

The Natural Death Centre's official magazine

# more to death

seventh edition 2016

**Are you  
actually  
getting a  
GREEN  
BURIAL?**

**TISSUE  
DONATION  
AFTER  
DEATH**

*Plus*

**THE IDEAL  
DEATH  
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pics of the  
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UNCOVER HIDDEN AND AMAZING OPTIONS  
SURROUNDING DEATH AND FUNERAL PLANNING

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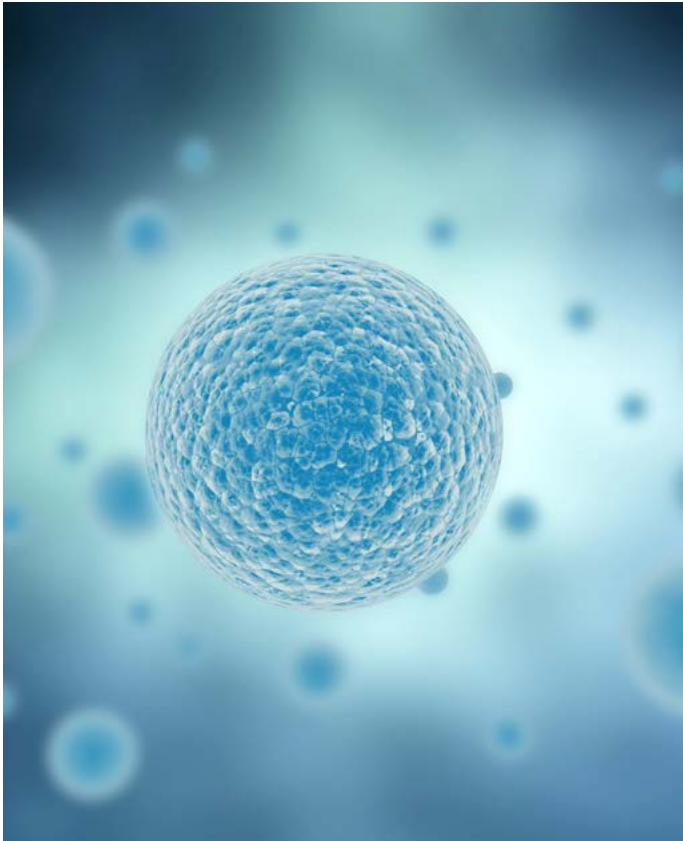
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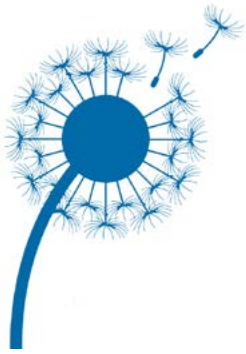
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As you can see from the dark and autumnal photo, the onions are gathered and we are hunkering down for winter at the bunker.

Again we have managed to pull together some fascinating articles for this edition. Please pass this mag's link to your chums and this [link](#) takes you to all the previous editions which is a really quick route to find the one you want.

If you have one, you can put it on your website – or please tweet or facebook links to any of the topics that you are particularly struck by. You will be helping to get this often hidden information out there. Oh and plagiarise at will, we are not precious.

Things are changing, we are winning. Lets hope that together we can maintain the momentum to change the stilted funeral industry at an increasing pace into the future.

All the best to you all in 2016

Cheers

*Rosie Inman-Cook*  
Editor



[www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

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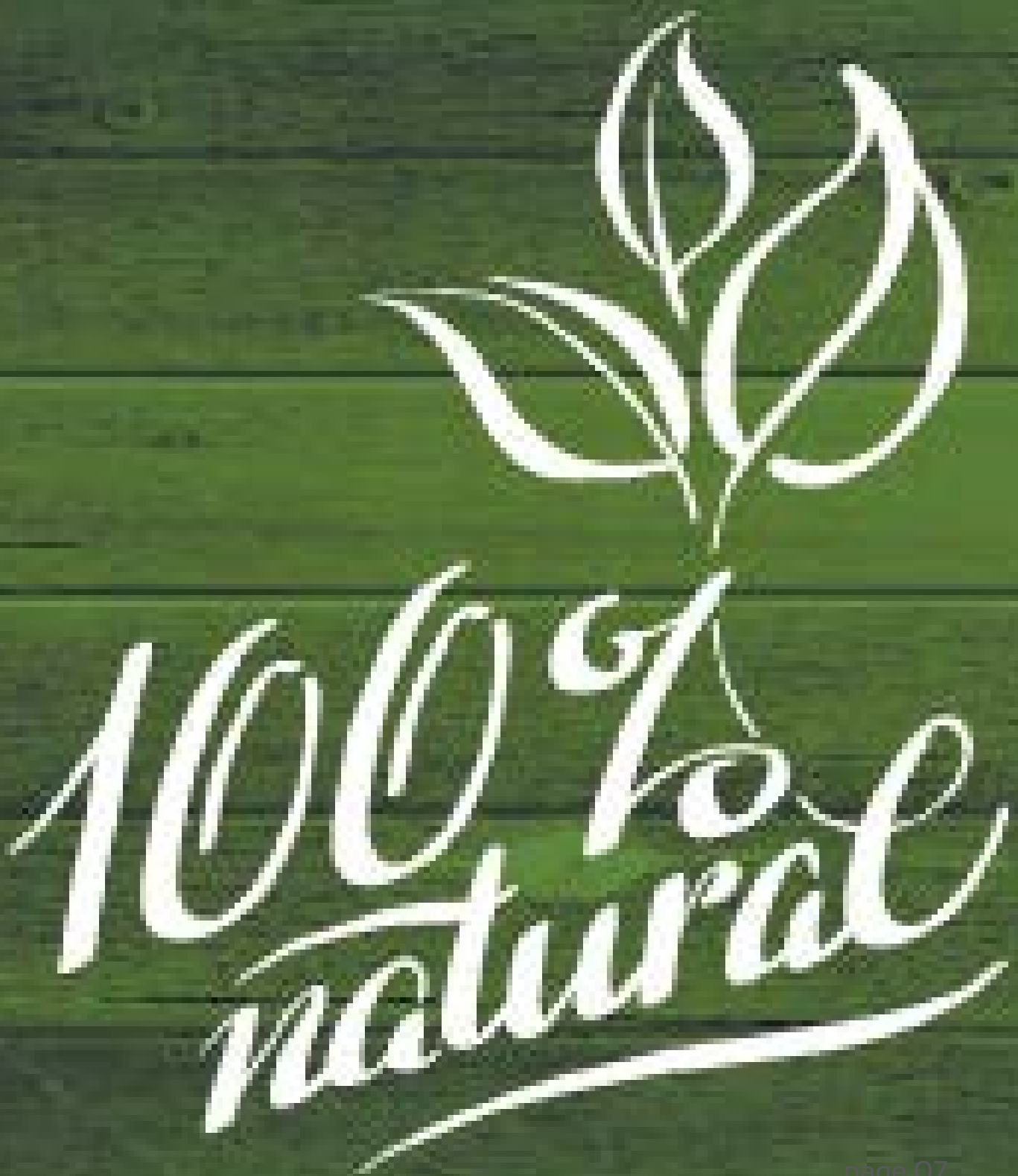
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page 07  
Rosie Inman-Cook

# Are you actually getting a Green Burial?

A couple of years ago, the NDC was contacted by a proactive chap from the Channel Islands who wished to be buried back on the mainland when his time came. He spent a couple of weeks touring the natural burial sites of the south of England that summer and wrote us a report.

He found greatness and skulduggery.

The worst was a site operated by a diversifying funeral director. During his tour of that site, he enquired firstly about embalming and secondly about the types of coffin they accepted and was told “Oh we don't care mate, you have what you want”.

That site is not a member of the Association of Natural Burial Grounds and does not comply with our code of conduct. As far as we can tell it is making a fortune and creating a site that will have serious problems in the future due to completely inappropriate tree planting and land management.

## Caveat emptor

With the growing popularity of natural burial it is becoming increasingly obvious that some providers are less interested in the environment than in getting a share of the profits to be made, or, in other words their hands on the disbursement fees.

Anyone planning to have an environmentally friendly funeral should do some research beforehand to make sure their funeral does not fall victim to the phenomenon of 'greenwash':

Greenwash – is a form of spin in which green PR or green marketing is deceptively used to promote the perception that an organisation's products, aims and/or policies are environmentally friendly.

## Questions to ask a woodland burial site;

Here are some checks you might like to make to ensure a burial ground is a truly green, environmentally friendly one.

- Is embalming discouraged / prohibited (other than in exceptional circumstances) by the burial ground? Is this clearly highlighted in their literature and on their website? If not, why not?
- Do coffins have to be made from recycled / environmentally friendly, biodegradable materials and manufactured in a sustainable way? If the site allows MDF veneered or hardwood coffins, you may want to think again. Look for this in their literature and on their website.
- Are coffins permitted to have plastic 'crem film' lining? This will not degrade and will wrap the deceased in a plastic cocoon once the coffin deteriorates. >>











- >> At what depth are bodies buried? Aerobic decomposition is enhanced within a shallower grave. Burial 'six feet under' will result in anaerobic, methane-generating decomposition.

- What types of memorials are allowed? The greenest sites will simply mark the graves with memorial planting of trees, shrubs or native flora.

- What is the policy on 'grave goods', that is items placed inside the coffin by families?

- What may be left on top of the graves? Many sites lose control of this and the ground becomes festooned with non-degradable, unsightly 'grief litter'.

- What is the planting policy of the burial ground? Are only native species of flowers and trees permitted? Is their provenance important to the burial site?

- Will they allow families to conduct funerals without a funeral director? If not, it may also indicate that doing business with funeral directors and keeping them on side is more important than insisting that undertakers comply with their environmental requirements.

- How is the site managed and maintained? Does the literature and website mention the wildlife present on the site and what they are doing to encourage more species. Do the staff know their stuff? Can they identify tree species and tell you about the different habitats on site?

- Are the graves dug by hand? This is the greenest grave digging, which does not involve the use of a pollution-belching, gas-guzzling, mess-making, noisy machine. The graves are also neater and it is often cheaper to dig by hand.

- If the site is manicured and regularly mown with petrol powered machines it could be viewed as a conventional lawn cemetery but without headstones. How is this green? Or is that a Bandwagon before you?



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“As in the eye of nature, they have lived,  
so in the eye of nature let them die”

William Wordsworth 1888



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**ARTICLE BY  
ROSIE INMAN-COOK**



# AFFORDABLE BURIAL

For Londoners and all urbanites

I am going to use London as a case study here. However, the same principle applies for all cities as far as I am aware.

A recent Royal London report highlighted the cost of purchasing a new grave in a city graveyard. The report says:-

“It is interesting to note the most expensive locations are in or immediately around London, and are for burials rather than cremations. London has a

particular problem with a shortage of burial plots.”

So, I decided to do a bit of Googling around some London boroughs to see how much they are charging for the purchase of a new grave plus the interment fee to bury one person.

I found several council websites unforthcoming, so this is not a comprehensive list – neither have I left any cheaper offerings off the list for effect! >>

‘If you get buried outside of your ‘manor’ you can expect to pay double or treble fees’



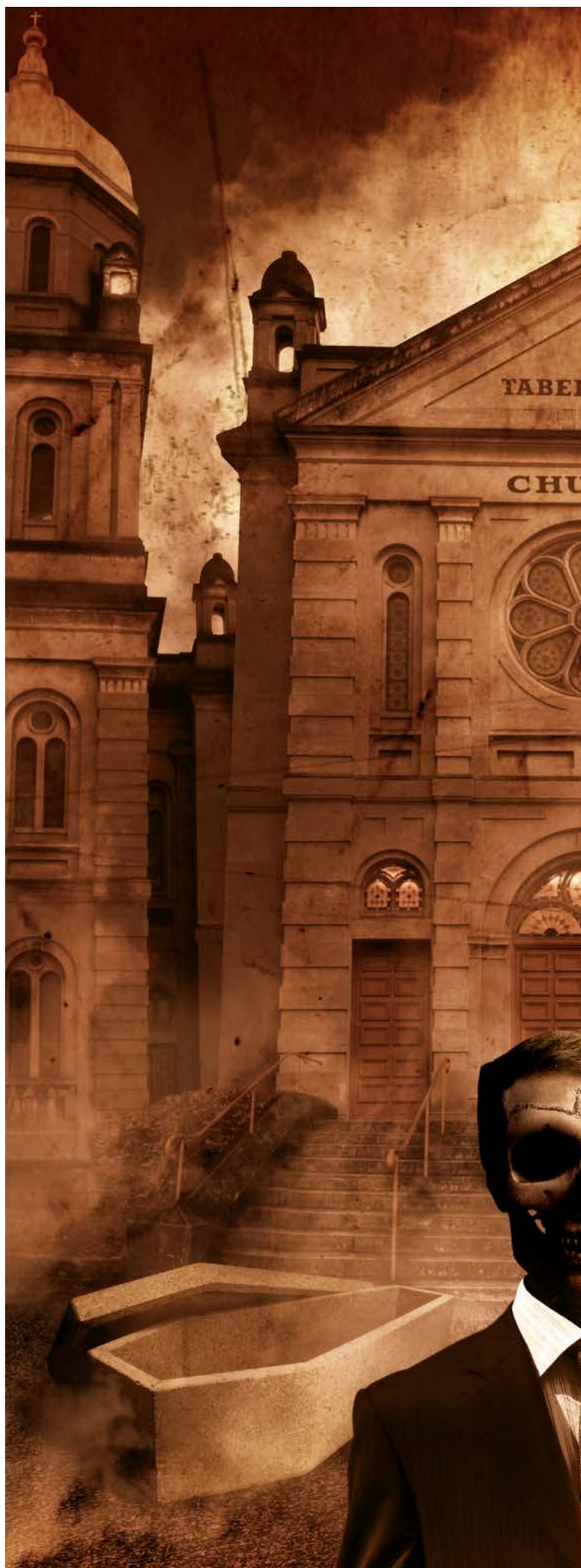
>> These are their charges for basic graves on short leases. Most, it seems, have more desirable spots at a premium, longer leases and also unmarked communal graves.

Barking/Dagenham	£2088
Barnet	£2617
Bexley	£2581
Bromley	£3809
Croydon	£4209
Ealing	£2338
Enfield	£4295
Greenwich	£2742
Hammersmith	£3089
Haringey	£7755
(for burial within the borough)	
Harrow/Brent	£2675
Havering	£2319
Hillingdon	£1740
Islington	£2425
Kensington	£4380
Kingston	£3800
Lambeth	£5617
Lewisham	£2787
Newham	£1793
Richmond	£3002
Southwark	£2577
Sutton/Merton	£3510
Wandsworth	£4471

So, only two boroughs bury for just under 2k and this is the price to the residents of those boroughs only.

If you get buried outside of your 'manor' you can expect to pay double or treble fees. Basically if your borough has completely run out of space, you are stuffed\*, or have to find between 5 to 15 thousand pounds for a grave.

The London average is over £3250 but Haringey tops the list at almost £8000!!!





I appreciate that municipal cemeteries are expected to keep their graveyards looking neat and tidy and that overgrown grass would likely initiate angry letters about neglect to the local press. This maintenance burden to the tax payer is often the justification for what seem to most folk to be exorbitantly high fees.

These charges are not exclusive to the municipal cemeteries either, private corporate business also has a role to play and profits to make.

Kemnal Park, for example, is a privately owned cemetery in south east London, and it has equivalently high charges. They even have what should be a lower maintenance woodland section but are still charging £3,150 for 25 years rising to £7,050 for a 99 year lease.

Using a natural burial site can be one way of getting a more affordable burial but again, as we have seen from the 'woodland/natural' site mentioned above, they are widely variable.

It is such a shame that ill-informed, bereaved relatives may be steered towards cremation as the only affordable option to these high cemetery fees. Unfortunately it seems that profit driven, ergonomically concerned funeral directors are more interested in maximising the use of their men and vehicles, preferring several trips to the crematorium rather than losing half a day getting a family to an out-of-town, reasonably priced, natural burial ground.

There are, of course, funeral directors who will help and there could be other compromises. The family could collect the deceased from the funeral director or take charge at the end of a church service and drive themselves and the deceased to the out-of-town resting place. Many old fashioned and inflexible funeral directors would have a fit at the mere thought of it! >>

## >>The Good News is.....

...that within striking distance of London there are several, wonderful, natural burial sites that will happily accommodate families from 'the smoke' without charging them double or treble fees for being outsiders.

It is interesting to note that some do this for the same price that some crematoria are now charging! (Dignity crematoria fees have now hit £900 .) Add to that the doctor's 'Ash Cash' fees, that are not payable for burial, and you have possible cremation disbursement fees of £1060.

Therefore, for the same price as cremation and for £1000 and under, fully inclusive prices (plot and grave preparation), and within two hours of Westminster:

### The Burial Heroes are:-

Barton Glebe – Cambridge.	£1000	62 miles
Crouch Valley Meadow, Essex.	£900	49 miles
Eden Valley Woodland Burial Ground north Kent/Surrey border	£970	27 miles
Fairspear – Oxfordshire	£810	66 miles
Michael's Wood on the A303 near Stonehenge	£850	80 miles
Sheepdrove, Berkshire	£1000	73 miles
Westmill – Swindon	£950	81 miles

### £1500 and Under

St Albans Woodland Burial Trust Bedfordshire	£1075
Deerton Natural Burial Ground North Kent coast	£1180
Muchwood Cambridgeshire.	£1200
Clayton Wood Brighton	£1340
Herrongate Wood Essex	£1475
Olney Green Burial Ground Buckinghamshire	£1500

Of course, these distances are taken from central London and are greatly reduced for those in the outlying boroughs of greater London.

For example, our charity's site, Eden Valley, in North West Kent is driveable in 20 minutes from Croydon or Bromley and costs a quarter of the local authority cemetery prices.

I should also point out that families choosing these natural burial grounds also save on the need to have a gravestone.

The erection and permission to erect at council sites are also chargeable.

In total, having a gravestone can easily hit another £1000, a further cost that families don't consider when comparing prices at the initial funeral arrangement stage.

Do I need to add that the natural burial sites are beautiful, positive places to visit? Or that they are time rich and as nature reserves, offer a constructive legacy? No, you know this!

**Rosie Inman-Cook**  
Manager  
Natural Death Centre charity

\*Taxidermy of human remains has happened but that would be a very different bit of research - submissions welcome!



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# Retire in Peace

*Richard Putt*

When Richard became a trustee at the NDC there were some that thought we had taken on one of the old school brigade and that for him it could be quite a controversial post.

How wrong that was.

In meetings when discussing challenging projects, aimed at the industry, it is often Richard who has a 'go for it' attitude.

Now he has retired and become my chairman I am hoping that the dynamic, boundary pushing lead that he took at Levertons will continue with both us and his new life in the wilds of Cornwall.

To quote Susan my treasurer "He is a dream".  
A well deserved retirement. Huge congrats from all at the NDC Richard, wax your board and steer clear of those damned pasties.

Rosie  
Manager, Natural Death Centre



Back at his desk in  
Eversholt Street



Richard has worked for Leverton and Sons for over 42 years, joining the company on the 4th September 1973. During those years he has been a valuable asset to the company and a much respected member of the community, and especially close to the local families of Somers Town and Camden Town.

Richard became Levertons' General Manager in 1989 and then in 2005 was made a Director of the company - the first and only non-Leverton to be given that honour.

His considerable experience and expertise have been invaluable in helping us run the company.

Both in conducting funerals and giving educational talks, Richard has been an excellent ambassador for the company.

A President of the British Institute of Funeral Directors in 1993/94, Richard has more recently helped champion environmentally - friendly funerals and client choice, through his work with the Association of Green Funeral Directors and the Natural Death Centre Charity.

It goes without saying we wish him and his wife Sam every happiness in his retirement.

Andrew Leverton,  
Director, Leverton and Sons Ltd

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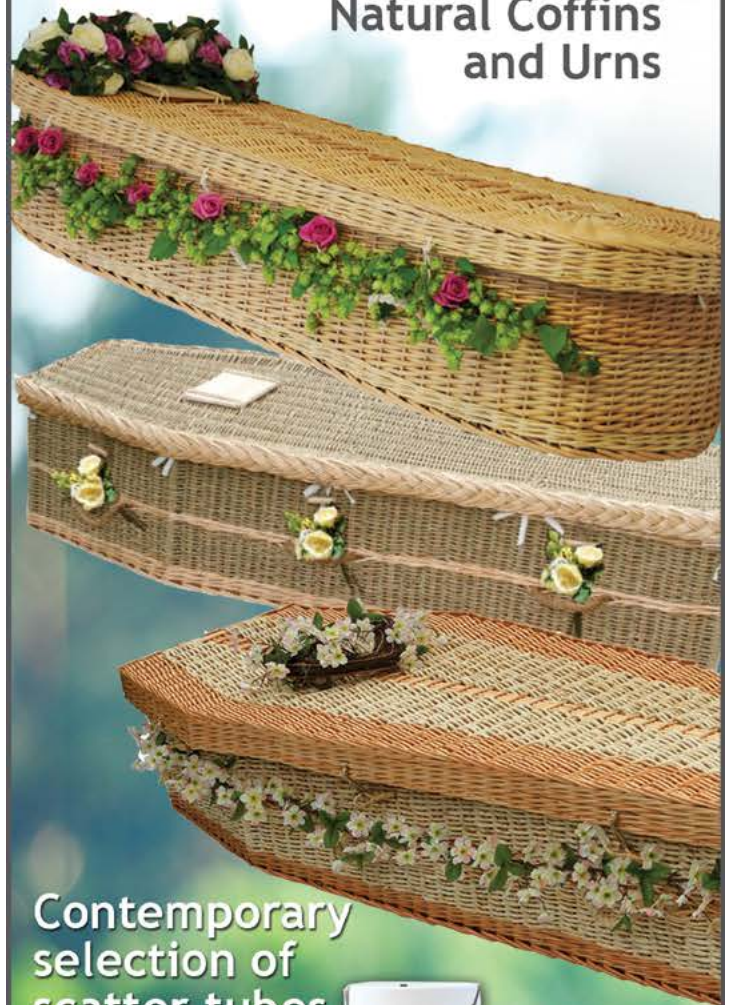
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# SHARPHAM MEADOW

## NATURAL BURIAL GROUND

Ancestors, eco-architecture and art reside together in a natural burial ground in England's South West.

Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground sits at the top of the Sharpham Estate, near Totnes, Devon, with an incredible valley vista down the River Dart and across an area of outstanding natural beauty.

The meadow was created in 2013 by the Sharpham Trust - the charity that looks after the 550-acre Sharpham Estate.



A ceremonial building made from natural materials has been erected there to shelter site visitors and ceremonies and an artwork that makes a sacred space has been created on the site.

“The artwork provides the perfect place for visitors to sit beside the flames, to remember the people buried here and to be a meditative spot for mourners and visitors,” said Ben Ballard, Programme Manager of the Sharpham Trust.

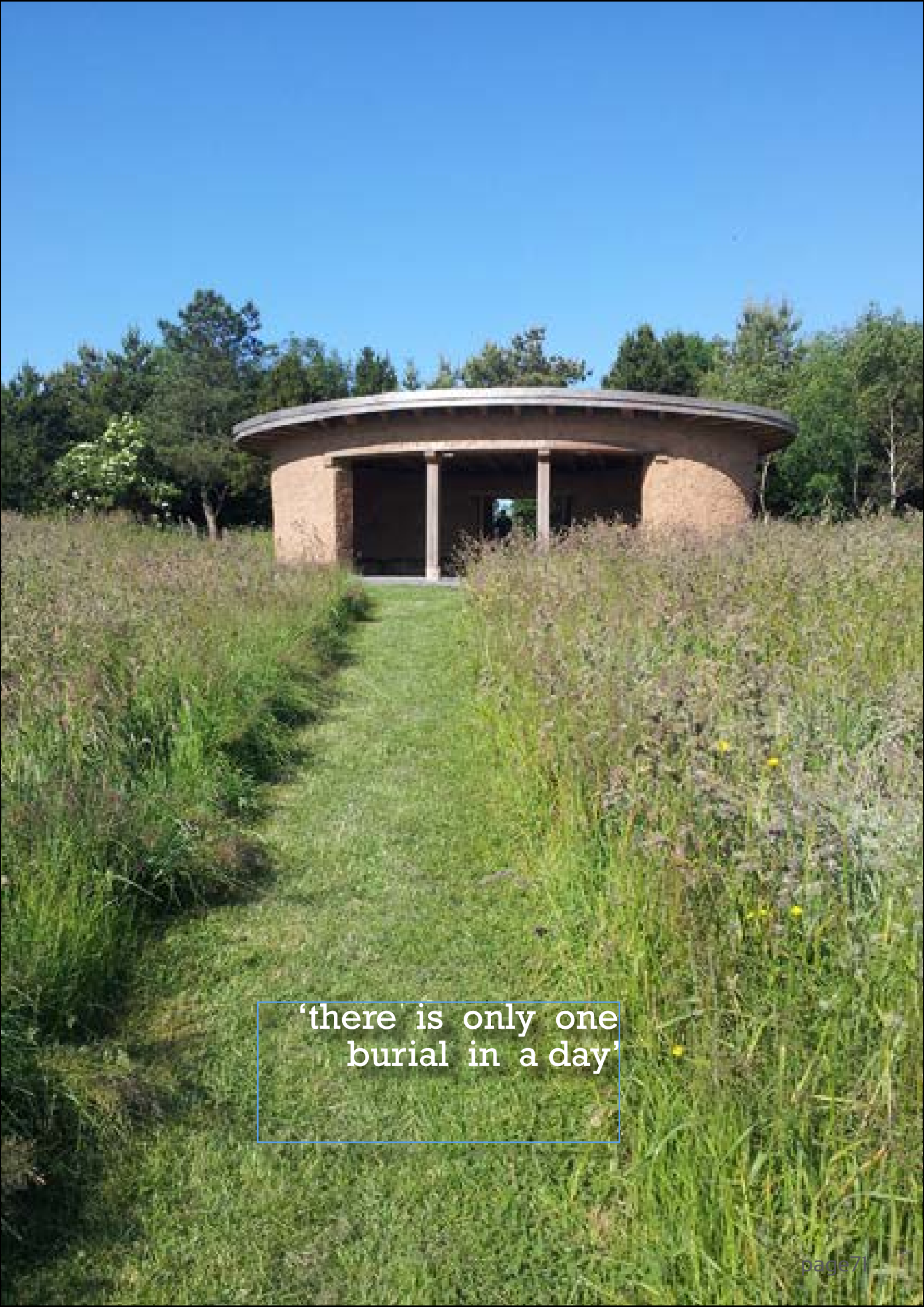
“The work was in response to a brief to connect people with the natural world and life cycles, whilst improving the experience of those visiting Sharpham Meadow,” he added.

Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground differs from a traditional churchyard or a municipal cemetery. It is open to all, regardless of faith or local residency, whether mourners are using a funeral director or not, having a religious ceremony, a secular ceremony, or no ceremony at all. Ashes can be interred there as well as burials.

The site is open all year round and anyone can visit anytime in daylight hours.


Both The Sharpham Trust, who own the Meadow, and Rupert and Claire Callender, who manage it, want to create an inclusive and beautiful place in which to remember our dead “There is only one burial in a day at Sharpham Meadow, so families have the place for as long as they need, sitting around the fire long into the night if needs be,” said Claire Callender.





‘there is only one  
burial in a day’





An annual All Souls' Day ceremony takes place at the site, as well as other events which are creating a community around Sharpham Meadow.

The ceremonial building there has been constructed with a stone and lime foundation, cob walls – made from mixing local earth and straw - and a green sedum roof. There is also a compost toilet.

The building is oval, reflecting the famed elliptical stairwell in nearby Georgian villa Sharpham House, often the venue for funerals, wakes and celebrations for those resting at Sharpham Meadow.

The Circle artwork is a cast bronze ring surrounding the Ancestors' Fire, with cedar seating posts allowing mourners and families to gather around the flames, perhaps lighting candles, meditating or leaving flowers or messages to the dead.

The ring symbolises the eternal circle of life, the fire, the Sun and the Moon and is emblazoned with a line of poetry from T.S. Eliot: 'in my end is my beginning'.

The seat posts have been decorated with bronze Sun and Moon ornaments protecting niches for votive offerings to the deceased.

The piece is the result of Sharpham Trust's Artist in Residence programme, and is the creation of Totnes artist Robin Lacey.

Feedback from people with family buried at the site has been positive. "The site is so beautiful, the wild flowers and the vista, so we have gone away with a complete calm image of [our relative's] viewpoint," said one family member.

The Sharpham Trust owned site will be protected in perpetuity. The site is run in accordance with the guidelines created by The Association of Natural Burial Grounds, of which Sharpham Meadow is a member.

Sharpham Meadow has been open for burials for two years now, and our community of souls is growing.

The meadow was farmed bio-dynamically for the previous 20 years, so has a well-established, flourishing and healthy ecosystem, which has generously accommodated this new but also timeless human activity.

Skylarks continue to proliferate across the field, nesting in the increasingly rare long grassland that they need to raise their young.

Deer pass through, badgers turn over the grass in search of succulent grubs, hares flatten themselves in divots and barn owls launch their evening raids from the cob shelter, returning to messily eat their prey in the rafters.

Over 30 people have been buried here so far, while others choose to have their ashes interred here. Some died at the end of long lives, rich with fulfilment.

Others died too soon, taken by tragedy or illness. Their stories and those of their families hang in the long grass like spiderwebs in dew, becoming part of this landscape of the heart.







# Maggie's simple, natural burial

by Rupert Callender.

Just as no life is alike, no funeral is either and the ceremonies that have unfolded at Sharpham Meadow have all been different apart from one unifying factor: the simple sincerity of each. One recent funeral stands out though.

Maggie was approaching her 9th decade and had been blind since her 50s. She lived in East Devon, a little distance from Sharpham and the Dart, but she had heard about this place, so got a friendly taxi driver to bring her.

Together they walked the field, while he described everything that could be seen.

Maggie sat on the grass and breathed it all in, feeling the hilltop breeze, hearing sheep, smelling the river and the sea on the horizon. She decided this was where she would lie.

When she died not long after, she was brought here by the funeral director she had known for 30 years, and with our help, she was simply lowered into her grave, but not before her coffin was lain in the long grass again, one last time.

We all paused and looked out over the soft hills, bright and alive in the May sunshine, cloud shadows scudding across the landscape, the river sinking into the sea's embrace, drinking it all in for Maggie.

Burial Ground Managers, Rupert & Claire Callender of The Green Funeral Company manage Sharpham Meadow for the Sharpham Trust. They were named Funeral Director of the Year at the Good Funeral Guide Awards 2012.

You can contact them on 01803 863923, email them at [sharphammeadow@sharphamtrust.org](mailto:sharphammeadow@sharphamtrust.org) or visit their website.

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A close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair blowing on a dandelion seed head. The seeds are captured in mid-air, creating a soft, ethereal effect against a blurred green background.

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# ESSEX'S

## *Coastal Beauty*



I thought our reader might like to find out why someone gets involved with running a natural burial ground, so I asked Samantha Lonergan at Crouch Valley Meadow in Essex some probing questions.

Who are you and how did this all come about?

“Hi, my name is Samantha. I’m 48 years old, married with 3 children and I opened Crouch Valley Meadow in 2004”.

What inspired you?

“I was visiting my brother in Devon and we visited a family grave at a woodland burial ground near to him in Totnes. As I stood on the site with the sun shining through the trees, I thought, “This is the sort of spot I would like for my final resting place”.>>

'this is the sort of spot I would like for my final resting place'





>> Starting a burial ground after visiting one on a personal basis is becoming a bit of a theme, you know. I can think of several other operators whose visits to existing burial sites inspired them to open their own.

Were you working back then?

“Yes, at the time I was working as a project manager. I have a background in Human Resources and Sustainable Development.

My husband and father are farmers and when I took voluntary redundancy I persuaded them to support me in applying for planning permission to change a two acre agricultural field into a green burial ground.

The idea was to share my field and its lovely views with like-minded people who also wish to help create a beautiful, english wood - an area of native trees, shrubs and flowers that support wildlife.

Do you think you will reach a point of ‘death fatigue’?

No, I will always work at the Meadow; it is part of my life. I like to meet every family who chooses their own or their loved one’s final resting place here.

Either Ross or I attend every funeral. Mind you, generally, our role on the day is car park attendant!

What do you do when not meeting folk and parking cars?

We have a vineyard growing Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. It surrounds the burial Meadow on two sides so when I’m not there I spend time helping Ross with the farm. >>

>> That sounds great! -a burial site for oenophiles! I think that is possibly unique! Can you give us a feel of the site?

Standing in the middle of the Meadow with my eyes closed I can hear birds singing, small animals moving about, the trees swaying in the breeze and insects hovering around me. There are many birds to see at the Meadow, from the common magpie, sparrow, swallow, thrush, wagtail, pigeon and robin as well as our resident woodpecker and visiting birds of prey including kestrels, owls and buzzards.

The river is only a ten minute walk away; you have a clear view of it from the Meadow's South facing slope and when the wind is in the right direction you can smell the salty sea air.

I suppose, like the rest of us, you have seen some interesting send-offs?

Yes. This is our eleventh year and we have been part of and witnessed some amazing and extraordinary funerals. There have been beautiful coffins, made and painted by the families and friends.

We have had biker funerals with Harley Davidson hearse and motorbike processions and also a horse and carriage hearse with bright coloured ostrich plumes.

**Any trends?**

Over the years we have seen more families preferring to arrange and conduct the funeral themselves.

Celebrations with live music and singing are becoming more common and are always lovely to listen to in the natural setting at the Meadow looking out to the river and across the countryside.



**What are your biggest problems and greatest joys?**

Our biggest problem is plastic wrapping around cut flowers. It is harmful to the wildlife and looks horrible.

Most people eventually understand it doesn't have a place at Crouch Valley Meadow.

My greatest joy is knowing that we have helped families in a small way with their grief, and every year I watch the burial ground change with all the new native memorial trees and shrubs which have been planted as lasting legacies and contributing to the health and diversity of the environment.





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**If you would like to find out more, contact the woodland dedications team on 0330 333 5302 or visit [woodlandtrustshop.com/mtd](http://woodlandtrustshop.com/mtd)**





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# TARN MOOR

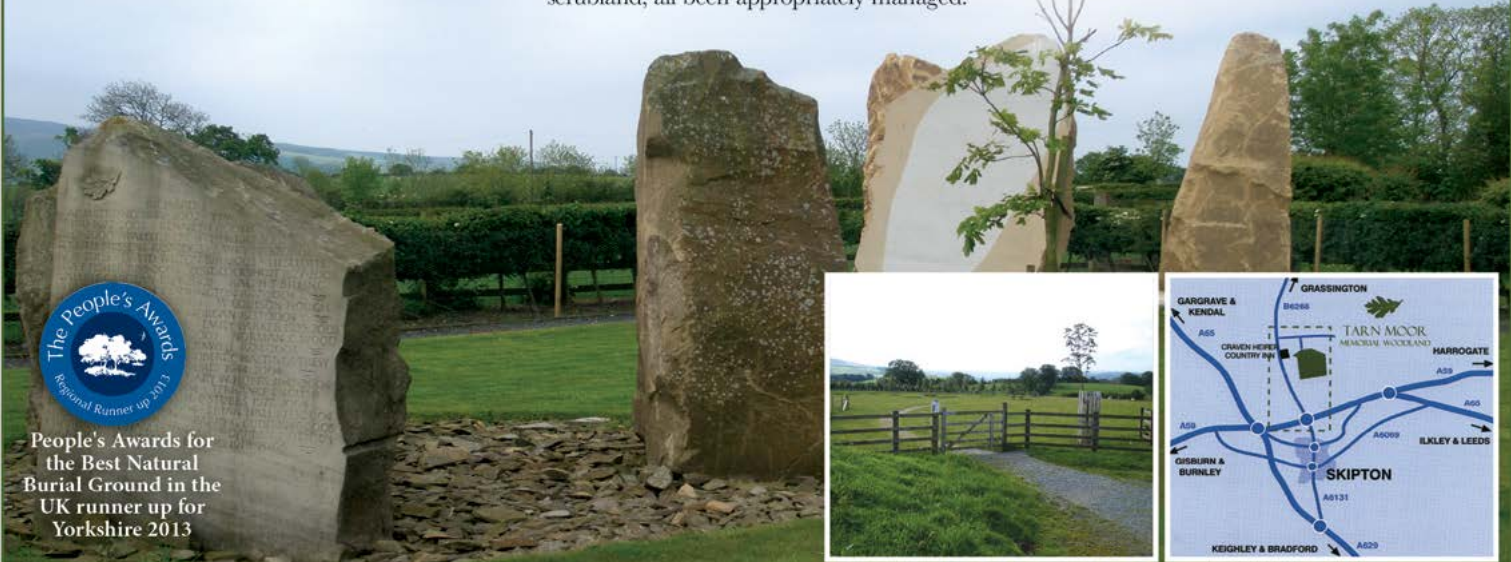
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The conservation approach will give an area of diverse habitat which will include areas of oak woodland, open pasture, traditional meadow and scrubland, all been appropriately managed.



People's Awards for the Best Natural Burial Ground in the UK runner up for Yorkshire 2013



Access to the memorial woodland is always available during daylight hours, footpaths, seating and open areas giving a variety of areas for family gatherings but allowing quiet individual contemplation if required.

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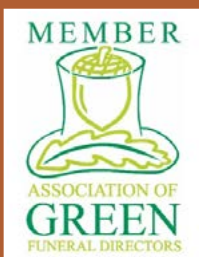
If you want to get your own arrangements in place, either by choosing your plot or planning your funeral we would be pleased to meet with you and explain all that we offer.

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For further information please contact Mrs Joanna Vassie  
Higher Ground Meadow | Hackney  
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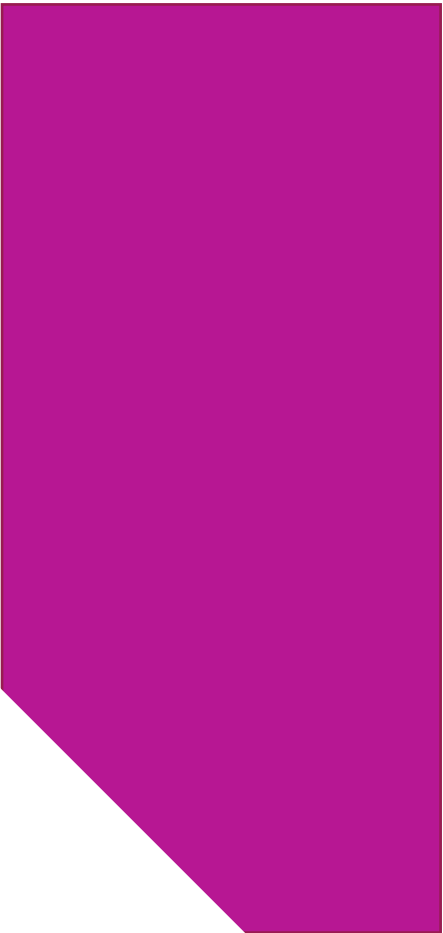
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# CIRCLE *of* LIFE Festival





Jean Francis, One Spirit Interfaith minister, pre-need funeral planner, author and winner of the 'Most Significant Contribution to the Understanding of Death' award at the Good Funerals Awards in Bournemouth 2013, is organising another series of 'happenings' in Horsham.

Here she tells us why she started the festival and about some of the events last year.

**Firstly, I have to ask, what is a InterFaith Minister ?**

In a multi-racial society, such as ours, there are people with widely-differing views. Interfaith ministers meet people of all faiths or none at

or another said, "Mum you can't say that.". She was referring to the Dying Matters Week.

Remembering that trying to engage the public with Death and Dying is almost impossible, I turned the idea on its head. We would take the work we do as ministers and facilitators to the general public but in gentle disguise, hence the Circle of Life Festival was born.>>

## 'above all, share special moments while celebrating the many milestones of life...

all, creating sacred ceremonies that are inclusive, loving and harmonious. In this way we bring people together to enjoy, and above all share special moments while celebrating the many milestones of life.

It is our job to be the 'spiritual' glue (so to speak) in our diverse and multi-cultural society.

I wanted to arrange an event in my hometown, Horsham, to support National Dying Matters Awareness week. However, even my grown-up daughter who has been brought up surrounded by end of life matters in one form





>>This was obviously a good decision because synchronicity immediately took charge of events. An e-mail arrived, the phone rang, my imagination was ignited - the programme was already coming together. Later that day I met Jill Shuker, leader of Horsham Healthy Walks at a lunch party. I shared my vision, which she immediately recognised, so we joined forces.

A week-long series of celebratory and sacred events included a variety of highly creative ceremonies and rituals designed as much to inspire and entertain as to heal.

Each event included a gentle reminder that birth, life and death are interwoven and that we can't have one without the other. Such reminders came in different forms, sometimes by candles being lit in memory of those unable to be with us for whatever reason, or by likening the circle of life to the cycle of nature.

These special occasions included ritual storytelling, celebrations for pets (both alive and deceased), blessings for children, old and divorced people as well as those who choose to rejoice in many years of marriage.

Celebrations around nature featured strongly, particularly as Horsham has an acclaimed programme of healthy walks, which is now into its 15th year, and included many enthusiasts who regularly enjoy active appreciation of the Sussex countryside.>>



'life, birth and death are interwoven...'



Ceremonies showcased the talents of Interfaith Ministers trained by the [One Spirit Foundation](#) as well as a range of professional experts and celebrants.

To link the occasions together I introduced each facilitator, speaking about their special talents, their location and the services they offer.

I also gave a brief outline about what interfaith Ministers are, and what we do.

**The areas we covered included:-**

**Story telling**, with a wealth of tales from around the world, each offering food for thought.

**Celebrating the animals in our lives.**

People gathered in the sunshine with their dogs, their memories and/or their pet's cremated remains that were scattered as we walked through the ancient and beautiful St Leonard's Forrest.

**A Croning and Crowning Ceremony.**

It was a very special ceremony for seven mature, wise women, who celebrated age, wisdom, fun and the beauty of inspiration and experience.

**A Memorial Celebration.**

Interfaith Minister Anthea Ballam created this ceremony to commemorate the life of her beloved mother, a vibrant, fun loving lady, whose funeral had been a depressing and impersonal occasion.

Cheri Mugeridge, who attended, said: "I now know that there are so many choices, and that funerals and memorials do not have to be dour affairs, but more real joyful celebrations of life, tailored to suit the person who has gone and the families and friends left behind. I now look forward to planning my own send off!"

**Honouring the Ancestors.**

Included a guided tour of the Old Denne Road Cemetery and we held a unique ceremony in the Peace Garden, which honoured our ancestors, both past, and, the yet unborn.

**A Walk for Wellbeing.**

A short but thoughtful amble on the Downs Link with Jill Shuker, during which a bench was dedicated in loving memory of a fellow walker.



## Feedback from Betty Pearce:

'The reason I was drawn to the festival initially was Jean's take on death and dying.

The experience was very warming and everyone was so friendly and passionate about what they do – even funerals!

## Feedback from Ella Roskilly:

'By the end of the week I felt uplifted and enthused by all I had seen and heard, it has opened my eyes to other and better ways of marking the important occasions in life, especially my funeral and has really made me think!'

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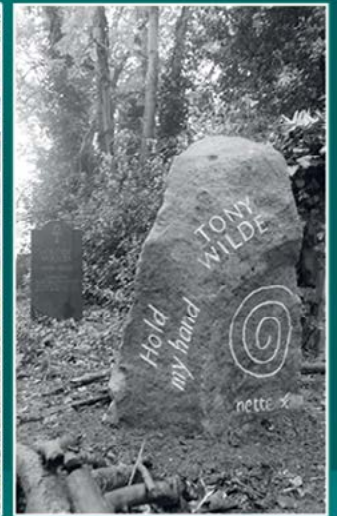
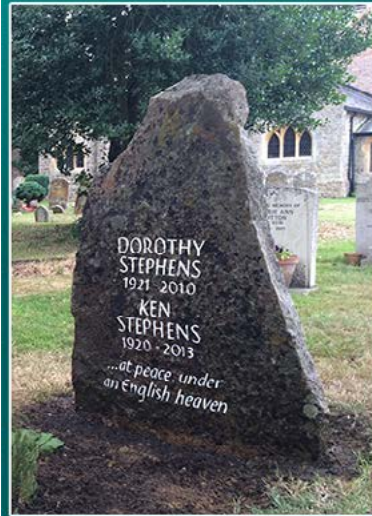
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*Is there  
a book  
in you?*

**James Baker tells us how he came to write “A Life In Death – Memoirs Of A Cotswold Funeral Director”.**

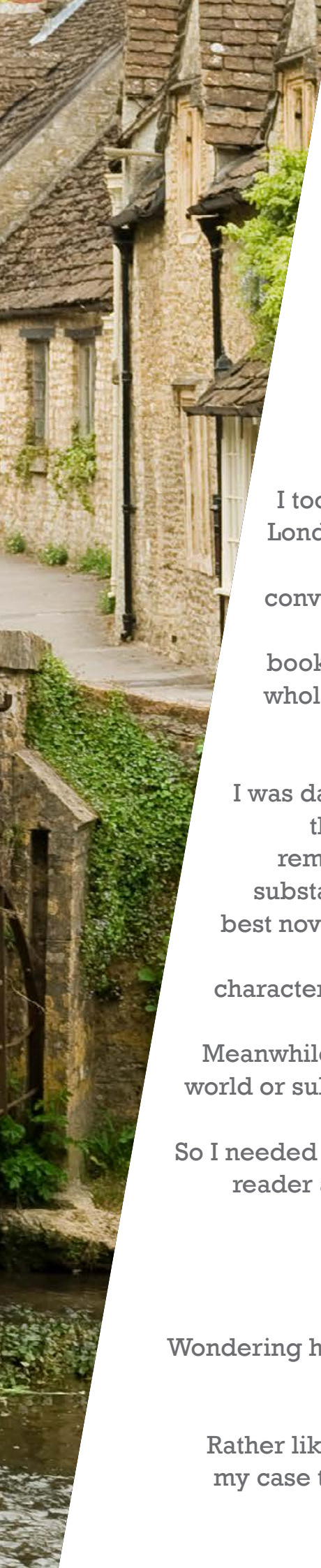
It wasn't originally my idea to write a book. My cousin, a professional author, suggested I do it. At the time he was halfway through a four book series portraying survivors in a post-apocalyptic world overrun by the virally-reanimated undead, so naturally I was sceptical about his suggestion. >>











>> I continued toying with the idea for a few months – an undertaker’s memoir I mean, not an undead apocalypse – but I still wasn’t convinced.

However, we had a quiet period at work and with time to spare I started making notes of all the stand-out moments, experiences and turning points of the first 25 years of my career. (incidents involving the marauding undead were notably absent.)

## **The blueprint was there, but would the book-buying public be interested?**

I took some encouragement from how ‘Don’t Drop The Coffin’ by London funeral director Barry Albin-Dyer was popular enough to warrant its own television series. But the thing that really convinced me was how ‘Don’t Drop The Coffin’ was characterised by its larger-than-life London setting, whereas my potential book would beset in the West Country. I saw an opportunity for a whole new perspective on the subject, telling the story of funeral directors in the anything- but sleepy country-side.

I was daring to think that maybe, just maybe, I could actually pull off this whole writing-a-book idea. But the biggest challenge still remained: would I be capable of writing something with enough substance that readers would feel they’d got value for money? The best novels take the reader on an adventure into a world far removed from their own, with vividly portrayed locations, interesting characters and a transformative journey for the story’s lead character.

Meanwhile, the best non-fiction gives the reader genuine insight into a world or subject to which they’d never otherwise be able to gain access.

So I needed to produce an informative non-fiction work that still gave the reader all the entertainment value of a fictional work too: the funeral directing equivalent James Herriott book perhaps.

Hmm, I thought, no pressure then...

Wondering how on earth I could achieve that, I cast around for inspiration before realising the answer was right outside my window.

Rather like James Herriott, I, too, am a product of the locality I serve; in my case the town and district of Stroud, tucked below the western >>

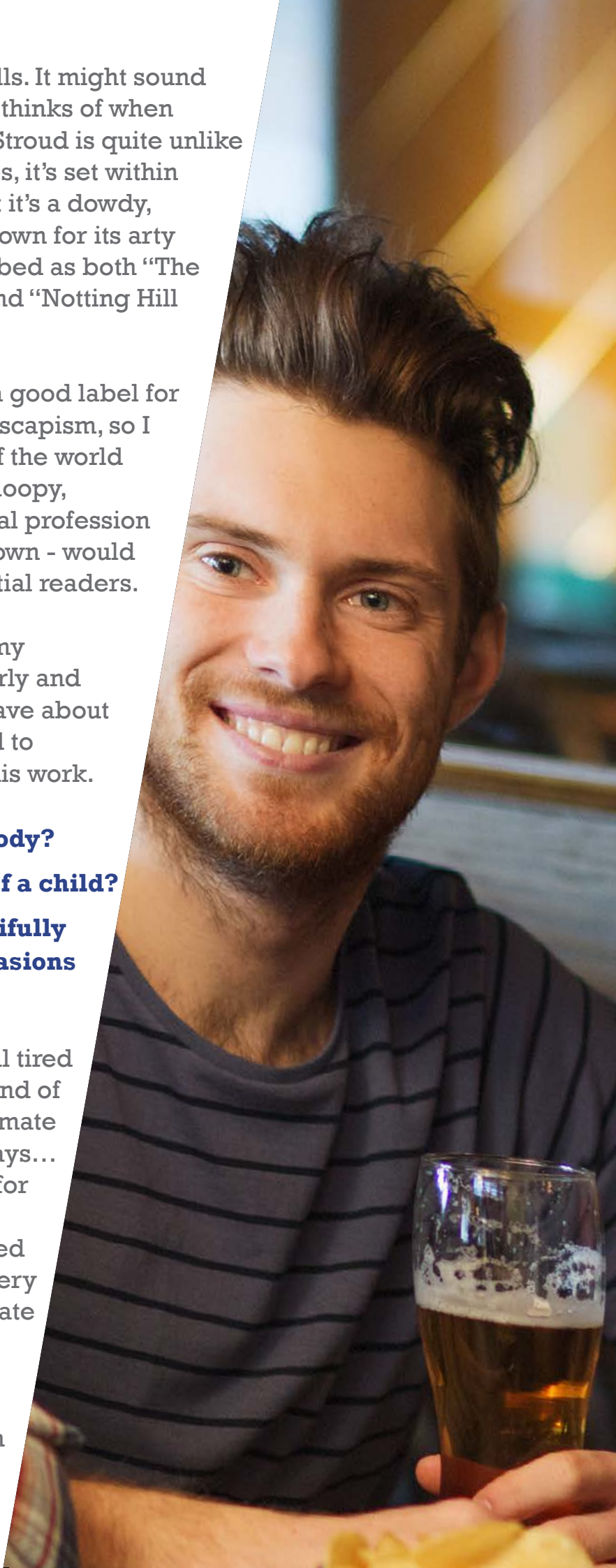
>> escarpment of the Cotswold Hills. It might sound like the kind of rural idyll everyone thinks of when Gloucestershire is mentioned, but Stroud is quite unlike the normal Cotswold stereotype. Yes, it's set within picturesque rolling countryside, but it's a dowdy, workaday kind of place and well known for its arty contingent. Stroud has been described as both "The Covent Garden of the Cotswolds" and "Notting Hill with wellies."

However, 'the Cotswolds' is always a good label for attracting readers seeking a bit of escapism, so I thought putting this beautiful part of the world against a combination of my rather loopy, un-stereotypical town and the funeral profession – itself a parallel universe all of its own - would provide a unique offering for potential readers.

Having by then committed myself, my overriding aim was to address, clearly and honestly, all the questions people have about the world of the funeral director and to illustrate what it's really like to do this work.

- What's it like to handle a dead body?**
- How do we cope with the death of a child?**
- How do we deal with those mercifully rare but sadly still inevitable occasions when something goes wrong?**

I was determined to avoid the usual tired anecdotes about funerals and the kind of stories you hear down the pub: 'My mate works at the crematorium and he says... ' Likewise there was to be no place for anything overly-sentimental or exploitative either. Above all I wanted to convey my experiences from a very personal angle so readers could relate to them enough to draw their own conclusions about what funeral directors actually do. Also to show how, sometimes, the truth really can be stranger than fiction.



*Quite apart from discovering the joy of writing, focusing on the human element made me realise just how rich with experience and learning my working life has been so far. I also found the whole exercise of assembling those twenty five years into a narrative unexpectedly cathartic and affirming.*

*I submitted my manuscript to various publishers but unsurprisingly none felt my book was commercial enough for them. So , instead, I diverted down the self-publishing route, finding myself launched into another adventure equally as enjoyable as actually writing the book.*

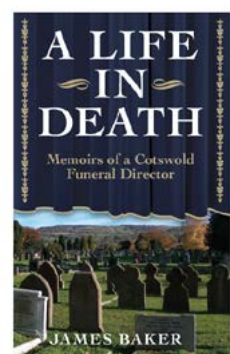
*However, being the nation's leading Luddite, I completely underestimated the popularity of e-books and instead concentrated on having a paperback produced, with the Kindle edition almost a grudging afterthought.*

*My only ambition had been to sell enough copies to cover my costs, but I quickly found that my Kindle sales alone would have put me in profit within weeks if I hadn't also produced a costly printed edition.*

*That's not to say I'm writing this from the deck of my yacht in Monaco, but I have been truly amazed by the success the book has achieved.*

*And the royalties have meant I can afford Marmite on my toast...on high days and holidays at least.*

**James Baker**





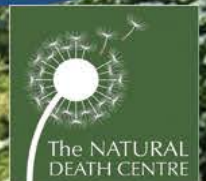
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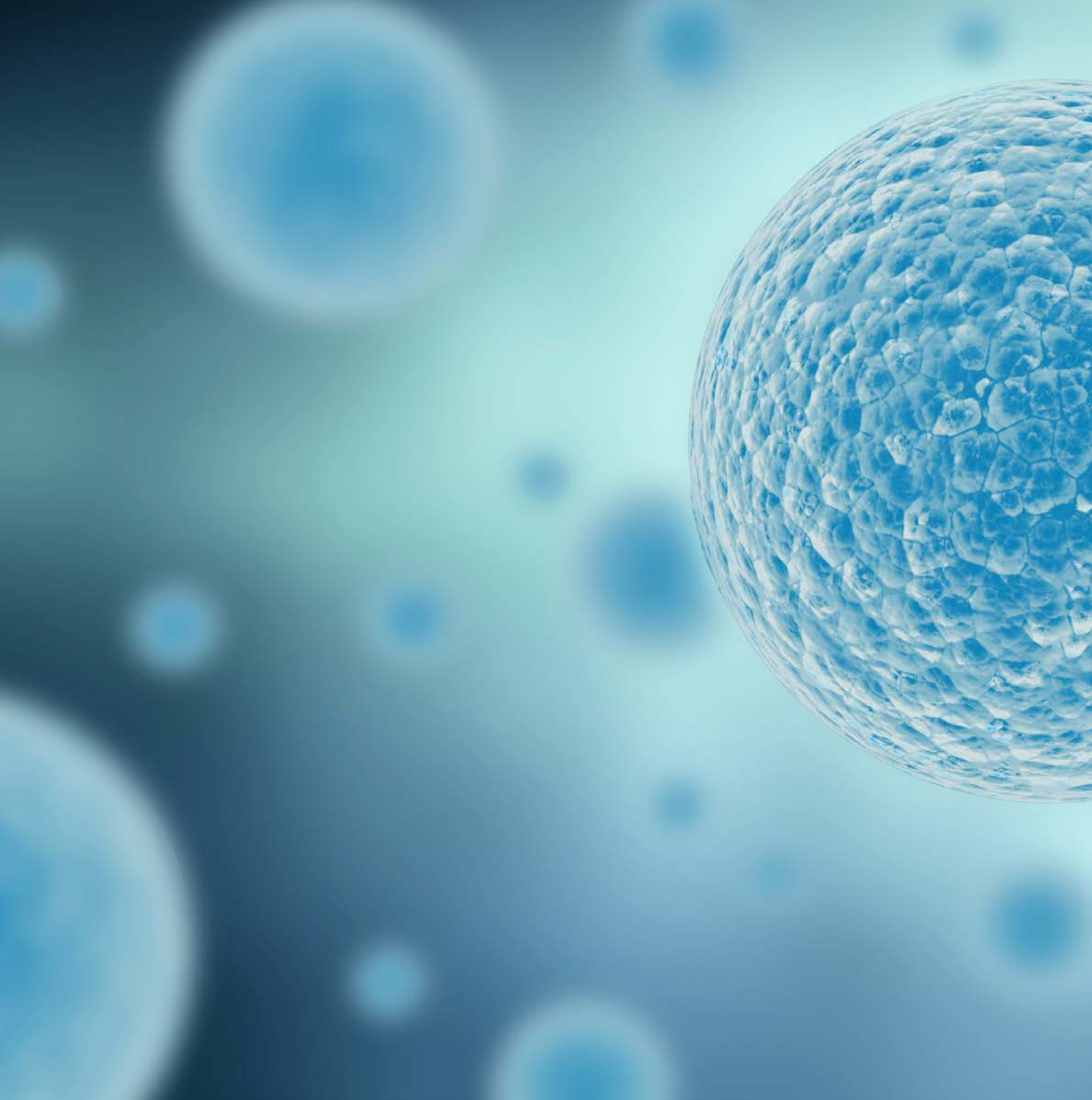
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have a walk round anytime to see for yourself.

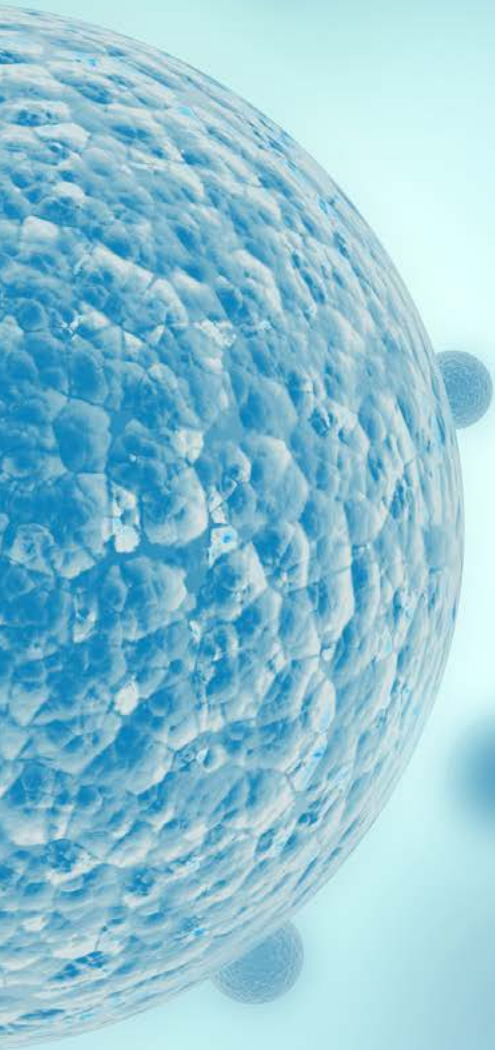


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# Tissue Donation after Death




After reading a couple of thought-provoking editions of this magazine and as someone who has recently started a career in this area, I thought I might offer a different perspective on a topic which may not necessarily come into people's viewpoint very often but one which I am striving to make a 'ordinary thing' in death..

Now most people know about Organ and Tissue Donation and how it can be radically life-changing. However, there is far less awareness about Tissue Donation for research purposes and this is something that I, as a Research Nurse for Ethical Tissue (The Human Tissue Bank at the University of Bradford), am hoping to change as part of a new initiative which is taking place in West Yorkshire (and potentially country-wide soon).>>







>>When I first started this job a year ago, I was already familiar with death and caring for the dying patient (I have been a nurse for almost 10 years).

However, I was used to death from a 'caring' perspective: the heart breaking conversation, the restraining of tears, the watching of a family in anguish kind of caring. I would stay with the family for hours, trying to make sense of this gut-wrenching situation with them. Especially in the Intensive Care setting, the family often had no time to prepare for what I could see was round the corner. And I would have to prepare myself too.

This job is different.

Death is still very present but it can now be life-affirming. In donating their loved one's tissues for research I strongly believe that families can take great comfort in knowing that their loved ones are potentially helping millions of people and future generations to come!

"Tissue Donation After Death" is a new scheme that The Tissue Bank and I have set up and developed in the past year. My role is to promote Tissue Donation as something that can be offered to those people who want to find something positive in death, or those who cannot for whatever reason, be organ donors. Only 1% of people can be organ donors whereas 99% of people can donate tissue for research (only HIV/Hep B preclude this).

Small 'marble' sized amounts of tissue (not usually whole organs) are taken from one or more areas in the body. This tissue is then optimised, anonymised and given to researchers so they can gain a comprehensive overview of diseased and healthy tissue. This helps them to develop early diagnostic tests, better treatments and cures for life-limiting diseases such as cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, heart, lung and skin disease just to name a few.

There are no delays to any funeral plans. The donor can, of course, still be viewed in the normal way by the family and the donation is done respectfully and ethically in a local mortuary. We organise the transfer of the donor to the mortuary and of course, return the donor to their desired funeral home/resting place. This is at no charge to the family. >>

>> Because we only take tissue samples which are useful to researchers (ie we don't just store tissues in dusty jars on shelves in our labs!), there is no set number of tissues to be donated.

Every case is individual and we will talk through with the donor/family what they would be happy donating.

Some donors want a specific tissue to go to help fight a specific disease they may have e.g. cancer. Some are happy for us to take several different tissues and put them into multiple research projects.

I am trying to give people another 'choice' after death and so I think by introducing this topic into the wider public domain, encouraging people to talk about their wishes and provide them with a basic knowledge about this service, they will hopefully be empowered to take control over their end of life decisions, like choosing a special song, cremation or burial... it can be viewed as another decision to make along the way. I recognise that this option isn't for everyone – but there are many people who would like to give something back to the medical and scientific community especially if they are fighting a specific ailment, such as

Alzheimer's and want their tissue to go to help find a cure.

It's important to get the message out that this is another option after death ...but if people don't know about it then they can't choose it!

So please spread the word: tell your friends and family, discuss with your local GP or care provider. There is nothing to sign or action to take beforehand, other than tell your next of kin your wishes. Keep our contact details/phone number handy and then if you decide to donate your precious, possibly life-saving tissue, your next of kin can call us when appropriate and we will take it from there.

If you would like any further information or an information pack, please contact me.

**Joanne Mullarkey**

Office: 01274 235849

Email: [j.mullarkey@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:j.mullarkey@bradford.ac.uk)

Ethical Tissue, The ICT Bioincubator, University of Bradford, Tumbling Hill Street, West Yorkshire, BD7 1DP





## Editor's note.

Just to be clear about 'donation' - as some folk seem a bit confused.

The above article is about giving tissue for research purposes. There is, of course, transplantation to the living, saving and improving lives. The big message here is that they differ in who can give permission.

To donate organs for transplant you have to join the organ donor register. To register [click here](#)

To donate tissue for research purposes the family alone can give permission.

A third option is to donate your whole body for educational purposes. You have to arrange this with the medical school whilst you are alive; your family cannot offer your body themselves, even if it was your wish and mentioned in your will. (One frequent problem we encounter is that altruistic individuals, who have made this arrangement, sometimes forget to make a plan B. This is necessary because if, for whatever reason, their body is declined at the 11th hour, their family, who thought that everything was sorted out, now find themselves having to make funeral arrangements and don't know what is the next best option).

There is a great article about educational donation on page 46 of the first edition of More to Death. [Click here to read.](#)

I never realised that in addition to donating much-needed organs, that other tissues like bone and skin, tendons and eyes can be donated for transplant too. According to the NHS blood and organ donation leaflet, tissue donations can directly help up to 50 people : amazing.

Rosie Inman-Cook

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# The Ideal Death Show

by Charles Cowling



**The annual Ideal Death Show and Good Funeral Awards weekend has come of age. It has found its niche, its feet and its raison d'etre. It knows what it's about, which is why it now occupies a glittering place in the social calendar of forward-looking deathies everywhere.**

The formula is simple. This is an inclusive, unstuffy event that brings the liveliest minds in the funerals business together under a non-sectarian umbrella, then stands back and watches them talk and... talk. The free and uninhibited sharing of ideas, insights and experience that characterises this event is a rare and beautiful thing in an industry where people tend to keep their cards close to their chest and their competitors in the dark.

What's more, delegates go on supporting and encouraging each other long after they've gone home.>>





>>This is good for businesses - often new businesses finding their feet - and good for bereaved people. The Ideal Death Show seeks, above all, to be useful.



It is also good for people who feel drawn to the death business and want to find out more. This is a where to research, make friends and get connected. There are several pioneering startups out there that owe their conception to the Ideal Death Show.

So if you're contemplating trying your hand at undertaking or celebrancy, come along in 2016. You'll be knocked out by the warmth of the welcome and the openhearted generosity of spirit you'll be shown.





Many of those who come to the Ideal Death Show identify themselves as progressives.

They reject the staid stuffiness of the old farts in black; they want to do things differently, more meaningfully, more in tune with modern life, which is why the Good Funeral Awards are staged on the same weekend, to bring the best of the old guard together with the young turks, let them learn from each other and develop mutual respect.

I spoke to three siblings from a heritage business in Essex who were lit up by the conversations they'd been having with bright-eyed newbies: they were full of ideas for brightening up their business.

It does no harm to remind reformers that, if set in their ways, the best of the old farts are open-minded, capable and have good things to share.

**'this weekend is all about symbiosis'**

Because the ineluctable fact remains that the arguably outworn, trad funeral is still very much with us. Because it's what most clients still ask for. Yes, the chilly winds of change are whistling. Increasingly, bereaved people are wanting something different. But, and here's the point, because they don't start thinking about this stuff until somebody dies they often don't know what precisely it is that they do want. >>



>> It's for this reason that, if thinking people in the death business want to enrich the experiential value of funerals, they need to get inside the minds, not of fellow undertakers, but the general public. Because you can't change the business from the inside.

You've got to work your socks off to make your case, philosophically and persuasively, to consumers. Message to young turks: you are not the change, they are.



And even though it's difficult, obviously, to divert ordinary people from pleasurable Saturday retail recreation and come instead to contemplate mortality and commemorative rituals to accompany the disposal of a corpse, this is what the Ideal Death Show pluckily tries to do - reach out to the public.



The good news: this year a record number came to the exhibition, death cafes and talks. Factors working in favour, besides the quality of exhibitors, were the town-centre location, excellent speakers and the indefatigable cajolery, streetside, of Paul Sinclair with his motorcycle hearse, and Rosie Inman-Cook of the Natural Death Centre.

Does this all sound mind-numbingly worthy? You wouldn't think so if you met the delegates. Sure, they're deadly serious folk, every one of them. But, like all deadly serious people, they have a well-developed sense of humour and a perfectly proper appetite for fun.



So the Good Funeral Awards provide a fitting climax to the weekend: good food, a bit of booze and all the suspense you get with any well-run awards event culminating in the coronation of the best in the business, many of them unsung heroes.

These awards mean a lot. They recognise personal achievement and endorse professional attainment. >>





>> Winners feel individually validated, as they deserve, and they also reap a rich commercial and reputational harvest. The interest shown in the awards by print and broadcast media adds immensely to their value and does an excellent job of raising public awareness.



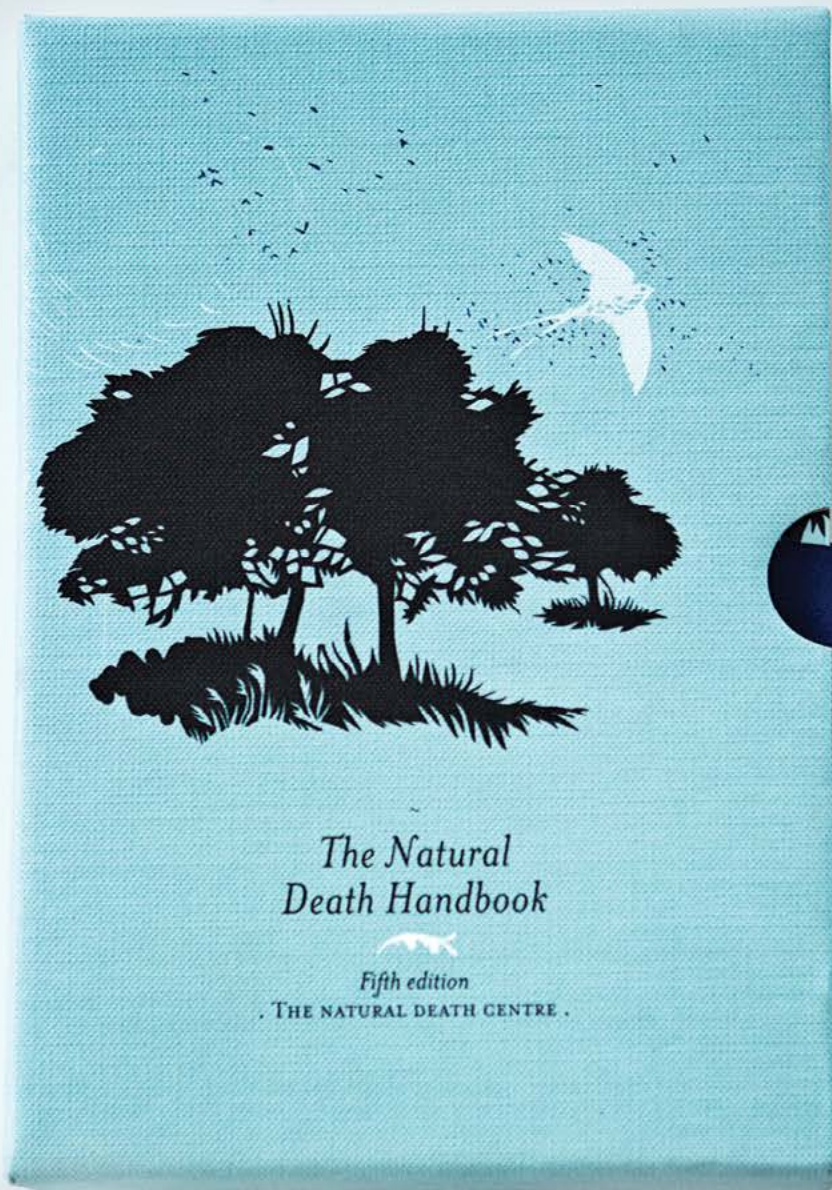
The Ideal Death Show has morphed over its short life in response to the suggestions, wishes and needs of those who come. The organisers work hard to make it affordable. They listen to criticisms and good ideas. For all this year's shortcomings and hiccups (there really weren't that many), everyone left happy and enriched, leaving the organising committee to recalibrate where necessary.



Next year's event, to be held at a venue yet to be announced, will be better than all the rest. If you've never been, come. The Ideal Death Show belongs to everybody.



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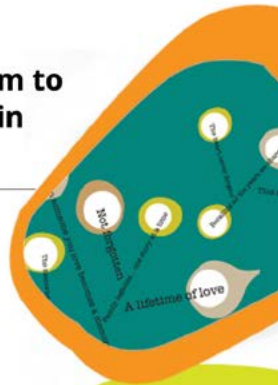
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A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a bright yellow sticky note. The note is held between the thumb and index finger, with other fingers visible. The note has a white rectangular area in the center with horizontal lines, similar to a notepad. The text 'How Much Can You SAVE?' is written on this area. 'How Much' is in red, 'Can You' is in black, and 'SAVE?' is in red. The background is dark and out of focus, showing a maroon and white striped tie.

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**Can You**  
**SAVE?**



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The annual Royal London Report is now out and shows that the average cost of;

- a funeral in 2015 was up 3.9% since 2014.

- a burial funeral is now £4,110 (up from £3,962 in 2014)

a cremation funeral is now £3,294 (up from £3,162 in 2014)

There is the secret option of a direct funeral. I say 'secret' because most funeral directors will still not mention this to families, even those declaring themselves to be without funds.

It costs one third of the ubiquitous national results revealed in the Royal London report.

The NDC has a list of a dozen providers of the £1000 funeral and we receive not only calls from the public seeking this, but we point others in the direction of these firms when they present themselves in a complete state of panic and disbelief at the quotes they have received.>>



>> **The following is an account by one of the latest firms to realise that there is a demand for this no fuss funeral.**

**I also gave Nick Gandon at Simplicita a ring to see whether or not the increasing number of direct funeral providers is affecting his business.**

“Busy as ever,” he declared, “and more folk seem to be aware of it as an option”.

*Has anything changed since you set up Simplicita in 2009?*

“Well, pre-need is growing, so we have found a plan provider who we are happy to work with”.

Nick went on to tell me how, looking at the socio-economic background of his customers, that with the odd exception, it is the professional classes using his service not those with few savings.

Interesting.

**Here, Jonathan Mees and Ian Hope from Oak Funeral Services explain what brought them to start South West Cremations.**

A few years ago, not long after Oak Funeral Services had been created, we were asked if we could provide a “Direct Cremation” service for a family, as they’d seen an advert by a company in London but were struggling to find something similar locally.



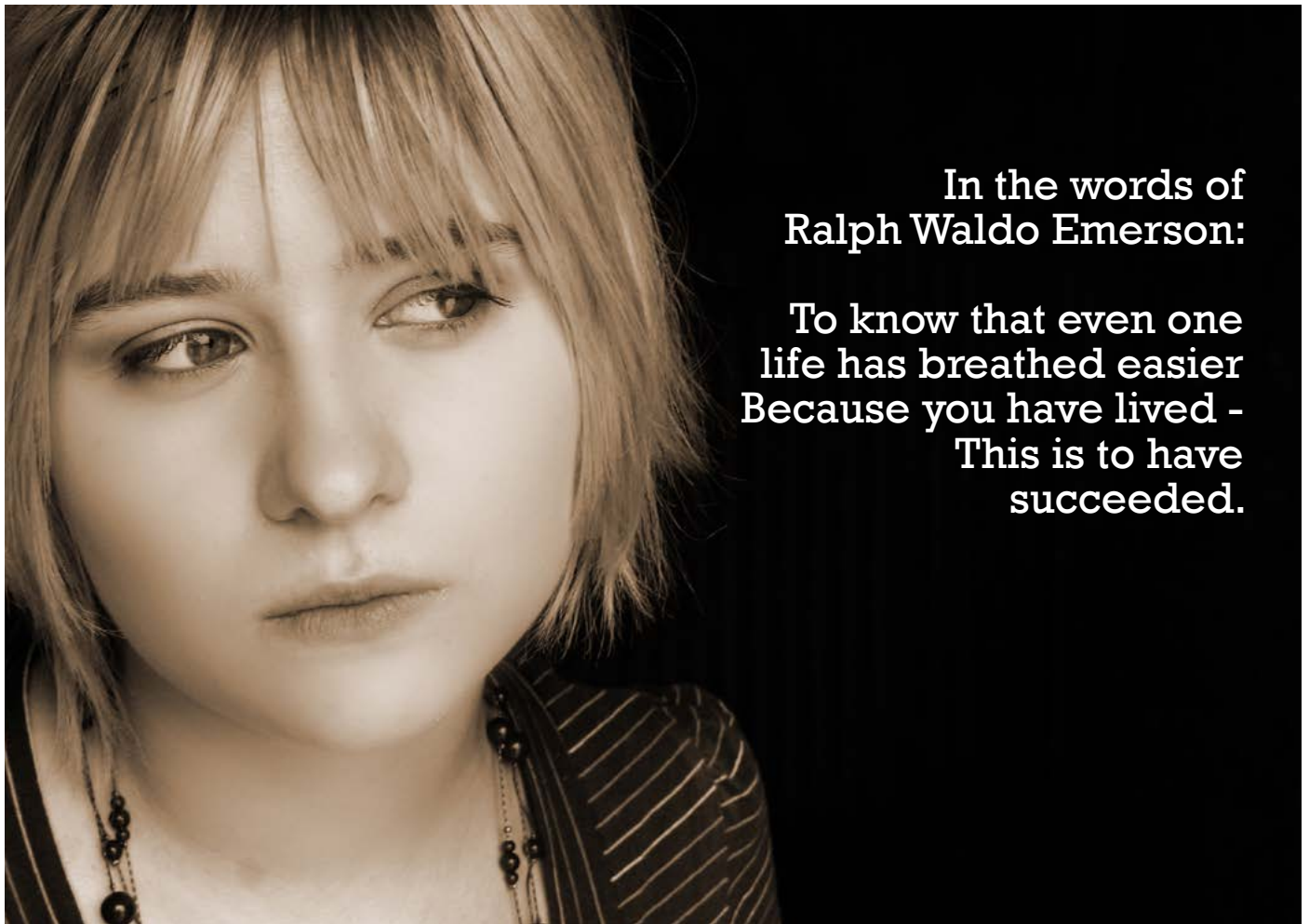
It didn't seem to be an unreasonable request and we were more than pleased to help make the arrangements as requested.

Although a direct cremation was certainly not a new idea, there seemed to be a real lack of a regional service in the south west for families who didn't want a traditional crematorium service but just wanted to meet Dad's wishes; a simple, no fuss, no bells and whistles cremation and for the ashes to come back to the family afterwards so that they could hold their own small memorial in the beauty of the Quantock Hills and scatter his ashes there.

About a month later, another family came to us with a very similar request and we arranged with the crematorium to do the same, this time returning the ashes to the family in a beautiful woodland scene scatter tube.

It seemed to be that there was a growing and unmet need for families that didn't want or need the formality of a traditional funeral, together with the ever-escalating costs of a standard crematorium service.

So many times we've been sitting with a bereaved family and they've told us that Mum didn't want any fuss and had always told them, "Just put me in a box and take me to the crematorium". >>



In the words of  
Ralph Waldo Emerson:

To know that even one  
life has breathed easier  
Because you have lived -  
This is to have  
succeeded.

>> As everyone is aware these days, the cost of even a simple no frills cremation service at the crematorium is escalating yearly with very few FD's offering any funerals below £2,500. And yet, so many people expressly tell their families that they don't want them to waste their money on a big 'do' when they go.

When you are released from the constraints of a 20 minute crematorium chapel service and keeping one eye on the clock - aware that the next hearse has probably already arrived and is waiting outside for their turn, you can create something so much more personal that is built and designed around the person who has died, as well as helping to create a ceremony that the bereaved family and friends will remember and treasure - something that has so much more meaning and provides a memory to be treasured rather than endured.

Over the last few years we've helped to hold some beautiful memorial gatherings in some fantastic settings, from a sunset scattering on the top of Exmoor to a champagne picnic on the cliffs. From a simple woodland interment to a private family farewell party in a back garden.

To keep everything simple and to try to remove some of the confusion from the convoluted pricing common to so many funeral directors, we decided to offer a simple Direct Cremation for a fixed cost. No hidden charges, no added disbursements. Just £1200 fully inclusive.

For many families this is all that is needed: someone to 'undertake' the cremation process for them whilst they come to terms with their loss. For others, we can help them to design and create a memorial gathering or a family farewell, together with a suitable celebrant or minister at a time that is right for them from only £1500.

>>Once we have been instructed to carry out a Direct Cremation, we arrange all the paperwork either in person or via recorded delivery and keep the family fully informed as we go. We always make sure that everyone knows the date and time the cremation will take place so that they can just be still for a moment and send their thoughts or prayers if they wish.

And we'll always follow up with a phone call the same day to let the bereaved know that everything went well and to talk about returning the ashes if required.

So many people feel that being an Undertaker or Funeral Director is all about working with the dead, when in reality nothing could be further from the truth.

The bodies that come into our care are treated with the same respect and dignity as any living person.

Yet our focus and reason for being here is to care for and support those that remain behind - the family and loved ones who are facing one of the most intense and traumatic periods in their lives.

#### Editor's note

If anyone knows of other providers of Direct services, at or about the £1000 mark, please ensure that we are aware of them too.

If this is of interest to you please take a look at a related article in the last edition of More to Death re direct burial choices. [Click here to read.](#)





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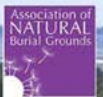
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# How did you end up doing this?

Over 16 years of being involved with death, I continue to meet new people who have, through various ways, come to be working in some death related business.

Some have been inspired by good experiences to take up a new career. Many others have been motivated by disappointment and anger at the way they were treated or the shoddy service they witnessed their family receiving. "I could do a whole lot better" is something I regularly hear.

Personally I never expected that firstly I would end up burying people in shallow graves in the woods and secondly running a funeral-related charity. It seems like many things in life, I just fell into it by chance, or was it meant to be? (I have yet to fall into a grave.)

We received this account from a coffin painter in Cornwall who has her own take on how her journey started. I hadn't heard any account like this before so thought M2D would share it with you.

Rosie







One sunny afternoon back in the 60s when I was about seven years old, I was playing in my maternal Nan`s back garden and I was suddenly drawn to an old enamel bread bin: you know, the sort of thing that is back in vogue now.

It was lying dormant behind the garden shed so I pulled it out from the weeds and grass that were growing around it, unveiling worms and other such creepy crawlies. I placed it on the sunny lawn and pondered, `It needs a wash! ` So I took it to the outside tap and rinsed off the earth and then left it to dry.

Now what happens next is quite bizarre for a young girl to be doing but please bear with me and I do believe all will become clear.

As it was very warm there was an abundance of flies making their mark on the day; some were full of zest and there were others, who ,shall we say, had seen better days! I decided that those who were no longer with us needed a resting place and I had just the place for them... the bread bin!

I put earth in the bin about a quarter of the way up and then I put each and every dead fly in a neatly parcelled piece of toilet roll and then gently placed the white soft caskets of toilet roll on top of the earth.

The next stage was gently to place more soil over the top of them. With the task completed, I knelt over the bin and observed my undertaking. Now they were buried neatly beneath the earth ; everything looked bleak and dark but as this was a beautiful summer`s afternoon, there was an abundance of colourful blooms in the garden. >>



## Mmm, this needs colour I remember thinking...!

>> I looked around the garden and was careful in my choice of picking : this needed to be dainty and delicate little flowers, not blowsy blooms or traditional roses. It had to be a natural creation.

I gathered daisies from the unmown grass, buttercups and buds of delicate pink fuchsias that were abundant on their stems : these are what I can remember picking. This needed a base before the buds and naive blooms could be placed on the top, so I set about picking the long blades of the unmown grass and covered the bare and unwelcoming soil with them.

page98

The grass created a carpet of green and now all I had to do was to set about placing the gathered flowers one by one to create a resting place to the flies.

A transformation had occurred : the dark and cold- looking grave now looked less daunting and scary.

## What happens when we die - a sense of emptiness and darkness

So much thought and detail that had gone into this; it is an afternoon that has stayed with me. I really knew nothing of `death` at this age; being `dead` just meant that the person wasn`t here.



As we all mature, `death` has more of an impact on us individually and I, like many others, became fearful of it... what happens when we die - a sense of emptiness and darkness, how could that be it?

It wasn't until I was in my mid twenties that my view on `death` changed. I suffered a traumatic miscarriage, which resulted in a minor operation but due to hospital negligence, routine procedures were forgotten and when lying on the operating table I had an out of body experience, which then changed my views on death from there on.

Since that experience my awareness of `something else` became increasingly prominent in my life!

Was this awareness of 'something else' telling me that funerals should be more than dark clothes and coffins, a lack of light and colour?

Was someone, somewhere, preparing me that summer afternoon back in the 60s for what I would endeavour to do in the future... delicately painted eco-friendly coffins....I very much think so! X

Love and much light

Susan Horwell

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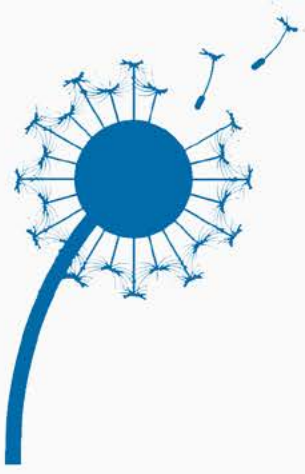
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# Post Mortems need not use the knife

The advancement in new technology  
is changing the way post-mortem  
examination can be done



## Editor

Since I started out in 'funeral world', the horror of the PM has haunted me. Then, two and a half years ago, at the National Funeral Exhibition, I came across a start-up business. It was, for me, the highlight of the show. Now it is a reality and everyone needs to know about and demand Digital Autopsy.

I asked Matt Chandran, the man behind iGene Digital Autopsy, to introduce himself and tell us how the business was created:-

I was born and raised in the remote village of Johor Bahru, Malaysia. I grew up in poverty with a housewife mother and a rubber-tapper father.


I would like to think that I have been lucky.

Despite the harsh conditions, my parents ensured that we were as insulated as could be from day to day realities and their focus on education was the single largest "investment" made with extremely limited financial resource.

Lucky, too, that in Malaysia there was free education and basic free health-care left behind by the British system.>>







>> Upon completing my education, I worked for three global multinationals, covering R&D, Business and Investment Management. I acquired good local and global exposure, mentored by good bosses who have been instrumental in my growing as a professional. I always believe that to have a good start in one's professional career, you need to have a great boss.

What on earth gave you the idea to take on such a challenge and in such an uncomfortable subject? Was it through some personal experience?

I studied Life Sciences, specialising in Biochemistry and Chemistry, and I have always worked in techno-commercial areas. I love science.

The idea behind Digital Autopsy was planted by an American entrepreneur. It was his observation that computers could one day digitize human bodies and that investigation could be done digitally, observing a human body in 3D rather than the physical body. These days, imaging of the living is at quite an advanced stage and one should be able to move it up a notch to a completely new level in terms of technological wonders!

**'the greatest pain a mother is subjected to is the pain of seeing a child die earlier than the mother'**

I had the opportunity to talk to him about my thoughts and he concurred that I was thinking along the right lines. It gave me the required conviction that I had an initiative worth pursuing. My hope was that it could literally change the ugly face of the post-mortem examination.

I could also directly empathise with the families of those who are affected. We lost my younger brother at the age of two, when he underwent an unsuccessful surgery, that resulted in a post mortem examination. I saw the devastation in the face of my mother. Her words still ring in my ears from that horrible day....'the greatest pain a mother is subjected to is the pain of seeing a child die earlier than the mother'....>>



>> Although this experience was never the primary driver, it still makes me think that each and every time a person gets dissected at a post-mortem examination, we have collectively failed, simply because we have what it takes to prevent such things, saving the family further pain and treating the dead with greater respect.

**What drove you on? Were you upset about conventional PMs?**

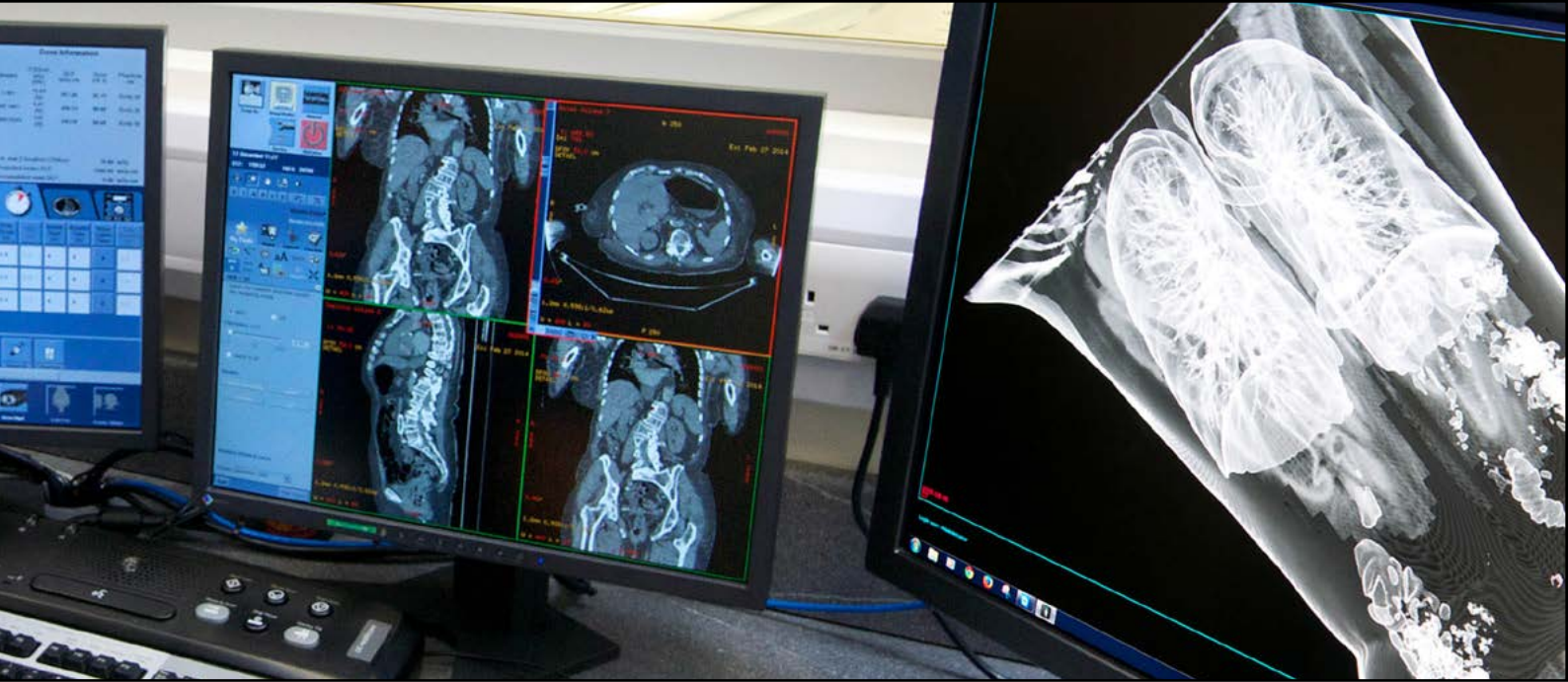
I was, and am not upset about traditional PMs but I am frustrated by the need to do them. Today, there is a clear alternative, a much superior method, which is also highly efficient and effective. It brings cost savings

and makes the pathologist's job easy and more elegant. To the deceased and family it provides the respect that is deserved, especially at such a distressing time.

Certain faith groups crave this fantastic solution but again it is a solution for greater humanity not just for faith groups. I also think that politically it is the right thing to do. Therefore I urge everyone to come forward and make this change, a change that is absolutely necessary and is clearly better for all.

**Was it hard? Have you faced lots of barriers? How long has it taken to this stage?**





The barriers are many: some do not apply today as the world has changed a lot in the last two years since we first started our operation in the UK. We have passed many milestones, transforming the old world into a new one, a world that promises and accepts more.

Lack of willingness and leadership among people at various levels has been the hindrance to the pace of change and the priority is typically perceived to be the world of the deceased and not those left behind.

### How is it going?

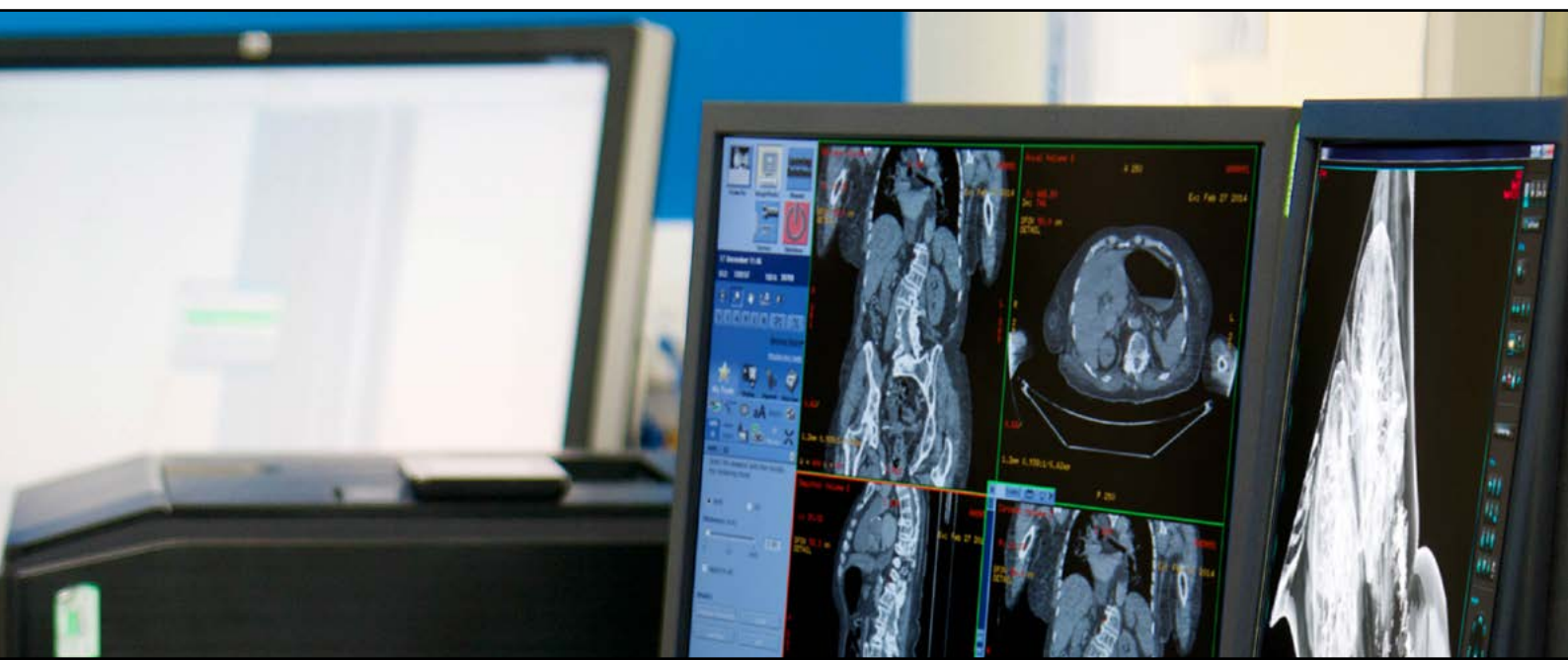
We are happy with the progress made, but just like any development, the pace could always be better. We

are determined to drive the changes with the help of those who are willing and are assisting us to make this happen. We do appreciate the fact that Rome was not built overnight.

### Where are your facilities?

We have three fully commissioned and in-service facilities at Sheffield, Bradford and Sandwell. Our aim is the optimal number of between 15 and 18 facilities which we have planned as part of a UK network.

Five more sites will be opened soon, in Cambridgeshire, Oxfordshire, in and around greater London and also a southern site in a place such as Bournemouth.>>



>>How do people access it? What is the legal stand point with demanding this as an alternative to the knife? What rights have consumers got, if any, to challenge a coroner who wants to carry out a conventional PM?

The need to carry out a post-mortem is determined by the coroner. In these situations we hope that the option of Digital Autopsy is clearly provided to the family of the deceased.

Should the family consent to the Digital Autopsy procedure a fee of £500 plus VAT will be charged to the family.

For those who live and die in the Sandwell jurisdiction, this fee is paid for by the local council. Our experience shows that should there be a request from the family for Digital Autopsy, there is no objection from the coroner. In rare cases, where for whatsoever reason, the coroner might decline the request for a Digital Autopsy, the recent case of the UK High Court ruling in the favour of family shall take the precedent, I believe.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coroners-must-send-bodies-for-scans-rather-than-autopsies-if-religion-demands-they-stay-intact-high-10422561.html>

How are the coroners with it? What problems, if any, are there?

I feel that the coroners are generally very supportive, but it appears that there is a lack of clear communication between the coroner's office and families with regards to the availability of Digital autopsy, something that needs to be improved greatly.

How long does it take to book a slot?

It doesn't take long; It is almost immediate. Please refer to our [website](#).

The movement of the body will be arranged by the coroner's office once there has been a request for Digital Autopsy. In most instances, our facilities are next door or within existing mortuaries.

How much does it cost?

The fee is £500 plus VAT. For families in financial difficulty, an instalment payment can be negotiated with our office.







If you would like to know more about family led funerals but aren't quite ready to make that call, why not listen to Claire on the video above and see how you feel afterwards.



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## Imagine

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- Having more precious time to say goodbye in your way, in your own home
- helping to create a personal ceremony filled with deep meaning and lasting value
- saving substantially on the arrangement costs
- developing a strong and nurturing relationship with one person who supports you throughout
- having the opportunity to stay connected, participate and give back to your community
- knowing all this is legal, affordable and possible.

For those families who feel this choice may be right for them we seek to make a significant difference.

Claire Turnham



article by Ann Bates

# Bespoke Pottery for *Bereavement*

Following on from our article in the last edition concerning the benefits of making things at a time of bereavement. We were sent the following article by Ann Bates and we would like to introduce you to her work.

“I have been working with clay for almost 25 years. I’m a hand builder and all of my pieces are either coiled or slab built. I chose this way of making during time at college and university because I felt that it gave me greater freedom of expression than using a wheel.

My partner encouraged me to pursue my love of making things by supporting me through university. After graduation he and I decided to become self-employed.

We shared a building in Cromford, Derbyshire; for him to run a quantity surveying practice and for me, my own workshop and showroom. This worked well until my partner unexpectedly died. I was unable to carry on renting the building on my own and decided to work from home.

Working with clay helped me through bereavement and I wondered if there was something that I could make that might signify this. Through research, I found that commercially produced funerary urns often left me feeling cold and empty. There seemed to be little or nothing uplifting about them.

They were simply a container for ashes, often smooth or shiny and without much character.

I thought I could improve on the designs and began working on one-off, hand built contemporary funerary urns and memory boxes that I hoped, in a discreet way, might celebrate the life lived and may be of comfort to those who remain.>>





>>Inspiration for decoration, and often the shape of an urn, comes from the natural world. Seed pods, leaves, and shells have all been used in one way or another in my designs.

The study of rock formations and ancient standing stones, with their carved decoration and symbols, have also been used to inspire some pieces of work. Of particular interest is the spiral, the natural form of growth and symbol of everlasting life; I use it as my mark.

Requests for urns and memory boxes usually come either by word of mouth, via my website or through taking part in gallery exhibitions.

## ‘working with clay helped me through bereavement’

Before embarking on a piece of work, it is important to establish the size of urn that is required. Some are full size, containing all of the remains, whilst others are smaller, containing only a portion, the remainder being scattered in a favourite place.

It is also helpful to find out whether the urn will be sited inside or outdoors, the type of clay for outdoor pieces needing to be more robust to withstand the weather.

The Poppy Seed Head urn, featured, was a commission piece and is situated in a garden. It has been slab built in six sections and has a sealed lid.

For more information please visit [www.annbates.co.uk](http://www.annbates.co.uk)

### **Editors note**

Ann’s ‘full set of ashes’ urns cost between two and three hundred pounds. When I first saw them I immediately linked them to the All Cannings Long Barrow. When I mentioned this I was not surprised to hear that some have been used there.







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