gravedigger,
- Graves, Headstone, Hearse,
- Inscription, Matting, Mausolea,
- Mourners, Shoring, Shovel,
- Soil Box, Standpipe,
- Topsoil, Trees,
- Vault, Wreath

## Scrambled up solutions

- |     |                       |                       |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1.  | TEOMMRIACUR           | Crematorium           |
| 2.  | TOURYSATT ENRCOADTIAL | Statutory Declaration |
| 3.  | CNTPAILAP             | Applicant             |
| 4.  | BTENMAETA             | Abatement             |
| 5.  | MAECERTD ANRMIES      | Cremated Remains      |
| 6.  | AERGDVARY             | Graveyard             |
| 7.  | CMAELID EEREERF       | Medical referee       |
| 8.  | AENLTBECR             | Celebrant             |
| 9.  | LSOEIUINM             | Limousine             |
| 10. | IETEGRRS              | Registers             |

## **grief upon grief**

In loving memory....

I could only watch when my 78 year old mother started to become short of breath. She had spent the previous 5 days with a high temperature and persistent cough, and as her only daughter, I tried to make her as comfortable as possible. However, as her condition rapidly deteriorated and I listened as she gasped for air, I rang for an ambulance with a mixture of fear and dread and some small part of me, hope.

The ambulance crew carried out an assessment and the decision was made to admit her to hospital. I wasn't allowed to go with her, hold her hand or give her comfort, instead I watched them take her away, not knowing then it would be the last time I would see her.

The hospital confirmed she tested positive for Covid-19. Her breathing worsened and she was put on a ventilator. During this time, I had to have the conversation around placing a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order on my mum, given on the advice of the hospital – it was one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make. Despite the best efforts of the hospital staff, Mum sadly died 7 days later.

After being in self isolation myself I was forced with having to arrange the funeral of my mum. Mourning the death of a loved one is hard enough, but the coronavirus has made it an even more difficult and lonely task.

I rang the funeral director who informed me that no face-to-face meetings were possible, they could not provide any cars, or viewing. The crematorium still allowed services to go ahead but numbers would be restricted to 10 made up of close family. I completed the paperwork over the phone and via email – and not once did I encounter a physical human being. Although everyone tried their best to offer words of comfort, there would be no reassuring hugs, offers of tissues or the feeling that the weight of grief is somehow shared, I felt truly on my own.

Despite her age, my mum had an active and social lifestyle – probably more than me! She was involved with several clubs and organisations and had a lot of friends. It was heart-breaking that they could not be part of her death as they were her life. We were offered the option of having the funeral streamed online for those friends and family that were not allowed to attend, which at least offered some comfort. On the day of the funeral we turned up in separate cars, waited inside our vehicles until the hearse arrived, and only then did we go into the crematorium chapel, separately, military style and keeping 2m apart. The chapel was devoid of chairs and those that were there were placed strategically to reinforce the social distancing rules. There are no words to describe how I felt as I sat there on my own – funerals are supposed to bring a level of closure but instead I felt numb and found the whole setting somewhat surreal.

We listened to her favourite pieces of music, recounted her life as best we could and exited the chapel – no touching of the coffin permitted so we blew her kisses instead. There was none of the usual conversation that would normally follow such a sad event, no gathering, no hugs or kisses, we were left with just our own thoughts.

I do, however, feel grateful, that during these circumstances where we have had to change the way we live, I could hold a funeral for Mum, even one with enforced restrictions, despite my rollercoaster of emotions. Losing Mum has no doubt left a huge hole in my life, but I am thankful to all those professions that made it possible for me to be there at the end and say goodbye. I cannot express the overwhelming feeling of loss and grief I am experiencing, but I am comforted a little from the many messages I have received, especially from those of Mum's friends who were able to watch the funeral online and be part of her service albeit virtual. When this is all over, we will have time to reflect and hold a huge party in her memory.

I would also encourage anyone who has suffered a loss to do what they can, however they feel comfortable, to honour the memory of those that have died. I know people are really afraid their loved ones will be forgotten amid this chaos so if they didn't have access to the ritualistic final farewell that we would expect, take the opportunity to remember them, and encourage others to share their memories.

**Sara Edwards**



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## the journal

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