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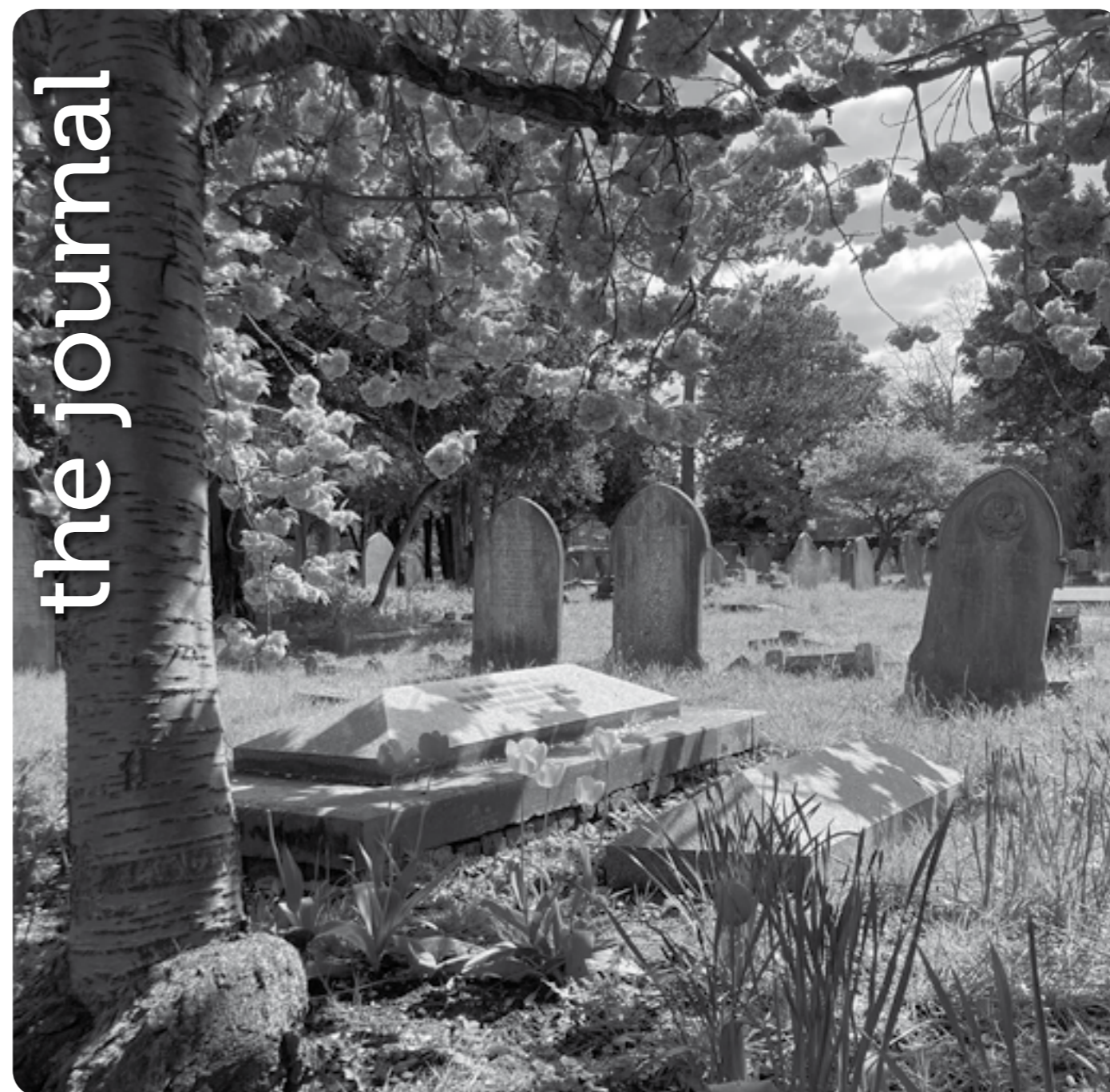
The Journal Winter 2023

2023

Winter

ICCM Learning Convention & Exhibition 2023
ICCM Awards 2023
ICCM Diploma Recipients 2023
Exhibitors 2023 Gallery

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Polishing a gem...
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2023

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editorial

Reflect back, look forwards

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Journal. I can't believe how quickly the last year has gone by and Christmas is looming around the corner!

This time of year can affect people in many different ways, depending on an individual's life journey and experiences. For me it is always a mixture of emotions. Whilst trying to remain positive, it is hard to ignore the underlying feelings of sadness that comes with the death of friends, this year in particular. I have attended five funerals this year, all young and all sudden deaths. Funerals do have a way of focusing the mind and putting life into perspective.

It is a time for reflection too. It is as important to assess our achievements and give ourselves permission to say well done, as well as looking at the areas that perhaps weren't so successful or where there's room for improvement.

With this in mind, and learning from our experiences, it is also a time to set targets and goals. The ICCM have some exciting new changes on the horizon to further enhance the member experience. We will be embracing the technology available and developing a new, more interactive, and user-friendly website as well as looking at our training courses and how they are delivered. There will be a new look Journal too so watch this space!

It was also lovely to see so many of you at the ICCM Learning Convention in September, old and new (some of us just older!) In my opinion there is nothing better than seeing people face to face and getting to really know someone over a drink or shared experience – or just trying to figure out the answers to Blue's quiz! You will see in this edition, for those that couldn't attend, a flavour of what happens at Convention. Whilst the aim is to learn more and build on our education, networking with our sector colleagues is invaluable. It can provide an important support network and in a lot of cases, lifelong friendships (which I can vouch for!).

Going forwards, the next year brings some changes to our sector. We are expecting the full implementation of the medical examiner system (watch this space!) and hopefully the Law Commission will make some headway with reviewing the changes to the current legislation relating to cemeteries and crematoria. We have already seen the installation of the first Resomator in the UK. This will give the public another option of disposal, and as it evolves will inevitably affect the business of existing crematoria and cemeteries.

In an ever-changing environment, we need to be mindful that we are changing with it. Are we meeting the expectations and standards expected by the bereaved? Are we making full use of the tools available to us to communicate with our communities that we serve? Have we learnt lessons from our previous challenges so we can improve and progress the way we move forwards? Are your staff adequately trained and supported? The road to underperformance is paved with good intentions – making changes to the way you lead is difficult, so providing coaching to help your team will translate intentions into reality.

Strive for progress, not perfection.

I would like to wish you all Season's greetings and a happy and healthy New Year.



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president's page

I can't believe I am here writing this. Three years on from becoming your deputy president, I have finally been allowed to take the reins and allow Heather a well-earned rest!

I would firstly like to express my thanks and gratitude to Heather for all that she has done over the last three years as president. The trials and tribulations of the pandemic years together with the sad loss of her grandson Harlee, the last three years have not been easy. Heather, you have been an inspiration and I hope I can follow in your footsteps with the same compassion and integrity that you have shown. I however don't think I can compete on the pudding front!



For those who don't know me. A brief synopsis of my career to date. In my previous life, I was a mortgage broker and financial advisor. I ran my own business for many years until the crash! At the time I had to consider my options and decide what my future might be. Little did I know taking on a role as admin assistant in a crematorium would lead to a career that I am passionate about. I have been in bereavement for 18 years; in that time, I have worked within both crematoria and cemeteries undertaking various roles. I have experienced the highs and lows that come with working in our sector. I now work as an independent and use my experience and knowledge to assist others.

The ICCM has always played a pivotal part in my career, they have always been there for constructive advice, training, and support. My career in bereavement would have been so much harder without it!

It was so good to see and meet many of you, some, for the first time at the ICCM Convention this year. I hope you all found this year's Learning Convention insightful and a rewarding experience.

I would like to say a big congratulations to all our members who have received their Diplomas this year. What an achievement.

The Learning Convention gives everyone an opportunity to meet face to face and reacquaint with friends and colleagues and make new ones. In a world of Teams and Zoom meetings, the need to connect with people is more evident than ever. Let's not forget the job you do can be hard and sometimes you need to step away and recharge; we all need the human touch!

During my tenure, I would like to be able to meet more of our members, engaging with you, and learning more about the issues that you face. The ICCM are making changes this year, and we want our members to play a big part in it. What can we do better? What new training can be offered?

Branch meetings are a great way to bring together members on a regional basis. A side effect of the pandemic was unfortunately these could not be arranged. This year it would be lovely to see more meetings, bringing together people in a face-to-face environment. Learning from each other and cementing contacts that can be invaluable in our sector. I am looking forward to engaging with you and will attend any that I can over the year.

There are wider issues that we need open discussions around such as:

- Grave reuse.
- Environmental sustainability and how we can support you on your journey.
- Are we doing enough for our bereaved families in our care? Could we do more?

I would like to hear from you about any other topics you want the ICCM to address.

We are your organisation and are here to serve you. I am here to serve you. I make a great cup of tea!

I also hope I do the role justice and ensure that I represent the ICCM and its members with professionalism when engaging with other external organisations and the public.

On that note, it was lovely to be invited to the dedication service held at Memoria's Doncaster & South Yorkshire Memorial Park in October. A lovely service was given by the Right Rev Sophie Jelley. As ever the new facilities have been designed with the needs of the bereaved in the forefront of their minds.



This was followed soon after, by an invitation to the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) annual convention. It was a pleasure to meet some of our members during the convention and receive some positive feedback on their engagement with the Institute.

If you are receiving your Winter edition before Christmas, I would like to wish you all joy and happiness during the holidays and the whole year through. If you are reading this post-holiday season, I hope it was all that you hoped for and are now working on your New Year resolutions!

Marian Millington

in touch



Winter 2023

The first frost of the year came as something of a shock this week after relatively mild weather for most of this year.

It was a reminder that winter is a season of stark contrasts; the world is transformed into a white wonderland, quiet and tranquil. Yet beneath this tranquil façade lies the inexorable cycle of life and death. In cemeteries and crematoria, this cycle is observed with reverence and respect, even in the harshest of winter's grasp.

Those who work in cemeteries and crematoria are guardians of memory, ensuring that the legacy of individuals is preserved and respected. Just as winter blankets the earth in frost, you blanket the memories of the departed in dignity. The quiet contemplation offered by winter's hush serves as a poignant reminder of the responsibility we bear in preserving these memories.

Winter can be seen as a metaphor for the cycle of life. It is a time of reflection and pause, mirroring the role that cemeteries and crematoria play in our society. These sites offer a sanctuary where people can reflect on our shared humanity, the passage of time and the importance of cherishing our loved ones' memories.

Winter often necessitates special considerations in the management of cemeteries and crematoria. Snow and cold weather can pose unique challenges. The ICCM provide guidance on how to handle these challenges, ensuring that the final services for the departed are conducted with grace, even in the face of winter's chill.

Just as winter calls for environmental responsibility in terms of energy consumption and snow removal, the ICCM also recognises the importance of environmentally responsible practices within the sector. It plays a vital role in promoting eco-friendly solutions, from green burials to sustainable cremation practices, aligning the field with the growing concern for our planet.

Just as winter holds diverse charms for people of different cultures and regions, the ICCM respects and honours the cultural and religious diversity of those it serves. It recognises that death and remembrance are deeply personal and vary across traditions. The ICCM promotes exclusivity and the adaption of services to meet the diverse needs of communities.

The ICCM is not just an organisation; it is a community of dedicated professionals. Like winter, it has its own unique beauty, shaped by the collective wisdom and experience of its members. These individuals are the caretakers of our memories and guardians of our final journeys.

As we navigate the winter season, let us also reflect on the importance of the ICCM's mission in providing a compassionate and dignified space for people to remember and honour their loved ones. Just as winter embraces us with its cold beauty, the ICCM offers warmth and solace to those in need, ensuring that the memories of the departed remain evergreen in our hearts.

Now, if you've just read the last few paragraphs and thought that this was possibly slightly more poetic than my normal ramblings, you would be right. Having recently learned about artificial intelligence (AI) and heard of free apps that you can use, I gave it a go. I simply wrote into the search bar 'write 1000 words for the ICCM Winter Journal In Touch'. Within seconds I had 1000 words of pretty passable prose. I left out some of the more schmaltzy paragraphs, but what was left impressed me with how quickly the 'bot' had understood the role of the ICCM in helping members deliver services to bereaved people. It also slightly scared me, because it is going to become increasingly difficult to tell the difference between AI and human produced text. This might not matter in some applications, but it isn't difficult to see how scammers will be able to use this technology to imitate human interactions.

Could it be useful in the bereavement sector? Undoubtedly. If you are trying to find the right words for your Book of Remembrance brochure, for example, try asking the chatbot for help. I did and it came up with words and phrases that I wouldn't have thought of. I also asked it for a 100 word eulogy for an 86 year old ex-teacher. What it produced was enough to bring a tear to the eye in honouring this make-believe person!

AI is powerful, and it will become increasingly so as some of the quirks are ironed out. Its applications are endless, and the bereavement sector won't be exempt; time will tell how it will affect the way that we deliver our services. Governments are looking at protocols and guidelines for the use of AI to help protect us from the worst excesses of those who will use it for nefarious purposes. There are some Doomsday scenarios around that see robots taking over the





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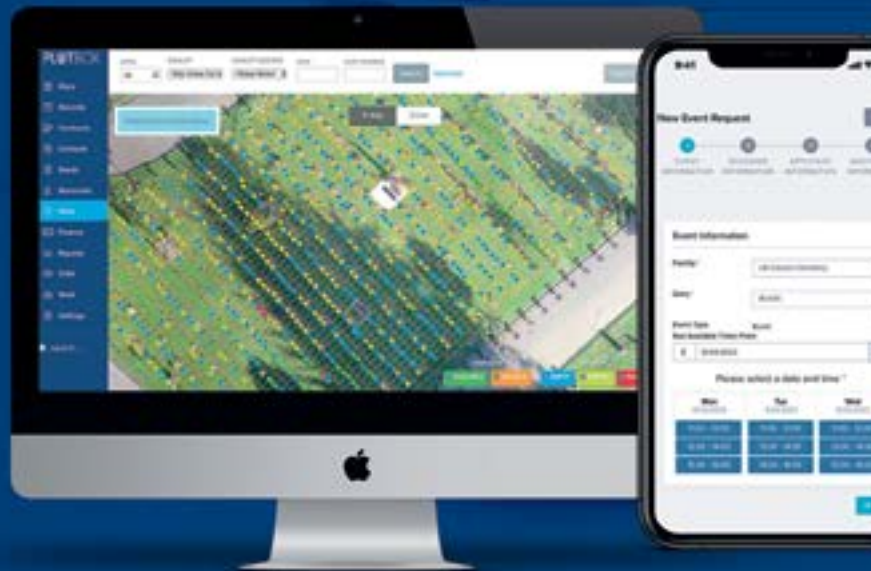
Outdated practices reliant on disjointed systems and multiple sources of data means even the most routine tasks can take longer than they need to.

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world, but that is not likely to happen. I fail to see how robots can undertake the many and varied tasks required of those who work in cemeteries and crematoria.

One of the paragraphs above that was generated by the AI bot talks of environmental responsibility, and that is something that we take very seriously. We want to help members make sense of all the information that is currently out there about threats to the environment and how we can counter them. We have a collective responsibility to do what we can to protect our fragile planet, both in work and in our personal lives.

To help, the ICCM in collaboration with the Environmental Stewardship Group (ESG) are delivering a miniseries of 4 x 2 hour online sessions supporting the wider understanding of the environmental challenges the sector is currently facing.

The session topics are : -

- Decarbonisation - What is it and why does it affect the end-of-life sector?
- Environmental stewardship – Implications and opportunities
- Planning for the future – Where do we start?
- Route to net zero – Follow the science with 3 scopes.

This series is designed to help all participants understand the challenges and opportunities provided by the current climate crisis, as well as helping to share with peers and customers inevitable changes that will happen in the years to come.

Further information on this unique training collaboration will be posted on our website and sent to members in the coming months.

A final reminder that if you haven't already signed up to receive email updates, you could be missing out on vital information. It's easy to do – simply send an email to trevor.robson@iccm-uk.com stating that you want to receive emails from us, and we'll add you to the list. You will then be sure to receive the latest news, policy updates, training opportunities and job vacancies as soon as they happen. All lovingly prepared and sent by real human beings (at the moment, anyway!).

Julie Dunk
ICCM Chief Executive

**The ICCM Directors and Officers
would like to
wish you all Season's Greetings
and best wishes
for a happy and healthy 2024**



iccm learning convention speakers and papers



It was a pleasure to welcome our guest speakers at the Learning Convention 2023. Thank you to them for giving their time and sharing some valuable topics with the delegates.



ICCM Heather White opened the Convention and delivered the President's address



Martin Birch & Julie Dunk shared their vision of The Future of ICCM



Martin Birch & Julie Dunk shared their vision of The Future of ICCM



Dave Jennings of Association of Greater Manchester Authorities are walking 50 miles for charity



Barry Ellis of Association of Greater Manchester Authorities is walking 50 miles for charity



Carole Henderson of Flourishh did a workshop on increasing sales without looking like you're selling



Mark Doohan of Benchmark Architects did a paper on trends in crematorium design



Vick Bain of VBain Consulting covered the contemporary use of music in funerals in the UK



Cath Brew of Drawn to a Story delivered the paper I can see Queerly helping us get confident with LGBTQIA+ inclusion



Alan Sheldon from Liverpool City Council shared some of his key initiatives and challenges within the funeral sector



Peter Smith & Richard Smith of Teleshore Group and Memsafe Ltd gave an interactive session around the importance of safety in our cemeteries



Ben Whitworth of the Maxwell Group Ltd, looking at the environmental impact in connection with the safekeeping and storage of the deceased



Simon Holden of the Faunus Group gave an informative paper on the relationship between ashes and the environment



Jo Little of Planet Mark shared her research on the impact the funeral industry has on the environment and if the funeral industry can achieve net zero



Judith Dandy of Dandelion Farewells gave a paper on sustainable sympathy tributes, highlighting the environmental responsibility we have



Justin Smith of The CDS Group discussed the cremator technology and the future of disposal of the deceased

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presidential address delivered by iccm president to the iccm learning convention and exhibition 2023



Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the 11th physical annual ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition, and my last presidential address. You will all remember, that because of COVID we held our events in 2020 and 2021 virtually, however last year we all got back together again, and I am sure that you will agree it was a lovely event and I know you will all thoroughly enjoy this one too.

This year we have once again returned here to the splendid Chesford Grange Hotel, a huge thank you goes once again to our CEO Julie Dunk for her exceptional vision and tireless dedication in organising this event to ensure that we can all get together again this year.

I have attended several events during my final year, and I hope you have enjoyed reading my page in the Journal and seeing all the wonderful places I have been. I cannot believe that I am finally coming to the end of my presidential years 2019 to 2023. So many things have happened in those years.

Covid started, we all went into lockdown, and restrictions were put into place on the number of people who could attend a funeral. The numbers constantly changed, and I am sure this happened to many of you, but our chapels seating arrangements were like a game of musical chairs! They went in and out so many times we thought about getting in a removal firm! People were unable to visit loved ones in hospital or be with family members to comfort them through their bereavement.

We had a change of monarchy and several changes of prime ministers.

The cost of living spiralled with energy and fuel bills rising to record levels. Funeral poverty grew and at Southampton we noticed that the number of public health funeral referrals increased, which I am sure is the case for most local authorities who have a statutory duty to deal with these.

April 2023 was the date that the medical examiners bill would apparently start to come into effect and here we are still waiting!

But I will always remember the wonderful camaraderie of all those associated with our industry, and I feel honoured to be part of it. Our ICCM officers continue to work extremely hard, dealing with our questions and ensuring that everything runs smoothly.

So, this year's theme is "Learning". This reflects on the opportunities to listen, think, learn, and share and to help you develop your skills and knowledge, it reflects our commitment to continuous improvement within the industry.



One of the highlights of this convention is the excellent range of papers and presentations that we have the privilege of being able to listen to, and I encourage you all to join in with the workshops and the Q & A sessions as no question is a stupid one and you can bet that someone else wants to know the same answer. Our speakers have poured their expertise into crafting thought-provoking and enlightening presentations that span a diverse range of industry related topics, you can expect a wealth of insights that promise to enrich your understanding and I would like to thank them all for attending. As always if you see anyone new or anyone sat on their own, please do invite them to join you as we have all been that newbie at some stage.

We are delighted to have an excellent number of exhibitors and I would like to thank each one of them for their valued support. This is a unique opportunity to explore the latest advancements that are shaping the landscape of our industry and with their valued support this ensures our learning convention continues to be a great success, so please ensure that you visit their stands. They always have some wonderful ideas and products and plenty of goodies.

Remember to vote for your favourite by using the card that you will have found in your ICCM pack when you registered.

This evening is quiz night and a big thank you to Blue for hosting this and to all those who have donated prizes. It's always a great evening and a good opportunity to meet up socially with old and new colleagues. It goes without saying no cheating please!!

Tomorrow evening, we have the ICCM Awards, dinner and disco. Marian, as President will be hosting the evening and joined by the presidents and representatives from kindred organisations, so as always please make them welcome. They are a wonderful group, and I would like to thank them all personally for the hospitality and

friendship they have shown to me throughout my presidential years. As I won't be weighed down by the chain and I am fully recovered from my hip operation, I will be looking forward to joining you on the dance floor and working off that desert, but remember the camera never lies!

Feedback is always greatly appreciated and is essential to ensure that we continue to deliver consistently high standards to you, our members. Please complete any feedback forms you receive to let us know what you have enjoyed and what else you think we can do to make the event even better if that is possible!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ICCM officers and my fellow Directors for all their help and support over these past years. My employer Southampton City Council, including my service lead and team Leaders, and all the staff at Southampton's bereavement services who have supported and encouraged me throughout the year. I would also like to say a huge thank you to my husband Codge for his support, to work colleagues Claire, Gill and Ellie, my friend Mandy and to Linda fellow ICCM Board Director for their company at events and dinners.

So here we are, and I am ready to bid farewell as I hand over the presidential chain to Marian during the AGM later. But before we get all emotional and teary-eyed, as you know one of greatest loves, besides this wonderful industry, is puddings! Yes, you heard right!! Now, for all these past years, you might be wondering what puddings have to do with the funeral industry or being a president and why I put them in every Journal page. Well, let me tell you, they are the ultimate comfort food! And you all know how important comfort is in our line of work. Puddings have this amazing ability to soothe the soul, just like how our caring gestures and heartfelt services bring comfort to those in mourning. I know we have had our fair share of serious moments in this industry, but hey, there's nothing wrong with sprinkling a bit of sweetness and humour into our lives, so if you ever need a pudding break, you know where to find me!

In all honesty though, it has been an absolute privilege to serve and laugh alongside you all, and if there's one thing I've learned, it's that the funeral industry isn't just about saying goodbye; it's also about cherishing the moments in between.

Before I conclude, there is one more profound moment, as many of you are aware during my time as president, life threw an unexpected curveball, the sudden and heartbreaking loss of my grandson, Harlee. It was a devastating blow that left my family shattered and my

heart heavy with grief. In those darkest hours, I found myself surrounded not only by my family and friends but also by the unwavering support and love of those in this incredible funeral industry community.

The kindness, compassion and heartfelt condolences extended to me and my family during this time were wonderful.

Harlee's passing taught me that life is both fragile and precious, and it reinforced the significance of the work we do each day. It reminded me that behind every family we serve, there lies a story, a love, and a legacy worth cherishing. I am forever grateful to everyone for being there when I needed it most and for reminding me of the profound impact, we have on other's lives and may Harlee's memory forever remind us of the importance of cherishing every moment we have with those we love.

Together, as part of the ICCM, we can make a difference, not only in the lives of families we serve but also in each other's lives, offering support, strength, and friendship when it is needed most!

As I step down and pass the chain to Marian, I leave with a heart filled with gratitude and appreciation for your trust in me when you chose me as president. Life may have its highs and lows, but with a caring industry like ours, we can weather any storm that comes our way.

As I leave you as president and become the immediate past president, I will share my poem with you: -

With laughter and joy, I pass the chain along,
A tribute to presidents, their legacy strong.
In a funeral industry, where hearts find their way,
We celebrate life, even on a solemn day.

After a long reign, my time has found its close,
But the spirit lives on, as everyone knows.
President's change, yet the companionships remain,
A bond unwavering, that forever sustains.
So, here's to the moments of laughter we share,
In the funeral industry, showing we care,
As I hand over this chain with a smile,
Let's keep spreading warmth, going the extra mile!

So, this isn't all about me this is about you, so please remember that this is your event so let's make this convention an inspiring and enriching experience for all!

Thank you everyone for listening.

Heather White

iccm awards 2023



At the ICCM award ceremony held at the Learning Convention and Exhibition 2023 at the Chesford Grange Hotel, the following awards were presented:

Fellowships

At the AGM it was announced that the Board had awarded a Fellowship to a very worthy recipient. Fellowships are awarded by the Board of Directors to those members who have performed any service which, in the opinion of the Board, has been of outstanding importance to the Institute.

Lee Macy, operations manager at South Essex crematorium was nominated for his service to the Institute, where he has been assessing candidates in the operational processes of cremation for an impressive 16 years. Lee recently stepped down as a CTTS assessor but was deservedly recognised for his commitment and hard work to the sector.



Fellowship award Lee Macey

Life Membership

Also at the AGM it was announced that the Board of Directors had awarded Life Memberships to two people.

The first Life Membership was awarded To Natasha Bradshaw of Mortlake Crematorium for her service not just to the ICCM, but to the wider bereavement sector. She is a shining example of compassion and care for bereaved people, and she runs an ICCM Charter for the Bereaved Gold Standard service that hosts a variety of community and charity events throughout the year. Unfortunately, she was unable to attend to collect her certificate in person but was given a huge applause in her absence.

The next Life Membership was awarded to Brendan Day for his long service and high standard of work across the bereavement sector. He has had a very positive impact on the sector and has served the ICCM well over many years, particularly in helping to develop training and education for members. He has worked in several authorities around the UK, where he has developed services and made massive improvements for bereaved people. In more recent years he has led the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and has introduced new initiatives, particularly in terms of environmental awareness and in cross-sector cooperation.



Brendan Day life member

Blue Audio Visual Best Exhibition Stand Award

The Blue Audio Visual Best Exhibition Stand Award 2023 as voted for by the Convention delegates was awarded to Dave Jennings and Barry Ellis stand promoting their charity run for Andy's Man Club and Once Upon A Smile.



Barry Ellis and Dave Jennings with Blue Donnebar

The Columbaria Company Raffle

The Columbaria Company kindly held a prize draw for an opportunity to win a lovely hamper.

All delegates had to do was to write their mobile number on a piece of paper and place it in the prize draw box. The only condition was they must be present at the announcement at the closing of Convention to receive their prize. At the end of the Learning Convention Blue picked a random number from the draw and, over the loudspeakers, dialled the number to see who's mobile would ring.



Anita Fish with Blue Donnebar

The lucky winner was Anita Fish.

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Wesley Media Raffle

Wesley Media held a raffle with a number of prizes up for grabs! The lucky winners were Anita Fish (again!), David McNaughton, Tracy Morris, Kevin Watkins won 2nd prize which was being presented separately, Graham Harrison won 1st prize which was given out separately.



Sarah Learmont of Wesley and Anita Fish



David McNaughton of Wesley and Anita Fish



Recipients who were unable to receive their prizes were presented to them separately

FG Marshall Prize

The winner of FG Marshall's hand drawn picture was Keith Welters who was not present to collect it but was delighted to receive it.





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convention 2023 - quiz night



In the usual ICCM tradition Blue kept us all entertained with his quiz on the first night. It is a great ice breaker for those who have not attended before or are on their own. It is not a test of knowledge but more about how good you are at guessing as none of the questions are based on anything you would know! (maybe the odd random one!) It is also interesting to see what random name each table picks for their team! There are no losers though as each team gets a prize! Thank you to the generosity of those that provided the prizes.



First – The Decimators



Joint Second – Dead Man's Fingers



Joint Second – Three's A Crowd



Joint Third – Roald Dahl's Full Length Kerbs



Joint Third – Burn Rake and Bury



Joint Fourth – Yvonne's Furry Worm



Joint Fourth - + 4's



Joint Fifth – Magnificent 10



Joint Fifth – Shagwraith



Tenth – Norfolk and Chance



Eleventh – Eddie Elizabeth



Twelfth – Blue's Cheerleaders

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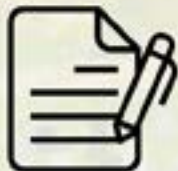
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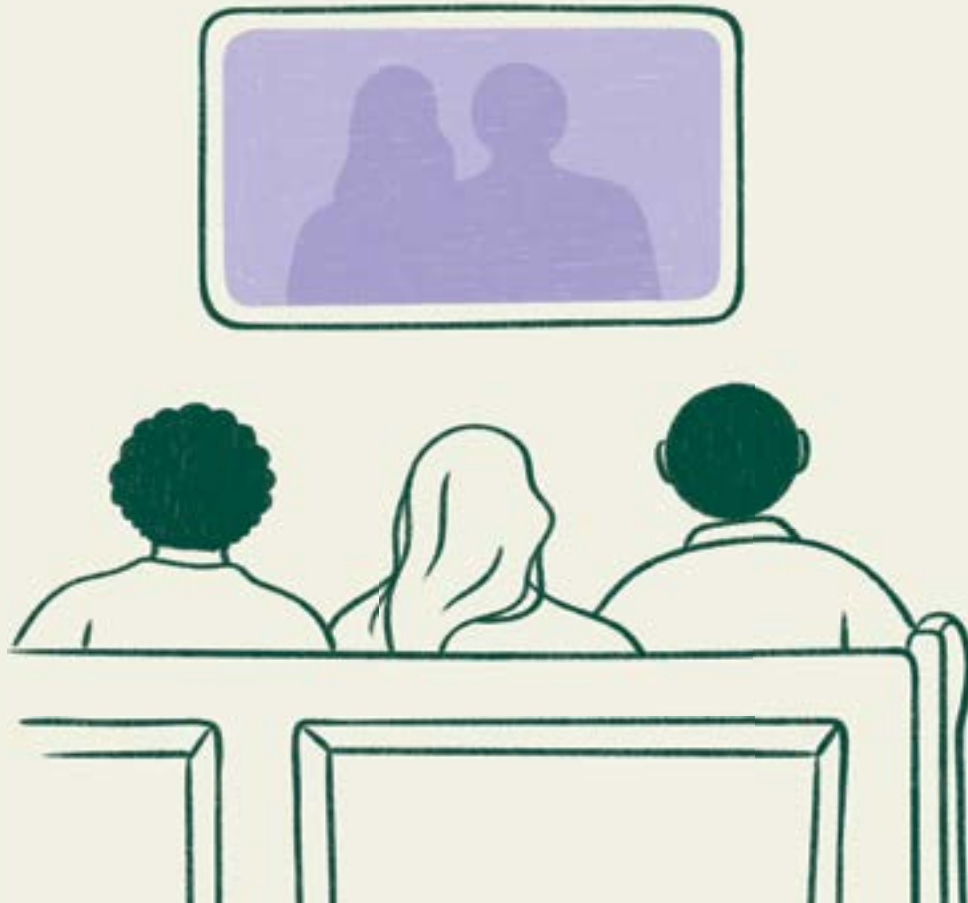
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convention 2023 - dinner and disco



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iccm diploma recipients 2023



The gaining of the Diploma is a huge achievement and is the culmination of several years of hard work. The Diploma is made up of several different units reflecting the work that we do as cemetery and crematorium professionals. Holding an ICCM Diploma demonstrates not only the possession of a recognised academic qualification, but also recognises an individual's character and commitment to developing his or her own management competencies in a specialised and sensitive field of work.

The successful Diploma holders were announced at this year's Learning Convention. Unfortunately, not all students were able to attend the presentations in person, but all were given a well-deserved round of applause.

Those that achieved their Diploma but were unable to be present to collect it were:

- Paul Clark of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- Esme McCambridge of Braintree Borough Council
- Michelle Burns of Gateshead Council
- Jane Matheson of City of Edinburgh Council
- Stephen Hemsworth of North Yorkshire Council
- Alan Thomson of City of Edinburgh Council

Those that achieved their Diploma in 2023 and were present to collect it were:

- David McNaughton of The Hurlet Crematorium.
- Paul Mann of Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council.
- Orrin Fairhead of North Lincolnshire Council.
- Jonathon Kreffer of Canterbury City Council.
- Susan Tolley of Blackpool Council.
- Tracy Kelly of Adur and Worthing Council.



David McNaughton of the Hurlet Crematorium



Paul Mann of Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council



Orrin Fairhead of North Lincolnshire Council



Jonathon Kreffer of Canterbury City Council



Susan Tolley of Blackpool Council



Tracy Kelly of Adur and Worthing Council

One person also awarded a prestigious Eickhoff medal for completing their Diploma in under 3 years and achieving distinctions for each unit – quite an achievement.

The person who achieved their Diploma with Honours and to receive the Eickhoff Medal was David McNaughton of The Hurllet Crematorium. The Eickhoff medal, named after ICCM President George Eickhoff, is awarded to those who show exceptional qualities in their studies.

There was another person who finished their Diploma in 2022 and was present to collect it this year after being unable to attend last year, Barry Ellis of Salford City Council.

Well done to all those who achieved their Diploma and thanks to our education partners, Stratford Business School and to all the tutors for their continued work in supporting the Diploma.



David McNaughton receives the Eickhoff Medal



Barry Ellis receiving his diploma

introducing Andy Bond as deputy president



I have worked for Wigan Council since 1981, progressing from apprentice gardener through parks management, arriving in bereavement services in 2012. I benefitted from being adopted into the ICCM and Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) families to support my learning journey. The contributions from all the members enabled me to grow as an individual and become effective in my current role as service manager for several services including bereavement services, environmental crime, CCTV & risk management, pest Control and parking services. I have been an active member of the ICCM, Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) and contribute to the local AGMA bereavement group.



During my career at Wigan, I have benefitted from the support and development of a forward-thinking organisation that invests in individuals through internal and external training and an organisation that holds strong values and behaviours which match my own view on life. I have been supported in achieving level 5 in management, a foundation degree in Community Governance, my ICCM Diploma (which took me 7 years to complete, as I enjoyed the education seminars so much 😊) and most recently I was given the opportunity to attend aspiring director training through the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy Planning & Transport (ADEPT). I love new learning opportunities, experiencing new opportunities and gaining new skills.

My vision was to give something back to bereavement services following the completion of my ICCM Diploma by offering to become a tutor for the ICCM Diploma, but my work demands changed and I was unable to make the necessary commitments and therefore missed that opportunity.

I am an outgoing individual which has enabled me to develop a local and national network of trusted colleagues and I want to use this to promote excellence, foster a culture of strong leadership and serve ICCM members and partners as an effective advocate. I'm a firm believer in professional development, and the development of others and promote effective use of innovative technologies to improve choice and efficiencies to the bereaved we serve. I believe that I am ethical and compassionate and can use humour where appropriate, to break down barriers and build networks.

The opportunity to become deputy president was very timely as I have just completed 20 years of being a governor in a local school linked to a change in my job role which has created the capacity to undertake the roll with an active commitment from my employee.

So, what are you getting? Well, I'd like to think that you will see is a passionate, energetic, respectful individual who is approachable and for those who have been to conference you may have seen that what I lack in dance skills – I make up in enthusiasm.



President Marian Millington inducting Andy Bond as Deputy President

Andy Bond

my first convention experience



Being fairly new in post this was my first opportunity to attend a convention and I have to say I learnt a fair bit. Some of which may not be relevant to the post, but I do now know the fate of Jenny the Titanic's ship cat; the skills of a member hiding their footballing allegiance whilst in the home end of Fleetwood Town and a senior ICCM member's requirements from a hotel shower. The other things covered within the two and a half days were equally enlightening, thought provoking and provide insights into some areas within our industry which I had little or no knowledge of.

The presentations covered a variety of areas. Dave Jennings and Barry Ellis from Greater Manchester explained how they are proposing to raise funds for two charities, 'Andy's man club' and 'Once upon a smile', through a fifty-mile winter walk over two days. Vick Bain discussed the changes in music styles at services. With the theme tune to 'Last of the Summer Wine' being top of the pops. We looked at new crematorium design with Mark Doohan. Alan Sheldon (before he set off on his holiday!), from Liverpool City Council, discussed ways of supporting our communities through the bereavement process by joined up working in the financially tight times. Cath Brew made it clear how simply changing a phrase or even thinking before we open our mouths can have a big effect on all people but particularly the LGBTQIA+ community. Peter and Richard from Teleshore reminded everyone of the importance of safety when digging graves. Also, they might know a supplier if you're in need of any equipment. Carole Henderson of Flourishh demonstrated the power of marketing and continuity to promote sales. Possibly not as achievable by those of us in council employment but still things to consider.

The final day's presentations were all focussing on green issues. Ben Whitworth (The Maxwell Group) discussing embalming first thing after breakfast might have reduced the numbers in the conference room, or that might have been due to the wine reception and disco the night before. But as an area I personally have no knowledge of I found very interesting. The Faunus Group through Simon Holden explained the issues experienced following long-term scattering / interment of ashes on plants, particularly roses. Watch out for high levels of calcium, potassium, phosphorus and sodium. Jo Little of Planet Mark took us on a possible journey to Net Zero but acknowledged that not all areas and manufacturers are providing all the information and data which we might want to know. Judith Dandy, speaking on behalf of Dee Watkins of Seed2Design brought up many points in relation to the environmental impact of funeral flowers. Probably the presentation which I am hoping will impact most on practice at our site. So can I recommend **www.flowersfromthefarm.co.uk** to you for floral supplies and also see if you can find a local florist who will reuse all of those plastic trays and letters. The final presentation on the future technology of cremators by Justin Smith of the CDS group showed where we are now in relation to our CO2 emissions and how these will reduce as we constantly strive to employ best available practice. Not everything is as green as it seems ... so research well.

With various free tout bags weighed down with 'freebies; for you can never have too many note books, biros, 'stress balls' and highlighters from the various exhibitors and filled with free chocolates there was plenty of opportunities to visit the exhibition stands. Be it music, memorials or mapping; cremators, cleaning products or cemetery design there were stands that covered everything. There were chances to ask questions, seek ideas and put faces to names. Networking is the name of the game.

What I truly learnt from the ICCM Learning Convention 2023 was that the ICCM is about people. It's the people we work with. It's the people we support, guide and care for at a time when they need those things. It is a network of individuals, councils and private companies who support and value each other.

But if you're thinking of going next year and Julie Dunk was already promoting 2024 before we left, things you'll really need to know. The accommodation was great, no problems with the comfort and facilities of my room. The staff were helpful and attentive. There was plenty of car parking. The food was tasty, and the waiting staff were attentive to previously requested dietary requirements. As for the induction of first-time attendees, as advertised by Blue Donnebaer and Tusar Sen Gupta, don't worry I'm sure you'll be fine. Being conned into writing a review by Sofia Allana was the hardest bit.

And as for Jenny the ship's cat... did she (a) escape in a lifeboat; (b) drown; (c) jump ship before they left Southampton?

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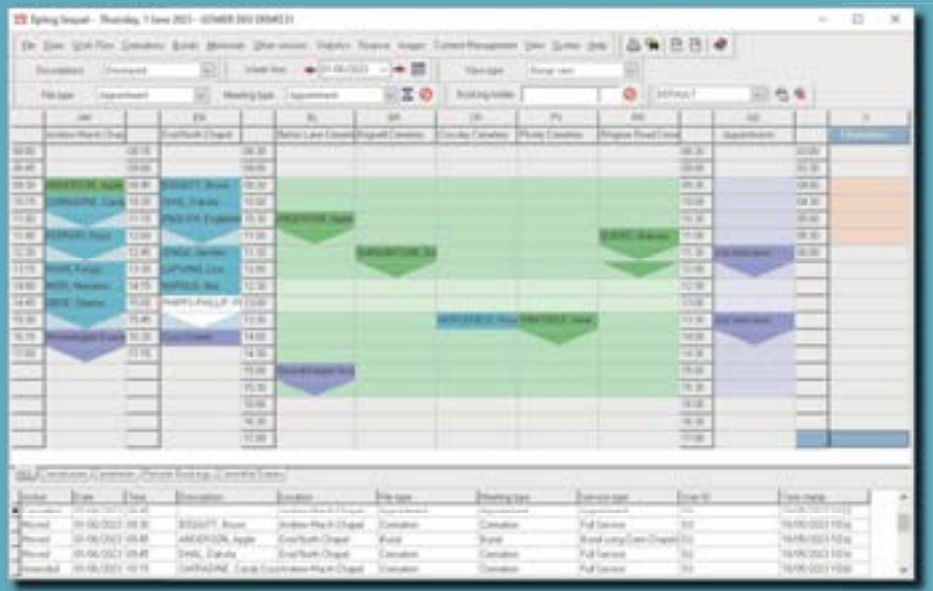
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my first convention experience



This was my first time attending an ICCM Convention, so I was unsure of what to expect from the 3 days, I was nervous! I am relatively new to the industry after beginning as a cremator technician in April 2020, and when I looked over the guest list I realised I only knew 5-6 people, only 3 of whom I'd actually met in person!

The nerves were settled quickly though when I was greeted by Trevor Robson who introduced himself, signed me in and gave me my delegate's bag, a friendly welcome to the event, and sent me off round the Exhibition.

The Exhibition

The exhibition was vast, I'd been sent on a few missions from the office (not just to bring back as much stationary as possible!) and the range of supplier and specialists provided some great information and loads of new contacts to help us shape the service we're trying to build here in North Lincolnshire. It was nice to put faces to the names I'm used to just seeing on an email inbox. Those interactions also allowed me to put some ideas across and see what was possible with what is available now, and to get suggestions for what might be in the pipeline.

As someone who enjoys learning wherever I can, listening to some of the exhibitors talking about the new technology and the different, green-focused products that were in development, was fascinating. From the big projects like hybrid-fuel cremators and drone mapping of cemeteries, to the simple everyday practices like deciding what type of bag to use for ashes now that single use plastic is being stopped. There seemed to be an answer for everything, and I left feeling genuinely energised about what was going on.

The Papers and Workshops

The variety of speakers was really interesting; the ups and downs of organising the charity walk, the top 20 funeral songs that made us all laugh because we'd heard most of the tracks in the last week, the importance of treating people equally regardless of how they identify, just to name a few. And then being shown that there are many more creative crematoria designs than the 1960's building I work in!

Throughout the talks, and whilst wandering round the exhibition, I got to meet the ICCM officers that I had only known by name and had been on the end of the phone when we were in crisis and needed urgent advice. Some of them had also been my tutors throughout the Diploma units. This was invaluable for me, and the atmosphere allowed for some really good conversations and insights to be had. It turns out everyone is experiencing similar issues no matter which part of the country they were from.

The Quiz and Awards Dinner

I was told by most people I spoke to that the quiz was something I would never have experienced before, and that unlike any ordinary quiz, it required zero general knowledge. I was doubtful but they were exactly right! The quiz was designed solely to get everyone over their nerves and to get conversations going on the tables. It was complete guesswork from start to finish but by the end everyone was talking like we'd known each other for years.

The awards dinner was a personal highlight of the Convention. After two and a half years of work, I was receiving the ICCM Diploma. The atmosphere was amazing, and everyone was so happy for everyone else. There was a genuine feeling of togetherness as an industry.

For me overall, the Convention was a great experience from start to finish, both professionally and on a personal level. It provided an opportunity to meet like-minded industry people from all over the country, to talk about the job, laugh about dealing with the same situations, and share meaningful ideas about bereavement services as a whole.



exhibitors 2023 gallery



The Convention would not be possible without the support and involvement from those that exhibit. It is a great opportunity to speak with suppliers and see what new initiatives and products are available. Here is a snapshot of some of the stands that were at the Learning Convention this year.





iccm learning convention and exhibition 2023 – thanks

Thank you to all who attended the Convention and made it such a success.

We received some very positive feedback and are grateful to all who supported the event.

Particular thanks go to the exhibitors and their much-appreciated support and for showcasing their products and services as well as donating prizes.

Ashdown Supplies, ASSETRAC Ltd, Clare Shaw Children's Books, Clear Skies/Agile Applications Group, Deceased Online, EDGE IT Systems Limited, Estate Research, Facultatieve Technologies Ltd, FG Marshall Ltd, Finders International, Flourishh, Gem Precast, Granart, Greenbridge Designs/SAMM Software Solutions, IFZW Maintenance Ltd, Memorial Trees, Obitus, OrthoMetals, Pear Technology Services Ltd, PJ Combustion Solutions Ltd, PlotBox, SafeMemorials (Frontline Mobile Solutions Ltd), Scattering Ashes/Algordanza, Signature Aromas Ltd, Stone-Safe Stability System, Teleshore Group, The CDS Group, The Columbaria Company, The MazWell Group Ltd, Welters Organisation Worldwide, Wesley Media.

Thanks to the Sponsors – Blue Audio Visual Ltd for producing and presenting the quiz, for sponsoring the Best Exhibition Stand award and for sponsoring the videography for the Convention.

The Wesley Group for sponsoring the Convention bags.

Edge IT Systems Ltd for sponsoring the ICCM Photographic Competition in memory of ex-President Ian Quance, and for providing the lanyards and name badges for the Convention.

Thanks too to all the speakers for sharing their knowledge with us and to the session chairs for keeping everything in order and to time, Heather White, Marian Millington, Sofia Allana, Mat Crawley, Kevin Pilkington and Linda Barker.

Thanks to the guests of the fraternal organisations for joining us at the Convention Dinner and Disco.

Thanks to Julie Dunk, and Flourishh for their photographs of the event.

Thanks to the ICCM Officers for their contribution in assisting with organising the event.



bramm bereaved community silver award



Under this new category there were so many new initiatives that were highlighted in the entries from across the country. The following are all the silver award winners. They are truly inspirational and demonstrate hard work and dedication to the bereaved.



Joint Burial Committee

We recently identified the need for an area where the bereaved could scatter their loved one's ashes. With the cost of funerals, memorials and grave provision being out of reach for more and more people, we felt that we should offer this space as a free resource for anyone to use. With some grant funding from 'The Rector and Four and Twenty Charity' and some astute budgeting, we were able to transform an otherwise neglected and untidy area to create newly planted areas with seating which now offers a peaceful and pleasant place to reminisce and bring comfort.

Blaby Parish Council

Our unique memorial tree is set in the tranquillity Peace Meadow garden within the cemetery, allowing time to be spent reflecting and remembering cherished memories of relatives and friends that has sadly left us regardless of how much time has passed.

Anyone is welcome to purchase a granite heart leaf that is engraved with the name of a deceased loved one with a small inscription and a chosen motif, this allows the name of the deceased to live on whether they have been cremated, buried and ashes scattered within the cemetery or elsewhere.

"The Forget You Not" post box situated next to the memorial tree in a wildflower garden are made from 100% recycled card, thoughts and memories can be put to paper and posted in the post box. Included in the memorial envelopes is a small packet of wildflower seeds that can be scattered in the garden, this helping to preserve the wildlife, particularly the bees and butterflies, and in time the memory cards will be buried in the garden which will turn into mulch, so memories and thoughts will always be with loved ones.



Mayfields Woodland Burial Ground

Volunteers at Mayfields Woodland Burial Ground have set up a new way for people in the community to grieve by creating life in their new vegetable patch. The idea came from our free coffee morning which is held at Mayfields Woodland Burial Ground to help anyone who has experienced bereavement and for finding comfort by sharing their experiences. The gatherings have brought together people at the site and a plan was hatched to create a vegetable patch on the grounds. Thanks to the staff and some local businesses, they have now started to sow seeds consisting of carrots, onions, potatoes, peas and other vegetables.

One of the coffee morning members has even had a go at planting large sunflowers. This is working really well, and people are really starting to take interest. We feel that this is a place where not just our coffee morning guests, but anyone in our local community who is grieving and expresses an interest, can come along and get involved. It is helping people come together, gives them something to focus on and is great for the children. A staff member's son Jack aged four has been studying the stages of the life cycle of plants and has planted his very own seeds. He comes every week, waters them, watches them grow and then takes some pictures and shows them to his class. This is a project that we are sure will grow over the next few years and will help many bereaved families come together.

Bridgwater Town Council

During 2022 Bridgwater town council decided to place a Christmas tree within the chapel at Quantock Road cemetery to enable the public to place a tag on the tree in memory of a loved one. This was open to anyone who had lost someone and not just for the people who had loved ones buried within our two cemeteries. From the second week in December the chapel was open Monday to Friday to enable the public to visit; tags, pens etc. were provided. We used Facebook, the website and local funeral directors to get the word out. With the support of a local funeral director, we were able to open the chapel on Christmas eve, a day which proved to be very popular and received great feedback via Facebook comments.

Once Christmas was over, we took the tags and placed them into a time capsule, and this was buried by our mayor along with a local funeral director within the grounds around the chapel. Due to the popularity, we made another memorial tree and opened the chapel for Mother's Day and Father's Day this year. Also, we now have a permanent memory book placed in the chapel for people to use.



We feel this has been a great help to the bereaved and will be repeating it again this year and years to come. Also, it has helped to engage with the community, and we wish to build on this.



Friends of Philips Park Cemetery

The friend's group are constantly thinking of new ideas. We have created a 'Children Grieve Too' area which has information and activities for the children themed with Teddy Paws character designed for this project along with an animal nature trail. New this year to add to this we have installed a 'Letters to Heaven' post box with ready-made little cards and pencil dispenser. Children can draw a picture or write a note to someone they miss.

Last year we joined the Manchester Library Trail which has been set up by Read Manchester under the umbrella of The National Literacy Trust. We have a lovely painted box on a stand which houses our children's books. Children can bring a book and take a book. Reading has also been found to help children with the grieving process.

This cemetery is in a deprived inner-city area of Manchester and we believe all children should have access to books.

Teddy Paws is unique to the cemetery, the Teddy Paws trail, Teddy Paws activities, the Teddy Paws 'let's sit and read a book' bench. In a fitting addition

to this project, this year we bring Teddy Paws to life with his very own story book. Teddy Paws helps Tommy Turtle in his time of grief after the loss of his Gran.

Another project we introduced is the, 'Did You Know' project. All of our graves of interest are now on display on single yellow lecterns throughout the cemetery, we have 15 of these.

Worcester City Council

Our Forget you Not memorial garden was designed to enable loved ones who for whatever reason either missed their opportunity to say goodbye or wish to mark an anniversary.

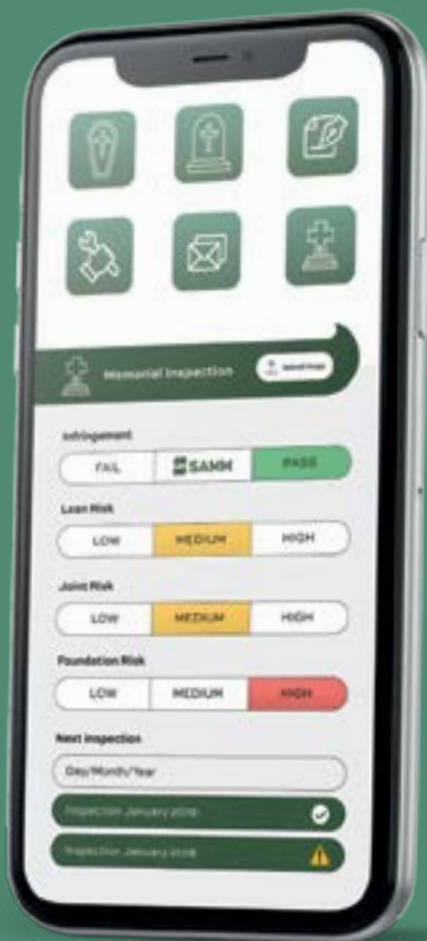
We provide free of charge (either in person or via our website) a specially designed notelet and envelope impregnated with wildflower seed. They write their personalised message to their loved one and post the notelet in our bespoke beehive post box. Every month the team collect the notelets and mulch them down and then scatter in





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www.teleshoregroup.com

cemetery of the year awards 2023



The FREE to enter competition open to any burial authority (cemetery or churchyard) within the UK has now been completed for 2023. The awards were presented at the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) Learning Convention in September.

The winners in the available categories were –

A. Large Burial Grounds above 10,000 graves.

Joint Gold Award: Philips Park Cemetery and Gorton Cemetery.
Silver Awards: Thornhill Cemetery and St Helens Cemetery.

B. Small/Medium Burial Grounds up to 10,000 graves

Gold Award: Tipton Cemetery.
Silver Awards: Bluebell Cemetery and Llanelli District Cemetery.

C. Parish, Town and Community Councils

Gold Award: Blandford Forum Cemetery.
Silver Awards: Syston and District Cemetery and Cyngor Cymuned Llanrug Cemetery.



Gold Philips Park Cemetery and Gorton Cemetery



Gold Tipton Cemetery



Gold Blandford Forum Cemetery



Silver Bluebell Cemetery



Silver Llanelli District Cemetery



Silver Syston and District Cemetery



Silver Cyngor Cymuned Llanrug Cemetery

All of the winners will receive a CYA Gold/Silver Award Certificate and a CYA Press Release that can be used to promote their achievement.

D. The BRAMM Bereaved Community Award

This is a new category in the Cemetery of the Year Awards 2023 and sponsored by The British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) with prize money of £1000.00 to the winner.

This category is open to any burial authority (cemetery or churchyard) in the UK who have completed any local initiative which has helped the bereaved in any way within the last 5 years.

The winner of this category was - Cardiff Bereavement Services with their "Dear Mum Garden" who will receive £1,000 prize money along with a BRAMM/CYA Gold Award Certificate and a CYA Press Release that can be used to promote their work, in local newspapers.

'The 'Dear Mum' garden is a truly unique and inspirational community asset designed to provide a therapeutic and interactive support service for bereaved families. It is the first of its kind in the UK and encompasses the whole 'Dear Mum' story. The garden follows the story of a young Dora Mouse who wants to tell her mother how much she misses her. Dora's friends in 'Little Wiggle' encourage her to write a letter and post it in a special post box.

The story of Dora is told through inscriptions on elements within the garden that have been produced in both English and Welsh languages.

There is an activity sheet which children can use to spot hidden bees, take rubbings, and learn bee facts whilst learning the 'waggle dance' on one of the skipping lanes. At the end of the trail there is a



Silver Thornhill Cemetery



Silver St Helens Cemetery

creation station where children can use paper and crayons provided to write to their loved one like Dora does.

The garden supports families who have experienced loss and the wider community. Schools use the garden to teach children about bereavement as part of their curriculum work. Links have been made with local community groups such as Macmillan Cymru and Ty Hafan children's hospice who use the area'

The project was undertaken in partnership with Columbaria Co, Cardiff Bereavement Services, Mossfords of Cardiff and the Cardiff & Newport SANDS group and sits in the centre of Western Cemetery, Ely Cardiff.



Silver Awards Certificates will be presented to the runners up along with a BRAMM/CYA Press Releases to promote their work.

CYA also included an opportunity to take the - Is Your Cemetery up to Standard Survey. This is a simple survey for your cemetery, that allows you to see where you are in providing a modern service for the bereaved.

You can print your own survey and send it to your elected members if you wish. The object is to highlight where your cemetery could be improved and provide some best practice examples of how to achieve this, often at very little expense.

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.

CYA Winners from this year's competition



The Cemetery of the Year Award 2023 has been supported and endorsed by –

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



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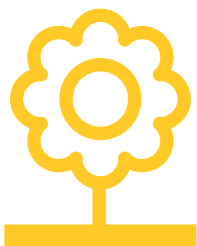
CDS are with you every step of the way from Feasibility Studies, Landscape and Concept Design through to Planning, Construction and Delivery, ensuring a seamless experience from inception to completion.

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



iccm recycling of metals scheme



Changes?? to the Recycling of Metals scheme

As the year draws to an end, members may remember the presentation at Convention 2022 and subsequent article from OrthoMetals about the recycling of metals scheme.

The ICCM/OrthoMetals scheme has always run on the basis of sharing all returns equally between scheme members and the comradery or altruist idea of the scheme. Yes, it was small initially and then grew and with success we've now found possible issues or maybe not, to how it operates.



– image by Freepix

First of all the elephant in the room

Recycling metal makes you money?

Yes it is true – if it weren't then we wouldn't have given nearly £20 million away to charities. So yes the scheme and in fact metal recycling does generate money.

Now the other elephant, how much money?

Well for ICCM and Orthometals cost recovery – and less of that than there used to be, as methods, technology and resources have improved. The returns we generate are over 15% cheaper than when we first started.

So you make a lot of money from the scheme?

Fortunately for members, if we didn't then we couldn't have given the total away to charity that we have done, we'd no doubt have made a lot more money for the Institute, but as we haven't generated millions in revenue then – no ICCM/Orthometals haven't made a fortune from its members.

But you could?

Yes, companies that recycle metals could make vast fortunes from the scheme as metal producers do. The important thing is that's not the case here.

The scheme is environmentally unfriendly

Burying metals, which we used to do, is very environmentally unfriendly. Recycling metals so that they are used again is more environmentally friendly. It's more cost and resource effective too. By using economies of scale and careful planning Orthometals collect and recycle more metals and generate the highest return possible in the European markets. They have also improved their facilities over the years to recycle as much as possible.

We can also add that helping a large amount of funeral director's sort their stocks of pacemakers is another plus point, for the environment and reducing a possible waste issue as well.

The future??

What we are now in the process of doing, is consulting with scheme members about the future. The increase in demands on councils and charities, coupled with the scheme's own

success has meant that the altruist idea might not be as viable in people's eyes due to meeting the best for their communities. It is understandable, but the scheme will not change unless members want it to for the good of their communities.



Picture courtesy of Doring Kindersley

We pay out to more charities per nominee than before- gone are the days of 1 member 1 nominee, now its 1 member and many nominees.

We are also looking at where a member contributes a larger share of metals than others in a round. We know some crematoria are busier than others. I've discussed at Convention how we know people live and die in different areas and we can't and shouldn't try to control that – there are lots of laws about that, thankfully.

What we can do, is listen and address any concerns and get back to talking about donations and not the mechanism as much once it has been tweaked if members see fit for its purpose.

We aim to get the best returns for all members in the best methods possible, if you can sell 100 tonnes of metals overseas for more money for a charity than it's financially better off to do that. The offsets environmentally do have to be addressed, however, the end point of all of this is to help the families and relatives of the bereaved. Not to financially help the scheme's existence or another company, but to help charities.

We've looked at how to make the scheme accountable and safer for donations. By only using charities, then there's the buffer and safeguard of the Charities Commission in case of any issues for member's donations. There's the security for an authority that the funds can't be diverted away from their cause.

I would suggest if a local authority had a charity-arm then this would be the best place to send funds, as then they could be divided up in an even better way to many smaller causes in a safe and controllable way.

So, as we end 2023 and scheme members that nominated for the July – November return will have or be getting their nomination emails through and the charities can be informed. All that remains is to say, thank you for your support as ever, thank you for engaging with us about the scheme and let's see where it takes us in the future.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Trevor Robson

Shaun Peters: an obituary

Shaun Kenneth Peters was born on Friday the 20th of March 1970 in the Sussex maternity hospital, Brighton. He was the first of three children for parents Mary & Ken, he was later joined by sisters Mandy and Melissa. Early years were spent in Burgess Hill, Shaun attended Manor Field Primary and then went on to Downlands Secondary School.

Growing up, Shaun was an active and sporty boy – he would play football in the family flat, making best use of the long hallway and large open window, dad Ken had to constantly go out and retrieve the ball from outside! He was also captain of his youth football team.

He had a go-cart that he was glued to - he used it so much the seat often had to be repaired!

On leaving school his first job was with the National Westminster Bank – trading stocks and shares in the financial district in London, he had to commute daily by train and Shaun wanted more out of life.

In 1991 he joined the Royal Marines – he attended an intensive training course in Exeter. The routine was relentless and Shaun picked up an injury that took him off training and he was seconded to the clerical team at the Marines HQ and was told that he would need to take the full course again. Shaun signed up to be part of the action and not to work in an administrative role, so he decided to leave.

Shaun took on a variety of jobs including doing removals and other bits and pieces. But it was when he started working for the local authority that Shaun really found himself. He became an inspector for Brighton & Hove council and Shaun's fair, calm and consistent temperament was perfect for this role – dealing with emotive and pressured situations, he flourished.

Shaun transferred to Wealden district council as an enforcement agent. He worked hard and got promoted to a senior enforcement agent and spent many years working in enforcement. He was a respected member of the team and made many good friends during his time there.

Wealden crematorium had been open for almost two years when Shaun took on a temporary position to look after it for a while. He loved the environment, the work and the incredible team that works there.

It was inevitable that his position as crematorium manager would become permanent.

Shaun was a breath of fresh air. He was reliable and has been described by many as a rock – he would jump through hoops to make people feel better, feel special – he was a safe space, his team could talk about anything and he would listen.

Wealden crematorium has Shaun's touches throughout it and he would never expect any of the team to do anything that he wasn't prepared to do – be it cleaning the toilets, sorting the litter or picking up fox poo – he would do it.

Sadly, Shaun didn't get to see his latest project come to fruition – but the crematorium now has 126 solar panels on the roof that move it ever closer to the cleaner, greener place that Shaun was committed to.

He was visionary and was always keen for the crematorium to continue to evolve, improve and be quite simply the best crematorium. Testament to this was the recent open day that brought visitors from far and wide – all of whom were bowled over by the site and what this facility offers.

Keeping fit was important to Shaun – he continued playing football for many teams – only stopping because of an ankle injury he had sustained.

He enjoyed going to the gym and road cycling. Shaun was very competitive and brilliant at whatever sport he took part in.

Home was in Hailsham and it was perfectly placed for work and access to the variety of cycling routes that Shaun used to full effect.

Shaun was a snappy dresser, he always liked to look smart. He worked hard, played hard and lived a good life – he was clever, humorous and enthusiastic. A personable, fair, kind and genuine man who will be hugely missed by his family, friends and colleagues.



Lisa Fiddimore
Deputy Manager, Wealden Crematorium

Sally Avis : an obituary

It is with great sadness that I am writing this obituary for my dear friend and colleague Sally Avis. Many of you will know Sally as an active member of the South East Branch and regular attendee of Learning Convention.

I first met Sally when she joined the team at Bournemouth in the summer of 1998 when our team was managed by Julie Dunk. Sally was a bubbly personality who loved quizzes, crosswords, knitting and cross stich. She was also fiercely proud of her Romany heritage.

She soon became a valued member of our team and gained both the ICCM Certificate in Crematorium and Cemetery Management.



We were a very social bunch and Sally helped organise many events that we all enjoyed with our families, including the annual crematorium picnic, quizzes (with great assistance from Blue) Treasure Hunts, a murder mystery weekend and even a weekend in Blackpool. We and our families became firm friends whilst enjoying these social times together.

Sally was promoted to Administration Manager at Bournemouth, a role that she continued in until her retirement. She was excellent at dealing with families and meticulous in her work.

When Sally retired in February 2020, she moved to rural Wiltshire with her husband James and Dachshund Raffles. They had many plans for the future but sadly within a very short time Sally was diagnosed with cancer and lost her battle on the 2nd September. I know both James and her daughter Romany will miss her terribly.

I will remember Sally as my right - hand lady, without whom my job at Bournemouth would have been so much harder and also for all the great times we shared together and many a glass of red wine!

She gave me a small plaque not long ago which is hanging on my wall, it reads 'Chance made us colleagues, the fun and laughter made us friends'. It certainly did Sally.

Linda Barker

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: Post Vacant

North West and North Wales: Dave Jennings

Email: Dave.jennings@trafford.gov.uk

T: 0161 912 1515

Accredited COTS & CTTS candidates

Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme Courses April 2023 – June 2023

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**

John Allen A B F	Paul Hill A B F	Russell Player A
Alex Attwood A	Ryan Hird A B F	Anthony Prohett A
Kyle Bates A	Anthony Hoggart A	Helena Reynolds A
Mark Bearmore A	Michael Anthony Hoggart A	George Roberts A
Michael Carr A	Tony Horne A	Paul Sharrott A
Darren Coubrough A	Andrew Howard A	Dean Simmonds A B
Will Daniel A	Daniel Jones A	Christopher Smith A
Justin Darley A	Jordan Karuthasami A	Duncan William Smith A
Stephen Eke A B	Thomas Kerry A	Dean Spradbury A
Paul Farmer A	Jason Lefebvre B	Michael Stocks A
Lee Farrington A B F	David Littlewood A	Kevin Thomas A B
Daniel Fell A B	Neil MacFarlane A B F	Paul Turner B
Peter Foreman A B	Chris Mapletoft A B F	Karl Walker A
Duvan Gutierrez A B	Sam Martyn B	Luke Watts B
Stuart Hacker A	David Mellish B F	Jake Whitehouse A
Daniel Haggerton A B F	Lewis Mundy A	Tom Winn B
Conor Hamilton A B F	Tony Nixon B F	Alasdair Woodhead A
Daniel Heard A	Terrence Ough A B F	Cameron Wright A B
Scott Herschell A B F	Mark Patrick A B	Martin Younge A B F

Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme - April 2023 – June 2023

Sam Clark
 Katie Humphrey
 Alastair Jenkins
 Timothy Nyogeri
 Dylan Sclater
 Stephen Thompkins
 Gordon Underwood

Congratulations to everyone who achieved COTS and CTTS qualifications.

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

Buckinghamshire Council, Cardiff City Council, Hartlepool Borough Council, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, John O’Conner GM Ltd St Albans, London Borough of Richmond & Wandsworth, Medway Norse, Mid Devon District Council, North Tyneside Council, North Yorkshire Council, Orbitas Macclesfield Cemetery, Perth & Kinross Council, Portsmouth City Council, Preston City Council, Rochford District Council, Royal Borough of Kingston, Sandwell MBC, South West Middlesex Crematorium.



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



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

Pear Technology Cemetery Mapping Services

Pear Technology have over 15 years' experience creating highly accurate, georeferenced and interactive cemetery maps able to link to burial records, photographs and documents.

We use Ordnance Survey's premium OS MasterMap® Topography Layer map data and are also able to create cemetery maps based on UAV aerial imagery.

Every plot on a Pear Technology map is an individual entity that can be selected as required. The maps remain crystal clear even at the largest magnification unlike scanned picture maps. Zoom in and out, print sections and click on individual graves to view the relevant burial records.

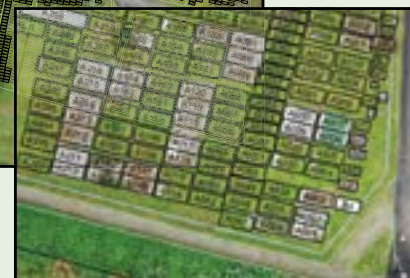
We work closely with popular cemetery administration software suppliers including Edge IT Systems Ltd, ClearSkies Software and Rialtas Business Solutions software. When using your burial administration system click the 'show on map' feature to easily identify where a grave is located. Maps can also be linked to an Excel spreadsheet or custom Access Database using Pear's PT-Maplink software.



Before



After



We can work from various sources including:

- » Scans or photographs of original paper maps
- » Excel or Word Diagrams
- » Aerial imagery from UAVs or other specialist suppliers
- » Surveyors CAD plans
- » GPS Surveys

If you have no usable maps we are able to help you source information we can use. We can also provide our clients with a register and map scanning service, as well as transcription service through our trusted partners.

Why is a cemetery map essential?

- » It is a legal requirement
- » Identify and/or sell pre-purchased graves
- » Enable the public, contractors, cemetery staff and ground staff to locate graves
- » Identify how much land is available to be used
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Accredited COTS & CTTS candidates

Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme Courses July 2023 – September 2023

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**

Florante Anicete **A**
Liam Baker **A**
Andrew Baxter **A**
Alex Baxter **A B F**
Brian Bell **A**
Alan Boland **A**
David Borman **A**
Steven Bowden **A**
Ian Braidwood **A**
Neil Browning **A**
James Buckland **A**
Kris Coleman **A**
Robert Coombes **A B**
Paul James Cooper **A B**
Paul Duncan **A B F**
Christopher Dyer **A**

Darren Evans **A**
Robert Fox **A B**
Nicholas Fox **A B**
Louis Francis **A B F**
Jim Hansford **A**
David Hardman **A**
Brian Henry **A**
Darren Humphries **A**
Stuart Jordan **A**
Paul Legname **A B**
Mark Levy **A**
Dean Lewis **A**
Gareth Lloyd **A**
Ryan Lombard **A B F**
Neil Mahon **A B F**
Jon McGeehan **A**

Jay Mullery **A B F**
Sean O'Halloran **A**
Karl Pettitt **A**
Robert Price **A**
Isaac Prichard **A B F**
Mark Rainford **A B F**
Colin Robinson **A**
Shaune Rogerson **A**
Simon Sheldrake **A**
Mark Thompson **A**
Patrick Tonge **A**
Glyn Towler **A**
Kristan Tuck **A**
Philip Welford **A B F**
Thomas Wood **A**

Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme - July 2023 – September 2023

Myren Berry
Colin Binfield
Fern Brooks
Abby Culverwell
Patricia Dowden
Michael Goodwin
Sarah Holohan
Cameron James Jukes
Colin Edward Kelly
Jamie Kisler
Aiden Stephen Lawrence
Gordon Markie

Jack Parker
Joseph Neil Parkin
Joanne Readings
Sam Richards
Donald Robertson
Jenny Sampson
Deborah Tew
Jed Thomson-Cramer
Joanne Tiffany
John White
Amanda Ann Wigmore

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Antrim and Newtonabbey Borough Council, Arun District Council, Bedford Borough Council, Brighton and Hove City Council, Buckinghamshire Council, Bury Council, Cardiff City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Enable Leisure and Culture, Greener Ealing, Harbour View Burial Ground – Tappers FS, Horizon Cremation (Cannock), London Borough of Lambeth, London Borough of Lewisham, London Borough of Southwark, Leeds City Council, Newcastle City Council, Pure Cremation Ltd, Stoke on Trent City Council, The Hurlet Crematorium, Warwick District Council, Wellingborough Bereavement Services Ltd, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Wirral Council.



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.



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iccm photographic competition 2023



The ICCM Photographic Competition is kindly sponsored by EDGE IT Systems. This year a new category was introduced – a best environmental photograph. This category has been introduced in memory of our ex-President and much missed friend, Ian Quance. The annual photographic competition is designed to encourage members to take photos of cemeteries and crematoria that can be used on the cover of The Journal. The standard this year was exceptionally high, and the Board of Directors had a really difficult job in choosing their favourites. For both the General Category and the Environmental Category, the Board of Directors decided that two of the photographs should be awarded a highly commended, but that one was the outright winner.



The first highly commended award goes to Andrea Taylor of North Tyneside Council



The second highly commended award goes to Anita Fish of Wyre Borough Council



The winner of the General Category of the ICCM Photographic Competition 2023 is Brian Parsons



◀ *The winner of the Ian Quance Environmental Category of the ICCM Photographic Competition 2023 is Joseph Sullivan of St Helens Council.*



The first highly commended award goes to Diane Collett of Chesterfield Borough Council



The second highly commended award goes to Kelvin Bush of Keynsham Town Council.

Congratulations to everyone and thank you to all those that entered.

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** subject to an assessment of the records*

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www.deceasedonline.com

what's new for the iccm?



Kicking off the convention for 2023 Martin Birch and Julie Dunk set out what's ahead in the coming year and beyond; here is a transcript of their talk:

Martin Birch **Chair of the ICCM Board of Directors.**

Here's an overview about the work of the board, which will help set the scene for Julie's announcements. The ICCM Board of Directors consists of 8 people. This includes the president and deputy president and the immediate past president. As you know, the board holds elections when vacancies arise. Each director is generally on the board for a period of three years. Some of us have been longer. The pandemic led to a lot of the directors doing a longer stretch, but we are back now to elections, which will go ahead every year. As the current board comes to the natural end, any directors who wish to stand for re-election can do so. I would like to, at this point, thank Alan José, who is stepping off the board now, at the end of his three years (it's longer than that because of the pandemic). Many thanks from myself and the rest of the board Alan, for all your input.

Let's face it, it's been a challenging four or five years, hasn't it? We've gone through one thing after another. So, what does the board do? We look at the organisation's work, at the operation, what the officers have been doing, the finances: - everything you would expect a board of directors of any company to do. The board works very closely with the officers.

At the start of the year, we held a meeting and set out our strategic direction.

We will take a fresh look at the charter for the bereaved. We are also looking to update the ICCM policies, essential in the face of changes in the industry, the changes towards direct cremation and low-cost funerals and the impact that's having across the UK. We want to make sure that our members are prepared for that, and you've got the information that you need to be able to deal with those changes.

We will also want to make sure that we represent the sector at a national level, crucial if we're talking about changes in legislation. The ICCM must be there with the people that are making decisions, the politicians who are responsible for legislation, and that we interact with the other organisations, national and international groups, to make sure that our views and the views of our members are properly heard.

Training and education are one of the mainstays of the Institute as they always have been; I would certainly not be here being able to speak to you if it wasn't for the ICCM training that was offered to me, too many years ago to mention now, but a long time ago. We will be reviewing the Diploma, reviewing the other training courses and making sure that we've got proper accreditations for all of the training that we provide.

There's obviously you as well, our members. We want to care for, support and assist our members. We want to make sure that your voices are heard. Now, any of you can contact any member of the board of directors, as well as the officers, all the contact details are in the back of the Journal.

BUT we want to make it even easier for people to contact and discuss or raise any issues with the board. We want to carry out regular membership surveys and make sure that your thoughts are captured. And we want to do a lot of work on improving the way that we get information out particularly around the website and social media. And finally, we, as every other organisation, have got to look at the sector's impact on the environment. None of us here are naive enough to believe that burial and cremation are the best options for disposal in terms of the planet, but we have to work together with each other; we have to work with other organisations and government departments to make sure that what we are doing, is in the greenest possible way.

Julie Dunk **Chief Executive**

Our overriding aim is to make sure that you, our members, are properly equipped to do your jobs. We can't do your jobs for you. I know, that would be nice for some of you, to allow us to do that. And we'd like that, but we can't, we don't have the resources. But what we do have is the ability to give you the tools, the knowledge, the skills and the support, so that you can achieve what you want to from your role.

Okay, so we're there for you to do that. And we trust that that aligns with what you want, what your purpose is, in carrying out your roles. And that really is to proudly look after the best interests of bereaved people.

That's what the ICCM wants to do. We want to be able to do that and we want our members to be able to do that. I want to start with news some of you may not have heard. When the board set the strategic objectives, it's a big agenda, an awful lot to achieve. To do that, we needed a little bit of a restructure within the officer team. So, we created a Deputy Chief Executive post, to offer support to me, and to help lead the team through the challenges ahead. And I'm delighted that Mathew (Mat) Crawley is our new Deputy Chief Executive. We then have our wonderful technical services and Journal officer, Sofia.



Sofia, is one of the team dealing daily with enquiries. Also delivering training and is responsible for the production of the Journal. So, if any of you have ever got anything you want to write for the Journal, please do submit it. We're always very proud to produce things that you're proud of. So if you've had an open day, or you've got a charitable initiative, or you've got something going on, tell us so we can tell other members. One of the best things about the Journal for me is reading what you, the members, are doing. I think it's fantastic. I get inspiration from that, I hope you all do too. So don't be shy. Don't rest on your laurels. If you've got a good news story, then tell it and Sofia is your person for that.

We've then got our amazing, Trevor. He's not on the hotline so much in terms of answering member enquiries, although he is getting roped into that more and more, Trevor just keeps things running for us. He's responsible for all our finances. So, when you get a membership bill, it's Trevor's hard work that has put that together. So please pay it. And Trev just keeps us all on track financially, as well as being an incredible support when it comes to IT. Some of us in the older generation are not so good at it as some of the younger people, and Trevor is always there to help us out. So he's a bit of an unsung hero. So thank you Trev, for all that you do as well.

We then have Julie Darroux (previously Callender). So it gets a bit confusing because there's quite a few Julie's! Julie is our administration officer and again like Trevor just came keeps things going behind the scenes. She deals with your training enquiries and provides administration support.

We then have Martin Clark, who's our COTS Manager. He works so hard. He's out all week, every week, delivering training to cemetery operatives, and does an amazing job. If you ever have any grave digger training, it will be Martin that comes out and delivers that.

Finally we then have an honorary officer Charles Ward, our solicitor. And I can't tell you what a great help it is to have Charles on board. Sometimes we need an expert opinion. We have an amazing team. I'm very lucky to work with such dedicated colleagues. And you know, every day going to work is a pleasure. And would you believe it? I know we all look quite young. But to your, but between us we've probably got over a century of experience in cemeteries and crematoria. We've got lived experience. We've been there. Most of the issues that you will face, one of us will have experienced it too.

Despite having all that knowledge and experience, we know there are some gaps in our own skills. And because of that we have bought in expertise, we recognise that we needed some help. And so we brought in a company called Flourishh headed up by Carole & Ian Henderson. With their help we took a hard look at what we are doing now and where we want to be.

One of the most interesting exercises that I found incredible was we had to write an obituary for the ICCM. And I'll tell

you what, that doesn't half focus your mind! We had to project ourselves 20 years in the future and write our own obituary. That is weird, but it does make you think, it was a really useful exercise. From all the brainstorming, the navel gazing, the wonderful support from Carole & Ian we came up with a new vision:

To be the number one organisation, ensuring all bereaved people receive great service.

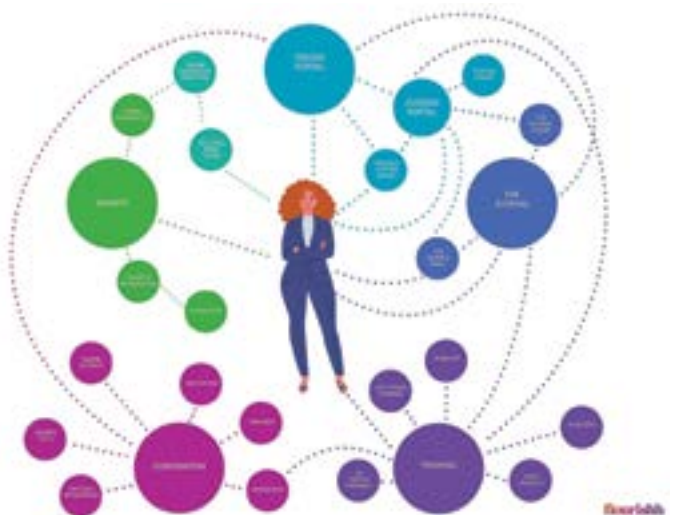
It's a no brainer, isn't it? That's exactly what we should be and we want to do. And from that vision, we then crafted a new mission statement:

Championing the needs of bereaved people, by influencing legislation, encouraging dialogue, and empowering bereavement professionals to achieve great things.

How are we going to help you do that?

There's a lot going on. We've been through the pandemic, we're about to go through a Law Commission review of burial and cremation law. We've got new disposal techniques coming on, we've got Resomation, composting, all sorts of things going on, we've got the environment, which we have to embed in everything that we do.

So, with Flourishh, we've put together a public relations strategy to raise our profile. Thanks to Maria Bailey, our PR lady, I appeared on BBC Radio 2's Jeremy Vine show. This followed her press release she circulated to lots of newspapers, asking people to think about the types of memorials that they leave in cemeteries and crematoria. And you know, what I'm talking about. We want people to be more environmentally conscious. We want to reduce the number of plastics that are used, we want to stop glass, and pottery being left because that causes us hazards. We wanted to open that conversation. So, Maria, got us an article in the Times - in her first week! From that article in the Times, the



Jeremy Vine show invited me on to talk about encouraging people to leave environmentally friendly tributes. We've had some good feedback from that as well. So you know, brilliant, we've already raised our profile, and the PR effort continues. The ICCM is going to be the go-to organisation for talking to media, for talking to government.

How else?

We're going to have a new website, but not just a website, it's going to be a membership portal. And it's going to be lots of resources on that portal for you. So, the idea is that you as a bereavement professional, will be able to access the portal at any time on any device.

You'll be able to *search* for answers to all your questions. The answers may be in video form or text with pictures or both.

There will be on demand (video) training courses covering a wide range of topics in addition to our current training provision.

There'll be a community hub where you can connect and network with colleagues across the country.

We're going to have a fresh look at the Journal.

An updated logo - it's not going to be a radical change. We are embracing our heritage, we've been around since 1913 so it'll be recognisable as ICCM. But we'll have a fresh new look.

As Martin said, the environment has absolutely got to be at the heart of what we do. We'll be looking at all our policies, our education and our training. And bearing that in mind. The other important thing, as Martin said is that we need your feedback. So we're going to introduce an annual survey of members. But you don't need to leave it a year before you contact us. It's your organisation, we need to know what you think. So please let us know. Try not to be rude, but you know, be constructive! But it is important that we hear from you. So if you've got comments to make, critical or otherwise, then please do get in touch. We need to know that we're providing you with the services that you need.

Martin Birch & Julie Dunk



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in touch - up north



From the outside looking in or our app..etite?

First of all, I hope every member can enjoy a relaxed and happy Christmas. It will have been another strange and eventful year for us all – we've had a Coronation, nearly won a football world cup and there are still COVID signs up in places and the darn thing is here to stay.

For something a bit different, we know about cemeteries and crematorium – it is the business we're in – strangely enough, but how are they perceived from the outside?

We can look at it in all kinds of ways. How about the way that most of us spend FAR FAR TOO LONG doing? -yup on the phone with an app.

So I'm not accused of any bias and complaints to the Editor, I am aware of various fruit based media stores that you can get apps from, however, as a carnivore I'm going with Google's one for this - the Play store.

And asking it to search for "cemetery".

Here's what it found as the top 3 –

1. Find a grave – Ancestry.com's app to search for memorial and burial records worldwide
2. Gravez – an app to locate and navigate for cemeteries in Israel
3. Idle Mortician Empire – here we go

I'm not sure what I expected but no. 3 brings back memories of Sim City and Roller Coaster Tycoon from the early 1990's.

So if these are people's cemetery simulation apps what on earth is it like?

Well with Mortician Empire, you start with suddenly running a business and then a couple appear who I guess have lost a relative. You need to hire a receptionist to talk to them. Then its straight to getting an embalmer. They come out, collect a body, that's obviously decaying badly, fix it up and then it's in a coffin and we're off to the cemetery. We get some pall bearers - they get to the cemetery, then dig a hole and in goes the coffin. The mourners weep and it's all done and after a moment, a headstone appears!

Then the whole thing begins again, the people keep dying, the whole process stacks up and you have queues of the deceased, queues of families and as long as you upgrade the mortuary and all the staff, more money. After a while the graveyard fills up.

No worries it regenerates, and you can reuse the space.

There's obviously a very good body disposal system in there that we don't know about to free up all the space in record time and they take the memorial's down really quickly to re-use the space – wishful thinking or a precursor to the real future?

After a few minutes play, its safe to say that it doesn't exactly reflect things for cemeteries in a good light – I know its just a game, as Hospital Tycoon is, but wow – it's a bit brutal. You can get a cremator a bit later on, after you've made more money and helped the community – the mayor thanks you for that. In addition, if you have a celebrity funeral then its more money for you to keep updating and racking the cash in – someone cue Jessie J's song on from 2011.

So how about "crematorium" as a search?

We get Idle Mortician tycoon first, then Mortician Empire, which appears to be the same game under a different name and finally Find a grave.

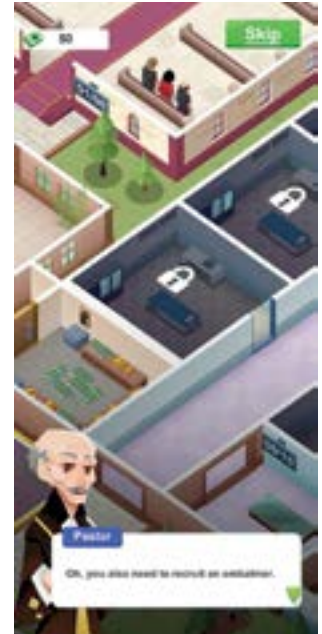
If you try "cremation" itself - the only new one in the top three is Casper Cremation – which is a Massachusetts app to help people plan a low-cost funeral with all the paperwork – its also rated 3+ on the age and difficulty scale.

I suppose it's not that surprising that if we try a general search, we get general results and some relevance and lots of irrelevance. There will be more relevant things and I'll try and hunt some down.

Still got a bit of time to spend and want to relax you can try good old "death".

Yes, this gives you Idle Mortician again, but also enough zombie-based survival games and a few death puzzle games to keep you going.

Definitely gives you a slightly different view to our sector and a far less serious way to end the year - enjoy and best wishes to all.



west wiltshire crematorium's open day

A Day of Community Involvement and Generosity



West Wiltshire crematorium recently held its first open day since the COVID pandemic, an event that not only welcomed the local community but also exemplified the spirit of giving back. The occasion showcased the crematorium's dedication to supporting various charities, allowing attendees to learn about the cremation process and explore memorial options while raising funds for incredible causes.

One of the highlights of the event was the remarkable fundraising made by Orthometals, a recycling company specialising in metals derived from the cremation process. Through contributions from Orthometals and the sale of raffle tickets, an impressive £540.00 was raised for Dementia UK. In addition, Orthometals and the compassionate attendees raised a further £520.00 for Macmillan Cancer Support, demonstrating the power of collective goodwill for vital causes.

Creating events like this highlights the crematorium's commitment to being an integral part of the community. Over the years, the crematorium has orchestrated a series of engaging events that unite the community, fostering a sense of togetherness. Not only do these events help educate the public about the cremation process, memorial options, and the importance of giving back, but they also serve as platforms to support charities that are making a significant difference in people's lives.

During the open day, a representative from Orthometals provided unique insights into the metal recycling process from cremations. This demonstration shed light on how this recycling initiative generates funds that are annually donated to various charitable organisations. It emphasized the power of repurposing materials for a noble cause, promoting sustainability and community support.

Attendees also had the opportunity to join guided tours of the memorial grounds, offering a serene experience while highlighting the diverse memorial and ashes options available. The memorial stand provided comprehensive information, assisting individuals in making informed choices regarding their memorial preferences.

To demystify the cremation process and answer any inquiries, the crematorium conducted informative crematory tours. These tours played a crucial role in dispelling any misconceptions while ensuring that attendees were well-informed and at ease with the process.

In addition to the educational aspects of the day, attendees were treated to tea, coffee, cake, and nibbles as part of the Macmillan coffee morning. The warm and inviting atmosphere encouraged conversations and connections among community members, further strengthening the sense of unity and cohesion.

Adding an exciting element to the event, a motorcycle hearse was on display, showcasing a unique and distinctive aspect of funeral services. This display provided a glimpse into the various options available to commemorate the departure of a loved one.



West Wiltshire crematorium's open day was a day to remember, emphasizing the importance of community engagement, giving back, and honouring loved ones. It was a testament to the crematorium's ongoing commitment to supporting charities and being an active, caring part of the community. The success of this event sets the stage for future endeavours, continuing the legacy of compassion and generosity.

company news

Teleshore

It was great to speak with so many members at the ICCM Conference and find out from our peers what is happening in our industry.



These events provide such a wonderful opportunity to network and the conversations we have are often thought-provoking – it's not uncommon for us to get back to Teleshore HQ and start brainstorming solutions to some of the problems we've had described to us!

This year, we presented to you on all things grave safety (which hopefully you all enjoyed and found insightful), covering soil condition assessment, appropriate shoring selection and a reminder to not leave safety to chance – we never want to see anyone needlessly injured from soil collapse.

As you plan your winter risk assessments, we hope you keep our advice in mind, and would like to remind all ICCM members that we are always happy to answer questions and help to troubleshoot tricky cemetery scenarios with you.

Plotbox



PlotBox appoints Executive VP of Operations. As PlotBox continues its growth journey, it is thrilled to see Asim Mirza take on his new role of Executive VP of Operations.

With an impressive track record in customer experience and enterprise-wide digital transformation, Asim joined the PlotBox Leadership team almost two years ago, during which time he has led on all delivery, implementation and professional services functions globally.

Sean McAllister, PlotBox CEO, commented, "Asim has played a key role in our growth, in terms of both revenue and headcount, and he will continue to support the strategic direction of PlotBox, shaping the future of our company and driving operational excellence across all our regions."

Asim Mirza, PlotBox Executive VP of Operations said,

"I am delighted to take up this new role and will continue to drive innovation and excellence in PlotBox and for our customers. It is an exciting time for PlotBox and we've a great team in place to deliver on our strategic objectives as we look ahead to 2024 and beyond."

To learn more, visit: www.plotbox.io

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the branch meeting stockton-on-tees crematorium

It was the first visit to Stockton on Tees Crematorium for many of the branch members and a big thank you to Darren Robinson and everyone at Stockton for agreeing to host the meeting. Stockton crematorium is one of the newest local authority crematoria in the north east.

The meeting was kindly sponsored by Gem Precast, and Clive Billingham welcomed people along.

Members discussed a number of items on the meeting, covering coffins, burial rights and memorials as well as having a chance to have a good catch up and network.



Trevor Robson gave an update on all ICCM matters and the branch discussed the recent news on Resomation from the Co-op. Members agreed it was an option and a number of Resomators are expected to appear in the north east, although the demand for this new technology is low as it is still in its infancy.

Nicky Raine from Sunderland highlighted issues with reaching carbon neutral by 2040 – an ambition of Sunderland city council. The plan does not involve being zero carbon but instead balancing the environmental impact, which is a concern for local authorities.

The north branch welcomed the idea of a WhatsApp group for problem solving and sharing proposed by Christine Walker-Kelley, which has since proved very useful for quick queries.



Managing the growing trend for wider coffins/caskets was discussed and the implications for this for cemetery planning and accommodating the wishes of the deceased.

Issues with memorial management plans were also highlighted, particularly interesting relationships between the local diocese and local authorities and who should foot the bill for their maintenance.

Selling burial rights in advance of needs is also a matter of concern for several authorities as space dwindles.

Tim Viney from AG International Ltd then went on to give us an update regarding their current project in relation to mapping Church of England churchyards and progress so far – Cumbria and Cornwall have been mapped and the project is rolling into Exeter next.

Clive Billingham from Gem precast/ Greenacre Innovations Ltd was up next, who gave a brief presentation on services that they provided in relation to their company. He was delighted to be attending and be able to hear more customer needs first hand to take back and work on solutions.

Graham thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting then moved onto lunch.

Following this Darren and his staff gave members a tour of the site and the fantastic grounds that it occupies.

The weather held off just long enough for everyone to tour the whole site before it reminded us we are in the north east and return to the lovely British summer.



Graham Harrison
Bereavement Services Manager & Registrar



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iccm welcomes new deputy chief executive



Following an internal restructure in August 2023 and a successful subsequent recruitment process, the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management are delighted to announce the appointment of our former Technical and Member Services Officer, Mathew Crawley, to his new position of Deputy Chief Executive.

Mathew will be no stranger to many members and industry professionals having joined the ICCM as a full time officer in June 2017, having left his position as ICCM Deputy President in the same year, to take on the Technical and Member Services Officer role full-time.

Prior to this, Mathew had gained extensive knowledge and lived experience of both cemetery and crematorium management during the preceding 20 years, having left his position as a funeral director to work in both the private and public sectors for companies and local authorities the length and breadth of England including the Westerleigh group alongside Colchester, Walsall, Harrogate and Salford Councils.

Mathew has always been conscientious to the needs of bereaved people and those providing essential services to them, throwing himself wholeheartedly into finding different avenues to promote an improved bereavement journey for them wherever possible. Such initiatives have included raising around £50,000 for various bereavement charities such as Scottys Little Soldiers, Winstons Wish and Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide, the latter of which he has served as an Ambassador for the last 3 years.

More recently Mathew's endeavours have included attaining a Masters Degree through the University of Northampton and currently working towards his PhD in policy and practice through the Centre of Death and Society at Bath University. Through these academic undertakings, Mathew hopes that he will be able to build on the works already undertaken on providing statutory bereavement leave and clarity regarding 'Direct' funerals, in order to again assist bereaved people and the ICCM membership.

'I am massively encouraged by the direction of travel that the ICCM continues to embark on to promote the highest quality services that we can as the people that are entrusted to look after those navigating their own personal bereavements' says Mathew. 'Through an inclusive, active membership and a forward-thinking Board of Directors alongside ICCM officers who all wish to go above and beyond in this pursuit, the future looks bright and I cannot wait to be a part of this journey in my new role'.

We are confident that Mathew will continue to build on his good work in his new role and wish him all the success for the future on behalf of the ICCM and our members.



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and I would walk 500 miles or 50 miles around greater manchester in 2 days



Officially launched at the ICCM Learning Convention the Greater Manchester bereavement service managers are doing a walk around the 10 authorities in Greater Manchester calling into a cemetery or crematorium in each one.

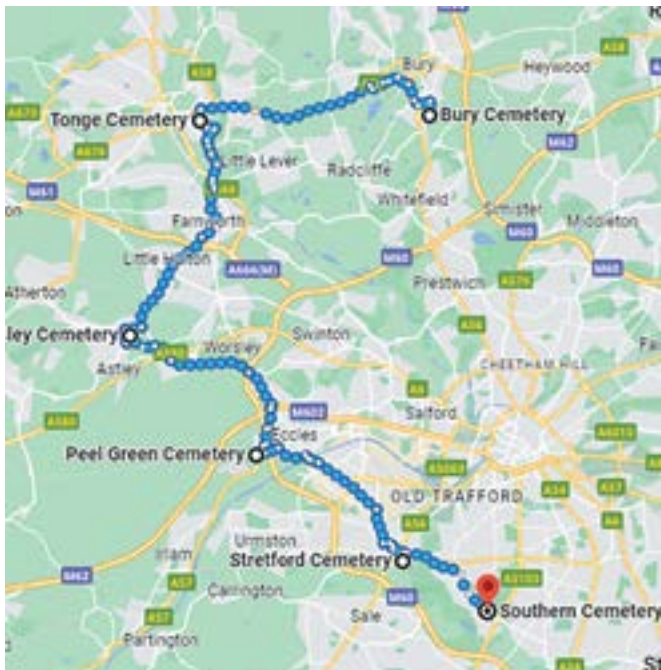
This will take place on the 7th and 8th December during National Grief Awareness week and covers a distance of 50 miles. The aim is to promote awareness and raise money for two charities we work closely with. Andy's Man Club, a national men's mental health charity that aim to provide peer to peer support to men over the age of 18. See www.andysmanclub.co.uk for more details and Once Upon a Smile, a charity that provides support to bereaved children in the Greater Manchester area. See www.onceuponasmile.org.uk

We have been fortunate that a number of our suppliers have agreed to sponsor legs of the route which has given us an unbelievable start and we are really grateful to each and every one of you. Details of our sponsors will appear on our social media along with updates on our progress.

Please let us know if you wish to join us on the walk at any point – you will be most welcome – especially if you can offer piggy-backs!

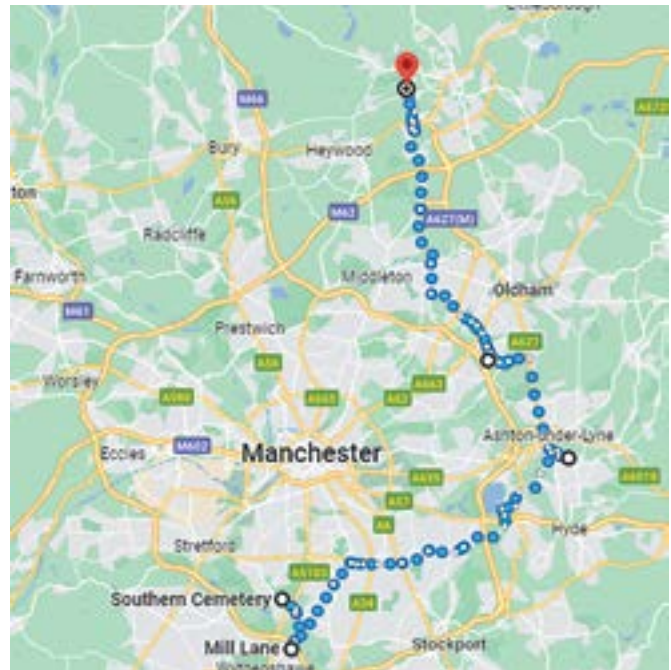
Please follow us on Facebook at: GM Bereavement Services 50 mile walk for updates on training and to be able to track us on the walk.

Donations can be made by following the link below or scanning the QR code.
www.justgiving.com/team/gmwalk



DAY 1 = 25 miles

Start at Bury Cemetery BURY to Tonge Cemetery Bolton to Tyldesley Cemetery WIGAN to Peel Green Cemetery Salford to Stretford Cemetery Trafford finishing at Southern Cemetery Manchester



DAY 2 = 25 miles

Start at Southern Cemetery Manchester to Mill Lane Cemetery Stockport to Dukinfield Crematorium Tameside to Hollinwood Crematorium Oldham finishing at Rochdale Crematorium, Rochdale

Dave Jennings & Barry Ellis

memorialising a national hero

The Columbaria Company's very special conference tribute

From my experience, albeit limited, of exhibiting at conferences, I know the days are long and tiring. A large amount of patience is essential, as well as a comfortable pair of shoes! This is precisely why the idea of creating a piece of artwork appealed to me – it would keep me out of trouble and hopefully, give the visitors something to talk about.

We decided that a portrait would be an eye-catching subject. Musing that it would need to be somebody in the public eye, instantly recognisable. A national treasure even.

Paul O'Grady fitted this description to a tee. He may have started his TV career as a working-class scouse drag queen; making thinly veiled jokes about 'being on the game', but he became a widely loved personality. A household name up and down the country. Whether camping it up, or championing the cause of the underdog, he'll be sadly missed by a great many people.

Paul O'Grady was a man who never shied away from the unusual, the brilliant or the downtrodden. He was a man worth memorialising. As memorial masons, our passion is paying tribute to the brilliant men and women who have left us behind. Thank you, Paul - for your time on this earth with us and we hope you like our piece.



To those of you who stopped to chat at the conference, it was lovely to meet you. Thank you so much for all the kind comments.

And no, I haven't finished it yet!

Alan Clough
Creative Designer, The Columbaria Co.

tales of a cemetery registrar

Is it spring?

As we move through dark days

Remember the sun.

As you stand watch on the bereaved

Remember your living.

As you see the tears fall

Remember they stop.

As you hear their laughter

Remember your smile.

As you sense the rain fall

Remember it will pass.

As you feel cold in your bones

Remember your flask.

As you return to your office

Remember your team support.

As you leave for the day

Remember you did your best.

By Anita Fish

polishing a gem.....

With the funeral industry rapidly evolving post the UK wide pandemic, part of Paisley's heritage at Paisley Woodside cemetery and crematorium has seen a very impressive makeover of both the site, chapel, and general facilities.

Memoria, who own several memorial parks across the country, have taken this famous old site under their wing and undertaken a large-scale internal makeover of the site leaving the exterior with its baroque elegance whilst improving the interior and adding modern options to ensure that this 85-year-old facility continues to be a preferred destination when saying goodbye to our loved ones in the local community.

The modernisation has been carefully thought out and Memoria have overseen the work to ensure it meets the needs of the modern traditional funeral.

The need for a cemetery in Paisley was first mooted in 1845 and following several meetings and consultations, Stewart Murray, Curator of the Glasgow Botanic Gardens was appointed to oversee the project. Situated on a low-hilltop position between Woodside House and Ferguslie House, the "garden cemetery" extended to just over 20 acres. Murray's design was greatly inspired by the earlier garden cemetery at the Glasgow Necropolis of 1832, which took its inspiration from Pere Lachaise, the first hilltop garden cemetery in Paris.

By 1938, cremation was becoming very much more common, and the addition of a new crematorium designed by renowned Paisley architect, James Steel Maitland, was opened on 28th October of the same year. With the latest, but then very innovative cremators supplied and installed in the crypt of the building by John F Askam Ltd from Birmingham, a company that were commissioned to install at every influential facility, nationally. The very first cremation was the late George Jephson and took place on 9th November 1938. The total cost of the Memoria Paisley Woodside development was £9,603 16s and 4d.



By this stage the cemetery itself had already taken shape significantly and such local nobility as Dundas S Porteus Esquire had started what would turn out to be several Mausolea additions to the already increasing number of important burials and memorials across the cemetery. Such eminent names as Sir William Arrol and Dr James Kerr and famous local families such as The Coats, Glen-Coats, Abercrombie, and Polson were well-known Paisley names that were already part of the cemetery's fabric.

By 1996, all 20 acres of the memorial park were already utilised, and the site was now seeing over 1,700 burials and cremation services annually. In 2019, local funeral directors Fosters took over the site for a short period before selling the facility to the Memoria Group in January 2023. This famous local landmark will now operate under the name, **MEMORIA PAISLEY WOODSIDE MEMORIAL PARK & CREMATORIUM** but the history and tradition of the site will continue to be celebrated.



The makeover that was completed on 4th September 2023 was carried out by locally based contractors Abercorn Builders Ltd and quickly followed on October 15th by an 85th anniversary event where local funeral directors and local people were invited along to see the improvements for themselves. Alexander Stoddart, who is the Kings Sculptor in Ordinary in Scotland, provided tours of the cemetery and shared his engaging stories and vast knowledge of the cemetery and some of its most famous monuments. There was also an exhibition of the site's history and an afternoon tea for everyone attending. This month on Monday 11th December at 6.30pm Memoria Paisley Woodside are holding a service of remembrance in association with the Erskine Veterans Care Home. At this event, local people can come along and remember at what can be a difficult time of year for many families that have recently lost loved ones and friends.

The names of these will be displayed on the newly installed plasma screens whilst candles are lit in loving memory. For full details of the changes and events please go to www.paisley memorial.co.uk or call the site on 0141 889 2260.

Frank Meilack
Community Engagement Director

creating a buzz in your cemetery

The Parish of Hound, which covers Netley Abbey & Butlocks Heath is in the Borough of Eastleigh and lays in between the City of Southampton and the Isle of Wight. We have an electorate of 5,509 and our parish has around a mile of waterfront where anyone can watch all the shipping movements each day.

The Council took over the burial ground from the Church of England in the early 1960s and the burial ground contains St Mary's the Virgin church which dates back to the 13th Century. Thankfully, the Church of England still own, manage and run the church, however we look after the maintenance of their burial section.



The current burial ground is now nearly full and thankfully during the 1980's, council members purchased a field directly behind the current burial ground to allow us to extend in future years. We worked with the CDS Group, who assisted us with the design, planning and groundwater risk assessment and we gained planning permission in September 2020.

As the burial ground borders a nature area and fields, we were very keen to enhance the ecology and biodiversity of what has always been primarily an open field. We worked with the Tree Council who very kindly provided a grant to thicken up the hedgerows around the field and also trees to plant throughout the field. A 'natural road' of clay and stone was part of the planning, so that we were not adding anything unnatural into the environment.

We appointed a local groundwork company who installed the road during the Autumn of 2021, and they also cleared an old fence that had become overgrown with weeds and shrubs that separated the current burial ground from the new section. As part of our plan, we left 1m either side of the road as we planned to plant flowers in between the trees.

In February 2022 we arranged a public planting day where we invited as many residents as possible to come and plant some of the 1200 hedgerow whips. We had a turn out of about 200 over the day and held a separate session with the local pre-school children who came along and planted their own section. We then planted 72 trees a few days later with assistance from the Tree Council and the contractor who had installed the road. Our estates team had a busy summer during the extended heat to ensure all of the whips and trees were kept watered and we were very happy to only lose 3 trees and a handful of whips.



During the late Spring, we also seeded with a mix of wildflower seeds, a large section next to a small ecological area that we had decided to keep at the beginning of the planning process. The reptile report that we had commissioned, showed that it had a healthy number of slow worms (16), a couple of grass snakes were recorded along with a plethora of smaller reptiles and insects. It had always had a good history of birds nesting, so it was really important to us to retain this area.

Continuing with our plan during October 2022, we held a spring bulb planting session on the strips next to the road with the local scouting group, the pre-school and some of the local Women's Institute ladies. We planted over 1000 bulbs so that from early to late Spring we would have a nice selection of flowers. In late March 2023, we seeded the strip of land that the fence had been removed from with a different mix of wildflowers seeds. We were delighted that from March through July, we had a glorious mix of bulbs that flowered and then a 3-month window of wildflowers that attracted both humans, animals and insects.

As the extension field is not currently being used - it is probably 5 years away from being required - it will allow the whips and trees to become semi mature, the plan is to only cut the grass in it twice per year. By allowing the grass to grow to meadow length this year, it attracted deer as well as other wildlife and we just maintained a walking path around the perimeter. The general feedback has been overwhelmingly positive on the plan, groundworks and the biodiversity enhancements to this field. We have had some great support from CDS, the Tree Council, our local groundwork contractor who went well above the tender scope and of course the public who have both been supportive and involved in public planting days.

David Nevin
Clerk & RFO, Hound Parish Council

hidden histories at keynsham durley hill cemetery

A special event for Heritage Open Days 2023

Keynsham's Durley Hill cemetery is a peaceful Victorian resting place which hides a very special secret. Beneath the ground lies a major archaeological site – one of the most spectacular Roman buildings ever to have been discovered in Britain.

In September, for the very first time, Keynsham Town Council opened the cemetery to visitors as part of Heritage Open Days, England's largest festival of history and culture.

On an autumnal Sunday morning, guests joined our staff and volunteers in the cemetery's unusual mortuary chapel to learn more about the site's history. Exhibition boards told the story of the chapel and its architect Charles Edward Davis, who is probably more famous for his discovery of the Roman Baths. The original funeral bier, used by the workhouse until the 1920s, took pride of place in the exhibition space.



Other panels provided information on the excavation of the Roman remains in the 1920s, with photographs and original documentation from that fantastic discovery. Visitors could also have a go at designing their own floor tile patterns and learn how to make a ceramic lamp based on an original Roman design.

Maps were also displayed, showing the location of the several First World War and Second World War graves that can be explored in the cemetery, with information on some of the local people who lost their lives in those conflicts.

The town council team was also joined by the Avon Wildlife Trust Keynsham Group, who led wilderness walks around the cemetery and provided the opportunity for visitors to come face-to-face with moths which had been trapped

on the grounds the previous night. Our young visitors had the opportunity to guess why resident moths have such curious names as 'L-Album Wainscot' and 'Angle Shades'.

It was a pleasure to host so many visitors of all ages, many of whom had lived in Keynsham all their lives and had never visited this hidden gem of a historic site before. We welcome anyone to come and visit our beautiful grounds any time – they are open to the public weekdays and weekends, with an attendant usually on duty Monday to Thursday 8am-4pm and 3.30pm on Fridays.

Vivienne McDonnell

a space to reflect

Lea Fields crematorium is proud to present its brand-new brochure for families considering a service or memorial in West Lindsey.

The brochure, 'A space to reflect' contains information on the facilities, services, site map and memorial options available to those who need it. The aim is to help guide families through the difficult process of saying goodbye and give reassurance that loved ones will be taken care of at this special place in Lea.

On the front cover of the brochure is the beautiful building, set in its peaceful hillside location, which provides a calm and tranquil space.

The team at Lea Fields receive a lot of enquiries from people wanting to know more about the services on offer especially from people who are keen to attend the open days to find out more. The team are delighted by the interest the brochure has garnered and have already distributed more than 200 copies to funeral homes to help families make informed choices.

The facility, which is owned and run by West Lindsey District Council, is the only facility in the district. Councillor Emma Bailey, who represents the Lea ward, is thrilled with the design of the brochure and what it means to families going forward.

She said: "The Lea Fields crematorium brochure not only showcases the brilliant work the team do, but also the services and beautiful memorials they offer. They are a hard-working team who are committed to maintaining a high standard of customer care and this is reflected in this new brochure."

Deborah Balsdon, crematorium manager at Lea Fields crematorium said: "We are delighted with the result and believe that families will find the brochure useful.

It's important people have access to helpful information regarding our services and memorials to help make informed choices. We aim to have an electronic copy uploaded on our website in the near future.

"We appreciate that this is not a topic that people like to discuss, but we are a dedicated and passionate team who are committed to delivering the highest of standards and are always willing to help wherever possible."

"You can phone 01427 676500, email crematorium@west-lindsey.gov.uk or visit Lea Fields, if you have any questions or wish to request a brochure."

Katie Smith,
Communications Officer

Eimer wins a good funeral award



Eimer Duffy of FIT Social Media who provides social media and digital marketing consultancy and training services specifically for Funeral professionals has won the award for "Best Innovative Product/Service for the Funeral Industry 2023".

The Good Funeral Awards is an annual event hosted by The Association of Green Funeral Directors where they focus on eco-friendly products and services for the Funeral industry. Eimer is a member of the ICCM and writes articles for our journal and to celebrate she would like to for the month of January 2024 give ICCM Members a free audit of their online presence. To avail of this go to www.fitsocialmedia.co.uk and "book a call" with Eimer.





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raising business profile

How Nene Valley Crematorium is engaging the community

Creating an environment that is welcoming, inclusive and a place that memories are made and then later fondly remembered, is at the forefront of the events and memorial offering at Nene Valley Crematorium. It is known that if a place resonates with a person, they are more likely to use the services, lease a memorial and support the venture going forward. So how do we create this in a crematorium that has only been open for seven years and what are the factors to consider?

We know that a key factor for success happens after what we affectionately refer to as the “day job”, (after the funeral and cremation has taken it to place). It is the final resting places, memorials and beyond aspect of a journey that really gives us a sense of comfort. Spending considered time, prioritising budget spend, and collective energy from the team to provide a garden of remembrance that is right, including individual themed gardens within, creating gardens within a garden concept has been the foundation for success. The meaningful planning includes carefully chosen plants and tree varieties with bereavement connotation names, and symbolism - coloured themed planting complements, alongside evident horticultural and grounds keeping care means there is a solid base to build upon, providing a special place for all to visit.

Once nature had delivered, the foundations of a beautiful garden in place, people needed to know about it, and even though Nene Valley crematorium has been open for 7 years, it is known that some Wellingborough residents don't know of its existence. Choosing a final resting place for a family member or friend without knowing they can, or a tour of



Left to right, Tracy Lawrence, (Manager & Registrar) Julie Carter, (Assistant Manager) Phill Castree, (Business Cover/Support) Richard Porter (Operations Manager) Dean Peach, Groundskeeper, Colin Kelly, (Operations Assistant) Cameron Menzies, (Acting Head Gardener) Councillor Barbara Jenney, (Chair of North Northamptonshire Council) Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood (Director) and Councillor Paul Bell, Chair for the Board of directors, present but not pictured.

the facilities will continue to mean that inevitably people miss out on choosing us – face to face communication with all user groups are planned by the reintroduction of personal visits and users group meetings for funeral directors and their ceremony leaders, and an expansion on community engagement by enhancing events for people, such as celebration and seasonal remembrance ceremonies, and a variety of engaging activities between these celebration and seasonal times.



Tree of Life water feature for the new Sensory (memorial) Garden

An increased presence on social media has allowed the use of imagery and ‘as it happens’ content to engage and interact with the community, of which the crematorium space is now part of. Alongside this, holding events and sharing the workings of a crematorium has become a key theme, such as open days and official memorial garden openings have really helped to continue raising the business profile.

The open day is a showcase event, allowing members of the community to dispel common myths and learn more about options, choices and provision offered. Working in partnership with professionals within the profession and local organisations that reflect the company's values, including nature and wellbeing, support such an event. At the most recent open day, 26 exhibitor stands and displays from funeral directors and ceremony leaders to florists and wake venues provided much interest for everyone.

- A local café set up a pop-up version on the day serving tea and coffee to visitors and a local bagpipe player added to the atmosphere.
- The day invited the whole family to attend, so to meet their needs, activities aimed at all were on hand. A large paper mâché Red Kite bird, part of the crematorium's branding, allowed visitors to remember a loved one by writing a name or message on a feather and attaching it to the wings.
- A temporary labyrinth was set up in the garden - labyrinths are used world-wide to quiet the mind, calm anxieties, recover balance in life, enhance creativity and encourage self-reflection and stress reduction. Visitors were encouraged to take five minutes out of the day

and walk the Labyrinth, thinking of a loved one who is no longer here, recall a happy memory or a hope for the future. Taking time in walking as they put each foot down, connecting and reflecting, when remembering – the manager was even seen to take part!

- A family and friends nature trail encouraged them to explore the garden of remembrance because hidden amongst the memorial gardens were eleven species of wildlife for them to find and complete, suggesting a name for each on a trail sheet.
- The final activity previewed a new feature coming to Nene Valley crematorium later this year, a post box to complement the 'Letters to Loved Ones Lawn', a final resting place for ashes. Here people could write a letter to their loved ones no longer with them on seeded paper, the letters and envelopes are then planted to form the basis for wildflower banks adjacent to the lawn.

The day attracted similar numbers to the most recent former open day of 2019, and like then was a huge success in terms of being well received by all that attended, and a real buzz felt, with interactions, questions and connections made.



Members of the public taking part in a tour – "back of house"

Two days later, on the 7th anniversary of the crematorium's opening a 5th memorial garden was opened, 'The Sensory Garden'. This garden like the previously 4 are entered through a pergola, deliberately installed, and complemented by scented planting to create a sense of peace and tranquillity as the visitor embarks upon their journey to a final resting place, memorial or just to visit, when remembering. A central pond, with a memorial Tree of Life water feature takes centre stage – its leaves available for commemoration. Radiating out from this is an appealing planting scheme that entice all senses, herbs, fragrant leaves and flowers, interesting colours, shapes, textured leaves, and grasses that rustle in the wind, with the gentle sound of running water from the water feature - all senses, truly awakened.

Councillor Barbara Jenney, chair for North Northamptonshire council officially opened the sensory (memorial) garden by the cutting of a biodegradable (environmentally friendly) ribbon and conveyed their



Support from local funeral directors at the Open Day

poignant words - listening to a heartfelt address from the chair were directors for the board of directors of Wellingborough Bereavement Services Limited and the bereavement services care team for the crematorium and its garden of remembrance – all agreed the memorial garden within is a fitting and welcome new addition. Although the wind was a little high the rain held off long enough for guests to enjoy an informative tour by the acting head gardener, followed by tea and cakes in the warmth and shelter of the crematorium's kitchen, affectionally known as "The Hub".

Two events, many visitors, thousands of social media interactions, and all with the same aim, to raise business profile, increase awareness and in the long term secure a prosperous future – primarily ensuring that all that use the facilities of the crematorium know about the choices available to them, so that informed decisions are reached - what is right for them does happen!



Members of the local community enjoy the pop-up café

If you would like to find out more about Nene Valley crematorium and keep up to date with future events and community engagement, follow us on social media, Facebook, X (formally Twitter), Instagram, and LinkedIn all @nenevalleycrematorium.

Will Sparrow
Events & Memorials

west lothian art project



I am very proud to be letting you all know about our amazing Almondell Cemetery Memorial Artwork. The project began before I started working at West Lothian Council in Scotland and was also delayed by Covid.

It was commissioned by East Calder Community Resources Association on behalf of the partnership with Stirling Developments and West Lothian Council.

The original planning conditions for the cemetery included a condition requiring public art, however due to the technical requirements of the site, the cemetery development overran its budget and there was no funding available at that time to achieve the public art aspiration for the site. Almondell Cemetery opened in 2016.

The artist Svetlana Kondakova was recruited through an open competition, advertised on Creative Scotland. The project brief outlined the budget, location for the intended work and a suggested theme, along with the requirement to carry out community consultation on all design approaches.

Following consultation with the Lothian Interfaith group, they had indicated that in some faiths the representation of animals could be an issue. It was suggested that in an open lattice framework of some of the designs, they could be incorporated as slightly hidden features to be observed if looking closely at the structure. Themes of flora, fauna, tree of life and community feedback were incorporated and main initial concepts were: 'Tree of Life', 'River', 'Bridge' and 'Wall'.

Workshops were run for schools / youth groups to involve them in creation of patterns from local trees, flowers and water to be incorporated within the final design. It was great to see the photos of the kids from the workshops. Some of these can be seen on the explanatory poster next to the Memorial Artwork.

Once the final design was selected, it was displayed as a Maquette in the Local library.

The Memorial Artwork was officially opened on 7th September 2023.

Ann Collings
Cemeteries Officer – West Lothian Council - Scotland



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the journal

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