

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS



ISSUE 10

THE JOURNAL

Conference Edition





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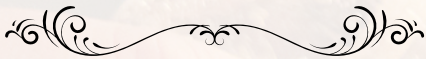
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FINAL LETTER FROM AMANDA DALBY

Immediate Past President



Dear Members, Students, Fellows & Associate Members of our very special Institute,

Well, here's my very last 'Letter' as I end my Presidential Year, and what a busy one I've had!

It has been a real honour to represent the Institute on so many occasions throughout the year, where I've met some interesting, amusing & influential funeral-related people across the country. I've visited some really beautiful places & clocked up hundreds of miles along the way too!

In the last month of my Presidency, I was honoured to attend the Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management (ICCM) Conference & Dinner in Kenilworth, Warwickshire.



President Andy Bond & his wife, Marie, made both myself & fellow funeral Director & friend, Skye, most welcome, as we helped them to celebrate their amazing achievement of recycling £20million of metals, in conjunction with Orthometals. As you can see, there was a bit of a 'metal' theme running throughout the evening!



At the end of September, I was invited by the Westerleigh Group to attend their 25th Year Anniversary Service at Howe Bridge Crematorium, Atherton, which meant I had to venture across the border, to LANCASHIRE.

Revd. Norman Rice gave a very moving service, reminding us what an important & very special role we fulfil, looking after bereaved families. We concluded with a buffet lunch - and the autumn sun shone for us!



The BIFD have held two great 'Zoom' CPD sessions over the last few weeks, which I also attended.

The first was an insightful online presentation by Eimer Duffy & Ian Henderson - 'How to stand out more online in a competitive market, and beat the Bear!' which included marketing tips on how to reach more of our target audience & have a greater online presence.

In the second one we were joined by Drew Whibley & Phil Perry, from Obitus. They guided us through their user-friendly portal, and talked through all of the options available to give families more choices for personalising a funeral service with music, themed visual tributes, recordings & webcasts.

If you missed these sessions, you can watch them through the BIFD website - I'd recommend watching both, as the sayings go 'every day is a school day' and we're 'never too old to learn new tricks' in this industry. They will also add valuable hours to your CPD tally, in order to gain our unique BIFD 'Licence to Practice'.



My Northern BIFD Region C group held a 'face to face' educational meeting in September, when Coleman Milne invited us to their premises for a factory tour in Bolton. It was amazing to see how hearses & limousines are created from the shells & engines of everyday vehicles, to become the distinguished funeral vehicles that transport our loved ones & their families to our funeral events.



My penultimate event as BIFD President was attending the Association of Independent Celebrant's Conference Dinner (AOIC) in Sutton Coldfield, at the beautiful Moor Hall Hotel, hosted by the new President, Brian Bull.

My Consort was well-known Durham funeral director, and good friend, Stuart Wright. The outgoing President was fellow Haligonian, Jeff Heaton, so we had a good old catch-up, discussing all things 'Halifax' and of course, Celebrant-related too. The Celebrants had lots of ideas that they wanted to share with us.



And then finally, on 18th-20th October, it was my time to host my very special Presidential outgoing BIFD 42nd Conference Weekend, in God's Own County - Yorkshire.

And a 'Reyt Good Time' was had by all, especially at our Yorkshire Rose themed Gala Dinner!

I want to thank our Conference Organiser, Mr. David Gresty, his wife Clare, and everyone who took part in helping to deliver my Yorkshire Themed Event - it was just SUPER!

And thanks to all who attended from across the UK, helping to raise a TREMENDOUS total of £5,000 for my Charity of the Year, Andy's Man Club, a men's mental health charity, based in my hometown of Halifax. Andy's Man Club is now nationwide - what a great achievement by the Team, and especially Andy's mum, Elaine Roberts, and his brother-in-law, Luke Ambler.

Here are some moments, captured across the Weekend in Yorkshire :-

At our relaxed Friday evening event, we were served a delicious 3 course meal, and were entertained by local singer, Jo Farrow. She also surprised longstanding & staunch BIFD member, Sue Puxley, by singing 'Happy Birthday' to her.

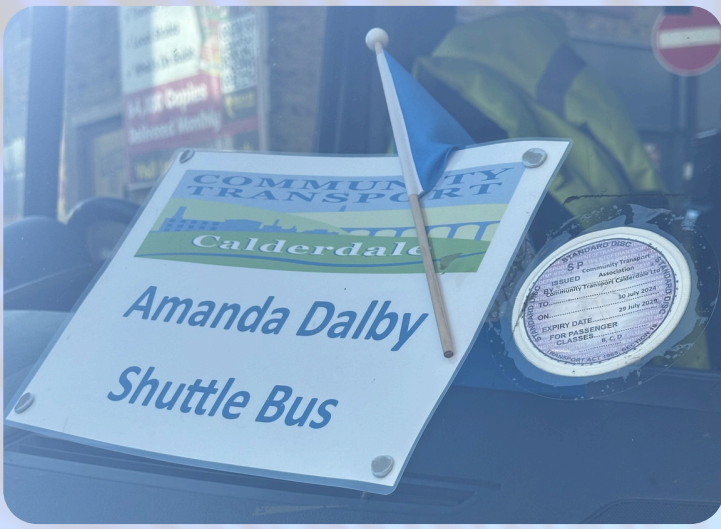
Then some of us danced the night away!



This was followed on Saturday morning by our annual AGM, where, amongst the BIFD business, votes were taken to elect a new Treasurer, our Conference Organiser, Mr David Gresty, & 2nd Vice President, Dr Phil Gore, from Margate in Kent.



Then after a superb lunch, we embarked on a short bus tour into my beloved Halifax. This was a trip to the centre of the town & our iconic Piece Hall, a Georgian Cloth Hall, built in 1779. This unique building underwent a £19million renovation in 2014, and now houses unique shops, bars & restaurants. The sun came out for us - it was a glorious afternoon!



On Saturday evening we were given a rousing welcome by our local 'Friendly Brass Band' playing all the Brass Band favourites, and of course, the obligatory 'On Ilkley Moor Baht'at'!



We then enjoyed a 'Yorkshire' themed Gala Dinner, with a much anticipated 'Yorkshire Pudding' as a starter!



Our Charity Raffle was held, and really bumped up the Andy's Man Club Total - there were some fabulous prizes, as you can see, and Rachel Shipley, the BIE President, was very pleased to win a GIANT bag of Yorkshire teabags!

Proud presentations were then made to 7 of our qualifying 'Diploma in Funeral Services' Students, followed by Amanda Pink, bring inaugurated as our next BIFD President for 2024-25.



It was an emotional evening, as I surrendered my Chain of Office, to the tune of 'Time to Say Goodbye' - our 'favourite' funeral piece of music, and as I swapped the most impressive piece of gold I've ever worn, for a 'Past President' jewel, to keep forever.

The best part of the evening was that my lovely son, Michael Dalby, joined me as my Consort - it really made my Weekend!



When I begun my funeral journey, over 20 years ago, I would never have dreamt of becoming the President of such a well-respected & honourable Institute, it has been the pinnacle of my career, to date.

My parents would have been so proud if they had been at the Conference Weekend, and although my mum passed away before I became President, my Dad did manage to congratulate me, when I embarked on my year in office, last October.

Thrn, after all of the formalities, we danced the night away, to the sounds of some 70's, 80's and 90's tunes 🎵 by our DJ & vinyl specialist, Stephen Brown.

So, that's that, as we say in Yorkshire!

Thank you all, for reading about my journey over the past year. I will be staying on the Board of Directors for the BIFD for a further year, and will of course continue to work to help to keep our Institute the best that it possibly can be, for now & for the future.

Yours funerially, Yorkshire & Proud!

Amanda Dalby
Immediate Past President





42nd Conference
& Gala Celebration
Highlights...

18-20 October 2024

Friday 18 October

The 42nd BIFD Conference weekend in Yorkshire began with in-person meetings for the Board of Directors and the Education Committee. These preliminary sessions set the stage for the weekend, providing the board an opportunity to address key matters and ensure a smooth AGM (Annual General Meeting) the following day.

Friday Night Entertainment

However, it wasn't all work and no play. The relaxed Friday evening was filled with good food, music, and laughter. Guests enjoyed a delicious three-course meal and were serenaded by local singer Jo Farrow, who added a special touch by singing "Happy Birthday" to longstanding BIFD member Sue Puxley.

The evening took a lively turn when some attendees hit the dance floor, with Treasurer David Gresty and 1st Vice President Clive Pearson surprising everyone with their spirited rendition of the "Birdy Song"—a moment that truly had to be seen to be believed!

Saturday 21 October

Saturday morning began with the Annual General Meeting (AGM), a key event where members could voice their views, vote on important issues, and hear updates directly from the board. This interactive session fostered open dialogue and transparency, underscoring the BIFD's dedication to being a democratic, member-led organisation. Attendees were empowered to engage with the board, address any concerns, and offer suggestions—witnessing first-hand the influence they have in shaping the Institute's future.

Key highlights included the announcement of a fifth consecutive year of frozen subscription rates, Andy Floyd addressed the membership and shared details of the continued strong partnership between the Education Team and Greenwich University, and news that six individuals will begin their Level 5 Diploma in Teaching on November 1. The meeting concluded with a unanimous vote from the floor approving Dr. Philip Gore as the new 2nd Vice President, demonstrating the collective voice of the members.



Members from across the UK travelled to Yorkshire for the 42nd AGM

AGMIN PICTURES



Our venue for the weekend, Cedar Court Hotel, Huddersfield



This interactive session fostered open dialogue between the Board and the Membership



The Presidential Team, L-R: National President, Amanda Dalby, 1st Vice President, Amanda Pink, 2nd Vice President, Clive Pearson & 2nd Vice President Nominee, Dr. Philip Gore



Addressing the Floor, L-R: Chair of Education, Andy Floyd, Region G Member, Sue Puxley, Chair of Region J, Andrew Western

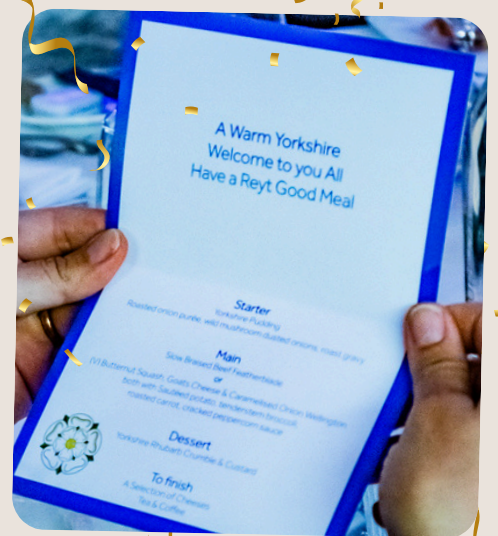
Saturday Afternoon Outing

After the AGM was adjourned and a delightful lunch, members took a short bus ride into Halifax, arriving at the historic Piece Hall—a stunning Georgian Cloth Hall dating back to 1779. This iconic landmark underwent a remarkable £19 million renovation in 2014 and now features an array of unique shops, bars, and restaurants. The sun emerged, making for a beautiful afternoon in the heart of town.

Gala Dinner & Diploma in Funeral Service Presentations

The pinnacle of the BIFD Conference weekend was the dazzling Gala Dinner held on Saturday night—a highly anticipated event that brought together our kindred associations, industry professionals, and honoured guests in celebration of achievements from the past year. The Gala was more than just a social occasion; it was a tribute to the dedication, compassion, and professionalism of funeral service practitioners, recognising those who continually support families and communities through life's most challenging moments.

In the grand setting, attendees reflected on the year's accomplishments and applauded the newest graduates who had earned the BIFD Diploma in Funeral Service. These graduates have joined the ranks of qualified professionals dedicated to excellence in the field, embodying the values of commitment, empathy, and service. Each graduate was celebrated not only for their academic achievement but also for their readiness to uphold the highest standards in the profession.



A highlight of the evening was the celebration of Amanda Dalby's term as National President of the BIFD. Under her leadership, Amanda had championed a vision of professionalism and compassionate service, elevating the institute's work and expanding its influence in the funeral service sector. Her tireless dedication, her support for peers, and her promotion of educational excellence marked her presidency as one of impact and growth. The Gala Dinner offered an ideal moment to recognise her contributions and thank her for leading the BIFD with passion and purpose.

The Gala Dinner unfolded with fine dining, heartfelt speeches, and a shared spirit of camaraderie, clearly achieving its purpose: to honour the dedication of those in the funeral profession and to inspire continued excellence across communities in the UK.

Another highlight of the evening was a series of diploma presentations celebrating individuals who had achieved the prestigious Level 4 Diploma in Funeral Service. This qualification, awarded to those who have demonstrated outstanding knowledge, skill, and commitment to the field, marked a moment of triumph for each recipient. National President Amanda Dalby, Chair of Education Andrew Floyd, and Tutors Clive Pearson and Hayley Owen-Barker beamed with pride as they presented the diplomas. Families and colleagues cheered, recognising the immense hard work and dedication behind each achievement. In particular, David Barker was awarded for receiving the highest marks in both the written and oral examinations.



Another memorable moment was the ceremonial presentation of the BIFD Chain of Office to Amanda Pink. Her dedication and expertise have earned her deep respect within the profession, making her an ideal choice for National President. Upon accepting the chain, Amanda announced her plan to skydive from 15,000 feet in support of The Lullaby Trust, her chosen charity.



Amidst the applause and heartfelt congratulations, a deep sense of inspiration filled the room at the Gala Dinner. The evening underscored the profound impact that funeral service professionals have on the lives of others, serving as a call to action to pursue excellence in education and embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The BIFD Gala Dinner honoured the past year's achievements while looking forward to a future full of promise and growth



Bottom L-R: David Gresty, Treasurer, Dr. Philip Gore, 2nd Vice President, Clive Pearson 1st Vice President, Adrian Pink, Past President, Amanda Pink, National President. Amanda Dalby, Immediate Past President & Michael Dalby

Incredible Donation to Charity

Thanks to the generosity of our dedicated members, we have raised an impressive £5,000 to support Immediate Past President, Amanda Dalby's, chosen charity, Andy's Man Club.

The funds were raised through a series of initiatives, including the 'Highlights of Halifax Hike,' the sale of merchandise at the National Funeral Exhibition (NFE), and a successful raffle during the Gala Dinner. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Alan and Sue Puxley, as well as the Westerleigh Group, whose contributions were instrumental in making these efforts a success.

Andy's Man Club is a UK-based charity that provides a safe, supportive environment where men can talk openly about the challenges they face. Founded in 2016 by Luke Ambler and his mother-in-law Elaine, following the tragic loss of Luke's brother-in-law Andy, the organization has had a transformative impact on men's mental health across the country.

With regular meet-ups now available nationwide, Andy's Man Club continues to break down the stigma surrounding mental health and empower men to seek the support they need.

We are incredibly proud of the contributions of our members and partners, which will help Andy's Man Club continue its essential work. Together, we are not only supporting an important cause but also helping build a brighter future for mental health in the UK.



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INTRODUCING :

Amanda Pink

National President, Region G



The British Institute of Funeral Directors is proud to introduce Amanda Pink, Dip. FS, LMBIFD as your new National President. Amanda is a dedicated professional who brings a wealth of experience and personal passion to her role, having worked in the funeral industry for over 14 years. Her journey into funeral services began after meeting her husband, Adrian, and she soon discovered a calling in this meaningful profession.

Amanda earned her BIFD Diploma in Funeral Service in 2018, proving that education and growth are lifelong pursuits. Juggling the demands of running a business while studying was a challenge, but Amanda's determination and commitment to the profession helped her succeed. Today, she is the proud owner of Evelyn's Funerals, an independent funeral service she established in 2015, which has become a cornerstone of care and support in her community.

Beyond her work, Amanda's life is a testament to balancing professional dedication with personal interests. She starts her day with an early morning swim at 6:30 am, ensuring she keeps active before diving into her busy schedule. Alongside her husband, she is deeply involved in charity work, often participating in Freemasonry events to raise funds for local causes. From clay pigeon shoots to elegant black-tie galas, Amanda is always ready to lend a helping hand.

When not working or fundraising, Amanda treasures her downtime with a good book —whether it's a heartwarming love story or an inspiring autobiography, reading keeps her mind engaged and constantly expanding. She also enjoys cooking for her loved ones and dining out to savour good food and fine wine. Social and energetic, Amanda embodies the saying, "If you want something done, ask a busy person."

As your National President, Amanda is committed to fostering excellence and supporting the funeral profession. She brings her unique blend of hard work, compassion, and enthusiasm to this important role, ready to serve the members of the British Institute of Funeral Directors.

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1984/85: M HARPER
1985/86: L J LAMBERT
1986/87: M P CASE
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1988/89: M DOW
1989/90: E EYRE
1990/91: A D MOAR
1991/92: J G MURREN
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1993/94: D M TAYLOR
1994/95: R W ROWNTREE
1995/96: A P PUXLEY
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CPD SESSION RECAP WITH OBITUS EXPERTS DREW WHIBLEY AND PHIL PERRY

We were delighted to welcome Drew Whibley and Phil Perry from Obitus to our recent online Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session. This interactive event offered members a valuable look at the comprehensive services Obitus provides, including their unique dashboard features, tools, and the accessible, supportive approach they take toward funeral services.

Drew and Phil guided attendees through an in-depth demonstration of the Obitus dashboard, showcasing how they empower funeral directors to tailor services to meet the personal and emotional needs of each family. The session covered essential functions, from live streaming and music requests to memorialisation options, equipping our members with insights and practical knowledge to better serve their communities.

The session was a great success, generating lively discussion and enthusiasm from attendees. We're thrilled to announce that Drew and Phil will be joining us again in the new year for another CPD session. Stay tuned for more details, this is a CPD session you won't want to miss!

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ARTICLE

ASK A CELEBRANT

PART FOUR: CREATING TIME FOR LONGER GOODBYES

by Independent Celebrants, Dinah Liversidge and Berni Benton

Covid took away people's choice and prevented many families from even creating the simplest of goodbyes in a cathartic way. The rise of the direct cremation initially seemed to force grievors into a similar conundrum. Whilst the first created so much extra complexity to the role of the Funeral Director, the latter has introduced a layer of competition, where families are sold the direct cremation solution to 'being a burden' or 'reducing costs'. As an industry the corporate companies in the direct cremation market not only threatened the core business of the Funeral Director, but the celebrants role in funerals too. But I believe that both have given us the impetus we need to think outside the box and promote "Celebrations of Life" away from crematoria and graveyards and in places that are meaningful to the deceased and their family and without the time constraints.

THE NEED FOR RITUAL:

Berni Says: *We are humans, and humans are social creatures. And, as social creatures, we need and benefit from process and ritual. Even those big corporates have begun to realise it.*

I noticed a Pure Cremation advert the other day where they actively talked about a Direct Cremation leaving the family with the opportunity to create a separate, meaningful celebration of life alongside.

Having worked through the pandemic, we Funeral Directors and celebrants have an even greater awareness of the need for families and communities to gather and share in their loss; to create a ritual in some form to begin to process and step into their grief

Dinah Says: Rituals around death have evolved, but their essence remains the same: they allow us to pause, reflect, and begin the long process of healing. Whether the ceremony takes place at a chapel of rest, a beloved family home, or even a scenic location that held meaning to the deceased, it is the gathering and the sharing of memories that help families process their loss.



Celebrants, by working closely with Funeral Directors, can offer innovative, heartfelt solutions that incorporate meaningful rituals even outside of traditional settings.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATING CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE:

Dinah Says: The rise of direct cremation has introduced a practical option for families, but with it, the risk of overlooking the need for a proper farewell. As independent funeral directors and celebrants, we offer a more compassionate, thoughtful approach. While corporate entities focus on streamlining the process, our focus remains on serving the family with care and attention to detail. This includes educating families about the benefits of personalised direct cremation services, where there's still the opportunity to create a meaningful goodbye—whether before, during, or after the cremation itself.



By offering bespoke services—where families can visit their loved one, know when and where the cremation is taking place, and create their own timeline for a farewell—we provide an alternative that honours both the deceased and the grieving process. It's not just about reducing costs, it's about offering a service that helps families feel connected, supported, and at peace with the process.

Berni Says: *If your Funeral Business has its own Chapel of Rest, it's worth suggesting to families that they can hold a celebration of life there, possibly, before the direct cremation.*

As celebrants we can work in partnership with our Funeral Directors to create a celebration of life there or in any other venue, (the family home, local pub, club or hotel) before the deceased is chauffeured to the crematorium. Even with attended funerals a family can have more time if the main celebrant led service is at a location other than the crematorium.

Alternatively, we can host a celebration of life with the interment or scattering of ashes.

ARTICLE

The benefit of any of these solutions is that families are not restricted to the time constraints of crematoria. Other benefits are that its possible to have the service and the wake in the same place. Also that place is more local, meaning more accessible to mourners, importantly a celebration of life can be held in any location that holds meaning to the deceased and the family

HOW DO WE RESPOND:

Berni Says: We all know that most Funeral Directors offer Direct Cremations, but the public, don't seem to. The advertising power of the big businesses attempts to corner that market, and its being pretty successful at it. Yet a Direct Cremation via an Independent Funeral Director is a completely different and more compassionate process. The deceased is collected respectfully and separately transported to a local mortuary in a hearse, not a van. The family can visit, and they know their loved one is still close by. The family will know when the cremation is taking place, and the crematorium will be a local one. This means they can, if they choose, be present at the crematorium to see their loved one arrive. And there is no waiting for the post to arrive never quite sure when your loved one will be returned to them. We need to work together to raise awareness of the quality and availability of pre-planned direct creations that local Funeral Directors offer and how they compare in cost but have so many added benefits. Let's talk about preplanning in partnership, both the Funeral Director and celebrant plan with the opportunity and flexibility of a Celebration of Life instead of a crematorium-based service.

As member of the AOIC , and as the now Vice President, I am delighted to let you know that the Association has produced a flier talking about exactly this and as your celebrants we will be providing you with some for your clients.

Dinah Says: Pre-planning a celebration of life is an opportunity for families to have full control over how they want to say goodbye, without the pressure of time or decisions made in the midst of grief. As celebrants, we work hand-in-hand with funeral directors to offer tailored plans that reflect the unique wishes of the individual and their family. This partnership allows us to provide a holistic service, where families can map out every aspect of the farewell, ensuring their final goodbye is a true reflection of the life lived. It is vital that we raise awareness about these pre-planning options. Families may not realise the extent of flexibility they have when opting for a direct cremation through an independent Funeral Director.

Together, as Funeral Directors and celebrants, we can empower families to make informed decisions that lead to personalised, compassionate services that celebrate life in the most meaningful ways.



above L – R: Berni Benton & Dinah Liversidge

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dinah Liversidge and Berni Benton are both Independent Celebrants. Berni is Vice President of the Association of Independent Celebrants (AOIC) and an end-of-life Doula.

Dinah trains Independent Celebrants and her training is recommended by the AOIC. They are both based in Wales.



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STILL PROVIDING 'OUTSTANDING' TRAINING

Civil Ceremonies Ltd is delighted to announce that following an Ofsted inspection in August 2024, we have retained our 'Outstanding' grading as an Independent Training Provider.

Managing Director Anne Barber said 'An incredible amount of hard work has gone into the celebrancy courses we offer over the last 22 years since the company was founded. We were so excited when our first inspection result in 2018 was 'Outstanding' and to have retained it on our second inspection is just brilliant. A massive thank you to all our fantastic staff, tutors and assessors who make our training courses so incredibly thorough. And to all the wonderful people who train with us, work so hard to achieve their qualifications and make wonderful celebrants'.


Ofsted
Outstanding
Provider

The full report can be seen on this link:
<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50258237>

For more information about our courses visit:
www.civilceremonies.co.uk
or call us on 01480 276080

FUNERAL DIRECTORS PROUDLY MARK 120 YEARS OF UNWAVERING AND DEDICATED SERVICE TO BELFAST FAMILIES

A Funeral Directors proudly at the very heart of their community held a special event to mark the provision of 120 years of care, support and trust.

James Brown and Sons Funeral Directors hosted a commemoration of their storied journey at their Newtownards Road funeral home in Belfast – one of the seven funeral homes they operate in and around the city.

The business was established in 1904 when, having moved to the city from Ballybay, Co. Monaghan, James Brown established a business that would eventually become what it is today.

Initially a coal merchant and furniture remover, Mr Brown arranged his first funeral in 1932, and the family name has been synonymous with caring for people ever since having helped thousands of people say their final goodbyes to their loved ones.

His grandson, also James Brown, is still very much involved in the business today, as is his great granddaughter Beverley, who is the Marketing and Community Relations Manager.

The company is now part of the high-quality Funeral Partners network – the country's third largest funeral business - which is committed to retaining the heritage and reputation of the companies they work with across the UK.

James said: *"It is a privilege for Beverley and me to be part of the business my grandfather founded in 1904. I was present at the Golden Jubilee in 1954 when my grandmother commented on behalf of her family:*

'During the past fifty years our path has often been beset by obstacles, which at times seemed insurmountable, but God's grace supporting human perseverance has brought us safely through. On this occasion we would like to pay tribute to our staff for faithful and efficient service through the years.'

"I heartily repeat what she penned, which I believe continues to be relevant in this era. Her words in relation to the commitment of the company's staff are particularly pertinent."

Guests at the special anniversary event included representatives from groups that have been supported by the James Brown and Sons Community Fund – an initiative that aims to support local organisations in Belfast and the surrounding areas, supporting them with grants, but also forging relationships between the groups and the team at Brown's.

The Rev Jim Rea, Retired Methodist Minister, was also present and paid tribute to the company.

He said: *"For more than 50 years, I have officiated at hundreds of funerals with Brown's, who are highly regarded in the communities they serve. They deal with every situation with great sensitivity and professionalism. The fact that they have sustained a business for 120 years says it all."*

Cllr Sammy Douglas, High Sherriff of Belfast, added: *"The contribution James Brown & Sons has made to East Belfast for 120 years has been immeasurable. They have helped many thousands of grieving families, including my own, in a compassionate and sensitive manner."*



James Brown, Retired Methodist Minister Jim Rea, Funeral Partners CEO Sam Kershaw, Beverley Brown and councillor Sammy Douglas

For more information about James Brown and Sons, visit

<https://www.jamesbrownfuneraldirectors.com/>

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Sam Kershaw
Chief Executive Officer
07834 531822
sam.kershaw@funeralpartners.co.uk



Steve Wilkinson
Mergers & Acquisitions Director
07528 970531
steve.wilkinson@funeralpartners.co.uk

For an informal, confidential free valuation or conversation about selling your business now, or in the future, call Sam or Steve

corporate.funeralpartners.co.uk

Your reputation is our reputation



FUNERAL DIRECTORS PREPARE CARE PACKAGES TO SUPPORT THOSE IN NEED ON WORLD HOMELESS DAY

The big-hearted team from a Funeral Directors dedicated to serving the community assembled care packages to help people sleeping rough.

W. Storey Funeral Service, based in Redcare Road, Guisborough, purchased a variety of hygiene products which they donated to Coatham House – a project which supports people in the local area who are homeless, or at risk of becoming so.

The team donated the packages to mark World Homeless Day, which the tenants of Coatham House were grateful to receive packages.



Above: Trainee Funeral Director Aimee Blackwood hands the care packages to Coatham House

Francesca Capaldi, Funeral Arranger, said: *“We wanted to do something to provide necessities – things that someone might need on a daily basis. All of the packages included toothpaste, a toothbrush, soap, a sponge and a pen and paper. We know the important work that staff at Coatham House do in the community, and we were really happy for them to give them to those in need. It is always a pleasure to support them whenever we can.”*

W. Storey Funeral Service is part of the high-quality Funeral Partners network. For more information about them and their community work, please visit

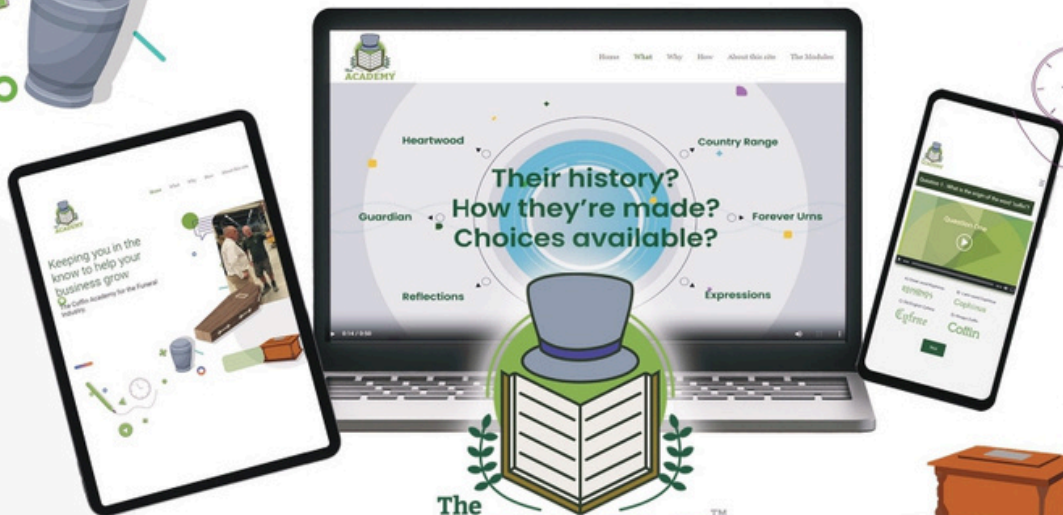
<https://www.wstorey.co.uk/>

Funeral Partners is the UK's third-largest funeral business, with more than 230 funeral homes staffed by over 1000 dedicated funeral professionals serving communities across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Chief Executive Sam Kershaw has over 40 years of experience in the funeral profession, joining the business back in 2016 as Chief Operating Officer. Funeral Partners, which celebrated its 15-year anniversary in 2022, has grown rapidly, building a strong reputation as a well-run, high-quality funeral services business overseeing more than 25,000 funerals each year.

It now includes more than 130 family businesses, which have entrusted their reputation and heritage to Funeral Partners.

Where can I learn about coffins? | 🔍



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PLUS MORE


Tiner Duffy

8 Ways...

TO BOOST YOUR FUNERAL HOME'S PRESENCE ONLINE!

I know the thoughts of social media and keeping up with it can seem like a real chore. But more and more families are on it and are looking online for recommendations and support. By being there you can extend the care and trust your funeral home offers to a wider audience. This will help you get started.

Social media is a way to connect with families in your area. Many people use Facebook and Instagram plus other platforms to search for services. And to be honest, a social media presence helps families find your funeral home. Research shows families make their funeral service decisions based on online reviews and helpful content that is posted. By being online you give families the opportunity to learn about your services. And feel more comfortable choosing you.

1. ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Social media is a way to connect with your community. You don't have to post all the time to be authentic and supportive. Share helpful posts like funeral planning tips, grief support advice or updates on local events you're involved in. This type of engagement shows your funeral home as a caring presence not just a business.

Example: If you sponsor a local charity event, post photos with a message about why it's important to your funeral home. This helps families see the values behind your services.



2. BE A HELPING HAND ONLINE

Families want to feel supported when things get tough, so your social media should reflect the care your funeral home provides. Share stories of how you've helped families (with permission). Introduce your staff or offer messages of comfort on special remembrance days.

Example: You could post a testimonial from a family who appreciated your care, showing how you helped during their time of need.

3. CREATE A DIGITAL MEMORIAL

Online memorials allow families to honour their loved ones beyond physical space. Social media is the opportunity to keep remembering. Whether through Facebook groups or virtual memorial services.

Example: Offer to create a private Facebook group where families can invite friends to share memories and photos of their loved one.

4. PICK YOUR PLATFORMS

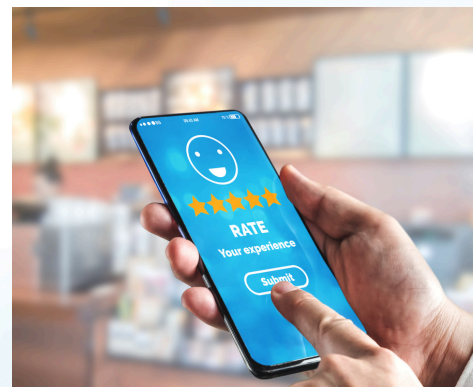
You don't have to be on every social media platform. Focus on the ones where your audience is most active. Facebook is for community engagement, Instagram is for visuals that connect.

Example: Share messages of comfort or behind the scenes photos of your facilities on Instagram. This will help families see the peaceful space you provide.

5. LEVERAGE GOOGLE REVIEWS

Getting positive reviews from families is the key to building trust online. Reviews show real life care you provide. And lead future clients to feel comfortable choosing your funeral home.

Example: After a bit of time, ask families if they'd be willing to leave feedback on their experience on your Google Business Profile.



6. COMMUNICATE QUICKLY WITH FAMILIES

Social media enables you to respond quickly to families' questions, offering support when they need it most. Being available for prompt communication, whether through Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp Business or Instagram Direct, shows approachable communication.

Example: Respond promptly to a family's inquiry about service details via a messaging platform provides comfort and reassurance.

7. BOOST YOUR REACH WITH TARGETED ADS

Using paid advertising on social media can help you reach more families. Platforms like Facebook allow you to target specific demographics, ensuring your marketing efforts reach those most in need of your services.

Example: Run a targeted Facebook ad campaign promoting your personalised services, helping families understand what sets your funeral home apart.

8. SHARE HELPFUL CONTENT

Your social media should provide value to families, not just death notices or promotion of your services. Share informative resources, such as grief support articles or answers to common questions, to position your funeral home as a trusted guide.

Example: Publish a blog post on "What to Do After Losing a Loved One" and share it on social media. This shows your funeral home is there to help and answer questions and concerns.

ALL IN ALL...

Social media offers funeral homes a way to build trust, support families and extend their reach within the community. By using a compassionate tone and sharing valuable, authentic content, you can create an online presence that reflects the care and support your funeral home provides. Start small and stay consistent, and soon your digital presence will feel as natural as your in-person services.

If you'd like to explore how to fully leverage your funeral home's Facebook presence and ensure it works for you, why not get in touch? I specialise in helping funeral homes build strong, compassionate online connections. Together, we can take your Facebook page to the next level.

**Visit www.fitsocialmedia.co.uk for more information.
You can email me at eimer@fitsocialmedia.co.uk.**

Thanks for reading!

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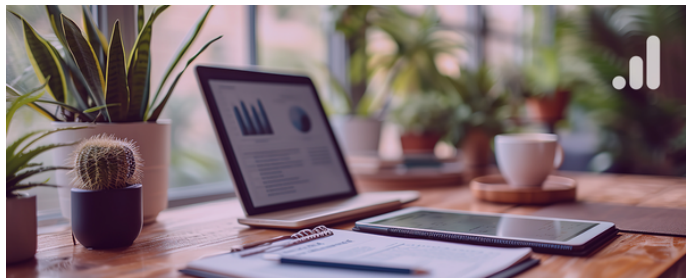
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COULD MY WEBSITE DO BETTER?

What you really need to know about website analytics to see whether your site is performing

For funeral businesses investing in a digital strategy, website analytics are useful for assessing your site's performance. These tools may seem daunting at first, but MuchLoved's experts can help you identify and focus on the most valuable insights.

Which data is most valuable?

Services such as Google Analytics provide a wealth of information about a website's performance. The good news is that you do not need to look at all the data to gauge how your website is doing. Based on our expertise in website SEO, and our experience in working with the funeral profession, we recommend that you focus on the following analytics:

- Source of traffic – Track how visitors are coming to your website, e.g. organic search (through Google or another search engine), direct traffic using a URL or bookmark, links from social media posts, referrals from other websites, or paid ads
- Traffic volumes – Data allows you to track whether visitor numbers are growing over time and see details such as whether people return to your site more than once
- Search terms – SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) data shows which search terms are leading people to your website, e.g. funeral director in Amersham, funeral plan, or banana leaf coffins
- User behaviour – See which are the most visited pages on your website, such as the homepage, funeral notice or obituary pages, pricing or contact information
- Conversions - Google Analytics can track specific goals such as contact form submissions, or interest registered in funeral planning services

Remember, the purpose of your website is simply to help people find your funeral service and provide answers to their questions. Having content which attracts and engages potential clients is key and, by looking at the analytics, you can see whether your efforts are making a difference. By answering the questions they have, you are not turning them away from enquiring. You are gaining their trust, making them feel at ease with enquiring.

Are website audits worth the money?

Every business with an online presence is a target for web design or SEO agencies, especially when the business is unlikely to have a dedicated internal resource. We suggest some things to consider if you are approached by agency, or are considering engaging their services:

- Do they understand the funeral profession? Your sector is very different from online retail, for example
- Companies often promise improvements to your website, but there is no guaranteed way to get to the top of search results or increase your website enquiries



- Technical enhancements, such as making your website faster, making it mobile friendly and fixing broken links creates a better user experience. Fixing the many technical aspects which help search engines read and understand your site is the main priority, but making isolated small improvements won't necessarily translate into more enquiries.

It's important to weigh up carefully the benefits and risks associated with website audits – you can read more on this topic in our article [Five tips for driving traffic to your website](http://www.funeralnews.muchloved.com/five-tips-for-driving-traffic-to-your-website/): www.funeralnews.muchloved.com/five-tips-for-driving-traffic-to-your-website/

How partnering with MuchLoved will help your website to perform better

Our data shows that MuchLoved funeral notices can drive up to 5x as much organic traffic to a funeral website. Why is this? SEO performance relies on frequently updated content and funeral notices are a great way to regularly, and easily, add content to your website. Similarly, MuchLoved's online reviews service delivers valuable, positive content to your site.

By using MuchLoved's tribute pages you will benefit from reciprocal links with our website. Visitors can find a tribute page by searching with the name of the deceased person. Once on the tribute page, they can visit your website by clicking on your logo. Our new funeral search will also help to drive traffic to your website.

Call out your expertise and your people

In our article Five tips for driving traffic to your website we talked about the importance of content which shows your expertise. Include pages focusing individual topics that people will search for, such as funeral hymns, eulogies, and choices of coffins. Each page will include the search term, with helpful content which attracts and engages potential clients as well as being favoured by Google for search results. You can track hits to these pages with your analytics service.

Make sure that your homepage includes a photo and welcome message and have an 'About Us' page that tells visitors about the people in your business. This core content will help potential clients to get a feel for your business and what it would be like to use your services. You might consider hiring a photographer as high-quality images of your people and services will make you stand out from the competition.

Think of your website as supplemental to your work in the community

Whilst your website is important for generating enquiries, it can never replace your work and connections in your local community. For generations, funeral businesses have been at the heart of their communities and the internet has not changed the need to focus on local people. Supporting local charities, putting on community events, or providing a forum for bereaved families to get to know each other, will all help to ensure you are the go-to funeral service in your area.

Next Steps

We hope that this article will help you to understand your website and how it's performing and make an informed decision about whether agency support would be beneficial.



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If you are planning a new website, or looking to make improvements, please get in touch. Our experts can work with you to build the perfect site.

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Rose Names

Flowers of distinction

Personalised Rose Names: A Lasting Tribute in Your Garden

At our small garden nursery in Hertfordshire, we specialise in growing and naming beautiful roses, each one uniquely personalised for our clients. Whether you're commemorating a loved one or celebrating a special memory, our individually named roses offer a heartfelt and lasting tribute.

Every rose we sell comes with a personalised A4 certificate, complete with your message, making it a truly special gift. To make it even more meaningful, we can print your loved one's image on a waterproof and frost-proof plant label, ensuring that the memory is preserved year-round in your garden.

Unlike cut flowers that fade and die, our roses bloom year after year, offering a beautiful, living reminder of those who have passed. We also offer the option to provide the same personalized rose to multiple family members, allowing each one to plant and nurture the memory in their own garden, creating a shared bond that lasts for years to come.

With our personalised roses, we hope to provide comfort and a special way to remember those who have touched your life.



Rose Names

Flowers of distinction

NAME YOUR OWN ROSES

These roses are a heartfelt way to add a personal touch to the tribute of your clients' loved ones.

Each rose can be named after the deceased and adorned with their image, creating a truly unique and memorable memorial.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

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RAYNER'S: PROTECT YOU, YOUR EMPLOYEES AND YOUR KIT

With new regulations coming in from 1st January 2025, safety when engraving is paramount. In fact, failure to do so can invalidate your insurance and lead to the Health and Safety Executive being called in. So, don't let it be a secondary thought – it's not worth the risk



A division of KP Rayner Ltd

What are the new regulations? Most will be familiar with CE marking on products. This has always been designed to protect people, by ensuring the product has gone through various tests before coming to market. It means the manufacturer has checked the product complies with all the relevant legislative, health and safety requirements to gain certification to be sold in the UK.

However, from 1st January 2025, new machinery that is only CE marked will no longer be acceptable. Instead, new machines must be UKCA marked and supplied with a Declaration of Conformity and English instructions. This is a significant shift and as business owners responsible for both your own and your employees health and safety it is important that any new kit purchased after this date adheres to these guidelines. More information on this can be found on the Government's Office for Product Safety and Standards website:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-product-safety-and-standards

How is your environment set up? Fume extraction may not be a particularly exciting subject! But extractors and safety screens are essential when using any engraving solution. Keeping people safe is imperative and is why employees should always observe all the Health and Safety requirements (as highlighted on the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk/dust/assets/docs/eh44.pdf) and be given the right equipment and tools to keep them safe. This is why correct ventilation is crucial. If relying on natural ventilation, then the danger of airborne chemicals accumulating in the air could become harmful when inhaled in significant quantities.

Do I really need an extractor? Whether it is rotary or laser engraving, making sure any dust and fumes are safely vented is critical. An extractor removes potential toxicity from the environment and disposes them safely. This means you, your team, and your equipment is safe and protected during the engraving process.

What are the dust and fumes created? Many industrial processes create dust and fumes and even the smallest engraving tasks create some kind of toxic mix of gases and nanoparticles. These can lead to irritation and in some instances are hazardous if inhaled.

Do I need an extractor, even for a laser engraver? Yes. Even laser engravers need a specialist extractor. The fumes and smoke produced by laser engravers can be toxic. In fact, a fume extractor also helps to minimise your engraver's wear and tear. Without extraction, the dust can settle on the kit such as on the lens of the laser engraver, the electronics and other machines, causing damage.

An investment worth making! If relying on natural ventilation or non-specialist equipment, then there is a significant danger of airborne chemicals accumulating and being harmful. Instead, using approved engravers and effective extraction reduces any potential health effects. This will also lead to better employee wellbeing, and limit downtime due to machinery damage.

Best bit of advice – ask for the certification!



WHY MEMBERSHIP OF THE FSA IS IMPORTANT

It is important to get the most out of your membership and understand the benefits that the FSA can offer. While the motivation for joining this trade association may vary according to the needs of the member company, here are some of the top benefits to membership and how many of our members use membership to their advantage.

Leadership: **Chief Executive**, Alun Tucker, is a vastly experienced funeral professional with over fifty years' experience both as a funeral director and, over the past 20 years, a prominent lead in the work of funeral trade associations. Alun is supported by an Executive Committee made up of experienced persons all of whom are specialists in their sector.

Networking: This is the most common and most obvious benefit of joining the FSA. Who you know matters, and the association is filled with potential contacts, clients and partners who can help your business move to the next level and become more prominent in your industry. Members particularly the more active – are able to build long-term relationships and partnerships that are mutually beneficial. They provide a forum for like-minded individuals to come together to share ideas, strengthen ties, find new jobs and make connections that would not be possible without the association.

Learning: With speakers on a range of topics at our general meetings, there is scope to learn and to join in discussions and express views. Recent speakers have covered the importance of commercial insurance, matters of the environment & funeral customs around the world.

Certification: For those members involved in the manufacture & supply of coffins the FFMA coffin accreditation programme is the number one in the funeral sector. With close to 200 coffins having successfully passed the testing procedure with Intertek, this is paramount importance to families & funeral directors for peace of mind in coffin selection.

Influence: Being one of the seven associations which forms the Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG) the FSA is at the forefront of meetings with Government departments on matters of legislation & regulation.

Information: Membership in a trade association means immediate access to any news or developments that affect your business and the industry. Outside of the usual communication of members to each other, associations generally provide newsletters, email updates and informative resources that help its members stay on top of recent developments in the field.

Best Practices: Any line of work has a specific set of best practices that is vital to efficient, quality work. Especially for anyone new to the industry, membership in a trade association is vital to learning these practices and performing the best work possible. The FSA works closely with Citation Ltd who provide members with regular updates on matters relating to Employment Law and Health Safety.

Relationships: Aside from all of the professional benefits that are available the FSA, there is also an opportunity for members to build friendships and personal relationships that can last a lifetime.

For further details please contact Alun Tucker chiefexec@funeralsuppliers.uk

Visit the website www.funeralsuppliers.uk



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