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The Journal Summer 2021

2021

Summer

Four years of 'digging a hole for myself'
Can we start saying yes
Cemetery of the year awards 2021
Tales of a cemetery registrar

The crematorium that likes to say, yes...
The Environmental Stewardship Group
Pulpit: John Lennon
CTTS assessments during lockdown



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editorial

The light at the end of a very long tunnel...

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Journal!

It was 19 March 2020 when the prime minister told the country "we can turn the tide within the next 12 weeks, and I am absolutely confident that we can send coronavirus packing in this country".

Four days later he locked us all down and those 12 weeks stretched into a year, on and off.

At that time, we were heading into the unknown. We saw the country come to a standstill, literally, as we had restrictions put on us and our liberties curtailed. Until then, our freedom was something we all took for granted.

For me it was the absence of human contact that I missed the most, not being able to see friends or family, stand shoulder to shoulder with your neighbour but instead watch as people actively crossed the street to avoid you. The inability to hug someone or offer comfort to those that desperately need it, has possibly been the hardest thing to deal with for us all, especially working within the funeral sector. At times this has felt like I have been in a dream from which I feared I may never wake.

However, despite these challenging times, you as bereavement professionals, have done a fantastic job to ensure that bereaved people can say goodbye to their loved ones. You have been remarkable in your resilience to "keep calm and carry on" even when dealing with your own anxieties and fears. For this I have the utmost respect for you all, well done and thank you.

With the easing of restrictions, we are starting to see life return, albeit incrementally, to something that closely resembles pre-pandemic "normality". We should, however, proceed with caution. The University of Warwick and Imperial College London report that there is a significant risk of a third wave of the virus over the summer, once these restrictions are lifted, despite the successful roll out of the vaccines. Nothing is certain of course, and there are many factors that will influence this, but we should all be prepared.

There have been some worthwhile changes that the pandemic has forced upon us, the most common being the use of technology. Very quickly we introduced and upgraded our use of streaming funerals online. Suddenly 200 people from anywhere in the world could be present, watching and supporting families, albeit remotely. The increased use of virtual platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams helped us to stay connected and for many of us have proved we can work from home successfully. One of the best changes, in my opinion, has been the introduction of electronic transmission of paperwork relating to death certification and registration. Let's hope that the government make the relevant changes to legislation to enable these to stay once the Coronavirus Act is rescinded.

Whilst we have been locked away, the natural world has continued on and even benefited from our absence. For the first time perhaps, we have seen a glimpse of what the planet could look like – or should like. The air got cleaner; wildlife was liberated - from a herd of goats taking over a Welsh seaside town to deer in a Japanese city roaming the roads in search of food. We could actually hear the birds singing instead of the constant rumble of car engines. It has shown us that it is time for change.

The world has witnessed an extraordinary amount of death. People are left with an overwhelming sense of grief and loss, and a feeling of being cheated out of time spent with those that have died prematurely. I hope that at the very least it has got us talking about death more. I sincerely hope it has taken away the stigma that asking for help is a sign of weakness – it's not. In fact it has highlighted the issues of mental health and shown us that no one is immune.

Without doubt we have learned a lot from this pandemic – good and bad. It has awakened us to the indispensable essentials of our lives, such as food, shelter, safety, and companionship. It might even make us grateful for them and help us focus on what is important.

One thing is for sure, as we come out of this very long tunnel, we will be living with COVID in some form, and its huge economic, educational, and societal consequences for years to come.

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president's page

So here I am again Last time I said I hoped to get out and about in 2021, but I think it will be more likely 2022! Where has the year gone!

We still have the restrictions for the number of attendees at a funeral, and this has also affected our Royal Family, with the sad passing of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh at the age of 99. His funeral took place on Saturday 17 April at St George's Chapel, in the grounds of Windsor Castle, and although it was televised, very much like our own services being web cast, the funeral was restricted in numbers of attendees due to COVID. The service was also much lower key than if it had happened in other times, which is exactly what other families have had to contend with over this past year.



We are slowly coming out of lockdown, non-essential shops are now open, so we can all head to that well known clothes store and stand in those incredibly long queues; we can finally have our hair cut, now that is definitely a bonus for many of us, I am sure! More importantly, we can finally start to meet up outside with family and friends that we have been unable to see previously.

Bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear are triggering mental health conditions or intensifying existing ones during this period of time. Many people may be facing increased levels of alcohol and drug use, insomnia and anxiety.

No suicide rate, whether high or low, rising or falling is ever acceptable. It is therefore important that we all consider how our family, friends and work colleagues are feeling and coping and especially more so now and when rates are reported as increasing, which is really upsetting to hear. The Samaritans have reported that since the restrictions began, caller's have expressed a sense of loss in various ways, from loss of income or routine, to loss of social contact, or mental health support and services. Sometimes, loss is coming from multiple angles all at once, which is particularly difficult for people to cope with.

I saw this on a web page, entitled "Sorry I haven't texted you back" by Alicia Cook, and I thought I would share it with you, as it truly shows we don't always show exactly how we feel. If someone asks us "how are you?", we simply respond with "I'm fine, how are you?". I have done this so many times; what we really need to ask is "how are you really?" but as we all know this is a difficult question to sometimes answer truthfully.

Hi, Sorry I haven't texted you back. ~~I've been anxious and depressed.~~ I haven't had time to catch my breath, you know how life gets. ~~I am so drained I can't even collect the energy for the most menial of tasks, like texting you back or washing the one dish in the sink.~~ The weather has been beautiful, right? Yesterday I fought off a panic attack while I was driving. I had to pull over because my vision was blurred. I focused on how blue the sky was. I haven't washed my hair in three days. ~~I just want to sleep all the time, but if I told you, you would want to uncover a reason behind all of this, and there is no tangible reason you would accept as valid.~~ How are you? I hope well. Let's get dinner soon!

It is important to maintain our mental health especially during this time. Talk about your worries; remember it is normal to feel worried, scared or helpless about the current situation and now that we are able to meet up with friends outside, try and take advantage of this, or just maintain contact via the phone / FaceTime or Zoom and Teams meetings.

I know a lot of companies are now concentrating more on their employee's mental health. My own authority, Southampton City Council (SCC), have dedicated staff internet pages and an employee advisory programme, they recognise that their staff are the council's greatest and most valuable asset. They are recognising that we need to look at our physical and mental health, as a good physical health can lead to an improved wellbeing. Similarly, good mental health can positively impact on our physical health.

We have an "Every Mind Matters" campaign to encourage adults to be more aware of their mental health and to help to discover simple steps to look after their mental health and wellbeing. They have a range of useful resources to help spot the signs of common concerns and it also provides self-care tips and guidance, but most importantly it explains when and how to seek further support.

SCC have also introduced mental health first aiders (MHFA) which is an internally recognised training course. The role of a MHFA in the workplace is to be a point of contact for an employee who is experiencing emotional distress or a mental health issue. Their support can range from having an initial conversation through to guiding a person to get appropriate help.

As well as in a crisis, a MHFA is valuable in providing early intervention for someone who may be at risk from developing a more serious mental health issue. MHFAs are not trained therapists or psychiatrists but they can offer initial support through confidential, non-judgemental listening and guidance and if your own company have this, I would definitely encourage seeking their services if needed.

The NHS also offer some very good advice on their web pages including switching off the TV to take time to talk to one another, play a game with your children, family or friends. I really enjoy playing games with my grandchildren, there is nothing better than practising my American accent to play barbies with Elsie-Mae, I will never understand why we must do it though, only she knows!

We were lucky to get a dog in October last year.



Barney is a gorgeous Golden Retriever and having the New Forest very close has enabled us to get plenty of walks in the fresh air, with lots of space to avoid other people.

He has certainly been a blessing; such a comfort especially during times of sadness. I have been working from home, but as soon as Codge opens that front door he rushes to greet him.

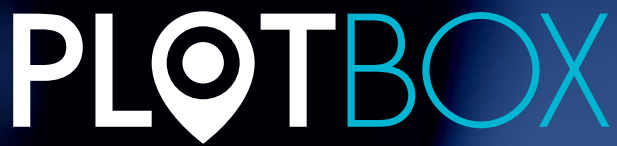
Always so eager to please and always at our sides.

Let's keep looking ahead to the future and hope that with all the vaccinations that are currently taking place, we will begin to be able to regain more normality in our lives over the coming year.

But remember it is still essential to follow the restrictions and to ensure that we all keep ourselves and each other safe.

I send you all my love and thank you for your valued support.

Heather White
ICCM President



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Summertime, and the living is easy.....

Well, maybe not exactly easy, but becoming easier as lockdown restrictions are being lifted across the nations of the UK. In England it is anticipated that the final step in the Government's road map out of the pandemic, Step 4, will be implemented on 21st June. At this stage, legal limits on the number of people who can meet will be removed, all businesses will be able to reopen, holidays at home and abroad can be taken, and, importantly for our sector, there will be no legal limits on life events.

Will this mean that life can return to 'normal'? Probably not. The virus won't have gone away by June, and we will need to learn to live with it, probably for many years to come. Hopefully vaccination will help to keep the number of people infected down to a manageable number and negate the need for too many stringent controls.

In many ways, I hope we don't return to the pre-pandemic normal. I hope we emerge from this dark period into a new light. I think we can all agree that the past year or so has been incredibly difficult and has presented many challenges. And I think we can also agree that the death care sector has responded to those challenges admirably.

As I write this In Touch in April 2021, the news is full of the dreadful situation in India, which is experiencing a huge wave of coronavirus infections and deaths. The country is short of oxygen, meaning that hospitals are unable to help many thousands of people and leading to what would otherwise be preventable deaths. The high death rate is in turn leading to the need for mass cremation, with areas of land being taken over for the building of funeral pyres. The pictures are very distressing, and I can only begin to imagine what it is like for those working in such dreadful conditions, and for the families they are doing their best to help.

Closer to home, there are reports that 2000 bodies are currently being stored in warehouses in Rome because the city has very limited burial space, and the only crematorium is operating at half capacity. People who lost family members in January have not been able to achieve a burial or cremation yet, some 3 months on. This is a scandalous situation. It prompted one person to place billboards across the city saying 'Mum, I'm sorry I've not been able to have you buried yet'; his mum died on 8th March and as of 29th April she had not been buried. The same was also true for his aunt, who died on 9th January.

Even at the peak of the pandemic when death rates in the UK were at their highest, our death care system did not buckle. All throughout the pandemic, the dead have been treated with dignity and respect, and families have been able to hold a funeral (of sorts) in a (relatively) timely fashion. Planning, regular communication, co-operation and sheer hard work by all parts of the funeral sector meant our system performed exceptionally well. Of course, it was not ideal, with attendance at funerals being restricted and

related events such as burial and scattering of ashes suspended for a while; time will tell what impact that will have on those bereaved during the pandemic. But the thing we can be proud of is that the essential service of burying or cremating the dead did not falter, and we were nowhere near the unfortunate and inexcusable situations currently being faced in India and Italy. Well done and thank you to everyone who worked so hard throughout the pandemic despite the threat to themselves and their families.

As things are beginning to ease, there will inevitably be new challenges to face. There is a growing momentum towards increasing the number of people able to attend a funeral in England to over 30; in Scotland the current maximum is 50 (subject to the size of the premises) and in Wales and Northern Ireland the maximum number of attendees is relative to the capacity of the building. Questions are currently being asked in the press about the wisdom of allowing thousands of people to attend a football match, but restricting important life events to such low numbers. We may therefore see a reconsideration by the English Government and an increase in the numbers allowed to attend a funeral ahead of the introduction of Step 4. We may also see an increase in the number of people who can attend a funeral related event, such as the burial or scattering of ashes. This number is currently 15, which again seems very low compared to the numbers allowed to go to the pub, for example.

What we must be particularly aware of as things are easing is the toll that the past 12 months has had on our physical and mental health. I know many of us have pretty much relied on adrenalin to keep us going; people have dug deep and found resources they perhaps didn't know they had. That's fine in the short term, but it can't be sustained indefinitely. We need to keep an eye on ourselves and on our colleagues and make sure that we and they remain well. It is a truism that we can't care for others if we don't take care of ourselves first.

At the start of the pandemic the ICCM identified that resources may be required to help members stay well. A Wellbeing During the Pandemic post was set up on the ICCM website, with links to various sources of support and help, including a reduced rate for ICCM members with our wellbeing partner, Heartled Wellbeing. This offer is still valid; it is confidential and non-judgemental and members can make contact directly with Heartled should they feel that they need some support.

Also on the website, and at the back of this Journal, you will find contact details for the ICCM Officers, who will continue to offer technical advice, general support and a friendly voice at the end of the phone.

Have a good summer and let's hope that by the time the Autumn Journal comes out the living really will be easy.

Julie Dunk
ICCM Chief Executive

the opportunities and challenges of UK cemeteries as ecosystem service providers through afforestation

National restrictions as a consequence of Covid-19 have resulted in a society-wide, appreciation for urban greenspaces.

The heightened value of greenspaces, often scant in urban settings (evident from the aerial image of London below) comes at a globally critical time to take action to protect, enhance and increase areas where ecosystems can deliver important services. All sectors responsible for land management have an opportunity to enhance and benefit from providing these services.



Figure 1. A 2012 aerial image of London, showing the lack of green space within the city¹.

Cemeteries are often overlooked within the urban greenspace matrix and could play a much greater role in achieving national environmental goals. This article will give a brief environmental and policy background; present Payments for Ecosystem Services; relating these concepts to opportunities available to cemetery managers via afforestation and will subsequently touch on challenges which could form a barrier.

Environmental and policy background

The UK's average temperatures have increased by nearly 1 °C since the 1980s, we are also experiencing an unprecedented loss in UK species, with 41% having decreased in number since 1970². This is due to pressures on the natural world, including intensification of agriculture, urbanisation and climate change². Despite these trends, there is growing awareness around the benefits we gain from natural spaces and increasing efforts to curtail environmental damage, such as national targets for emission reductions and woodland creation schemes². There are also local level initiatives with many local authorities having declared a Climate Emergency³ and implementing Tree Strategies⁴. This is coupled with a growing market for climate conscious options, e.g. growing demand for natural and woodland burial grounds^{5,6,7}. The UK aims to increase woodland cover to 19% by 2050, urban areas, including cemeteries, hold great potential to increase tree cover, while also providing social benefits⁸.

What are Payments for Ecosystem Services?

Ecosystem Services (ES) are “the benefits people obtain from ecosystems”⁹. These services can be categorised further, seen in Figure.2.

Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) can broadly be defined as; a voluntary transaction for the provision of an ES¹¹. E.g. in Figure.3, the ‘service provider’ is the forest owner who manages the forest to ensure it provides regulating services e.g. stormwater runoff reduction, the ‘service users’ are the neighbouring homeowners who make a payment to the forest owner to maintain the service. In addition to reduced flood risk there may be other benefits, such as an increase in house values; energy savings from the shading effect of trees and health benefits from a reduction in air pollution.



Figure 2. The four categories of Ecosystem Services, including some examples of each¹⁰

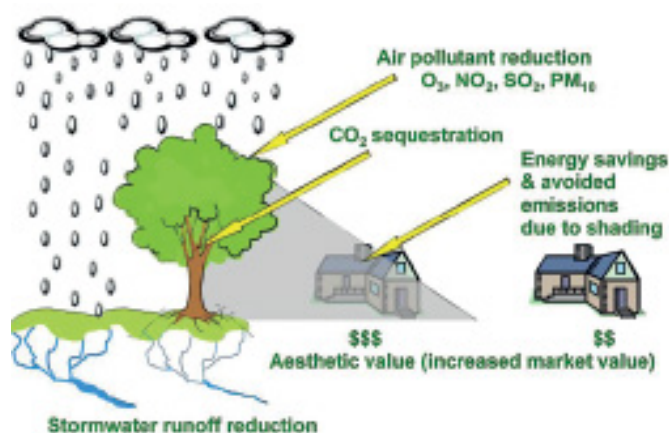


Figure 3. The Ecosystem Services from forested landscapes, these include reducing stormwater runoff; providing shade to homes (which in turn reduces the energy costs and emissions associated with cooling); reduce air pollution; sequester carbon and increasing the market value of surrounding homes¹²

Carbon sequestration and Carbon Credit Schemes

As trees grow, they capture carbon from the atmosphere and store it in the tree wood, leaf litter and surrounding soil^{8,13}. These elements make up the carbon stock of the forest and this carbon storage is a type of ES which we all benefit from via climate regulation¹⁴.

Forests have a key role in mitigating climate change making them very important to protect and in suitable places, expand^{8,15}. Tree planting has been encouraged through grant schemes; subsidies; as well as the development of a Woodland Carbon Code and Carbon Sequestration projects^{16,17}.

Sector opportunities

Cemeteries could deliver more ES, with potential benefits to cemetery management. There are many methods to achieve this, including through afforestation. Table.1 presents possibilities ranging from a low to high intensity of tree planting, high intensity planting representing a blended management model with commercial forestry.

*Table 1. Summary of potential approaches for land managers of cemeteries from least intense on the left to most intense on the right. Potential conflicts increase with intensity, as do resources needed. There is also a notable increase in the Ecosystem Services delivered from an increase in intensity, however any negative impacts from increasing intensity are not represented here. Content from several sources^{7,8,13,15,18}. *No literature was found investigating the interaction of trees on the rate of human decomposition, or their effect on toxic leachate.*

	Treescape	Intermediary	Blended commercial forestry
Intensity	Low		High
Incentive schemes/ Income source	Donations based Small planting grants	Woodland Creation Grant Carbon Credit Scheme Corporate Social Responsibility Planting grants	Long rotation hardwoods, high-end timber products such as coffins (75-100 yr. rotation) Carbon Credit Scheme Corporate Social Responsibility
Resource needs	Few resources needed	Expertise Budget for tree management	Expertise and equipment Partnership with forestry professionals
Ecosystem service	Spiritual enrichment	Habitat/biodiversity Wellbeing Spiritual enrichment Carbon sequestration Reduce runoff/flooding Positive effect on decomposition rates? * Reduced toxic leachate? * Reduce air pollution	Habitat/biodiversity Wellbeing Spiritual enrichment Carbon sequestration Reduce runoff/flooding Positive effect on decomposition rates? * Reduced toxic leachate? * Reduce air pollution (Depend on site, location, tree species planted, spacing etc)
Potential conflicts	Few		Many
Sites	Most sites could undergo a small increase in number of trees.		Fewer sites would be appropriate for this model. Dependent upon design incl. grave spacing; historic importance; soil and site conditions.
	Credit: Tourscotland		Credit: Time Travel Turtle, Skogskyrkogarden Woodland Cemetery

Since there is no accurate estimate of the area of burial ground in the UK, it is difficult to quantify the existing and potential ES and the resulting economic opportunities of afforestation. However, it is important to note that not every cemetery site will have the conditions suitable for planting and each should be considered independently.

Incentive schemes and income sources

Government incentives such as Woodland Creation Grants (see Table.1) are accessible to parish councils, tenants of public bodies, and public bodies¹⁹, however local authorities may be exempt from maintenance payments which others are eligible

for¹⁹. The Woodland Trust also provide grants for tree planting on publicly accessible land⁸.

Avenues for income generation through afforestation, see Table.1, include using land for long-rotation timber species. E.g. hardwoods could be harvested on a rotation length which complements that of burial time (75-100 years)⁷. Additional short-term income could be through carbon credit schemes. Projects must be verified by The Woodland Carbon Code and take many forms e.g.; planting could be offered as a means to offset someone's lifetime carbon emissions; could form part of Local Authorities carbon offset; or as part of a Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR) scheme. CSR schemes vary but often include a business offsetting its emissions by supporting a social or environmental project.

Table 2: From Endreny et. al., 2017 showing value per unit tree-based ecosystem service, for London UK, converted as \$1.43 per British Pound.

Value	Ecosystem Service from Tree
\$1,238.03	/metric ton of CO removed
\$8,718.32	/metric ton O ₃ removed
\$86,281.68	/metric ton NO ₂ removed
\$2,180.91	/metric ton SO ₂ removed
\$238,320.66	/metric ton PM _{2.5} removed
\$9,992.41	/metric ton PM ₁₀ removed
\$1.08	/m ³ Stormwater avoided
\$199.26	/kWh Electricity avoided
\$18.78	/Mbtu Energy avoided
\$0.08	/kg CO ₂ sequestered

Delivering ecosystem services

The structure of forests determines the ES which they deliver¹⁸. Table.1 list some of the ES which may result from afforesting cemeteries. This includes being part of a habitat network to support biodiversity; sequestering carbon; reducing flooding and air pollution²⁰ as well as delivering wellbeing and spiritual enrichment¹⁸. Table.2 estimates the monetary value which can be associated with urban trees²⁰.

Challenges

Challenges in implementation may include lack of resources, expertise; public/private ownership related differences in management priorities and constraints; and different opinions on how a more forested cemetery could impact the bereaved. It has been shown that trees and their fungal associations can increase the activity of bacteria in the soil, essential for decomposition processes²¹. However, more information is needed on the effect on human decomposition rates and the effect on harmful chemicals associated with this process⁷. How trees and roots may impact the re-use of graves must also be considered, however the time scales of 75-100 years offer many options to mitigate such impacts, e.g. timing of tree felling, strategic planning to avoid areas scheduled for exhumation⁷.

Depending on project structure there may be additional costs from initiating a planting and PES scheme. However, there are an increasing number of options to cover these costs and a public appetite to see such schemes implemented⁷. Site and species considerations must also be made, and tree placement must be considered aesthetically and practically.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the changing policy landscape; the need for climate solutions; the establishment of Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes; and the increasing value of natural spaces means there is opportunity for all land managers as ecosystem service providers. There is a distinct lack of information on the interaction afforestation may have on the primary role of cemeteries as sites for the safe decomposition of human remains. However there remains many opportunities and evidence for the exciting role these often-invisible public spaces could have in ecosystem service provision.

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Tabitha Ewing,
Bangor University student

adding a personal touch to customer experience in the digital age

Conor McGrellis of Plotbox outlines how to provide customer service with an individual touch

Advancements in technology over the years have rapidly changed customer experience as consumers now have endless buying opportunities, whether that be purchasing goods online, renewing life insurance via an app or making funeral arrangements via video call. All of these processes can be done efficiently without face-to-face interaction, but it's so important to get the correct balance between digital experience and providing a personal touch, especially within the death care sector.

Here are five suggestions to help you think about how to add a personal touch to customer experience in your cemetery or crematory:

1 Involve All Staff in Customer Experience

It's very important to involve all team members in building customer relationships. When a family walks into your cemetery, quite often the first person they will interact with will be a member of your grounds crew, rather than office staff and this is an opportunity in itself to build a relationship. This could be as simple as helping an elderly person carry flowers, having a chat or walking them to the cemetery office if they ask where it is, instead of just pointing them to it. This rapport building means that when people reach the cemetery office, they already have a feel for how they will be treated by the office staff and know they can trust the people within it. They will also be more likely to recommend you to their friends and family if they have had a good experience.

2 Being Part of The Community

It's important to remember that cemeteries are not only a place for the dead, but they are also places which can bring the living together. Many cemeteries have successfully attracted more visitors by hosting a range of different events such as cemetery picnics, open-air theatres, movie nights, remembrance ceremonies and yoga classes. The more visitors you have, the more opportunity you have to educate them on what the cemetery has to offer as well as influence their consideration for end-of-life planning.

3 Use Customer Data to Practice A Human Centred Approach

As cemeteries, you will already have some information about your families, so it's a great opportunity to assess this data and really learn who your customers are. This way, you will be able to group customers based on their profiles and create tailored messaging for them. Are you currently using a searchable database to store contact information? If yes, then great! If not, you should consider streamlining your customer data by using a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System. This will help you adjust what messaging you are sending to families depending on their religion, location, actions they have taken on your website, events and holidays. If you offer a live streaming service, you could send a tailored message via email to families on days of religious celebration, prayer and remembrance so they can virtually join services.

4 Grow Customer Satisfaction Through Personal Touches

Perhaps a work order has been completed involving cleaning a headstone, why not add a personal touch of emailing a picture of the cleaned headstone to the family? A small gesture which would be received with thanks by a family. Similarly, if you are aware that a deceased person's family lives a large distance from home, you could think about sending a personalised email reminder with a link to the grave on their loved one's birthday or anniversary so they can make arrangements for someone to visit or place flowers on their grave.

5 Invest in Employee Satisfaction

Your employees are one of the most important assets to your organisation, so their emotions and experiences matter just as much as your customers. Providing professional development, mentorship and listening to their feedback creates a feeling of togetherness and unites your organization. Think about your response to COVID-19, were your team able to work remotely? The benefits of offering this flexibility to staff allows them to have a better work life balance. Added to this, are you providing support for employees' mental health and wellbeing, considering all the changes they have made thus far? Encouraging them to maintain contact with family, friends and work colleagues, running virtual social activities and openly discussing what's working and what isn't, can ensure you support each other through any challenges. When employees have a high level of job satisfaction, their enthusiasm for your organisation will be felt by the customers, therefore creating a better experience all round and harnessing a culture from which everyone can grow from.

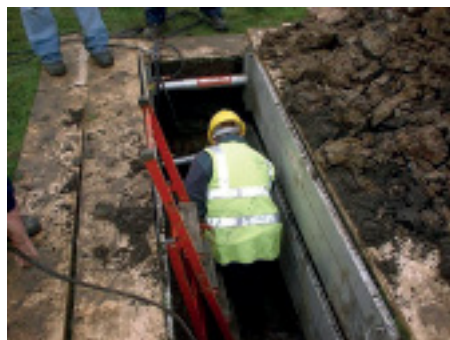
Conor McGrellis
Marketing Assistant, Plotbox

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Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme Courses January– March 2021

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

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



COTS training has restarted from April 2021

For more information, please contact Julie Callender on julie.callender@iccm-uk.com

Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme - January – March 2021

Kerry Arnott

Maria Brancati

Claire Bruce

Stuart Driver

Philip Ewing

Michael Faul

Brendan Fisher

Angela Froggatt

David Gibbons

Emily Hartshorn

David James

Antony Johns

Justin Lee

Alex Mason

Stephen Saggars

Alfred Smith

Mandy Thomas

Katrina Webber

Callum Wilford

Susan Williamson

Gary Woodhall

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

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

Alford Crematorium, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, Chesterfield Borough Council, Clyde Coast and Garnock Valley Crematorium, Copeland Borough Council, Coventry City Council, London Borough of Havering, London Borough of Lambeth, London Borough of Southwark, Middlesborough Council, Northumberland County Council, Nottingham City Council, Porchester Crematorium, Pure Cremation Ltd



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



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

Keith Hendry: an obituary

It was with sadness that I learned from Julie Dunk that Keith Hendry had died on 10th February 2021. Many will remember Keith as the face of Guildford Crematorium which he represented at conferences that he assiduously attended from 1986 to 2007, only missing 1999. Keith's favourite conference was in Glasgow in 1990 – must have been the generous drams of whisky! (I must say that I agree that it was a wonderful event).

Keith began his working life as an engineering apprentice which did not suit him and, after a period working on cars as a mechanic, he joined the Surrey police force as a constable in 1970. Unfortunately, a serious accident while on duty in a Police Mini brought about a change of direction which led to Keith joining the funeral profession as a bearer with the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society at their Guildford branch. Keith enjoyed the varied and often demanding position and progressed to the role as a funeral director but was tempted by a job at Guildford crematorium and was successful in his application taking up the post as assistant superintendent of Guildford crematorium and cemeteries in August 1976. Keith was appointed the third manager since the crematorium opened in 1967 and in 1983 found himself responsible for the crematorium, a mortuary and two cemeteries.

This was a role that Keith enjoyed and one, which in addition to his day-to-day managerial tasks, he had the opportunity to develop a new memorial garden which became his pride and joy. The introduction of troughs and hanging baskets into the crematorium grounds resulted in a Britain in Bloom commendation in 2002. In 2004 Keith was very proud indeed that the crematorium came second in the Cemetery of the Year (crematoria only section) competition.

Keith suffered a serious heart attack in 2006. After a period of recovery, he returned to work but sadly he experienced further problems in December 2008. Keith eventually took early retirement in July 2009 after 32 years dedicated service. Keith went on to enjoy his retirement with gardening, holidays and being with his family up until his death in February.

By Alan José



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Have you introduced any environmental initiatives?

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

Have you held any virtual events?

Are you doing something that others should know about?

Why not write an article for the journal?

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

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

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



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book review by Alan José

Designs on Death, The Architecture of Scottish Crematoria
by Hilary J Grainger



The eagerly awaited book that was to give a real insight to crematoria in Scotland was published last October (2020) and it certainly does not disappoint.

The book is indeed a hefty tome by any definition and quite probably the most impressive looking book ever to have been published featuring crematoria anywhere in the world. Whilst *Designs on Death* may not necessarily be a coffee table book of choice for the majority of people, for those of us who live and breathe details of the buildings that provide places of peace, serenity and reverence where families can mourn their dead, this is a pinnacle.

Hilary Grainger specialises in late nineteenth and twentieth – century architecture and has in her book been able to relate the story of the development of cremation in Scotland which makes for fascinating reading, explaining how it was that it was Glasgow and not Edinburgh that was to be the first to have a crematorium built. The detailed descriptions of Glasgow (Maryhill) crematorium designed by James Chalmers which opened in 1895 together with some impressive photographs which include some dating from the 1920's give a real insight to Scotland's first crematorium; the very slow progress of cremation being accepted and to Chalmers' close association with the building for over 30 years until his death in 1927.

No less impressive detail is afforded to each of the other thirty crematoria operating in Scotland today, (Aberdeen Kairnhill which opened in 1938 and closed in 1975 when the new Hazlehead crematorium opened).

Hilary's attention to detail and her enthusiasm for her subject takes readers on a journey of 124 years of design research and development of the cremation industry in Scotland and the buildings, many of which have been adapted, altered and extended to meet public expectations and they have served and indeed are serving the bereaved of Scotland so well in the 21st Century.

This is a book to be enjoyed by all who work in the crematorium sector and a book to be studied by architects looking to provide the best of crematorium design for the future.



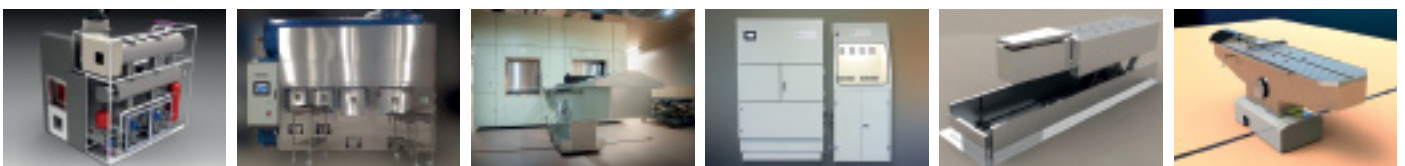
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Henley Town council unveils new columbarium

Following a conversion and major refurbishment of the chapel the columbarium is reopened



On 22 March at 2pm at a socially distanced ceremony, Mayor Ken Arlett will formally unveil the columbarium – opening a new chapter for the Grade II Listed Fairmile cemetery chapel.

From April 2021 Henley-on-Thames Town Council will offer a service leasing columbarium niches for the interment of ashes at the Grade II Listed non-conformist Chapel at Fairmile Cemetery.

A columbarium is a structure designed to hold cremation urns. The term derives from the Latin word for dove (columba). Traditionally, doves denote peace. This symbolism will not be lost on those who enter this space of quiet contemplation and reverence. The interment of ashes in columbaria is popular in Europe and is becoming more prevalent in the UK as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to a traditional burial.

The columbarium lies inside the council's Grade II Listed non-conformist chapel, one of a pair of listed Victorian chapels at the Fairmile cemetery and comprises hand-crafted hardwood cabinets holding glass-fronted niches. Each niche has its own soft interior lighting. There is a designated seating area in the chapel for quiet contemplation. Ashes from any denomination of the Christian faith, or other faiths, can be placed here.

Henley town council's columbarium meets the needs of families who would prefer to have the ashes of their loved ones rest in a visible and sheltered niche rather than in the main cemetery or elsewhere. Niches are of varying sizes and can accommodate up to 4 urns. They can be leased for a 20-year period. This lease can be renewed at the end of its term.

The columbarium is the result of careful deliberation by Town Councillors, who were keen to restore and repurpose this remarkable building. The ambitious refurbishment project began in the Spring of 2020.

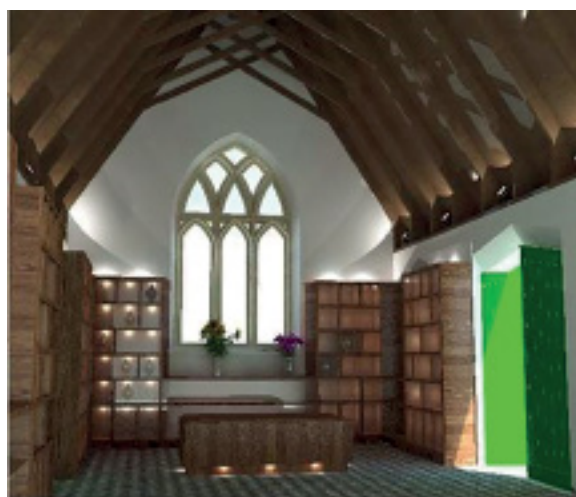
Features including the transept screen, Victorian fireplace, distinctive chequered tile floor, the tiled beamed roof, wall plastering, downpipes and guttering have been retained and lovingly restored to their solemn Victorian splendour by restoration experts Universal Stone Limited. The project was managed by Listed Building specialist architects, West Waddy APT.

The restored chapel has a secure-access system allowing families to visit the chapel as they wish during cemetery visiting hours. Visitors will of course also have access to the whole cemetery with its views over open fields in the South Oxfordshire area of outstanding natural beauty.

The cost of a single niche, for a period of 20 years is £1,300 and £1,800 for a larger niche (including VAT). For non-Henley residents there is a sliding scale of up to three times these charges. This is in line with our policy for all burials at the Fairmile cemetery.

Mayor of Henley, Councillor Ken Arlett adds,

"This has been a major undertaking – its completion heralds a new chapter for this rather lovely building. This council service is unlike anything else offered in the region by any other public sector body. We are an innovative and resourceful council, and we were keen that the chapel was not only restored, but that it was given a new purpose and meaning for the people of Henley.



Sirhowy Valley Crematorium and Memorial Garden

Westerleigh Group opened its 35th crematorium for business on Thursday 4th February 2021



The crematorium is very well placed to serve the local community in the Pontllanfraith, Blackwood and surrounding areas as the nearest crematoria previously were all over 10 miles away, with journeys for families taking over 30 minutes in a funeral cortege.

The building of Westerleigh's 35th crematorium at Sirhowy Valley has been the result of several years of dedicated work by the development team led by Ian McArdle, Chief Property Officer, which has been fundamental in delivering this beautiful new facility.

The crematorium situated in the heart of the Sirhowy Valley on a four-hectare site has been beautifully and sympathetically designed to offer a place of peace and seclusion which is so important to families arranging a funeral service for their loved ones.

The chapel is light and spacious and finished in Welsh pennant stone on the exterior with a warm and comfortable interior that has picture windows along one side which frame the panoramic views across the beautiful countryside. The chapel is equipped with a state-of-the-art media system supplied by Obitus with two large screens for visual tributes and there is the facility to webcast services all over the world.



The crematorium has the latest generation of Facultatieve fully abated cremators with NOx abatement making this one of the most environmentally efficient crematoriums in the UK.

Jon Deacon the crematorium manager who was for many years a funeral director serving the local area said " I am delighted to be taking up the role as crematorium manager at Sirhowy Valley at a time when local communities are experiencing exceptional levels of pain and heartache due to the pandemic. Our new crematorium set in beautiful grounds coupled with our absolute commitment to delivering a uniquely personal service will provide a dignified place for a final tribute."

Alan José
Group Ambassador

bereavement services Lambeth's Freddie Young announces retirement after 50 years

On September 22nd 2020, Freddie Young celebrated his 50th anniversary at Lambeth Bereavement Services.

Starting in 1970 at 19 years old as a gravedigger, his job title has since evolved to Crematorium Technician, but the value of his work to the cemetery's grounds and the people of the borough has remained consistent over the half century. He is one of Lambeth's foremost unsung heroes.

Freddie sits cross armed under the filtered light of the cemetery's trees.

"When I started over there, you didn't have no mowers, the only people who had mowers were the gardeners... everyone else had a hook and scythe."

Freddie has worked on-site in hands-on, manual roles his whole life. He began at Lambeth in the early 70s, given the job at the recommendation of his uncle, who worked there as a gravedigger at the time.

"I was thrown in the deep-end," he attests, speaking about being put in the specialist position in the crematorium before even his superiors, and recalling the system of hand-digging each grave in pairs.

Immediately before this, he worked the contract for American oil tycoon Robert P. McCalloch, taking down and preparing the old London Bridge for shipment.

Although offered a permanent position at the agency, 19-year-old Freddie refused: "I'm getting further and further away from home".

Soon after, he found himself in front of the superintendent.

"I went in the office, spoke to the superintendent for Lambeth at the time, he said, "When can you start?" I said, "When... d'you want me?" He said, "Can you start Monday?" I said, "Yeah." And as I say, I've been here ever since."

Freddie's professional duties have remained much the same throughout his career at Lambeth; "grass cutting... emptying the bins. General maintenance on the... cremator," but a significant portion of his role and duties is still very much about day-to-day kindnesses.

"I think that's why I like it... You're out in the open all day, you meet different people, you're sort of a shoulder to cry on... and they go away happy."

Freddie has been responsible for putting the loved ones of countless Lambeth families to rest, and has held countless hands through the grieving process.

"I still see what's left of the families," he says.

Freddie recalls an 85-year-old woman whose husband he cremated telling him, "I don't want you to go until I'm gone... I'm not gonna trust anyone else to cremate me."



Freddie even met his wife in the cemetery.

Laughing, he talks about their first date; "I go into the living room, her dad's there and her brother's there... They both worked over there... I used to go drinking with them, Tuesdays and Fridays on a dinner time. I couldn't believe it. I didn't have a clue!"

One could say his whole adult life has blossomed in and around Lambeth.

Not too long after their marriage, he and his wife moved themselves and their children on-grounds into the foreman's lodge.

"Well, as I say, I'm still there," he laughs.

Freddie's connection to the actual cemetery grounds is as undeniable as his connection to the people. "It's as peaceful as anything here."

Beyond simply maintaining and caretaking, Freddie has been responsible for significant landscaping and revitalising efforts.

Many of its trees and greenery have been personally planted and nursed by him, and he has even used pieces from his own garden to beautify certain nooks and crannies.

Explaining, he says, "You know it is like, oh, we've come here years ago, and it was all unkempt... I said 'Well, you know, we'll be losing staff we're not replacing anybody'... We do our best for everybody."

Freddie's place in Lambeth cemetery and crematorium remains more than invaluable; he will be sincerely missed both within the staff and without the broader community. His retirement was finalised with a bang on New Year's Eve of this year, which was also his 70th birthday.

announcing the Sheri Coates article of the year 2020

Every year we choose a selection of articles across all four editions and put them forward for consideration for the title 'Article of the Year'. Each member of the ICCM Board of Directors votes independently for their favourite and the winner is announced in the Journal, with the winner receiving a prize.

Below are those shortlisted last year – but there can only be one winner.

The 2020 award goes to 'A Little Slice of Heaven'. Congratulations to author Kate Greening, Bereavement Services Manager at Adur & Worthing Councils, and to the other nominees Liz Hall, Ken West, Symeon Walker, Mollie Taylor, Alan Sheldon and David Jennings. Nominated Articles from 2020 were:



A Little Slice of Heaven
Kate Greening
(Winter 2020 V88/4)



We winged it and it worked
David Jennings
(Autumn 2020 V88/3)



Bereavement & Cemeteries:
The Benefits of Nature
Mollie Taylor
(Winter 2020 V88/4)



Disposal of the dead in
prehistory
Ken West
(Spring 2020 V88/1)



Keep Calm and wash your
hands
Alan Sheldon
(Autumn 2020 V88/3)



Doncaster municipal funerals
CIC
Symeon Waller
(Spring 2020 V88/1)



Death café at Poole
Crematorium
Liz Hall
(Summer 2020 V88/2)

Submit your article and you could win the prize of £100. Please send original copy to the editor at sofia.allana@iccm-uk.com or call **07502 627521** if you would like to discuss an article.

The editor will be delighted to receive copy for publication in The Journal either from members of the ICCM, or from others made aware of 'TJ' thanks to members suggesting they write an article which may be of interest.



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iccm recycling of metals scheme



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



Newcastle-under-Lyme. – The Dove Service

An emergency service helping people to cope with grief, trauma, isolation and loneliness during the pandemic is being extended thanks to bereaved families in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) has donated £10,000 to the Dove Service – the only grief support charity in North Staffordshire – after the council nominated it as its chosen beneficiary for funds raised from the ICCM's metal recycling scheme.

The Dove Service, based at the Dudson Centre in Hanley, provides counselling and support to people from the age of four who are experiencing issues relating to bereavement, loss and life-changing illness. It's seeing a dramatic increase in the number of referrals and people struggling as a direct result of the pandemic. The money is being used to run two weekly online support groups as well as funding extra counselling capacity which is currently being delivered online or by telephone by trained professionals.

Charlie O'Dell, Dove Service CEO, said: "We're honoured to have been given this generous contribution to the service that we're delivering to support people impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and we can only thank the families who have enabled this work. We're pleased to be able to use this money to deliver a free service that allows us to help our local community at a time when grief and loss are having such a broad and severe impact on so many lives."

A "Dove buddies" friendship group was set up at Keele cemetery to further support bereaved residents prior to the pandemic and the charity looks forward to being able to start that again in the future.

Cllr. Trevor Johnson, Cabinet member for environment and recycling, is the portfolio holder for bereavement services. Cllr. Johnson said: "We're really pleased that the ICCM has accepted our nomination and donated a significant amount of money to such a worthwhile local cause in these very tough times. This has been made possible by the many bereaved families who have decided to allow metals remaining following cremation to be recycled in this way. It's a very personal decision and we are there to help residents make an informed decision.

"The charity is absolutely thrilled as it will allow them to continue meeting the additional demand for their specialised services during the pandemic. I hope that this provides residents who have lost a loved one with some level of comfort that their selfless actions are helping to make a big difference locally in these unprecedented times."

Media contact: Simone Harris – 01782 742606/simone.harris@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

Nottingham Wildlife Trust – Nottingham City Council

Dear ICCM,

I would like to acknowledge kind receipt of moneys from the ICCM Recycled Metals fund, which we received on 7 July and 19th December. This is enabling us to continue working with our partners at Nottingham City Council on enhancements at cemeteries under their management.

A large tree replacement project has recently been completed at Wilford Hill, which funded from the project. We are also looking at creating more wild flower areas at this site this coming year. We are also looking forward to progressing tree planting at High Wood (this site already supports native woodland, including incredible displays of bluebells) and, possibly, a tree replacement at General Cemetery in Nottingham in the autumn, to help secure the long-term future of this site, which has an amazing collection of specimen trees and areas of grassland managed sympathetically for wildlife.

Ben Driver - SeniorConservation Officer (South)

www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org



WHY celebrate £10,000 donation from Haycombe Crematorium

Cancer counselling charity We Hear You (WHY) is celebrating a £10,000 donation from Previous local beneficiaries include the RUH Forever Friends Appeal, Make a Wish Foundation and Cruse Bereavement Support. We Hear You provides free professional counselling to children and adults affected by cancer and life-threatening conditions in BANES, Somerset and Wiltshire and is benefitting from the scheme for the first time.



Fundraising and Communications Manager Gemma Wilkes says:

“Thank you so much to Haycombe Cemetery and Crematorium and Bath & North East Somerset Council. This donation will make a huge difference to WHY in what has been a very challenging year. At We Hear You we understand the enormous emotional impact of a terminal diagnosis or the loss of a loved one. Many thanks to the generous individuals who consented to participate in the scheme and thought of others and of course to the Council and the staff at the crematorium for thinking of WHY.”

Councillor Paul Crossley, cabinet member for Community Services at Bath & North East Somerset Council said: “I’m pleased we’ve been able to support the essential work of WHY. At a time when so many of us are distanced from our loved ones, its important people feel they can talk to someone about their feelings and try to make sense of what is happening.

“We always respectfully retrieve the cremated remains of a loved one, but metal items used as part of surgery are often recovered from the cremator. The most responsible way to dispose of them, with permission of the family, is to recycle

them. We feel it’s only right the money raised goes to support charities and I hope people who are bereaved take comfort from that.”

To access WHY’s free counselling service, call 01373 455255 or email info@wehearyou.org.uk.

CLIC Sargent - Rochdale

A cancer charity has received a £10,000 cash donation, raised from recycling metals found following cremations.

The £10,000 donation raised from cremations held at Rochdale's crematorium was paid at the end of December 2020 to charity CLIC Sargent, who support bereaved families in Rochdale and across the UK. Coun Neil Emmott, cabinet member for quality of place at Rochdale Borough Council, said: “We are delighted to have played our part in the donation of this substantial sum of money to CLIC Sargent who work tirelessly to support many of our young people and their families across the borough.

“This money can only be raised by families who give us express consent to collect metals following cremation, which we understand is a sensitive subject.

“We would like to thank all those families who enable this to happen and is vital to the ongoing success of the scheme.”

The funding is earmarked to help significantly towards the work in supporting families with young children who have sadly been affected by cancer - with many struggling more so than ever financially through these extremely tough times.

Joe Burns, senior fundraising manager at CLIC Sargent, said: “This donation will go a long way in helping our charity further support those families who have a child or young person with a terminal cancer diagnosis.

“Our dedicated support workers are there for them to prepare for loss and facilitate ideas to create cherished memories with their child, for as long as time allows.

“Emotional support remains in place for as long as it is needed.”

“We also see the joy of those who have successfully made it through treatment and have beaten cancer and we are on hand every step of the way.”



Gwynedd Council - Music in Hospitals & Care

Music in Hospitals & Care is a charity passionate about improving the health and wellbeing of children and adults through live music. Every year, professional musicians share live music with over 100,000 people from across the UK who wouldn't otherwise get to experience it. This includes those living with dementia, mental health problems, or who are seriously ill.

The charity had to pause its usual live music sessions in hospitals and care settings at the end of March last year due to COVID-19 restrictions, but it has still been reaching patients and staff far and wide with its **#MusicEveryDay** live stream music sessions.

"The residents absolutely loved the session today! The musician gave some shout outs to us here and took a couple of requests, so it made the residents feel super happy and they were dancing away and singing along. Thank you for the music!" – Dolywern Leonard Cheshire Home, Llangollen.

The sessions have been helping people like Gill, who lives at dementia specialist care home Cameron House in Inverness.

"Gill is quite young to be living with dementia. She is in her mid 70s, which is relatively early to be at an advanced stage of the illness. She loves music and while her memory is significantly impaired, she still knows all of the words to the songs. The live stream concerts are such a boost for her as she loves to sing along with the musicians and is always the first on the dance floor! She is very proud of the fact that she remembers all the words and she loves it when people comment on the fact that she is able to do this.

This has such a positive effect on her sense of confidence and self-worth." – Margaret Morrison, Activities Coordinator.



The generous donation of £10,000 received from the ICCM's metal recycling scheme will help Music in Hospitals & Care to continue its live stream programme into 2021 and to plan for a safe return to healthcare settings when restrictions ease.

"The past year has been so difficult for hospitals, care homes, hospices and community settings. This donation means we can continue to reach people who may be particularly isolated at this time with the healing power of live music. We are very grateful to the ICCM, crematorium staff and the bereaved for making this possible." Barbara Osborne, Chief Executive.

Gwynedd Council - Music in Hospitals & Care

Sandwell Council has nominated a local children's charity to receive this year's donation from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM).

Councillor Wasim Ali, cabinet member responsible for bereavement services, said: "We are very proud to be part of the ICCM's charity scheme. Acorns Children's Hospice, like all charities, has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. "The donation will go a long way to help Acorns support the children and families of Sandwell and the wider Black Country during what continue to be very difficult times. I would ask all Sandwell residents and businesses to continue to support local charities, including Acorns Children's Hospice."

Deputy Leader, Councillor Maria Crompton, added: "It's great that we can help a worthy cause and continue to support children across the Black Country who are coping with a bereavement." Claire Snape, Area Fundraiser for Acorns, said: "We're thrilled to have been nominated to receive this incredible donation. The children and families who use Acorns need us as much as ever during this time of uncertainty as we continue to provide our vital children's hospice care and lifeline support.

"This very generous donation will help us be there for families who rely on our support, including those who are bereaved. On behalf of everyone at Acorns, we could not be more grateful – thank you."

Acorns Children's Hospice provides specialist palliative care for children and young people with life limiting and life threatening conditions across Sandwell and the wider West Midlands, as well as support for their families. Over the past year Acorns has supported around 200 children and their families from its Black Country hospice, including those who are bereaved.



Acorns has been at the forefront in the battle against coronavirus, supporting some of the most vulnerable families in the community as well as the emergency response of the NHS and social care system. It costs £27,000 every day to run Acorns services providing care for children and support for their families.

The charity relies heavily on donations to fund the majority of its activities.



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Ashgate Hospicecare welcomes £10,000 donation from crematorium

Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee has donated £10,000 to Ashgate Hospicecare.

The charity, which provides specialist end of life care to patients with complex palliative care needs across North Derbyshire, will use the donation to help support its bereavement services, which have seen a surge in demand since the pandemic again.

In addition to helping to fund their existing bereavement services such as one-to-one counselling, group support and art therapy, the donation will also fund the creation of bereavement information packs.

The pack, which will be used by Ashgate Hospicecare’s community nursing team, includes information on how to register a death, who you must inform legally and where to find emotional and spiritual advice.

Arlene Honeyman, Head of Supportive Care at Ashgate Hospicecare, said: “We are incredibly grateful for this generous donation which comes at a time when demand for our services has never been greater.

“Our Supportive Care Team have been working tirelessly to give emotional, therapeutic and spiritual support to anyone in our community struggling with the loss of someone they love. This is given by our 16 staff who include specialist bereavement counsellors, chaplains and an art therapist who are supported by our 20 trained volunteer counsellors.

“Sadly, the number of people within our community who are experiencing a bereavement is continuing to increase due to COVID-19. We are hearing from people every day who are unable to be by their loved one’s bedside in hospital and are unable to say a proper goodbye.

“It really is a desperate situation for so many at this time, which is why our bereavement services and this donation is more important than ever.”

Ashgate Hospicecare does not receive any statutory funding for its bereavement support, instead the service is entirely funded by voluntary donations.

Right now, Ashgate is reporting a funding shortfall of £2.4 million, as a result of COVID-19 forcing the charity to close its shops for a third time and scale back or cancel fundraising events.

Councillor Mary Dooley, Chair of Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee, said:

“I believe that those who have lost loved ones will draw some comfort, knowing that their loss is in some way contributing to the tremendous efforts at Ashgate Hospicecare.

“Our crematorium, working alongside the Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management, has raised a tremendous amount over the years for many good causes and it has been great to hear the feedback from the charities about how this money is helping them with their excellent work.”

Ashgate Hospicecare was nominated by the Joint Crematorium Committee to be the recipient of the proceeds from the Recycling of Metals Scheme in 2021. The scheme is in partnership with the Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management.

To find out more about Ashgate Hospicecare or to support its Winter Crisis Appeal, go to: www.ashgatehospicecare.org.uk



Southampton Crematorium donates £10,000 to Paediatric Intensive Care Unit charity

Southampton Crematorium, which is run by Southampton City Council, donated £10,000 to Friends of PICU. Southampton Crematorium has raised this money from their Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) recycling of metals scheme. This brings the total that Southampton Crematorium has donated to charities to £58,000 since its introduction.

The presentation of the cheque took place on Thursday 1st April 2021 at Southampton Crematorium.

Friends of PICU was nominated by members of the crematorium's Bereavement Team, following the death in 2020 of 11-year-old Harlee Steele, grandson of Service Manager Heather White. Harlee's family had chosen Friends of PICU in his memory.

Founded in November 2006 by parents and nursing staff of the PICU, Friends of PICU has grown due to the generous donations from all their supporters, and the recognised great care given by the PICU team.

Kerry Houghton, Operations Manager, Friends of PICU wrote a letter of thanks to Bereavement Services, stating:

"I am writing on behalf of everyone at Friends of PICU and the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, to thank you so much for your kind donation of £10,000 from the ICCM Recycling of Metals Scheme following a nomination by members of the Bereavement Services Team at Southampton Cemeteries and Crematorium to receive this donation in memory of Harlee David Steele. This money is an absolutely incredible donation to receive and really will make such a difference."

"With your donation we will continue to assist the PICU and the NHS in providing the best of care for critically ill children, their parents and families, who will require the specialist services of the PICU. Friends of PICU are very proud to have funded the expansion of PICU to 16 beds, from the previous 14, 4 dedicated PICU ambulances and various items of equipment, staff training, and craft materials to desensitise the medical environment, over the past 15 years. We are now working towards our next major project, which is the renovation of the on-site parent accommodation alongside further key medical equipment".

"It is through such kindness given by yourselves and other supporters that we make a real difference. I send from myself, our Trustees, Patrons and all who support Friends of PICU our thanks."

Dr Iain Macintosh, Clinical PICU Consultant and Chairman of Friends of PICU added: *"The Unit really appreciates the incredible support received from the charity as it makes an enormous difference across the whole of the unit and the excellent level of care which can be provided to the children and their families. Friends of PICU contribute to every part of the specialist care with no patient passing through PICU without being assisted by nursing training and education, the variety of equipment donated, and the caring and considerate environment they have helped to create – Thank You."*

Harlee's mum Fern Steele on behalf of herself and her husband Ryan said: *"In June 2020 our world was suddenly turned upside down, when we had to say goodbye to our smiley, caring, beautiful son Harlee who was just 11 years old. It was such a devastating time and me and my family would like to thank the staff in PICU for how supportive and caring they were to us all. Even though the staff knew that there was nothing more they could do to help Harlee, each one of them came into the room and spoke to Harlee, telling him who they were, what they were doing with the machines and when moving him they showed such compassion. The lovely idea of providing hand printing and making sure they got all the colours that Harlee's brother and sister wanted was so thoughtful. We really can't thank you all enough for the way you looked after Harlee."*

Mary D'Arcy, Executive Director for Communities, Culture and Home at Southampton City Council said: *"We're absolutely delighted that our crematorium is able to offer this donation to the Friends of PICU. We hope this money goes some way to help fund the vital work the charity is doing in supporting children and their families on the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit Southampton Children's Hospital at the University Hospital Southampton."*





From left to right are: Dr Iain Macintosh, Clinical PICU Consultant and Chairman of Friends of PICU, Kerry Houghton, Operations Manager, Friends of PICU, Claire Hodges, Team Leader, Bereavement Services, Heather White, Service Manager at Southampton Crematorium/ICCM President (Harlee's grandmother), and Harlee's parents Ryan and Fern Steele and his siblings, Louie and Elsie-Mae Steele.

Kettering Crematorium donates £10,000 to the Twinkling Stars Appeal

Kettering's Warren Hill Crematorium has donated £10,000 to the Twinkling Stars Appeal at Kettering General Hospital, from money received for participating in the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) metals recycling scheme.

This takes our total donations from the scheme to more than £119,000 donated to local bereavement related charities since 2011.

Other charities to have previously received donations include: Cransley Hospice, Cynthia Spencer Hospice, Kettering Mind, KGH Charitable Fund and MacMillan Cancer Support, among others.

Jayne Chambers, Kettering General Hospital's Head of Strategic Corporate and Community Fundraising, said: "We are extremely grateful for Kettering Crematorium's donation of £10,000 towards our Twinkling Stars Appeal.

"While fundraising for the Appeal has been significantly disrupted by the Covid pandemic our appeal to dramatically improve the bereavement facilities at KGH for local families who lose their baby is still very much open.

"We are looking forward to a time when we can re-launch active fundraising for the appeal as Covid restrictions are lifted and organising fundraising events becomes easier."



The Twinkling Stars Appeal aims to raise £1million to dramatically improve the bereavement facilities for local families who have suffered the trauma of losing their baby.

Shirley Plenderleith, Head of Public Services at Kettering Borough Council, said: "We are extremely proud of the impressive amount of money that we have been able to donate to local bereavement charities. Kettering's Warren Hill Crematorium continues to provide a high-quality service in a family's time of need."

Cllr Ian Jelley, Kettering Borough Council's Portfolio Holder for Environment, said: "We're delighted that local charities are able to benefit from the metals recycled by Warren Hill Crematorium, and it is a tremendous achievement that over £119,000 has been donated to local bereavement related charities over the last 10 years."





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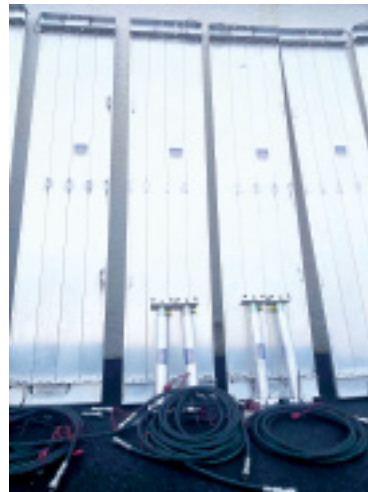
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Lea Fields Crematorium donates £10,000 to Lincolnshire hospice!

St Barnabas Hospice has received a £10,000 charitable donation from Lea Fields Crematorium in West Lindsey.

The money will be used by the charity to support Lincolnshire residents with Life limiting and terminal illness.

Lea Fields, which is run by West Lindsey District Council, opened the much needed facility in January last year. The authority signed up to the ICCM (Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management) Metal Recycling Scheme, which means that with the consent from families, metals recovered during cremation are recycled and any money raised is used to give back to bereavement related charities.

Chairman of the Council, Cllr Steve England selected St Barnabas to receive the donation as part of the scheme.

He said: "St Barnabas Hospice does such incredible work in Lincolnshire supporting people with life limiting and terminal illness. They do a fantastic job by making such a positive difference to the lives of poorly people in such tough circumstances.



Picture -Deborah Balsdon and Carlton Bradley

"It is an honour to be able to provide them with some extra financial help especially in the current conditions when fund raising for many organisations due to COVID-19 has made things challenging.

"We must not forget special thanks to the bereaved who gave their consent to be part of the scheme for without them we would not have been able to give back to the local community in this way."

Deborah Balsdon, Crematorium Manager at Lea Fields Crematorium said joining the national scheme was a great way to support local good causes.

She said: "At Lea Fields we always ensure families give their full approval to be part of the process and while making funeral arrangements they are given the choice about whether they wish to authorise the sensitive recycling of any metals remaining after the cremation."

Caroline Swindin, Fundraising Development Manager at St Barnabas, said "We are over the moon to receive a £10,000 donation from Lea Fields Crematorium and think that the ICCM Metal Recycling Scheme is a fantastic way to raise money for charity. This past year has thrown up many challenges for St Barnabas Hospice, so the money from Lea Fields will go a long way towards helping us provide holistic care to an increased number of patients, looking after their physical, social, spiritual and psychological needs.

"To put this fantastic amount of money into perspective, £10,000 could fund 585 virtual bereavement support sessions for people grieving the loss of a loved one, or it could fund 711 Hospice at Home visits to people being cared for at home by our community teams. It could even cover the cost of 293 hours of specialist inpatient care for patients we look after round-the-clock in our Inpatient Unit.

"Thank you so much to everyone involved in raising this incredible amount of money – it really does mean so much to us." Senior Director of Cliff Bradley and Sons Funeral Directors, Carlton Bradley, added: "I hope that this incredible donation – which wouldn't be possible without the support of so many selfless, generous, wonderful people – will make a huge difference to those who are living with terminal illnesses in Lincolnshire during this most difficult of times.

"For anyone who has lost a loved one, to have the incredible ability to still think of helping others shows a selfless quality that is simply the best in humanity. I truly wish the best to everybody who has made this possible, and to everybody who this incredible act of humanity will touch."

To find out more about Lea Fields Crematorium please visit: <https://www.leafieldscrematorium.co.uk/>

To find out more about St Barnabas please visit: <https://stbarnabashospice.co.uk/>

Sands summer update



In the past year you have helped to raise over £90,000 for Sands, a phenomenal gift to the charity during very challenging times. This directly supports our work to provide services to over 186,000 bereaved mothers, fathers, family members and health professionals. Thank you, it would simply not be possible without you.

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

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

Sands is a national charity, distributing and providing services across the UK through our extensive network of local groups. Many of your teams work closely with our regional volunteers in your local communities to fundraise and raise awareness.

“With the support of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and members, and your wonderful donations, we have made strides to innovate and revolutionise Sands’ services to ensure we remain accessible and relevant in this ever-changing situation. We know our work is not done however, as we strive for excellence across all areas of our work so that we can continue being the beacon of hope for all those impacted by loss, and to drive urgent change across the baby loss landscape to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable in society for the long term. Thank you for sharing our vision and passion, achieving it would not be possible without your support.”

Oliver Reichardt, Chair of Trustees

Sands welcomes new Ambassador, Professor Gordon Smith

We are delighted to announce Professor Gordon Smith as our newest Ambassador, who will help drive our ground-breaking work to save babies’ lives. Gordon is head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Cambridge. His internationally recognised research is looking for better ways to predict problems in pregnancy so babies and mothers get the care they need.



Professor Smith has supported Sands for more than a decade with expert research and clinical advice, and has helped us in successful campaigns to highlight the need to reduce baby deaths.

As Sands’ Ambassador, he will have a special focus on promoting work to save babies’ lives and improve the range and impact of perinatal research.

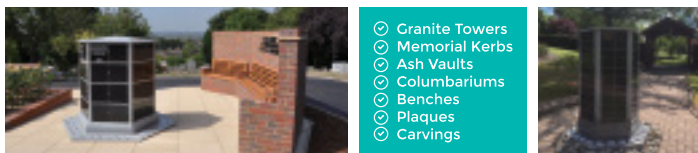
“I am honoured to take on this role for Sands. I have worked with them for many years and have been consistently impressed by the charity’s commitment to helping bereaved parents and trying to improve care to prevent stillbirths. I look forward to working with them to champion research which will save babies’ lives.” Find out more: www.sands.org.uk

Professor Gordon Smith

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



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the environmental stewardship group

On the 1st March 2021 a fledgling collaboration of 4 key organisations within the sector took a significant step forward by officially launching themselves as the Environmental Stewardship Group.



The “ESG” is an innovative collaboration between organisations who between them have in excess of 350 years interaction with the bereavement sector. The Cremation Society of Great Britain, (CSGB) The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management, (ICCM) The Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) and the CDS Group (CDS), representing public and private interests, but have come together to address the implications raised by the Climate Emergency for our sector.

In September 2020 we held our first tentative meeting, with executive officers and respective Chairs / Presidents where we broached the subject of Climate Emergency declarations and overall environmental impacts for the sector and how perhaps together, we could make a difference.

Two months later we agreed that there was sufficient common ground to move forward and explore how as a group we could meet the challenges before us. An overview of the implications and challenges relating to the Climate Emergency drawn from the Government, Environment Agency and Committee of Climate Change provided a backdrop to deciding the road ahead.

At this meeting we agreed upon the name and its strapline which would serve to frame our approach as well as giving a collective direction to our intentions.

Our discussions progressed to creating a set of objectives which would fully underpin this position.

Protect the environment.

To take a series of measures to reduce existing and negative impacts by 2025.

Promote continuous improvement.

To establish an industry wide approach to driving positive change and innovation.

Shape regulatory requirements.

To influence, legislation, guidance and advice that reflects the industry as a whole.

Communicating commitment.

To embed within the sector pro-active and positive commitment to promoting the sector's actions and efforts.

However, the real question was how to get a clear understanding of where the sector as a whole sat, what were the constituent parts of the sector and how to get



a meaningful insight.

We recognised that all members of the group had varying amounts of information and data, some live, some anecdotal but in reality, not enough to be able to speak for or on behalf of everyone confidently.

It was agreed that we needed to facilitate open engagement in surroundings which encourage open and honest dialogue and by utilising Chatham House rules this activity could provide the robust framework needed. So a “year zero” approach was adopted where we would take timeout to gather the required information after our launch.

Having approached the Environment Agency, we managed to secure 2 key individuals to take part in the official launch event where over 80 individuals not only listened to what the ESG was planning to do but took part in a series of Breakout rooms where they could fully engage with responding to questions, comments, and suggestions. Needless to say, it was extremely well received, and a recording and slides of the event are to

be found on our fledgling website:

www.environmentalstewardshipgroup.org.uk

At the end of the event our speakers left us with some very apt words of advice and encouragement: -

“No one person or organisation or government policy will solve the issue of the climate emergency for you and your business. It will require effort from all parts of society and is as much a cultural shift as a policy one.

You know your business better than anyone so it's imperative that you get as much information as possible to help know the risks and opportunities so you can create bespoke practical plans to ensure the continued sustainability and success of your sector.”

Lee Rawlinson, Director of Regulated Industry, The Environment Agency.

And to further underpin that our guest Chair for the event further challenged us : -

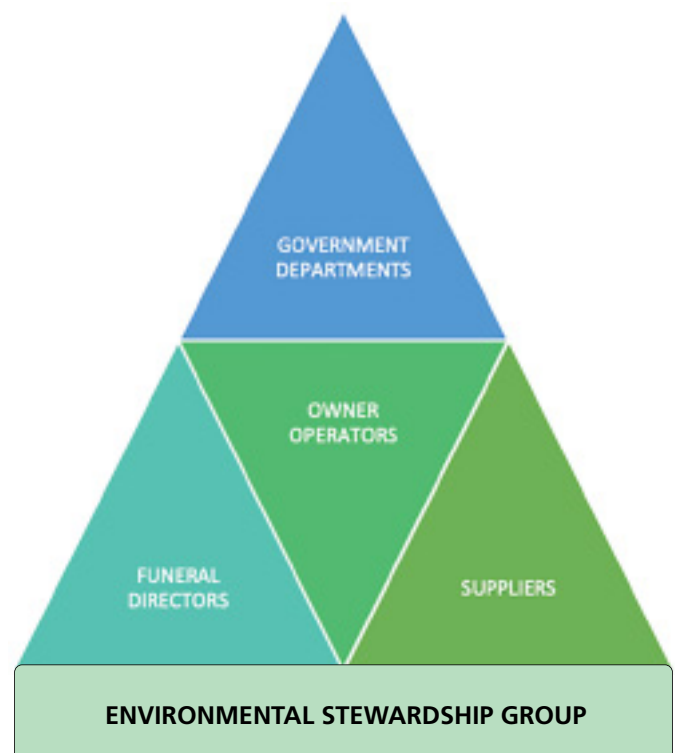
“In a sector with a great degree of sensitivity around cultural change, the court of public opinion is changing fast, sustainability and environmental issues are at the forefront of market change, those who rise to this challenge will be at the forefront of market advantage, those who lag behind will be at a significant disadvantage.”

Richard Macdonald, Deputy Chair, The Environment Agency

With those words of encouragement and the responses from the breakout rooms, we have since embarked on a series of virtual round tables where we have been able to in part educate about the Climate Emergency and its impact on our sectors, but in addition we have been able to ask specific questions in relation to current levels of understanding, gaps in knowledge, support required and concerns about what is required and how to move forward.

The round table virtual events have been focused on the 4 sub sections as identified in the graphic top right: -

Each event has been structured specifically for those organisations and individuals operating in those fields, this is to ensure that we have a set of specific responses focusing on their area of operations only. From the activities to date, and from the engagement and feedback received we certainly appear to be meeting an unmet need.



However, as you would expect for some this is the first time of consideration, for others there is a greater in-depth knowledge being shown.

Some suggest legislation is the only answer, whilst others proffer “tradition” as a barrier to change, different approaches to “more information, support and clearer unbiased communications” are regularly flagged as must haves.

Whilst we have only had 6 weeks since our launch, the depth and breadth of discussions has proven to be both exciting and promising for the way ahead.

What is most encouraging is the clarity of purpose being displayed by all sections of the sector recognising they want to address the issues with help and guidance. Therefore, it is paramount that we continue to move forward in our understanding or how together we can address these issues.

Perhaps it is pertinent at this stage in the article that we pose some questions for you our colleagues to consider?

Do you fully understand the impact of the Climate Emergency?

Do you know how it will affect you and your workplace? Are you aware of the simple steps that you can take to

start making a difference?

Have you considered your customers and where they fit into this scenario?

For some this may seem daunting, for others they may be able to take this in their stride, but one thing is clear inaction is not an option.

Therefore, what support would you like?

What could the ESG do for you?

These actions and activities will become business critical in the next few months and years. Announcements are



being made daily about how various industries are responding to the need to reduce their carbon footprint, Jaguar cars are going fully electric by 2025, Volvo by 2030. Alternative power source suppliers are racing to take up the predicted 80% decline of gas in the next 30 years. Jet Zero and Green Shipping will impact on costs



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of imports. Road transport will see the biggest overhaul in significantly reducing its emissions.

As a country we are legislated to achieve Carbon Net Zero by 2050, that means any capital expenditure on plant and equipment with more than a 20-year life expectancy will have to be either carbon neutral or have a strong net zero offsetting plan from 2030 onwards.

With the UK hosting COP26 in November this year and the establishment of the Office for the Protection of the Environment we can be sure that there will be a raft of new legislation, guidance, and advice landing on our desks.

The ESG wants to ensure that as a sector together we can demonstrate our willingness and ability to meet all challenges to further underline just how much we care.

Info@environmentalstewardshipgroup.org.uk

www.environmentalstewardshipgroup.org.uk

**Jon Cross FloD
ESG Group Facilitator**

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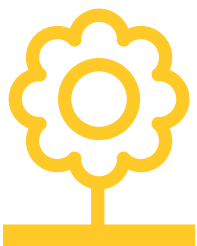
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Covid 19 – A lesson learned. (A play in one act)

The scene: mid 2021; a Bereavement Services office in a dark corner of the Civic Centre, where mushrooms thrive. The walls lined with shelves straining with 'the records'. A mixture of registers in various states of decay; treasury boxes with cryptic script, some legible some not; boxes of letters dating back to the mid-seventies sorted by date and map drawers containing dilapidated plans of the cemetery, some apparently, supporting life.

It is the first day back in the office for everyone after lockdown.

Present are **Carol Manager (CM)**, **Simon Admin (SA)** and **Councillor Dubious (Cllr Dubious)**

Cllr Dubious (channelling Old Mr Grace): I just popped by to thank you all for your efforts during the pandemic, you did a marvellous job under difficult circumstances.

CM: Thank you Councillor, it has not been easy and it's become pretty obvious that we need to have a fundamental review of how we do things here.

Cllr Dubious: If that means spending money, forget it, we've got none.

CM: Not necessarily, but several issues arose during lockdown that my staff had to deal with. This will happen again, we need to be better prepared.

Cllr Dubious: (suddenly interested) Issues? I've heard nothing from my constituents, have you? We've an election coming up.

CM: No, my staff made things right, as they always do, but our organisation didn't help them at all. We had to spend hours telling each other what we'd done each day, who had what paperwork and so on. Take the registers for instance. We couldn't take them home, so someone had to come into the office when we needed access. Last year's risk assessments means that two of my staff are not allowed to touch the older registers as they are too big and heavy; the registers that is. The maps are a health hazard; some have mould growing on them. The letters are almost unsearchable. We did an exercise, picked a grave at random and tried to find all the records associated with it – it took over two hours.

Cllr Dubious: Cemetery offices have always been like that surely? Comes with the territory.

SA: They may have been Councillor, but we've now 160 years of records and we're adding more every day. Alternatives are possible. At the last place I worked we had a computer system called Epitaph which held all the Statutory records, maps, correspondence, everything really. It was also cloud based so we could access it from anywhere, even from the cemetery. Those two hours Carol mentioned - two minutes.

Cllr Dubious: I've just come from Planning, they've tied up the IT department trying to access their software and to work collaboratively whilst all at home, it's been a complete shamble.

CM: These people have been successfully supplying cloud-based software for over 15 years; if they can't sort us out no one can. We wouldn't be involving IT at all; the responsibility is all with Epitaph.

Cllr Dubious: Sounds expensive and vulnerable, how do we know our records are safe? You'll have to put in a Capital bid, book some time with IT and we'd need a formal procurement process. This could cost a lot of money and take up a lot of staff time. We've just been thought that process in Parks, it took four years.

SA: Not at all, there's no upfront cost, just an annual lease fee. Their security is probably better than ours. IT would have



minimal involvement, just some help setting it up and nothing after that. As for procurement, we started that, but when we saw what had been proposed we had no confidence we'd get anything like what we needed. Fortunately, Epitaph is available through the EverythingICT procurement platform which means we could enter a contract with them rather than the supplier. EverythingICT therefore bear all the risks, they've already put Epitaph through the scrutiny an inhouse procurement process would do, probably far better.

Cllr Dubious: Well that's all fine, but in what dim and distant corner of the world would our records be held? How are they secure?

CM: Epitaph records are held in the UK on the company servers in Coventry. They back up records every hour, both to their own servers and to a third party data storage company called DATTO who would provide back up if the main office went offline. We can have two part authentication at our end to prevent anyone accessing what they shouldn't. The people at Epitaph actually hire people every year to try to break through their security but they never get anywhere. Keeping all our records here in one place is like keeping our savings under the mattress.

SA: One big advantage for us is being able to scan all of our paperwork and attach it to bookings, graves, EROB transfers, memorial applications, and the like. We can email directly to Funeral Directors, Stone Masons, we can even return the green part C slips to the Registrar via email, so we won't be spending much on postage. We could even scan in those letters, make some use of them at last.

CM: There were two whole days I had to spend with the registers helping people find records; all those genealogists

sitting at home with time on their hands. If we had Epitaph's HeritEDGE mapping, we could share maps and records through our own website and let the public find their own records and print off location maps.

SA: All this paperwork here is the result of the memorial inspections I've been doing. I've now to put these into a spreadsheet and then write letters to the three hundred or so owners with dangerous memorials, so that's the rest of the week taken up. If we had Epitaph, all I would have to do is plug in their InspectEDGE tablet, upload the results and hit a few buttons to send the letters and to order immediate make-safe work.

Cllr Dubious: I'm very sceptical about this, it sounds too good to be true. Software in my experience is always out of date, never works properly and I've always had to fight to get any support. When I do it's usually some technical person who doesn't understand me and who I can't understand in return.

SA: Actually, Epitaph never let us down. Help was always available via the phone or email. We also had direct access to their helpdesk which allowed us to monitor and comment on issues we'd raised. Because it's cloud based, they can and do update the software regularly, every few weeks or so, so we'll always be on the latest version. They also employ Bereavement Services professionals with nearly 50 years of experience between them, they speak our language. If you have a problem, they can join you in Epitaph and work out what's wrong.

Cllr Dubious: But the money?

CM: It's really not a lot, I'm sure I can find it in Revenue.

Cllr Dubious: (laughs) Why didn't you say? I'm not on that committee. Well done everybody, carry on! (Exits hurriedly).

GreenAcres reflects on the far-reaching impact of covid on the funeral industry

Andy Tait, CEO of GreenAcres Group, reflects on the last 12 months

On the first National Day of Reflection (23 March 2021) – marking one year since the first UK lockdown – Andy Tait, CEO of GreenAcres Group, reflects on the last 12 months and looks ahead to how the pandemic could have a lasting impact on the sector.

“We in this industry all recognise the pressures this past year has put on our services. We might even go so far as to say we are the forgotten sector; the service that even government ministers don’t like to talk about. Yet we make such a difference to people’s lives at such a difficult time.

“Sadly, it comes as no shock to people in this sector that the average UK death rate during the last 12 months was 14.5% higher* than the previous, with the number of funeral services twice the typical average in some weeks during 2020 and the start of 2021. Across our six parks, we’ve supported around 4,000 families through their loss over the past year – an increase of 21% on the previous 12 months for GreenAcres.

“We’ve made it our mission to ensure that every family still had the opportunity to make their loved one’s resting place as unique and special as ever. Our teams – as frontline workers – have displayed immense fortitude, at times having to withdraw from their own family bubbles to protect them and keep safe and sensitively delivering the services that bereaved families needed. Together with colleagues across the industry, we have embraced flexible working so as to accommodate early morning and weekend services, we’ve supported thousands of people over a short, intense period. “By offering unique, personalised services and resting



Coffin burials are frequently chosen by people of different religious and non-religious backgrounds.

places in peaceful parks, GreenAcres aims to help people from all faiths, or none connect, celebrate and remember loved ones in the way they want to. Our aim is to offer – above all – choice, and the chance for that choice to provide sanctuary, connection, and support for generations of families.

“All of us in this industry see first-hand the impact of bereavement on families, and it is incumbent on us – as trusted professionals who provide essential services to support those dealing with loss – to ensure that support continues, irrespective of what life (or Covid) throws at us. Like all of us in this sector, dealing with bereaved people is what we do. But the pandemic has made this much tougher – not just for people dealing with the uncertainty it continues to cause, but also for us as service providers.

“Certainly, market research within the consumer packaged goods (CPG) sector suggests that we need to re-think the old demographics. Accenture’s research** has identified four personas that have emerged during the pandemic; four different over-arching ways in which people are responding. These findings reiterate how important it is that we in this sector remain customer focused and recognise that people have different perspectives on life and death, and that they expect and deserve choice.

“At GreenAcres, we’re working hard to get a better understanding of our customer needs, and also to support people to realise they do have choice when it comes to planning for the end of life. We know these needs and preferences are often driven by family tradition, by faith or beliefs, or simply by individual mindset.



A shroud burial at GreenAcres Kemnal Park: a biodegradable shroud made from cotton fabric is the preference for people from Muslim faiths, and also a popular option for those who choose a natural burial, or to support the reduction of carbon emissions.

“Another thing we do know – which is borne out in both the research and our interactions with families – is that the pandemic has triggered a range of reactions, including feelings of caution and vulnerability, worries about health and reflections on mortality, as well as a push to be more sustainable and a greater concern about climate change.

“Our vision is for GreenAcres to respond to these needs, and continue to support people to embrace connection, community and choice.

Historically, we know that their funeral is one of the life events or purchases that people research least, certainly in proportion to how much they are prepared to pay for it. We see it as part of our role at GreenAcres to encourage more conversations about death and dying, so that families have a chance to see the range of options open to them, and how their choice can have a positive impact on their loved ones and on the planet for generations to come.

“A key part of this is around encouraging people to connect, talk about and share their grief. As well as giving families the time, space and support to choose their loved one’s memorial, we want people to feel supported and connected beyond the day of the funeral. Our aim is always to create a space for the living – a sanctuary where people can connect after the loss of a loved one. As restrictions ease gradually, we hope to welcome more people back to our beautiful parks, so we can support more families to say goodbye and reconnect – with their loved one and the living – safely and sensitively in these tranquil places within their local community.

“Having listened to people’s concerns, we know that for some people, even when restrictions ease, the fear of travelling and mixing in large groups will remain. So, we’re investing in upgrading our internet and Wifi services to ensure that all services, across all of our Parks, can offer live web streaming. All our Parks are already equipped with state-of-the-art media equipment



Around 80% of British people prefer a cremation, where ashes may be interred within beautiful woodlands.

in the service halls and over the last year we’ve seen an increase in the use of these media systems, both for the visual tributes set to music for people attending the funeral service, but also for web streaming services for those unable to attend due to Covid restrictions.

“We’re pleased to be part of the working group, The Environmental Stewardship Group***, looking at the role this industry can play in reducing our environmental impact. We know this is of

increasing importance to our families too, and we see it as part of our role to educate and empower people to understand the impact of their funeral choices on the environment. None of us can do this alone but together, step by step, we can move this sector forwards and meet the challenges that change demands. We have plans to expand our portfolio of Parks and are wholly committed to creating those according to the green design philosophy championed by our sister company Cemetery Development Services Ltd (CDS).

“As the nation reflects on the last 12 months, I think the vast majority of us would agree that the pandemic has had a life-changing impact on our world and on each of us as individuals too. As well as the obvious changes to how we’ve had to live our lives, I think it’s changed us more profoundly, in terms of what matters to us most. We’ve had to take a step back and look at life differently. We want to feel close and connected to friends, family and our communities; we appreciate the healing power of nature and the importance of sanctuary more than ever. I hope that at GreenAcres, we can continue to offer all of that, and more, to the diverse communities who seek our support.”

For GreenAcres, the focus initially will be around reducing the amount of plastic that is used within the sector, exploring different options for memorials to reduce the carbon footprint of imported granite from the Far East, and moving to more sustainable sources of energy for the running of our Parks.”

Jane Kirkup,
Head of Sales & Marketing

*<https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/deathsintheukfrom1990to2020>

**<https://www.accenture.com/ie-en Covid-19 pulse survey wave 7>.

***<https://www.environmentalstewardshipgroup.org.uk/>

<https://www.thecdsgrp.co.uk/>

To find out more about GreenAcres Cemeteries and Ceremonial Parks, visit www.greenacresgroup.co.uk/



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when can we start saying yes again?

A year on, are we all still holding on?

A genuine question to anyone taking the time to read this, "How are you doing right now?" If nothing else, please take just one moment - now - to say "well done" to yourself. You have made it through over a year of the Covid-19 pandemic, and you are still going. What is that saying? "When you are going through hell, keep going!" What a year and well done to the entire bereavement contingent.

So, who is this person saying well done to you?

I am the bereavement services manager at Weymouth crematorium - down on the Dorset coast and I am new to the role, well at least I was immediately before the pandemic. Baptism of fire doesn't even really start to cover it. I started my new role and.....enter Covid..... (as I write 'enter Covid', to get a true sense of the situation, I find it helps to hear the first few bars of Metallica's 'Enter Sandman' in your head).



Although new to the bereavement industry I am experienced in running local council services, with a history of providing frontline services to customers. Bereavement services, however, was a new role to me and one that I was thrown into mere months before lockdown 1.0.

So how does someone with no crematorium experience manage a service during a global pandemic?

With a hell of a good team of people around them! It 100% goes without saying that we could not have made it through this pandemic without teamwork and strong support to each other. I was fortunate enough to have had a very experienced team around me, who knew and undertook their roles well. I will forever be in their debt for their dedication, determination and support to get through the last 13 months. I'm not sure I can even express in words the pride and amazement I have for how they have handled this. A feeling, I am sure, so many of you will hold when considering your own teams. How did we make it through? Together.

But the support doesn't cease there. Forming good rapport and working relationships with funeral directors and officiants has also been key. The tone set throughout by our team was "We are all in this together." So, we worked hard to maintain relationships through the exceptionally tough times and to find solutions together. Navigating the reams of regulations and guidance, that I am sure many of you would agree, were at times difficult to work with.

And then there is the wider support; collaborating with neighbouring authorities to find a common approach, so that families and funeral directors using multiple crematoria in the area could rely on a consistent approach, as much as possible given the circumstances. New bonds were formed with other local councils and problem solving through networks of support have been invaluable through these recent times. Relationships that I hope will continue beyond the pandemic.

The ICCM and the DMAG have provided vital guidance and clarity when the water was murky. Back in November 2020 our team, along with colleagues from 3 other neighbouring authorities, joined together to undertake some online training. Delivered over two mornings, this was an engaging and accessible way to learn, but also manageable - although I look forward to the times when we can again be in one room together. The ability to attend virtually meant a cohort came together that otherwise would not have occurred. Keeping in mind we are all the way down in Dorset, it is highly unlikely that this group of people would have all been able to travel to one location and learn together - but due to the online offering this was made possible. It ensured healthy discussion and joint problem solving, that has continued beyond that initial training. Even when face-to-face learning resumes, I urge you to consider the benefits of learning together with some of your neighbouring authorities or as one team. All on the same page, all at the same time.

I ask you again now, "How are you doing?" Have you stopped to reflect on what you and your team have survived and navigated together? This has been a year like no other. I am sure there will have been some areas along the way where we perhaps wish we had approached things differently, but it was uncharted territory and I believe we will have all kept the bereaved at the heart of what we do.

Therein lies some of the trauma of these last 13 months.

That overwhelming desire to help the bereaved yet we have been so limited by guidance and regulations, surely never before

has the answer been “no” so often. How unnatural is that word in the work that we do? Most people are here to make bereavement just that little bit easier on people, to support them in the ways that we can, with the resources we have.

But the past 13 months has left us saying “no”, when we so deeply want to say “yes”. Does anyone else feel this has wounded them and their team? Are we all ready for the word to be “yes” again? Yes, you can fill the chapel. Yes, you can hug and comfort one another. Yes, you can sing out loud. Yes, you can!

But is it all bad? No, of course not. We have come together with a wartime spirit that we may have never have known.

We have catapulted forward our digital approach to paperwork. We have seen the focus on the deceased be prioritised above all. Some of the more ceremonial aspects have been reduced - through restriction or choice - and with the limitations on mourner numbers, the deceased is truly the focus, not the flowers, not the wake, but the loved one who has passed on. The main mourners are not having to meet and greet numbers of people through a strained smile. People are being granted a moment of pure grief and to let that flow out naturally.

There are many lessons we have learned and amongst the hardship, progress has been made, that we can take in to our ‘new normal’.

I write this now in mid-April, just as we have moved into Step 2. Looking positively and hopefully forward, ready for those restrictions to be lifted when safe to do so - eager to start saying yes again.

Thank you for reading and thank you all for your contribution. The unseen and unheard workers that many people cannot bear to have to think of...thank you.

Emma Parry
Bereavement Service Manager, Weymouth Crematorium

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in touch - up north



“Did you become an accountant because of your birthday?”
– The question was asked of me.

“No, it’s just a horrible coincidence! I replied as my birthday, the 31st March, also known as the financial year end or the day before the panic starts as the new membership/financial year begins.

So happy new membership and financial year everybody, hasn’t it been a good one? Well actually rather than drawing on the horribleness of all the Coronavirus affected events and just how tough it’s been, if you’re reading this, then you’ve made it so far.

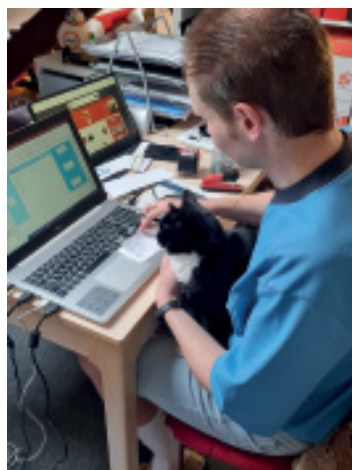
It has been hard, traumatic, stressful, utterly exhausting and nothing prepared us for the length or breadth of it, but please congratulate yourself, you are still going in some shape.

Commiserations if that shape is slightly rounder than 12 months ago, we all can’t just blame the Easter eggs this time!

The 2020 – 2021 year was a massive upheaval for ICCM and how we operate and function. Things have changed that will never quite go back the same way, but a lot of very good changes were forced to occur that will make things more positive in the future.

To some degree we have all learnt how to video conference, we have probably also shown more people our pets on calls.

As an example, here’s Flo helping me just this week - yes, the office could be tidier, but as it wasn’t meant to be an office until last year at really short notice, I might get it right before 2022.



With ICCM’s webinars we have probably spent more time on member engagement on papers and topics than we would have done if we’d had a convention. We are going to have a convention again, but until then, there are hours of topics to digest online which before would not have been the case.

Environmentally, well I’m going to have to get used to processing travel claims sometime soon from the officers – but like everyone else, we’ve spent less time in cars and more time walking, I think. To compensate for not getting to you, you have come to us in your hundreds for the online training courses. As I manage the feedback, I can also thank

each of you that have replied to say what we could do better as well as thanking you all for the nice words of how you have enjoyed them and what you have learnt. So, things are different, however, we have still been able to provide a service that you need.

It’s a service that we’ve reviewed and while we want to get back on the road to you as well, the online courses will remain an option, some people find it easier to attend – so out of madness comes improvement.

ICCM managed to survive and will record a profit this year, despite our COTS programme being temporarily suspended, the education seminar and convention being cancelled and us all spending a long time wondering what on earth was going on.

My son’s secondary school does WWW tasks for their homework – What went well and also what could you improve (it seems to be a case of not saying you did it wrong or failed, but hey ho).

WWW for ICCM

Better member engagement with more newsletters, social media posts, telephone calls and webinars.

An online AGM that was better attended and more engaging than during the last decade.

Online courses reaching over 400 people.

Online CTTS assessments, assessing more people than ever before in a year – thank you Mat.

Being there for members to let off steam, rant and trying to explain VASTLY changing Government guidance – if they let us write it, it would have been better.

We donated over £1million to charities through the recycling of metal scheme and we are doing it all again right now.

What could we do better –

Well, this is down to you, if you have any advice or ideas please let us know.

Oh and if you’re moving house, changing jobs or email addresses, then PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, let us know so we can send you information and your Journals correctly - it’s a little thing on your long list of changes to make but it helps.

Contact – Trevor.robson@iccm-uk.com

Take care, look after yourselves and hopefully enjoy the fresh air and not another lockdown!

Trevor Robson
ICCM Finance and IT Manager

four years of 'digging a hole for myself...'

Tusar SenGupta reflects on his four years in the industry

Before the pandemic, we had all been there. In a group of people. Some of whom we don't know. Introducing ourselves. And then waiting. Waiting for the moment someone turns to us and asks, "And what do you do for work...?"

I have usually found this can prompt three reactions dependent on who you are with, and whether people are inebriated or not. (1) Mortification and a rapid change of subject. (2) A million and one questions asking lots of gory details, and/or (3) being peppered with one-liners such as, "Do you lose the plot sometimes!?", "Do you have a skeleton staff?", "You must have grave concerns!", "Do you think you're sometimes digging a hole for yourself?", etc, etc, etc. I usually get in there first and reel off all the one-liners first nowadays, as after 4 years today in the industry (Jan 16th) I have pretty much memorised the best versions of each joke, and it's much quicker if I just do it.

On reflection today, I am finding it difficult to believe it is four years. And what a remarkable four years to come in to! And it got me to thinking of the journey that led me here to becoming cemeteries manager for the London Borough of Waltham Forest. And now I'm here, has it been worth hearing that I'm 'digging a hole for myself...' for four, whole, years?

I came directly from working in adult education. I was a lecturer and led a team of lecturers. I loved the job, but it changed from being really people focused to being really results driven. I wasn't happy. I prefer people to spreadsheets. Whilst this was going on, I saw an advert locally for a cemetery manager. It was the most bizarre job on the list. I tried to ignore it at first. It sat there on the list for months. And it kept staring at me.

Despite my part-Hindu origins, I do not believe in pre-determination or fate. Some people adhere to the theory of 'If the bullet has your name on it'- but I think this is deeply unfair. I have always thought, "What if your surname just happens to be Kalashnikov?" And if your parents happened to name you Colt Winchester? You would have absolutely no chance. But this job.... the advert was just sitting there, winking at me. Was it meant to be...???

I eventually plucked up the courage to open the job description. This proved fatal. The requirements were a bit strange and in a weird order. Finance and accounts? health & safety? knowledge of machinery? admin? bereavement support? conservation? legal experience? It felt really strange, but I have had a pretty varied career and feel like an all-rounder but never really fit in to one role. This had them all. I had experience of almost every aspect of the job individually, but never all these things at the same time. I was hit by a wave of, well, the fate and pre-determination I

don't really believe in! It was both eerie and uncanny. Was this the job I had been waiting for all my life? Was this the silver bullet with my name on? I applied....

I got an interview...

I got the job... I was now hit by a wave of "What on earth have I done! Had I bitten off more than I can chew?" Despite all the quips from my friends, have I really gone and dug a hole for myself?"



I started the role on January 16th 2017. On my first day I had to intervene in a near punch up outside with the police summoned. Day two, the main sewage pipe for the area which runs through part of the cemetery exploded, (I won't describe the consequences), resulting in 8 weeks of civil engineering works. Day three however was reasonably quiet, so I thought I would stay a bit longer. It really taught me that far from being quiet, no two days in the Cemeteries here are ever the same.

A few other things I learned was that cemetery staff tend to stay in their post much longer than other professions. And here I am as a 'newbie' not only to the service, but to the industry. I certainly did not have the track record to be considered a 'cemeteries man', but I do have some core beliefs which I feel have carried me through, ones that I still stick to. I remember the funerals of close ones in my life. I remember every second of each of those days. I remember how I felt and how I was treated, and I know a funeral just cannot go wrong. If they do, people remember forever. So, things cannot be left to chance, and above all, the deceased should be treated with the care and respect we would show to one of our own.

Also, it is an industry that responds best to evolution rather than revolution. The success of changes introduced depend on how they are introduced and received. I fully respect the experience and opinions of my colleagues. I would be daft to ignore and not learn from their knowledge and expertise. They need to be involved in any changes. The world is changing so fast, and we often lag behind. (I honestly could not remember the last time I used a fax



machine, but there it was beeping away in the cemeteries office on my first day. It has gone now). But if our colleagues know it is not just change for changes sake, the reasons and benefits behind it, and that those changes are properly tested and not

rushed in, then it is amazing how much can successfully change in the service for the better over a period of time.

The other thing which has helped me immensely with getting up to speed quickly is the support I have received from people I now consider as friends from the ICCM, and some of our nearby boroughs, particularly Islington and Barking and Dagenham. Knowing where to go for a second opinion on something, or being able to de-brief, offload, chew the fat, compare notes, etc has been a real lifeline.

Chingford Mount is probably best known nationally as the last resting place of the Kray Twins and their family. Their notoriety attracts all kinds of interest, particularly if a new film or documentary is released. Reggie's young wife Frances is also at rest there. I was actually born around the corner from the Blind Beggar pub, so I have looked into their history.

But the cemetery is not just the last resting place of one family. There are close on 200,000 life stories there, and another 70,000 at Queens Road. So, I have been collating stories to turn into a series of 'Ten Point Trails' telling the story of WW1, WW2, social history of east London, and cemetery symbols so visitors can take a walk around the cemeteries and learn how their area connects to local and indeed world history. Just some of the other characters discovered include;

- Benjamin Pollock of Toy Museum fame near the British Museum. This place inspired the David Bowie Pierrot costume he used in his 'Ashes to Ashes' video.
- Sgt Frank Dobbs, killed whilst engaging in the 1920's sport of balloon jumping. He jumped too high, lost control, and grabbed hold of an electricity cable. (He is on YouTube demonstrating this sport).
- Jane Cakebread, known worldwide as the 'Worlds Drunkennest Woman' (Lots on Google about her).

- Joseph Fleming, one of the initial suspects in the 'Jack the Ripper' murders. (Buried right behind the Kray family).
- Jacob Lepidus, one of the Russian communist revolutionaries involved in a failed armed robbery and six-mile chase with 1000 shots fired, 23 casualties and 2 deaths. This is known as 'The Tottenham Outrage' of 1909 and is still known as the world's most bizarre heist and involved the Russians commandeering a tram while the police gave chase on a milk float.

One of the most positive and uplifting of these changes that I would like to share with you is how community involvement has come to the fore here during the pandemic. We have two very old cemeteries; Chingford Mount, which is still operational, and Queens Road Walthamstow, which is full. We also have a fairly small team based at Chingford. As with all of us in the industry, it was all hands to the pump from the start of the pandemic. It really showed that we cannot do it all sometimes. With the pandemic restrictions in place and people doing things locally, it has shown, now more than ever, that cemeteries can be vital public, community open space, full of wildlife and history. Community input and involvement needs to be there to reflect this. I have been struggling to get Friends of/ Volunteer groups up and running. Positive, 'hands on' groups who get involved and want to physically help and support us. I have observed that the pandemic is bringing out the very best or the very worst in people. I think these times have galvanised that spirit and support, with people really wanting to help. We now have two groups, one at each cemetery, helping with flowerbeds, wildflowers, shrubs and poppies. People want to have opportunities to help, get out into the open, exercise, have company, discover their local area and history, and do something constructive and creative. The first volunteer day was an absolute joy. We expected maybe 4 or 5 people, and we had so many, from toddlers to senior citizens, in their small bubbles, socially distancing, bringing tools, keen to help, making it all feel worthwhile.

The pandemic has hit bereavement services hard. I am sure I am not the only one feeling battered by it all at times. My colleagues have really pulled it out of the bag this year. They have been immense. And yet also these two strong community volunteer groups have risen up out of it. This more than anything, especially in 2020 really has been a joy to see and made my heart glad. And when I see them with shovels and spades, giving their time to help make the cemeteries even nicer for others, working away, planting things, and of course my ever-dependable cemeteries team, each member of which I am immensely proud, and can 100% rely on, I know I am never alone in digging a hole for myself.

Tusar SenGupta
Cemeteries Manager
London Borough of Waltham Forest

Stourbridge reopens its doors!

It is often said that timing is everything, with regards to our crematorium refurbishment project, I don't think ours could have been worse!

Stourbridge crematorium opened in 1960 following extensive work carried out to incorporate a crematory building onto what, since 1879, had served as the town's burial chapel. Since opening, the crematorium has welcomed bereaved families from the local community and farther afield and currently carries out approximately 1,300 cremations each year.

In 1995, two L & P Furnace cremators were installed at the crematorium. The machines were reliable, regularly serviced



and looked after by the suppliers, Kevin Evans and Malcolm Baines (latterly of The Phoenix Partnership). The longevity of the machines is a testament to the build quality and to the expert maintenance carried out by Kevin and Malcolm.

Although having a recommended operational life of 15 years, with regular maintenance - including the usual new hearths and relines, we nursed the machines with the aim of extending their lifespan up until late 2019 early 2020. We had not however planned for the events of last year which, although challenging, further demonstrated the resilience and goodwill of those involved in bereavement services.



We are fortunate in Dudley that local councillors and senior managers acknowledge and support the need for excellent services for the bereaved, and this was once again demonstrated by the willingness to significantly invest in facilities at Stourbridge crematorium. Following the usual capital budget allocation process, the council committed to



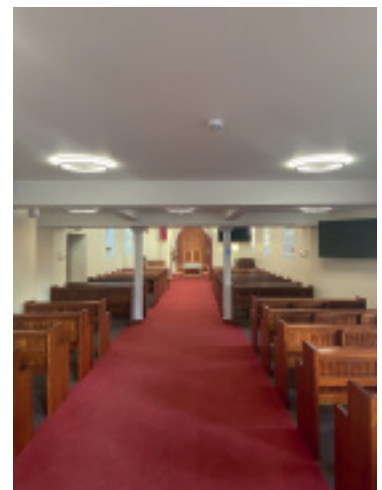
upgrading the cremation facilities whilst, at the same time, taking the opportunity to extend the chapel capacity from sixty-eight to ninety. Amongst other improvements, building a new flower room and road re-surfacing were also included in the £2m project.

The council accepted that it would be necessary to close the crematorium for the

duration of the work but as we own and manage two crematoria (Gornal Wood being the other) and originally intended to carry out the work during the generally 'quieter' spring and summer months, we hoped that disruption would be minimal. The project was explained in a number of press releases and communicated to all local funeral directors who I must say, have been both understanding and supportive throughout.

As COVID-19 started to take hold in March, we made the decision to postpone the upgrade work and attempt to extend the life of the existing cremators even further - despite their deteriorating condition, as we recognised the disruption that would be caused by closing in March. This was a huge risk which funeral directors supported, and which fortunately paid off. We did however ultimately have to close the crematorium in August as we feared a major breakdown was imminent.

So, onto the project. One of the major challenges was that the building was not originally purpose-built. Although not listed, the Victorian chapel is considered to have local historic importance with the borough's planners therefore all changes had to be agreed with both the planning and historic environment divisions. In addition, COVID-19 caused a myriad of issues such as a lack of supplies and labour, restrictions on the number of people able to work at any one time and the need for additional health and safety controls. Furthermore, the existing cremators had originally been cleverly shoe-horned into a relatively small crematory; this proved to be problematic





as the new cremators are larger, hence the need for a building extension. The number of challenges however only really hit home as the project progressed.

The early discussions were around the scope of the work. Should we fit mercury abatement plant, how many oversized cremators should we install and

what can the industry expect to face in the coming years - particularly in relation to environmental emissions.

We liaised regularly with our professional industry bodies and commissioned Martin Street of Rose Project Management to work with us. Martin provided useful, professional information on the national picture and gave his personal views based on his knowledge of the sector; all were duly considered.

From the outset, we were extremely aware of the need to manage public expectations. By this I mean we were conscious of the need to show value for money improvements; something that would be difficult if most of the expenditure was allocated to 'behind-the-scenes' facilities. We therefore included a new glazed dome canopy leading up to the doors of the chapel which accommodates a digital media screen and speakers to enable those who are unable to join the congregation in the chapel to watch and listen to the funeral service. Beneath the canopy is a disability scooter charging port and there is a port for electric car fast-charging located on the main drive.

The Book of Remembrance room is now more easily accessible by a longer and shallower ramp. The toilets and waiting area - which could only previously be accessed via



the main front door, are now independent of the chapel and fully accessible to those with a disability.

The chapel retains the magnificent Victorian vaulted ceiling and many of the original features. It now also provides visitors with the added benefits of modern LED lighting and state-of-the-art, energy-efficient air conditioning and heating systems. The speaker's lectern has been fully mechanised and linked to extensive multimedia resources. Our continued trust in the Obitus music set-up allows the bereaved a choice of almost limitless music and the opportunity to show family videos and slideshows as part of the service. The traditional organ remains, as does the webcast facility.

The original catafalque, which had previously been accessed by a step, has been replaced with a modern motorised process. The step has been removed and the catafalque - now at floor level, can easily be accessed by funeral directors and mourners. The final phase of the project will be the installation of a new and larger flower room.

Alongside our desire to enhance customer facilities, we were also extremely aware of the environmental agenda. As we all know, this issue has gathered pace over the past few years and as an industry, due largely to the emissions that result from cremation, we are fully expecting additional government guidance on the role crematoria will be expected to play to further reduce harmful gases. As the authority met



our 50% abatement obligation by installing mercury abatement equipment when cremators were upgraded at Gornal Wood Crematorium in 2011 and as the budget was tight, the decision was made to proceed with two new FT111 cremators without the installation of mercury abatement plant, but to install equipment that will allow for retrofitting in the future, when anticipated government guidance has been issued.

Fast forward to 14th December 2020, just four months after work commenced and despite the need for some very last-minute finishing touches, the crematorium re-opened. Yes, there are a few minor issues that still need to be resolved but these are generally 'behind the scenes' having no impact on the service provided. The feedback from bereaved families and funeral directors has been extremely positive and it is evident that once the new flower room has been built, we will be able to provide a greater level of service to the bereaved.

I would like to mention how important our internal

architectural technicians and appointed builders, Interclass, were throughout the project. From the start they took the time to understand both the building requirements and the sensitivities of the service. Their excellent professional service is something I am extremely grateful for.

Finally, I would like to thank Dudley's bereavement services team. As soon as the staff became aware that Stourbridge was due to temporarily close, they instantly accepted the need to offer three additional service times a day at Gornal Wood crematorium and without hesitation, worked later evenings and bank holidays to ensure the service could cope with the increased number of funerals. This level of commitment was replicated by the grave digging team and by staff who volunteered to support the service from other non-essential areas of the council. The result of this exceptional team effort was bereavement services being awarded The Freedom of the Borough by the council, an award deserved by each and every member of the team.

Ian Bailey

Principal Bereavement Services Officer

company news

welters® organisation worldwide

While we, as a country, work together to fight our way through the pandemic, we, as an organisation, strive to continue to provide our products and services whilst battling the many logistical issues it sets in our path.

The ongoing production of all full body and cremated remains interment facilities has been essential throughout the last year and we are proud to continue to work with our clients to provide the services they need whilst following the ever-changing guidelines and procedures.



All our products and systems can be installed together, in any configuration or layout, designed to best suit the needs of our customers, to create the welters® Cemetery Village® concept. Previously unusable land can be transformed into attractive cemeteries and cemetery extensions, creating interment positions where none were possible in the existing land prior to our involvement.

Please visit our website for further information on our products and services.

welters®
ORGANISATION
WORLDWIDE

Viscount Organs Wales

Exclusive Play Now Pay Later™ Scheme from Viscount Organs Wales

Play Now Pay Later™ provides a unique Interest- free 1 or 2 year plan and avoids the full initial outlay for a new instrument. We also offer this plan for churches, crematoriums and educational settings.



St Anne's church in Margate and Queen Anne's School Caversham recently took advantage of this plan with us.

www.bit.ly/St_Annes_Installation

Our most popular Instruments the Chorum 40S and the Envoy 23s are available from as little £189.00 per month. The plan cost is exactly the same as if you purchased outright. We can also provide a custom plan to meet your personal requirements. Please visit us at www.viscountorgans.wales or call 01792 721499 for more information.



company news

Teleshore Group

Teleshore launches CGI technology to enhance remote safety training

Teleshore Group has launched a new CGI visualisation video of its best-selling telescopic grave shoring system, enhancing its remote-training and demonstration capability. The latest CGI video is the latest addition to Teleshore's growing CGI portfolio, as the company continues to invest in technology which improves its remote safety training and demonstration capabilities.



Operations Director, Richard Smith, comments:

"The past year has proven how vital it is for businesses to respond to the changes in ways of working triggered by the pandemic, leading us to explore different training channel options so we can continue to deliver vital safety options and training for our product range.

Our previous CGI videos were very well received so we have invested further in animation which shows our telescopic grave shoring system's functionality in more technical detail within an excavation, enabling it to be used as a training tool for the system. We are excited to share this with our clients now and will be expanding this technology across more of our product range in 2021."

Teleshore's CGI technology investment provides the additional benefit of being as effective for remote training internationally as it is within the UK, enabling Teleshore to move further towards its 'Carbon Neutral' goal by reducing the need for travel even when it is once again permitted.

Teleshore's telescopic grave shoring system was the first of its kind to be designed and produced specifically for the bereavement services industry and was the company's first product launched when it entered the market 26 years ago. Telescopic shoring remains one of the company's best-selling safety solutions today; this latest technological advance in demonstration capabilities aligns perfectly with Teleshore's continued commitment to delivering market-leading safety solutions for the bereavement services industry.

The animation can be viewed at <https://teleshoregroup.com/telescopic-shoring>

Westerleigh Group

Extra help for families to remember lost loved ones

Families who have memorials at crematoria run by the Westerleigh Group are being offered an extra year free of charge.

The goodwill gesture recognises the fact that restrictions placed on people because of the Covid-19 pandemic have meant people have been unable to visit the memorials to their loved ones for many months.

Roger McLaughlan, Chief Executive Officer of the Westerleigh Group, said: "Throughout all the lockdown restrictions, our dedicated grounds teams have continued to maintain our gardens to the highest standards.

"But we know that, during the pandemic, the government restrictions have meant that many people have been unable to visit memorials of their loved ones as they would have wished to.

"Not being able to mark an important date or anniversary by visiting the resting place would have been upsetting for many people.

"Through providing an additional year to the length of existing memorial dedications at our crematorium, we are aiming to extend the precious opportunity of remembering a loved one.

"We hope that this will provide some comfort to the families we support, and we very much look forward to welcoming them back to our gardens as soon as they're ready to do so."

Anyone interested in finding out more about the offer should contact their local Westerleigh Group crematorium office.

Westerleigh Group is the UK's largest independent owner and operator of crematoria, with 35 sites nationwide. The offer excludes Stirlingshire Crematorium and Sirhowy Valley Crematorium.

For further information, please contact:

Darren Bane or Martin Powell on 01275 394400 or email darren@empica.com



the crematorium that likes to say, yes...

One thing that is apparent as soon as you commence your employment at Nene Valley crematorium is that the customer always comes first.

If a request is made that is lawful and practically possible then we do our utmost to accommodate the said request, even during a pandemic! Where others are saying no, we are saying, yes, from a risk-based approach. The environment at our crematorium is one of delivering extremely high "standards", mentored by our manager and registrar Tracy Lawrence, is to see everything we do through the eyes of the customer, and with the utmost attention to detail – the team mantra is "standards".

My journey within the bereavement sector has recently changed direction from an operations manager for a local funeral director to recently being appointed as the new operations manager at Nene Valley Crematorium (NVC). I came into the funeral industry in January 1996 working for a small family independent funeral director with branches in Corby, Kettering, and Wellingborough. My role in the funeral home for the first year was mainly 'back of house', which involved all aspects of caring for the deceased, from bringing them into the company's care from their place of death, to washing and dressing them in the chosen clothing. All the above practices had to be carried out with the utmost care and respect and of course attention to detail. All of which needed to be carried out with the utmost sensitivity because you are looking after someone's most precious possession, and therefore all of their trust is put in you.

I naturally progressed into arranging and conducting funerals with the clients. During the arrangement process you will guide the client through the entire process and offer them all the help and guidance along the way. Whilst arranging the funeral you also must be able to explain all the local customs and various choices that are available. One thing that I would always ask a family towards the end of an arrangement would be, is there anything else that is important to them. This might be something the deceased had mentioned that they did or did not want to happen, I would then do my utmost to make this happen. An example of this was a memory for the family of their loved one's obsession with denim jeans. I arranged for a coffin to look like a pair of jeans and on the day of the service both myself and the bearers all wore jeans to the funeral. The family of the deceased were very appreciative of us going the extra mile to look after their wishes.

My character of caring, listening, doing what is right for the deceased, their family, and friends, coupled with the buy-in to the "standards" at NVC has come naturally to

me – so the transferrable knowledge and skills makes me a good fit to become part of the family ethos of the NVC's bereavement services care team, where we are conscious that the service we deliver is not about any of us, but about the deceased and those bereft. A mantra from Tracy's former employment that she holds closely to her heart and that we must always remember is that: "We are advocates for the dead, to safeguard the living". I really like this and believe it beautifully wraps up our responsibilities, and accountability!

Anyone working in the funeral care profession knows that the past year has been especially challenging for the family and friends who have lost loved ones during the pandemic because of the restrictions in place. At NVC, like most of you have seen a significant increase in webcasts so mourners, who in other circumstances would have attended the service, attended from their own homes.



Another way that



Dog guard of honour – kindly approved by the family to share with you, and Bear.

we have seen mourners who cannot attend the actual funeral is to attend site in their individual vehicles to clap the cortege purely, and respectfully in, followed by their quiet egress from site before the funeral starts. We have also seen adaptations to accommodate, with restrictions from clubs and organisations that the deceased was part of, making a socially distanced guard of honour at the entrance to the crematorium to symbolically convey their last farewell. This could be a military guard of honour or different, such as lorries and more recently a service took place with our first dog guard of honour. This was in memory of a dog handler, a former trainer for German shepherd dogs - as a mark of respect members of his club lined the driveway to the crematorium, with our very own site security and staff welfare dog, Bear, (a fellow German shepherd) who looked on from the top of the site.

Allowing acts of compassion like this, despite restrictions, always executing from a risk-based approach in favour of a draconian way of working sets us apart from service offerings at some crematoria, so our

customers say...We recently received a prestigious award for our services to the pandemic that encompassed allowing acts of kindness like this, whilst keeping people safe too, but that is an article for another time.

We all look forward to the future, to a time when restrictions are lifted further, when it will be pleasing to start saying YES more frequently, for any special requests for loved ones that we receive from families and friends that we will continue to serve – and to serve from a YES perspective, unless there is a good reason to say no, and if a no is unavoidable, to explain “the why” of said no. In the meantime, I am enjoying my own learning journey, the mentoring and training support I am receiving from my colleagues is second to none. As part of this mentoring journey, I look forward to meeting some of you at forthcoming education seminars and the learning convention and exhibition - not until next year I understand, but both of which I have heard many positive things about :)

Richard Porter
Operations Manager for Nene Valley Crematorium

Member interaction is the Institute's lifeblood.

Why not facilitate a branch meeting?

iccm branch secretaries, contact details

Northern: Graham Harrison

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

Eastern: Tracy Lawrence

Email: TLawrence@nenevalleycrematorium.co.uk T: 01933 229 660 or 07904 457 372

South East: Heather White

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

Midlands and Mid Wales: Michael Birkinshaw

Email: bereavement@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk T: 01527 62174

North West and North Wales: Dave Jennings

Email: Dave.jennings@trafford.gov.uk T: 0161 912 1515

CTTS assessments during lockdown

Virtually Nothing's Changed!

I write this month's article a shade over 12 months since penning a similar piece which announced to our members that the ICCM would be continuing to offer the assessment of candidates enrolled on the Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme (CTTS), throughout the unfolding pandemic in order to support frontline workers in providing cremation services for their residents.

In order to achieve this, within 7 days of the first lockdown beginning in March 2020, all CTTS assessments were moved from a physical, face to face assessment, to a virtual alternative utilising video conference technology.

Understandably, many were sceptical or nervous about this transition at first as we moved into a new, digital way of working but thankfully, such concerns proved to be short lived. The basic elements of the assessment remained unchanged with the practical assessment being witnessed via video call, and the questions and walk through of the entire process (and more) by the candidate were then picked up in a telephone call immediately thereafter, prior to witnessing the cremation's conclusion back on a video call.

'The quality of remote assessments has really helped keep the CTTS scheme viable and has given reassurance to the ICCM membership.'

*Philip Ewing, Crematorium Manager,
Clyde Coast and Garnock Valley Crematorium*

Despite occasional challenges of reduced crematory WIFI capacity and some mentors/videographers getting to grips with how to switch the camera around to face the candidate (you know who you are!), we now find ourselves amidst a much more streamlined process which will produce an instant result for the candidate, and is confirmed in an email prior to the receipt of the certificate of qualification, all whilst being entirely compliant with the syllabus as required by our awarding body.

Whilst the long-term return to face-to-face assessments appears to be a way away, we are pleased to share that such assessments in the meantime have produced entirely positive feedback as managers, mentors and candidates have been kind enough to share their experiences throughout, in order that we may adapt and improve if an opportunity arises.

As a member service, we are therefore extremely proud that we are able to share that we have now assessed over 120 candidates using this virtual process at over 50 different locations which we sincerely hope has gone some way to alleviate the pressures faced by our members throughout such testing times.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in making this happen, from our partners at Pearson and Stratford Business School, through to the candidates, mentors and sites that have embraced these changes and worked with us to adapt and achieve the best results for members over the last 12 months and beyond.

At the time of writing, assessments remain ongoing as we continue to receive applications for new candidates wishing to undertake the CTTS qualification. For those wishing to receive more information on the training scheme, please contact Julie Callender at the National Office at the following email address where we will be happy to answer any questions that you may have:

Julie.callender@iccm-uk.com.



Mathew Crawley
Technical & Member Services Officer

Cemetery of the Year Awards 2021



The **FREE** to enter competition will once again run from **31 March until 31 July 2021** and open to any burial authority (cemetery or churchyard) within the UK.

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

The categories of cemeteries are –

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

The competition in 2021 will also include a NEW category –

- E. The Memorial Design Award.

This is an opportunity for memorial masons to enter a FREE national competition and showcase their work. It will be open to any memorial already erected in a cemetery or churchyard within the last 5 years. If you (memorial mason) have a suitable memorial simply attach a photograph of the memorial (after obtaining permission from the family) maximum three entries per company. The memorial must be on a single grave space, it can be lawn, cremation or with kerbs/traditional memorial. The memorial will be marked on its innovation, personalisation and originality by a team of memorial masons from BRAMM who are sponsoring this category.

To enter the competition simply log onto the CYA website at – www.cemeteryoftheyear.org.uk

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

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

The GOLD award winning cemetery/memorial mason in each category will receive £1000.00 prize money as well as a 'Cemetery of the Year 2021 framed gold certificate' along with a CYA press release that can be used to promote your work and achievements.

Runners up, in each category, will receive a 'Cemetery of the Year 2021 framed SILVER certificate' and a CYA press release.

The Cemetery of the Year Awards competition is designed not only to improve standards within burial grounds but also to encourage compliance with legislation and encourage best practice with information and support from leading burial authority organisations.



The Cemetery of the Year Award 2021 has been supported and endorsed by –

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

pulpit: John Lennon

As a boy, in the 1950's, and later as a young man in the 1960's, I have to admit that I was not a fan of what is generally described as "popular" music.

Where I was born and lived until the age of 20, in the grubby back streets of Manchester, which was then still a bomb site in large areas of the city, I instinctively preferred classical music to what was, and still is, called popular music.



*Jean Metcalfe and Cliff Michelmore
in 1950 who were married*

On Sundays, the family listened to "Two way" or later "Three way" family favourites on the radio as we sat down to eat lunch. It was fronted by Jean Metcalfe and Cliff Michelmore. The programme was a knock-on application of the second world war broadcast, with soldiers still in Germany and other countries still mopping up after the war. The radio provision was 99% popular music, but, just at the end of the broadcast, they played a piece of popular classical music, perhaps Tchaikovsky or Borodin...something obvious to please us gormless working class listeners! Family Favourites was the successor to the wartime radio show which was styled BFPO, or British Forces Network, later known as British Forces Posted Overseas or Forces Favourites, broadcast at Sunday lunchtimes on the BBC Light Programme, BBC Radio 2 and the British Forces Broadcasting Service, amazingly until 1980.



Unlike my siblings, I remember being unattracted to the popular music and very interested in the classical. It was instinct, and although now I can see beauty in a variety of musical styles, I was, as a teenager, completely distracted by the beauty of the "classical" music that I heard, and in particular, when I finally heard Sir Edward Elgar's 1st and 2nd symphonies, at the age of 16. I was overwhelmed. I rushed to the record shops to purchase what were then described as 33 rpm records and I listened to them on what was then a cheap Dansette record player night and day! (Although it would cost you a couple of hundred quid or more to buy one today!)



Years later, it was a particular thrill to hear on BBC Radio 3 Anthony Payne's reconstruction of Elgar's 3rd Symphony in 1997, some 84 years after his death in 1934. It is another Elgar masterpiece and Anthony Payne deserves huge credit for interpreting Elgar's notes and sketches into a major symphonic success.



Anthony Payne b. 1936

Left- Sir Edward Elgar and dogs!



When I visited Elgar's grave in the churchyard of at St. Wulstan's Church in Little Malvern, some years ago, (see TJ Winter, 2011) I was shocked that the gravestone made no reference to his major musical contribution to English and world music, and that (who could explain it?) no music was played at his funeral! How crass! The gravestone pays much more attention to his wife who was a member of an aristocratic line, and in those days, those in authority presumed that she deserved more attention than the major musical genius which was her husband! These days, a funeral at Westminster Abbey would have been deemed appropriate!!

However, as I grew into adult life, two "popular" musicians made a deep impression on me. One was Karen Carpenter, born in 1950, and so younger than me, although she died in 1983,



and John Lennon, born six years before me in 1940, but who was shot dead in New York in 1980. Their life spans are similar, but their musical styles and their life-styles are somewhat different. I will consider John Lennon's music and poetry in this edition of The Journal, and that of Karen Carpenter in a future edition.

In my teenage years, I dismissed The Beatles as a rowdy, noisy, pointless pop group. I have grown in awareness of how much John Lennon had insight into human life and how this informed some of his song words. I remember back in 1981 being in our local parish pub, the Red Rose, in Oldham. It was busy and drinking was going on apace! Suddenly I realised that it was after closing time, and here I was, a clergyman drinking in a pub after time. I panicked a little and went to the door which I discovered was locked. I then went to the bar to ask the landlord to let me out. He replied that this was not possible because if he opened the door, people would try to enter the pub and that would be illegal. I looked around and saw that there were at least 20 people sitting around the lounge and drinking merrily. So I asked the landlord what would happen if the police arrived. He smiled and said "They are already here. They are sat at that table at the end of the lounge, drinking beer." I realised that I had entered a world of which I had no previous knowledge! Then suddenly, I heard the juke box start to play a record. It was John Lennon's song "Imagine." I just sat down and listened to it, full of emotion remembering that just a few months ago, he had been shot dead in New York. The whole pub-load of people were visibly moved by the occasion, and tears were shed. A few months later, after reflecting on the whole incident, I wrote the following poem.

Dear John,
 They played your song tonight.
 Imagine!
 And you a thousand miles away
 and dead as well.
 I think you would be pleased.
 The time was late - last orders had been called
 and gone unheard for quite some time.
 We'd had a few and eyes were bright
 and faces smiled and knew a thing or two.
 Then, someone rocked up to the juke box
 and rolled back to their seat, and then
 Imagine!
 "You may say I'm a dreamer,
 But I'm not the only one."
 No John, your vision of that country
 freed from crap
 is shared by us as well.
 We all joined in, and John,
 we thought of you,
 all shot to bits and lying on the New York floor,
 and yes, we cried a bit, inside
 at your wasting.
 Imagine!
 You're now a Freeman of that country, John and
 all the way from Liverpool, New York and Heaven,
 you came to our pub last night
 and it was good,
 Dear John.



Neil hard at work in the pub!



The Beatles



Central Park, New York



Yoko Ono had John Lennon cremated and his ashes interred at a site in New York's Central Park. I am sorry that we never saw the full expression of John's mature interpretation of life and the words he might have written to communicate his vision to the world.

Below you may read the words of John Lennon's song which we heard in the pub that night.

Some people have commented that it is odd, if not deeply in conflict with my profession as a priest, to agree with some of the messages in this poem.

Imagine

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one
Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man

Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one

What is a pretty sight is faith and faithfulness. These are qualities which bring success and happiness, bind people together, whatever their technical religious affiliation, and unite all of the people in a positive and enduring search for a world in which everyone may find a good place to be and be free from terror and pain and hunger.

I'm definitely with John Lennon!

Neil Richardson



John Lennon and Yoko Ono on the day he was shot dead in New York.

In fact, I feel very much at one with the author. The positive messages about unity and equality, the deep unity of all humanity, sharing, not hoarding possessions, not killing each other, life lived in peace... What is wrong with that?

However, the concept of ridding the world of religion has to be explained. Religion is man-made, (and yes, I mean man-made) and made to create power structures and create authority which is used to intimidate and eventually eliminate those who don't agree with the authority, either by death, often by being burned alive, like Joan of Arc, or at least by a declaration that they are going to be punished now and not going to heaven, but to hell. Such concepts are deeply flawed and politically violent and have been used to intimidate ordinary people.

That is religion and it is not a pretty sight. This image from the church of St. Thomas in Salisbury depicts the condemned being led to hell (below.)



tales of a cemetery registrar

Observer of Grief

I stand on the side-lines you would not know that I am there,
I'm the custodian of the cemetery, the worker who cares.
If it is a burial there's lots to do behind the scenes,
We work tirelessly, diligently like well-oiled machines.

I'm the one that's taken the call and ensured the grave is dug,
I get the funeral directors to the grave that they should.
I might hold a broolly to shield the minister from rain,
Or maybe it is sunshine they can both be a pain.

I stand at the side-lines all dressed in black,
I've checked the path is clear, the grave is covered in mats.
Our staff scatter petals to add a special touch,
We want the day to go smoothly, ever so much.

This virus stopped us all from travelling,
Churches closed they became small gatherings,
No overnight stays or chats after, with food,
No time for funny memories, that would set the mood.

Most services became short words at the graveside,
My head bowed low I watch families stand side by side,
Recounting all the memories they had,
Loved ones still got the send-off, but it was sad.

I stand on the side-lines and I see grief come in all forms,
I hear their cries, how they show love and still smile through their storms.
Some people had no one and some just a few,
Maybe the virus spread then, but no one knew.

This year staff had near fainting, cut fingers and a gash on the head,
But no fuss made ensuring funerals went on to respect the dead.
Heat stroke near finished us but then lockdown did ease,
New guidance appeared that confused and displeased.

A funeral is a final goodbye but extra tears they do wipe,
As only some could visit the ill, and some had a chance to skype,
But most did not, and that must be so hard to take,
Saying goodbye, lost moments and without a wake.

The second wave came it was worse than the first,
High numbers of deaths, so tired thought we might burst.
What has got me through, is a smile a friendly chat,
Colleagues, funeral directors talking this and that.

I stand on the side-lines quiet and out of sight,
But I reach out to everyone with all my might.
Masks are optional but I wear to reduce fears,
I keep my distance as even I shed a tear.
The hugging, kissing is what we all missed most,
Some managed instead to do a sneaky toast.
Live stream, video recordings become the norm,
Those living away could listen and watch to mourn.

We try to do our best to ensure they are now at peace,
Their endings maybe have left you to feel incomplete.
Think of them often, hold all they mean in your hearts,
Their memories will live on and the healing grief starts.

I'll continue to stand on the side-lines, and you won't notice I'm there,
Say hello if you prefer, I will chat, listen as I really care.
When the funeral is over, I let out a sigh of relief,
As my duty that day is done, as an observer of grief.

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Safer Burial Grounds Film



BRAMM have produced a short film to explain why the BRAMM scheme was set up in 2004 specifically to help burial authorities manage their responsibilities to the British Standard 8415, with the aim of establishing a network of nationally accredited businesses and registered fixers that will ultimately replace individual registration schemes.

The short film covers the history and requirements of BS8415 which underpins all construction work relating to the installation and refurbishment of memorials in your cemeteries. The British Standard has also been used in legal cases concerning issues relating to memorialisation and used as a reference point for technical details and standards of workmanship. The standard is ever evolving, and it was reviewed in 2008, 2012 and again in 2018 which looked at the various types of soil conditions found in cemeteries and the impact on the types of ground anchors that are used.

The short film also focuses on the legal and ethical requirements of burial authorities and how this legislation is mandatory and failure to comply could prove very costly for the burial authority or the management team. It is the responsibility of the burial authority to ensure that all masons and fixers are properly trained, insured and following current industry standards. As a result, some burial authorities have their own registration schemes which are time consuming and costly to administer also policing and addressing discipline is a very real challenge. Understanding the technical requirements and keeping track with regular updates of BS8415 is very time consuming and also essential if standards are to be maintained and staff and contractors informed.

The British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) was set up in 2004 to help burial authorities meet their statutory responsibilities, improve standards, and create safer burial grounds. It provides a national register of approved masons who are all appropriately trained to fix memorials to current BS8415 standards, they also have correct insurance as well as current risk assessments and health and safety policies.

BRAMM is the only register that is recommended and endorsed by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) as well as The Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) and The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

BRAMM Has a free registration scheme for burial authorities.

Following suggestions from burial authorities, BRAMM have now simplified the criteria required for BRAMM burial authority registration.

To watch the short film (approx. 16 mins) log on to BRAMM you tube

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLZWMdKwIXv2iZKz_-DEVBA

This film is also available on the ICCM or BRAMM websites.



ICCM Photographic Competition 2021

Would you like a photograph taken by you to appear on the front cover of The Journal?



If you have a photograph taken in a cemetery, crematorium, churchyard or natural burial ground you can enter it into the ICCM Photographic Competition 2021 for a chance to win the prestige of having it reproduced on the front cover of the Journal. The winner will also receive a £50.00 gift voucher. The Board of Directors will choose a winning entry. A selection of the images submitted will be shown at the ICCM AGM, and the winner will be announced there.

The image must not identify any individuals and must have been taken by the person submitting it.

To enter please email a maximum of TWO unique, generic images to Julie Dunk at julie.dunk@iccm-uk.com in HIGH RESOLUTION jpeg format. Colour images will be converted to black and white for judging. The judges' decisions will be final.

The closing date for entries is 30 July 2021

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

coffin quality testing scheme on course to reach milestone in 2021



A quality assurance scheme run by the UK's principal trade association representing the coffin manufacturing sector is on course to hit a product testing milestone in 2021.

The Funeral Furnishing Manufacturers' Association (FFMA)'s Coffin and Casket Protocol is expected to achieve 180 coffins assessed for strength and quality in the coming months.

Since launching in 2016, the Protocol has been deployed to test 170 products made by the Association's 60 plus members, who comprise a high percentage of the British coffin making sector. Coffin materials checked under the Protocol range from oak veneer and wicker to picture coffins and cardboard.

The aim of the testing scheme is to ensure coffins, caskets and even shrouds are safe for use in both cremation and burial settings, bringing peace of mind to bereaved families, crematoria and burial ground operators and funeral directors.

And with the rise of online coffin sales on e-marketplaces, the need to uphold quality standards has never been greater.

FFMA Chief Executive Alun Tucker said the Protocol had become the universal kitemark for quality in coffins.

"We're incredibly pleased with how the scheme has embedded itself within the sector as the standard for quality assurance in just a few short years. And with 170 products tested so far, we can be confident that the majority of coffin and casket ranges presented for funerals in the UK are of exceptionally good build quality.

"This is essential to families, who need to know that the products supplied for a loved one's final journey will perform as intended. It's also a vital health and safety issue for funeral directors and employees at crematoria, cemeteries and burial grounds. The last thing anyone wants is a coffin or casket igniting too soon during charging at a crematorium, or the base collapsing whilst lowering into a grave.

"With the FFMA's Protocol, everyone involved in the funeral can be assured that an accredited coffin is a safe and dignified coffin," Mr Tucker said.

He also thanked Intertek, the London-headquartered international inspection and product testing specialist, which has conducted independent testing on behalf of the FFMA.

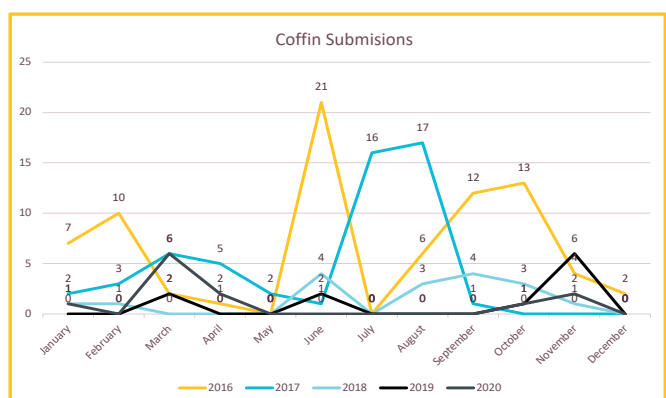
Under the Protocol, there are nine tests. These cover strength, leakages, excess ash, handle breakage and ignition to name but a few.

For further information about the FFMA's Coffin and Casket Protocol please visit ffma.co.uk.

For further information please contact Mark Binnersley on 07392 006928 or hello@markbinnersley.co.uk

Sample Analysis: Please see below table containing samples tested monthly over a period of five years. Alongside this a graph has been created to visualise YOY trends. Coffin testing became available to FFMA member and non-members from 2016.

Month	Year				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	7	2	1	0	1
February	10	3	1	0	0
March	2	6	0	2	6
April	1	5	0	0	2
May	0	2	0	0	0
June	21	1	4	2	0
July	0	16	0	0	0
August	6	17	3	0	0
September	12	1	4	0	0
October	13	0	3	1	1
November	4	0	0	6	2
December	2	0	0	0	0
Total	78	53	16	11	12



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the journal

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