



BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS

# THE JOURNAL

ISSUE 11





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*National President's  
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## Letter from the National President

# Amanda Pink

Dear Members, Associates, Students, and Supporters.

Wow what a few weeks its been from Amanda Dalby's conference in Halifax, it was a fabulous event where likeminded professionals gathered to celebrate her term in office and didn't she do well, Amanda presented our latest students with their Diploma's Certificates after months of hard work and study, Well done to them all and hope your journey in the profession is rewarding, as this is a unique profession and you have been trained by some of the best Tutors within the BIFD, if not the profession.



After Amanda installed me as the next National President I announced my charity for the year which some of you may have heard is "The Lullaby Trust" and that I have had the mad idea to throw myself out of a plane at 15'000ft to raise money to try to find why some babies just go to sleep and never wake up, and also support those bereaved parents through an horrific time,

What some of you may not know is I suffered this awful journey some 36 years ago, I put a healthy 4 month old baby girl to bed and she never woke up, and to this day I still have no answers as to why this happened, So if you are able to support me weather that is a few pennies or pounds I would be extremely grateful or even just write a message of support on my page to bolster my confidence to be able to do this mad thing. You can find my dedication page by visiting: <https://lullabytrust.dedicationpage.org/charityoftheyear2024>



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So moving on to what I have been up to in the weeks since the 42nd Conference, well National Office address has had to be changed to please do check the address on the website before you send anything in by post, all the admin for the BIFD has had to be updated to show the move up of the chains within the Board of Directors.

The email for national office has been busy with lots of enquires for our courses which is fabulous to see, as remember we are the **ONLY** association that is accredited by Greenwich University and offer a licence to our members with completion of CPD.

Out and about I have been to various events starting with Tina Turner the musical in London which was extremely entertaining so if you get the chance do go, Then it was off to the Funeral Suppliers Association (FSA) Gala Dinner in Stratford Upon Avon to celebrate Anthony's year in office and wow he had a fabulous year with his wife Lucy by his side, Anthony welcomed the new President for the coming year Jade Wilcox so it seems the ladies of the profession are taking over.



I then had the honour of being invited along with my husband Adrian to the Festival of Remembrance at The Royal Albert Hall by the Royal British Legion in their personal box, all I can say it was an incredible evening and so emotional, seeing it on the TV is always thought provoking by being there in person is another level.

Coming up later this month I am off to Nottingham to see the new unveiled interactive Westerleigh Crematorium at Gedling which I am looking forward to.

That's all from me for this time but if you see me out and about do come say hello its always lovely to put faces to names. If you are having any regional meetings or outings let me know I am more than happy to pop along and meet you all.

Oh and one more thing save the date for next year's conference 24th – 26th October 2025 at the Copthorne Hotel Slough- Windsor, which we hope to be an excellent weekend of education fun and food.

*Amanda*

Amanda Pink, Dip. FS, LMBIFD  
National President, Region G

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## INTERVIEW :

# Amanda Dalby



During the conference weekend in October, the Editorial Team had the privilege of sitting down with Immediate Past President Amanda Dalby to reflect on her presidential year.

- **WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE NATIONAL PRESIDENT?**

*It's a real HONOUR, and has been a great experience for me. I particularly enjoyed travelling up & down the country, and meeting all of the Kindred Association Presidents & members.*

- **DO YOU THINK IT HAS CHANGED YOUR VIEW OF THE INSTITUTE IN ANY WAY?**

*My view of the Institute will never change - I've always regarded the BIFD as the most distinguished of all of the Funeral Institutes, due to the high level of education that we have to achieve to attain membership. Going forward, this will be very important as the government look to regulate our industry.*

- **WHAT DO YOU THINK WENT WELL FOR YOU THIS YEAR?**

*Our YORKSHIRE THEMED CONFERENCE WEEKEND! Over 100 Members & Associate Members joined us from across the UK & Northern Ireland, and it was a great atmosphere throughout the whole of the Weekend. I have had so much positive feedback, and I was proud to show off my beloved town of Halifax in West Yorkshire. Additionally, the National Funeral Exhibition at Stoneleigh Park in June was a great opportunity to showcase & highlight the benefits of studying & being a member of the BIFD. I really enjoyed representing the BIFD and networking there too.*

- **WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE LIKED TO DO MORE OF?**

*I don't think that I could have squeezed any more in, as I run a small funeral business, with only one other member of permanent staff, so I think that I gave as much as I could give. I'm so glad of the experience, though.*

- **WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT AS NATIONAL PRESIDENT?**

*Raising £5,000 for my Charity of the Year - Andy's Man Club. They are such an amazing group of men, and it was great to support them. We had a lot of fun on my sponsored walk 'The Halifax Highlights Hike' in August, and then went on to more than double the total with some very generous sponsorship & the Raffle Prize Draw, at my Conference Weekend.*

- **WHAT ONE PIECE OF ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE AMANDA PINK, THE INCOMING NATIONAL PRESIDENT?**

*I don't give advice, unless it's asked for. The only thing I would say to Amanda is - enjoy your term in office, as it goes very quickly!*

- **WOULD YOU TAKE THE POSITION AGAIN IF IT WAS OFFERED?**

*At the moment I think I'd have to say no, as it was hard to run my small business alongside being National President. But never say never!*

- **WHAT WILL YOU MISS ABOUT BEING NATIONAL PRESIDENT?**

*I'll miss touring the country, as I've travelled to some beautiful places, including Stratford-Upon-Avon, York, London, Kenilworth, Cheltenham, Sutton Coldfield & many more.*

- **DID YOU ENJOY HOSTING THE CONFERENCE?**

*It was exhausting, but fun! I think I'll stick to Funeral Arranging - as that's my forté! I really enjoyed putting Yorkshire on the map though.*



- **WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU PERSONALLY FOR THE REST OF 2024?**

Well, I turn 60 on 10th November, so I have a Big Party planned for that weekend, with family & friends. And I'm hoping to spend more time with my four beautiful granddaughters in 2024/2025, who all insisted on trying on my Chain of Office, earlier in the year. Which one will follow in my Funeral Business Footsteps, I wonder?

- **SENSIBLE MILLIE?**
- **DANCING ROSIE?**
- **HILARIOUS BETSY?**
- **OR THE FEISTY LITTLE ONE, WHO ALWAYS WANTS TO BE 'THE LEADER', PENELOPE??**



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# FINAL CPD SESSION OF 2024: AN EVENING OF INSIGHTFUL LEARNING WITH ANDY FLOYD

As the year draws to a close, we hosted our final Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session for 2024, and it was one to remember. This engaging session was led by none other than Andy Floyd, our esteemed Chair of Education.

With his wealth of experience and passion for education, Andy facilitated an in-depth exploration of embalming, drawing on his extensive knowledge as both an accredited tutor for the BIFD and the British Institute of Embalmers (BIE). Participants were treated to a comprehensive session that balanced technical insights with thought-provoking discussions, creating a valuable learning experience for all involved.

In addition to his pivotal roles with the BIFD and BIE, Andy wears many hats within the funeral profession. He runs La Calavera College, a private institution dedicated to embalming and mortuary science, whose motto, *Pulchritudo in Morte* "Beauty in Death", reflects a deep respect for the art of caring for the deceased. Andy also manages his own successful embalming company, further cementing his status as a leader in the field.

The session underscored the importance of ongoing professional development and highlighted the diverse opportunities for learning within our industry. We extend our gratitude to Andy for his expert guidance and to everyone who joined us online.

As we wrap up 2024, we're already looking ahead to 2025, with CPD sessions resuming in February. Stay tuned for updates—let's continue to grow and excel together!

If you missed this session, you can request the recording via National Office: [admin@bifd.org.uk](mailto:admin@bifd.org.uk)



*Pulchritudo in Morte*

'Beauty in Death'



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## INTRODUCING :

*Dr Philip Gore*

**2nd Vice President, Region K**

Philip joined Gore Brothers Ltd in Margate in January 1978 and encountered the embalming process during the spring of 1978, and consequently trained with Lears of London in September 1978 working at 369 Clapham Road. He qualified in 1980, and left the firm to read for a science degree in Psychology and Sociology at the university of London that same year.



He returned, full time, to the firm in 1983, completing his Dip FD in 1988. Philip became a director of the family firm in April 1984, and became chairman of Gore Brothers Ltd in September 2000. He has over the last forty years overseen the growth of the firm from premises in Addington Rd, Margate to the multisite entity that it is today. Central premises in Thanet Rd, Margate and branches in Cliftonville, Broadstairs, Ramsgate, Westgate and Birchington enable a local presence to be sustained throughout the local area.

A masters by research at the University of Kent, with the title of **'From undertaker to funeral director: emergence of funeral firms in east Kent'**, completed in 1992 and his Ph.D entitled **'Embalming and the social construction of the corpse in contemporary England'**, completed in 2005, kept him very well occupied for years.

Philip is also a first responder for Kenyon International Emergency Services as an international repatriation specialist and has responded to aviation, man-made & natural disasters and incidents within the UK and also in countries within Europe, North, Southern and West Africa, the middle East, the far East, America, the Gulf and the Caribbean.

Philip is married to Liz and they have four children: Tom a history teacher, married to Rachel, Alex, a BIE member and a younger director of Gore Brothers Ltd, Amy who BIE qualified in 1987 and works within GT embalming after a degree at Oxford and Nick, a solicitor, married to Ruth. The addition of seven grandchildren in recent years has made significant inroads into the working week, but nevertheless are very widely appreciated, as is the afternoon snooze, following the grand children's departure.

Philip is a member at Birchington Baptist church, but also attends Margate Baptist church because (as he often mentions to his grandchildren) he is 'really really naughty'. Work is not so much an occupation as a way of life, as very many funeral directors will confirm, and any spare time might be spread amongst hobbies including ballroom dancing with Liz, Margate Lifeboat, from which he shortly retires, after fifteen years service, as part of the launch and recovery crew, choral singing within a small chamber choir, where he successfully brings down the tone, researching (on a very part-time basis) the distant roots of Gore Brothers Ltd in Margate in the early eighteenth century and being a trustee of the Alexandra Homes, a local Alms house in Margate.

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**MADE IN  
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**INTRODUCING :**  
*Kayleigh Ingham*  
**Deputy Editor, Region C**

Hi all,

I thought that as the new Deputy Editor, that my first post would be just to introduce myself, so people know who I am and what my roles are. I currently work for our family company Deborah Ingham Funeral Service in Huddersfield. It is my mum that owns the company, and at the time, my grandad and grandma also helped with the running of the company. These days, it is myself, my mum, my stepdad Graham, and our casual staff, with my sister Becki coming to help out when needed. I joined as Office Manager and Trainee Funeral Director. In March 2024 I passed my Diploma in Funeral Services through the BIFD.



If you had asked me at 15 if I had wanted to be a Funeral Director, I would have said no. Although I grew up with my mum being one, at the time, she worked for a big company, so I was kept away from everything. However, with no idea what to do for work experience, I went to a company, who at the time were independent, and they showed me all aspects and got me interested in a career in Funerals. Six months later my mum brought our business, and it was agreed that I would eventually join. In the meantime, I was to study and gain employment elsewhere. I achieved a BTEC in Business Studies at a local college, where I also did some more work experience with Clive Pearson. I then found work as an Administration and Accounts Assistant in a construction firm, and then a parcel company. I also studied on a night and achieved my NVQ Level Two in Accountancy, so I can at least understand the basics of what the accountant talks to us about!

In July 2016, I finally joined our company and can honestly say, I have never looked back. I joined as Office Manager and Trainee Funeral Director. My business course has helped me in running all aspects of the business and I have got the company involved in a lot of work in our local community or charities. In March 2024 I passed my Diploma in Funeral Services through the BIFD.

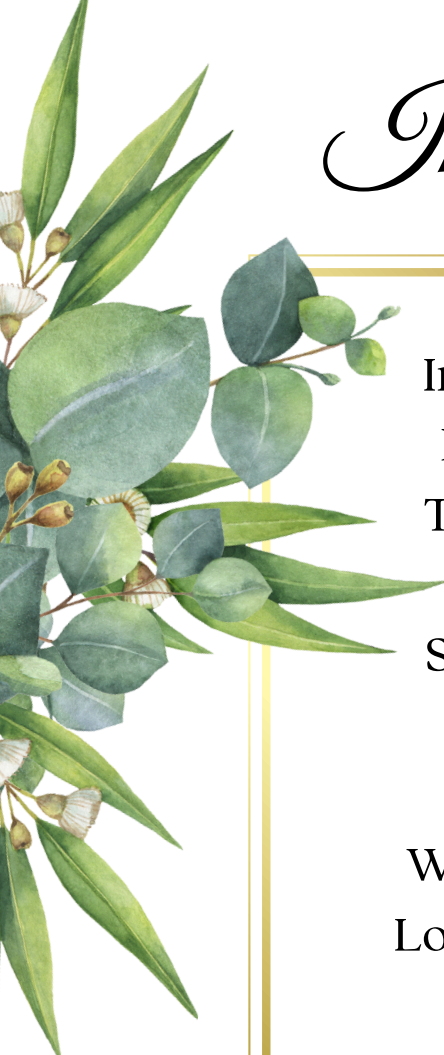
Outside of work, I am a mum to two boys, Reece who will be 12 in December and Riley who has just turned 10. So when I am not running around after them, taking them to their sports practices and matches, I'm usually cleaning up after or cooking for them. I do try and spend as much time as I can with them, and we can often disappear for a day. Usually, to find a good walk and then some food afterwards! I do also drag them along to community events, to help out. Family is important to me.



My aims are to keep our company going and hopefully one day, my boys or my niece and nephew will want to take over and carry on the family name. At the same time, I am wanting to see the profession regulated, with high standards being held and educate future Funeral Directors to uphold these standards, as well as educating the public that they do have choices and that we are here to help and that we are approachable at any time and not just when we are needed.

Anyway, enough of me waffling on, I wish you all the best and if you want to know more, you can get in touch! See you next time.

# *In Flanders' Fields*



In Flanders' fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders' fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high,  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders' Fields.

*John McCrae*



## HONOURING SACRIFICE: PEARSON FUNERAL SERVICE'S INVOLVEMENT IN REMEMBRANCE EVENTS

On Saturday, November 9th, Pearson Funeral Service had the profound privilege of participating in the remembrance service on Pule Hill Moors, perched above the village of Marsden. This poignant occasion was dedicated to honouring the local regiments and all service personnel who have recently passed away. As we walked along the hillside, with its sweeping views of the village below, the atmosphere was filled with reflection and gratitude for the sacrifices made by those who served. The quiet solemnity of the walk allowed us to pay our respects, standing in unity with the community in remembering their bravery.



The significance of the day continued on Remembrance Sunday, when Pearson Funeral Service once again contributed by assisting with traffic management during the annual parade. Our efforts ensured the safety and smooth flow of the event, which was attended by dignitaries including the Lord Lieutenant, emphasizing the importance of honoring those who have fallen in service to our country.



The culmination of the weekend's events took place at 11 AM on Remembrance Day at the Marsden Cenotaph. The act of remembrance was made even more special by the participation of Marsden Junior School, whose students presented heartfelt tributes to honour those who lost their lives in past conflicts. It was a moving reminder of the sacrifices made for our freedom and the importance of passing down the legacy of remembrance to future generations.

Through these events, Pearson Funeral Service was proud to be part of the collective effort to remember, reflect, and honor the heroes of the past, while supporting the community in moments of solemn reflection.



ARTICLE

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF MEMORY: FROM ASHES TO FIREWORKS ON THE 5TH OF NOVEMBER

*by Clive Pearson, Dip. FD, LMBIFD ~ 1st Vice President*

"Remember, remember the 5th of November" is a phrase that echoes through the corridors of history, evoking images of rebellion, revolution, and reflection. This date, immortalised by the infamous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, is not merely a reminder of a foiled attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament but a symbol of a more profound human condition—a yearning for change. As we explore the significance of this day, we discover that the sparks ignited by Guy Fawkes and his fellow conspirators have transformed from the ashes of failure into the fireworks of celebration, offering a nuanced perspective on memory and transformation.

The 5th of November is intrinsically linked to the Gunpowder Plot, an audacious scheme led by Guy Fawkes and his Catholic co-conspirators to assassinate King James I and restore a Catholic monarch to the throne of England. This act of treason, intended as a violent upheaval, was thwarted, leading to the execution of many involved. Yet, the significance of this day extends beyond the mere historical event. It reflects a profound human desire for justice, freedom, and expression, illustrating the lengths individuals will go to effectuate change.

Over the centuries, the 5th of November has transformed from a grim reminder of treason to a night of festivity and fireworks. The day has evolved into a celebration of defiance and the triumph of law and order, symbolising the resilience of a nation that withstood internal threats. Bonfires are lit, effigies of Guy Fawkes are burned, and fireworks light up the sky, marking the passage of time and the enduring spirit of a people who value freedom and justice.

This transformation from a day of mourning and ashes to one of joy and fireworks is a testament to the malleability of memory. It illustrates how society can reshape historical narratives, turning past grievances into opportunities for celebration and reflection. The 5th of November serves as a reminder of the power of the collective consciousness to reinterpret and redefine its past, finding beauty even in the ashes of history.







As we contemplate the 5th of November, we are reminded of the dual nature of memory: it is both a keeper of history and a canvas for reinvention. The ashes of the Gunpowder Plot have indeed been transformed into the vibrant fireworks of today, symbolising not only the passage of time but also the ability of humanity to find hope and celebration in the shadows of its past. This metamorphosis from ashes to fireworks is a powerful metaphor for the resilience and creativity that define the human spirit. It is a testament to our collective ability to rise from the ashes of failure and adversity, creating something beautiful and enduring in its place.

We couldn't end this article without noting ashes into fireworks, something which has been offered to those we are called upon to serve as an act of remembrance and ash dispersal. This innovative approach allows families to celebrate the lives of their loved ones in a spectacular and heartfelt way.

As the fireworks light up the night sky, they create a breathtaking display that embodies the essence of the individual being honoured. Each burst of colour represents cherished memories, illuminating the darkness with joy and love. This method of memorialisation not only serves as a poignant farewell but also invites participants to reflect on the beauty of life, even in the face of loss.

In choosing to transform ashes into fireworks, families can foster a sense of closure and connection, turning a moment of grief into a celebration of life. It serves as a reminder that while our loved ones may be physically gone, their spirits continue to shine brightly in our hearts and in the memories we hold dear. As the final firework fades into the night, it leaves behind a sense of peace and a promise that love endures beyond the boundaries of life.





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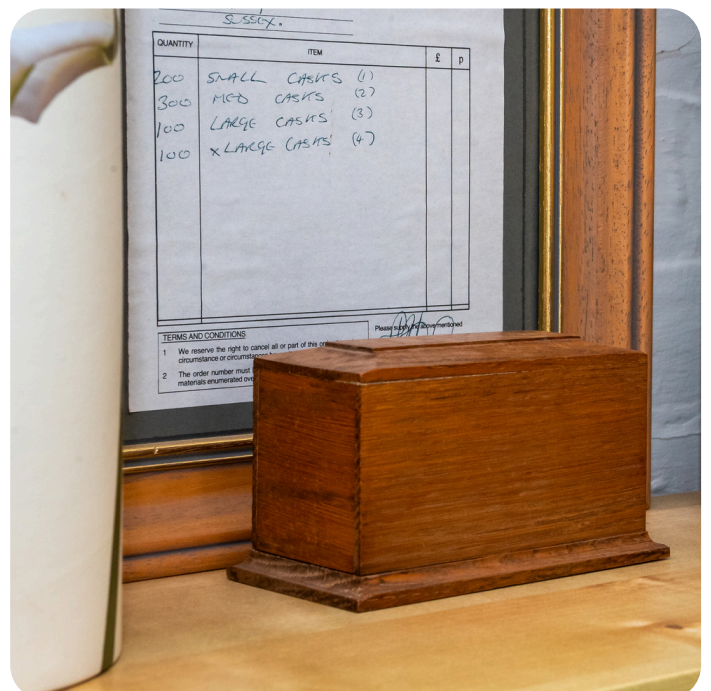
# TRIBUTES

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**30** YEARS

Before the Tributes family began drawing breath to extinguish the 30 candles burning patiently upon their cake, they did what most do at a milestone celebration. Reminisce.

Tori Bush, Sales Director, recalls the first ever order for the company, who originally supplied Pet Crematoria, *“It was Dad’s first order. 700 wooden caskets, and everyone was involved – even 8-year-old me! An assembly line of caskets and baize covered the living room floor to the tune of the Eastenders omnibus.”*



## ADVERTORIAL



Founder of Tributes, Richard Bush, branched into the human funeral industry with a desire for quality and innovation. When his sister passed away, disappointed with the scattering options available to say goodbye, he developed a product which is now an industry staple – the Scatter Tube.

When requested by a Funeral Director to develop a relocatable urn for buried ashes, the response was the HighDown Urn. Beautiful, personalised, and most importantly, relocatable. All of Tributes' products are designed as elegant and compassionate solutions.

If innovation is the central pillar of Tributes, the support given to their customers is the foundation.

*“Ricky and I loaded up the van and drove through the night from Arundel to Aberdeen”* recounts Marie of the time a coffin was urgently needed within 24 hours. *“Not only did we get it to the Funeral Directors in time, but I also made my Zumba class!*

*There was the time a customer in Nairn couldn't get hold of an urn from any supplier for love nor money.”* Enter Rick. An integral part of Tributes since 1999, working in every role going until settling down in Customer Care. He literally answered the call and by chance was travelling to Inverness the next day on holiday, so he met the very grateful customer at the airport, with his last-minute travel partner: the Serenity Urn.

*“Long before Dulux produced their football team colour charts”, Candy smiles as she thinks back, “I had to take my commemorative Tottenham shirt off the wall to be colour matched in-store for a bespoke coffin.”*

The number of stories seem as endless as the enthusiasm in which they are told. When asked what drives the team to go above and beyond, the response was rapid, unwavering, and simple,

*“We're a family helping other families.”*

If this is what Tributes can achieve in their first 30 years, we can't wait to see what happens in the next.



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**30**  
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# GRIEF, STRESS AND HYPOTHERMIA: SIMILARITIES AND COPING MECHANISMS

*by Dr Philip Gore LMBIFD, Ph.D ~ 2nd Vice President*

I thought a short paper on grief would be a useful way of introducing myself to the members of the BIFD, since I am to many a new face. This is not because knowing me is a source of trauma and distress, but because the work we do is in a difficult area. This is a purely personal account, and I recognise that there are others within the BIFD who have significant experience in this area. It became obvious to me after a few pages that this will be a pair of articles, as there is a lot in this particular concept.

The BIFD is, as far as I am concerned, the premier professional organisation for working funeral directors and to that end I feel that we should be mindful of the stresses and issues that we face on a day-to-day basis. We need to highlight these issues and to enable our members to manage these issues so that their performance 'out on the road' is of a higher standard than the feeble and pathetic versions that I encounter on a daily basis in our locality.



I plan to tackle this issue of stress by way of a metaphor, one that I used to some effect at the AGM in October as an anecdote. I remember from my youth that our mother was a keen advocate of swimming in the sea. Several years after she died I decided, for reasons now that I cannot fully recall, to give this habit a go and to 'take the plunge' in a literal sense. Anyone familiar with the geography of Margate will know that there are a number of bays, and one named Walpole bay (possibly after the Victorian prime minister) has a large tidal pool which shields the swimmer from the swell of irritating waves, as the image (left) shows.

I have to say that swimming in the sea is an invigorating sensation. I have often commented that the Victorians were on to something with this, so after a short-ish session of summer swimming in 2023, I decided that a lightweight wetsuit would prolong this habit for me into the cooler climes of Autumn. I have described this garment as a sort of Edwardian bathing costume, made out of wetsuit material, which is quite insulating, rather like a 'one piece shorts and vest top'. This has the ubiquitous zip up the back, so that one can get into and out of this successfully, but with enough freedom that one's arms are not constrained whilst swimming.

By the end of the summer months, the sea at the channel where my native Margate is, is cool, verging on the chilly, but with a wetsuit, you are well protected from the chilled water... until after taking the plunge. At that point the sea creeps into the inside of the garment. This is not a moment for the faint hearted, but having struck out for the far side of the Walpole bay tidal pool, you are rather on your own when you get going. I find it useful to swim in short bursts, as the cool sea has a number of subtle but debilitating effects on the physique. After the initial shock, swimming can be very liberating, but the insidious effects of hypothermia are not too far away, and the numbing and gradual paralysis of muscles are something that the wise bather or nautical traveller will take note of.

I can talk with some expertise about this because when I was fifty, I resolved that I needed something to distract me from the constant tide of grief-filled individuals coming to see me, to initiate funeral arranging. I decided to join the RNLI at Margate. I have been responsible for launch and recovery operations for the last fifteen years, but by the time this article sees the light of day, I will have retired from Margate lifeboat.

The wise words of the RNLI warn sea goers that hypothermia can be a debilitating event, brought on gradually by the presence of factors that sap the strength and reduce judgement, leading in the wrong circumstances to death.



It struck me that those within the funeral world are themselves exposed to a tremendous amount of emotion as an everyday event, becoming an accumulative burden and perhaps we need to take a moment to recognise these issues and evolve ways of coping with this. Psychologists call these coping strategies and for the wise there are a few lessons to learn here.

Grief is perhaps not so different to hypothermia. You can insulate yourself against grief in many ways, some productive and some not so helpful, but it would be a wise man or woman to take on board that a lot of stress is gradually accruing. I'm not convinced that this realisation actually occurs to everyone involved with funerals. I think we have all come those people who just don't seem to care about the funeral, may be rude to other parts of the team and treat the bereaved, the dead, ashes and flowers as a rather irritating part of the day.

We can all recognise people who are a little frazzled or burnt out and helping them in some way would be kind. My first degree was a joint psychology/sociology degree and it was very interesting (at 21) to read about the sorts of issues that concern academics who write about grief, since I had worked for a number of years in our family firm prior to this.

Of course we need to recognise that with many of the families we serve, death at the very end of a long and eventful life, preceded by illness and intellectual decline might be quite welcoming. We could label these sorts of death as more 'routine' and part of the everyday working schedules. It does not mean that they are not crucial events in the life of the family. Of course they are, but for very many families they are an expected part of the dying trajectory.

But we all know that the funerals of the very young, the young and the unexpected are very far removed from the more expected events outlined above. It would be a wise person to recognise the burden that a great many of these events impose upon the funeral director. I have come to recognise, now apparently older and wiser, that there is an emotional price to pay for being involved in these events. In my head I feel that there is a storage device for these sorts of events and I often think of this as a sort of rucksack that these events go into, that for me is far too full of the most traumatising and difficult moments in my working life. The container is finite and I feel that it would be wise to recognise this. Similarly to hypothermia, there is a gradual gathering of difficult moments and being able to insulate oneself where possible is, I feel, a wise activity. I have often counselled our young members of staff that families do not come to us for our tears, but for our practical support and guidance. You need to balance one against the other with some care.

So its all very well to bang on about emotional issues, but some sort of opinion about how to sort all this out should be explored. I plan to highlight some mechanisms and strategies in a concluding article which I hope will be of interest and assistance to the membership.

# KIRSTIE ATHERTON IS THE VERY FIRST FUNERAL CELEBRANT TO ACHIEVE THE NOCN LEVEL 4 ADVANCED PRACTICE DIPLOMA IN FUNERAL CELEBRANCY

Civil Ceremonies is delighted to announce that Kirstie Atherton, based in Widnes, is the first ever funeral celebrant to successfully complete the new Level 4 national qualification, completing it in just 9 months, from January to September 2024.

Kirstie has been a practicing funeral celebrant in the northwest since she achieved the Level 3 Diploma with Civil Ceremonies in 2021 and conducts ceremonies in Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Flintshire.



*Kirstie is pictured receiving her certificate from Funeral Director Helen Horne of Helen Horne Funeral Directors in Warrington. Helen says of Kirstie that families tell her that families say that Kirstie 'Makes the family feel that she actually knew the person.'*

Anne Barber, Managing Director of Civil Ceremonies Ltd who developed the Level 4 Diploma in partnership with awarding body NOCN (National Open College Network), says 'We are thrilled that Kirstie has achieved this advanced level qualification. She is the first ever person to do so, and it is a huge achievement. Kirstie completed the course assignments at a very high standard and used the course materials to great effect. The Level 4 Diploma is all about progression for practicing funeral celebrants and taking existing skills to a new level. The feedback we have received from the celebrants currently studying for the diploma supports that it really does provide excellent progression.'

Anne talked with Kirstie about why she decided to take the Level 4 Diploma and how she feels she has benefitted from it:

*Kirstie, what made you decide to study for the Level 4 Diploma in Advanced Funeral Celebrancy? I love my work. When a family trusts someone to craft a ceremony to mark the end of their person's life, they deserve that trust to be repaid by getting the very best. As funeral professionals we have one shot at this, it has to be right. I am always striving to make sure that this is exactly what my families get. It's essential that, not only am I well-qualified, but that I see my qualifications as something which should be continually enhanced. Just as in all other professions, continual development is essential. Since undertaking my initial training in 2021, I've consciously sought out other training and development opportunities so that my ceremonies and my working practices are continually evolving and being enhanced.*

*When I heard that the Level 4 qualification had been made available, I did not hesitate to apply straight away. As I'd completed my initial training with Civil Ceremonies, I knew the level of quality to expect from them. I trusted that this training would be the best available, and so knew that it would be my obvious next step. I was excited to be at the forefront of another leap forward in our industry and in helping to further legitimise and professionalise the role of the celebrant. Funeral celebrancy is a hugely competitive field, and so it's incumbent on celebrants to do all they can to stand out and to illustrate that not all celebrants are created equal.*

## PRESS RELEASE

What do you think is the greatest benefit the course has given you?

*Firstly, it gives you a shake-up. There are large pockets of our industry which are extremely resistant to change. People have their way of doing things and often aren't able to appreciate how embracing change offers such enormous benefits for them and for the families they support. It's tricky sometimes as a celebrant to not allow yourself to just go along with this. Whilst I thought my work was still fresh and innovative, the course made me recognise (literally from page 1!) that there were elements within my working practices which were already at risk of becoming a little safe or staid. Overshadowed perhaps by this pervading notion that what we currently offer is all that there is, all that the bereaved ever need.*

*The course has also made me want to study and discover even more. Ours is a mis-understood profession, people see the 20 minutes standing 'reading' at the lectern of a crematorium, without having any notion of all of the hours and hours of work which has preceded that day and made that day possible. For too long people have been short-changed on the content of funeral services and this course helps to broaden and deepen the knowledge which underpins all of the skills which give those 20 minutes the potential to be some of the most impactful of people's lives. The confidence which that depth of knowledge has brought to me has enhanced every part of my work. It's also made me consciously make space to look at my work and to see where it can be actively improved. The families I work with deserve the very best and knowing that all that I do is underpinned by this raft of knowledge, and this commitment to continual improvement, enables me to give them that.*

Were there any aspects of the course that you feel were most beneficial?

*Vocal coaching! This is something I had no real appreciation of the value of before I actually did it. It makes me smile now to think about how blasé I was about this. Like a paramedic who never took their ambulance for an MOT, or a hairdresser who never had their scissors sharpened. As celebrants our only tools are our ears and our voices, the fact that I was doing so little to take care of my voice seems comical to me now. A celebrant without a strong, clear, healthy voice is of no use to anyone.*

How helpful did you find the feedback that you received as you worked through the course sections?

*One of the best things about the training Civil Ceremonies offers is just how thorough it is. In terms of content, but also in terms of feedback. The feedback received is absolutely invaluable and clearly shows the level of attention to detail that those assessing the work provide.*

There are interactive sessions within the course programme, how helpful did you find these?

*The online one-to-one with the voice coach was enormously helpful. I especially appreciated these being individual sessions too, as it could then be specifically tailored. The interactive session at Obitus HQ was such a fantastic opportunity. There is no substitute for spending time in the company of people who are passionate about what they do, and this day was really inspiring.*

And finally Kirstie, why do you love the work of a funeral celebrant so much?

*I understand the level of responsibility that I have and finding the threads of the life that are not obvious to start with. I truly believe the job is not about talking – but all about listening and it really is a vocation.'*

Kirstie is not stopping here though, she is about to embark on a Phd research project on how a funeral impacts on how families move forward with their grief.

For further information about the Level 4 Diploma, which is open to any practicing funeral celebrant, see <https://www.civilceremonies.co.uk/level-4-diploma-funeral-celebrancy>, email [info@civilceremonies.co.uk](mailto:info@civilceremonies.co.uk) or call 01480276080.



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## CRUCIAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL CHARITY HANDED £47,000 AFTER STAR-STUDED CHARITY FOOTBALL MATCH

More than £47,000 has been donated to a children's charity following the incredible success of a charity football match. The fourth annual Goals 4 GOSH match played at Crystal Palace's Selhurst Park Stadium featured former Premier League players and stars of social media, television and music and raised an astonishing £47,850 for Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity (GOSH Charity). The money raised will go towards building a new Critical Care Unit at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) to improve the experience and outcomes for children who are dealing with, or starting to recover from, the most life-threatening and serious illnesses. This new unit will form part of the new Children's Cancer Centre at GOSH, which GOSH Charity has recently launched its biggest ever fundraising appeal to help build.



Adrian Mariappa, Anton Ferdinand, Jamie Groves, Charlotte Styles and David 'Temps' Templer present a cheque to GOSH Charity

Goals 4 GOSH co-founder Jamie Groves and Charlotte Styles were joined by former top-level Premier League players Adrian Mariappa, and Anton Ferdinand, plus David 'Temps' Templer from Made In Chelsea who all played in the flagship match to present the cheque to GOSH Charity. The presentation took place on the site of the hospital's new Children's Cancer Centre, which is currently under construction and is being funded by GOSH Charity's Build It. Beat It. appeal.

Goals 4 GOSH is supported by key sponsors Funeral Partners, where Jamie works as Regional Development Director, and Choice Funeral Plans – the company's prepaid funeral plan product. "It is a pleasure to keep on raising money for this fantastic cause," he said. "Together, we have now raised more than £158,000 for GOSH Charity since we started, something I never, ever thought was possible. Myself and Charlotte would like to thank every single person who has helped make Goals 4 GOSH 2024 such a success, the players, the volunteers, the supporters and match sponsors like Funeral Partners and our funeral plan company, Choice."

This year's match featured a star-studded lineup, including BBC reality show The Traitors stars Paul Gorton and winner Harry Clark, former Premier League and Crystal Palace players Wayne Routledge and Adrian Mariappa, internet sensations Kristen Hanby and Danny Aarons, former England Lionesses Lianne Sanderson and Gemma Davison, and BBC one Gladiator Bionic. Former Eagles manager Ian Holloway returned to lead one of the sides, adding to the excitement of the day.

In addition to the main event, in which the Pan Panthers emerged victorious over Hook's Hippos with a final score of 5-3, the day was filled with a host of fun activities, including football tournaments for youngsters and adults, ensuring there was something for everyone.

Liz Tait, GOSH Charity's Director of Fundraising said: "Another enormous thank you to Goals 4 GOSH for their latest donation of more than £47,000, and for their continued support of GOSH Charity. It is thanks to the kindness of supporters like Goals 4 GOSH that we can fund the hospital's most urgent needs and make a significant difference to the lives of seriously ill children from across the UK and beyond. Last year we were thrilled that Goals 4 GOSH joined our Tick Tock Club, which is raising money for a brand-new Critical Care Unit at GOSH. This will help us provide better facilities at the hospital for children with the most serious and life-threatening illnesses."

Jamie recently took part in GOSH Charity's annual flagship mass participation event, RBC Race for the Kids, with his young daughter Bunty. You can sponsor them via

<https://fundraise.gosh.org/fundraisers/jamiegroves/rbc-race-for-the-kids>

For more information about Goals 4 GOSH and upcoming fundraising events, visit <https://goals4gosh.co.uk/>

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## FUNERAL DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEMORY WALK ALLOWS COMMUNITY TO PAY POIGNANT TRIBUTES TO LOVED ONES

A kind-hearted funeral team invited people from across the community to take part in their annual memory walk as a touching tribute to lost loved ones. The team at Murray's Funeral Directors welcomed people to the stroll from their funeral home in Main Street, Findern, in Derby, to a memory tree which was planted in 2019 at the nearby Cardales Meadow.

The 30 families who joined were also given the opportunity write a memory tag which was placed on the tree, before a short service and a moment of quiet contemplation. Participants were then invited back to the funeral home for refreshments, a raffle where proceeds were donated to local environmental group Findern Footpaths Group and a chance to chat to others.



*Participants ready to set off on the annual memory walk*

Angela Bembridge, General Manager at Murray's, said: "We had a great turnout for this event, and I'd like to thank everyone who attended and donated raffle prizes. We find it is an opportunity for people to get to know each other and meet others who have been in a similar situation to them, whether we have provided the funeral service or not. When we planted the tree, we wanted to find a way to support those who had suffered a loss with a memorial where they could spend a few moments of reflection. We knew we wanted to do this in Findern and working with our friends at Findern Footpaths we were able to secure its current location in the meadow. We now have a lovely bench to enable those who wish to visit to stay a while with their thoughts and memories. We are told it brings a lot of comfort to people, which makes it all worthwhile."

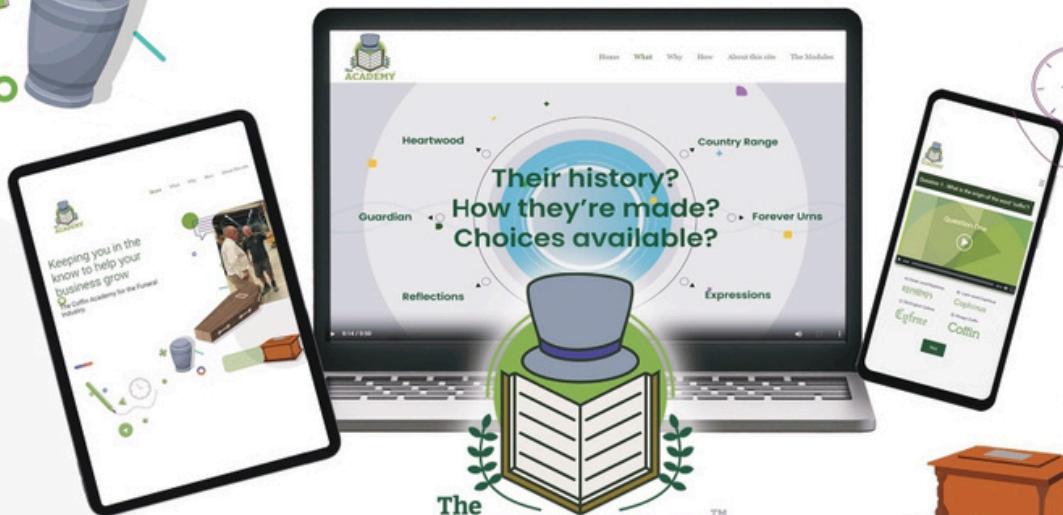
Murray's Funeral Directors is part of the Funeral Partners network of high-quality funeral homes. For more information, visit <https://www.murraysfunerals.co.uk/>

**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.**

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For families and friends who wish to honour their loved ones by scattering ashes at sea, Wetwheels Hamble offers an opportunity to bring loved ones together, immersed in the natural beauty of the open water. We aim to help make such gatherings both accessible and unforgettable, bringing peace to families as they say goodbye in a truly meaningful setting.

For funeral directors interested in learning more about Wetwheels Hamble and how our services can complement those provided to families, please visit our website:  
<https://wetwheelsfoundation.org/locations/hamble/> or reach out directly.

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## HOW TO CHOOSE PICTURES FOR YOUR FUNERAL WEBSITE

Your choice of images can greatly influence potential clients' perceptions of your funeral business. Experts, Kate Walker and Gerry King, provide tips for selecting pictures that will be appealing to website visitors and portray the right image for you.

The right images will help make your website engaging and trustworthy. They not only improve the user experience for website visitors, but also play a key role in search engine optimisation (SEO), helping your business become more easily discoverable online.

### Can't I just find images online?

We understand that finding suitable pictures is difficult, so it can be tempting to find images online that you don't own. However, using images without proper licensing or permission can lead to legal issues which could damage your reputation. Also, if you have used a free image website it's likely that many other people have done the same so your website branding and messaging will no longer be unique. Respect for copyright is critical.

### What are the best ways to source pictures?

There are several options open to you:



**Hire a photographer:** A professional photographer can work with you to capture bespoke images tailored to your business. This ensures that your team, facilities, and unique aspects of your services are presented in an appealing manner.

Nicholas Tonks of Jerrams Brothers (pictured) said, *"It's definitely worth going to the trouble of getting your own personal photographs because the stock images are the same across so many other websites."*

**Pros:** The authenticity and quality of custom photography can set your website apart from your competitors'. In the funeral profession 'people buy people' so have a staff photo page shows that you are warm, friendly and welcoming to your website visitors.

**Cons:** Likely to involve a higher up-front cost.

**Purchase stock images:** Stock photography platforms (such as Shutterstock, Adobe Stock and iStock) offer a huge range of images that can be licensed for use. You can purchase individual licenses and find out how many other people have bought the image before you commit.

**Pros:** flexibility and cost-effectiveness, allowing you to find visuals that complement your brand.

**Cons:** finding suitable images that have not been used on other funeral websites can be time consuming.





**Take photos yourself:** Using your own phone or camera can be a practical and budget-friendly approach, particularly for pictures of your team or facilities. Choose a nice day with flowers blooming to photograph your funeral home in the best possible light. Internal photographs of the arrangement room can also enhance your website.

**Pros:** Self-taken photos can add a personal touch to your website.

**Cons:** They will lack the polish of professional photography.

**Contact organisations that you work with:** You could ask your local crematoria, and other suppliers, if you can use images from their websites. Always ensure you have permission to use any images sourced from other parties. Details of local church and crematoria can make valuable content for your website - consider having a separate page with photos and useful information.

**Consider a blended approach:** Combining professionally taken photos with your own pictures can work well. For instance, professional portraits of your team members portray your professionalism, while informal shots show a human side of your services which people can relate to.

## 'Alt Tags' – what are they and why do I need them?

Alt tags, or **alternative text descriptions**, help visually impaired users understand the content of images through screen readers. They also contribute to SEO by providing search engines with information about your images. Alt tags should include keywords and be descriptive and compassionate, such as "gentle floral arrangement for a memorial service" or "family gathered in remembrance."

## Check your image sizes

Large images slow down page load times on your website, impacting SEO. While your web developer will usually handle this, we think it pays to be aware.

If you consistently use very large image files (or a lot of video), your site might be deemed slow by search engines, and speed is a factor when it comes to your ranking. Naturally, there will be times when there is a trade-off: a beautiful video on the homepage can really wow your visitors. But use responsibly! Larger images than necessary increase file size without offering any additional benefits.

**Remember** – many of your visitors are looking at your website on a mobile phone or tablet so you don't need a photo the size of a poster. Over-dimensioned images are resized by browsers, but the full file size is still loaded. Images can be compressed to reduce the file size whilst maintaining quality. Aim for under 100KB where possible to improve performance. There are many online image compression sites but it is more secure to invest in image editing software which will reduce the image and file size for you.



FOR MOST MODERN WEBSITES, THE MAIN IMAGE CAN BE 1920 PIXELS (508MM) WIDE TO ENSURE A CLEAN, SHARP LOOK. THE HEIGHT DEPENDS ON YOUR INDIVIDUAL DESIGN BUT WE SUGGEST KEEPING IT BETWEEN 800 AND 1200 PIXELS (212–318MM)

FILE SIZE: UNDER 100KB

IMAGE WIDTH: LARGE IMAGES: 1200-1920 PX

THUMBNAILS: 150-300 PX

RESOLUTION: 72 PPI

FORMAT: JPEG (PHOTOS), PNG (TRANSPARENCY, E.G. LOGOS), WEBP (FAST LOADING)

## ADVERTORIAL

A carefully chosen selection of images can really enhance your website. Your aim is for bereaved families to imagine themselves using your services, so choose pictures that show you as professional and trustworthy. You can also communicate any special areas of expertise, or unique aspects of your heritage. Try to refresh your images periodically so that your website doesn't become stale. Every image tells a story - make sure yours aligns with the values and quality of service your funeral business represents.

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**Kate Walker**

Kate has 15 years' experience in creating websites and has worked with the funeral profession for the past five years. She has a long-established background in IT Training and Technical Project Management and enjoys sharing her knowledge with Funeral Directors and Funeral Arrangers.



**Gerry King**

Based in Newcastle upon Tyne, Gerry is committed to helping funeral directors do more and better business by engaging new customers using digital marketing. Gerry has 20 years of experience launching successful websites for funeral businesses.



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## CJ WILLIAMS ELEVATES FUNERAL SERVICES WITH ACQUISITION OF LUXURIOUS WILCOX MERCEDES FLEET

CJ Williams of Telford, a family-owned funeral director with a legacy spanning over a century, continues to redefine the standards of funeral services. Their recent acquisition of three new Wilcox Mercedes-Benz hearses and limousines underscores their commitment to providing dignified and luxurious farewells.

The addition of these prestigious vehicles to their existing fleet, which already boasts eight luxurious Wilcox Bentley Flying Spur Hearses and Limousines, further solidifies CJ Williams' dedication to honouring the memory of loved ones.



Simon Williams, from CJ Williams quoted: *“Having received our first Mercedes fleet, finished in onyx and with a few individual styling changes, we couldn’t be more pleased. The build quality is outstanding, and they complement the Bentleys perfectly. In fact, they have made our remaining XJ look a little dated, which has prompted us to order a fleet of E214s to replace the existing Jaguars and work in conjunction with the Flying Spurs.”*

Wilcox Limousines, a third-generation family business, is renowned for its exceptional aftercare and top-quality vehicles are the perfect complement to CJ Williams' commitment to excellence. The new Mercedes-Benz models, with their unmatched luxury and attention to detail, set a new standard in the funeral industry. For over 75 years, Wilcox has been at the forefront of funeral vehicle design and innovation, combining luxury craftsmanship with advanced technology.

Paul Wilcox representing the Wilcox family quoted: *“The Wilcox family is delighted to know that The Williams family is happy with their new Mercedes. We at Wilcox strive to provide the best possible service at the most competitive price. Our commitment to our products, clients, and service is instilled in our staff. We would like to thank CJ Williams for their custom and for choosing Wilcox.”*

**About CJ Williams:** Founded by Simon Higginson Breeze in 1880, now run by his great-great-grandchildren Simon and Louise and their mother Carol, CJ Williams has been a cornerstone of the community for over a century. With a rich history and a commitment to compassionate care, CJ Williams continues to provide personalized funeral services tailored to the unique needs of each family.

## ADVERTORIAL

# LODGE BROTHERS PLACES £2 MILLION ORDER WITH WILCOX LIMOUSINES FOR NEW MERCEDES-BENZ FLEET

Wilcox Limousines proudly announces a significant new alliance with Lodge Brothers, one of the UK's oldest and most respected funeral directors.

Lodge Brothers has placed an order for a fleet of new Mercedes-Benz hearses and limousines, valued at over £2 million, with delivery scheduled for early 2025. This fleet will replace 15 of Lodge Brothers' vehicles, further enhancing their commitment to excellence in funeral services.



Robert Lodge, Chairman of Lodge Brothers, commented on this decision after an extensive twelve-month evaluation: *"The decision to use Wilcox was based on the quality of the Mercedes vehicles together with the reassurance of the support provided by their aftercare service and reputation in the industry over many years."*

Wilcox Limousines, a third-generation family business, has been at the forefront of funeral vehicle design and innovation for over 75 years, combining luxury craftsmanship with advanced technology. Known for their strong client relationships and caring service, Wilcox prides itself on its heritage and dedication to producing the finest funeral vehicles in the UK.

Louis Wilcox, representing the family business, responded, *"We are incredibly grateful to Lodge Brothers for their support in this very valuable order. We strive to offer the best products and service possible, and we look forward to delivering a fleet that embodies both quality and care."*

**About Lodge Brothers:** Founded in 1780, Lodge Brothers is an employee-owned funeral director business known for compassionate, professional funeral services. With 48 branches across West London, Middlesex, Surrey, and Berkshire, Lodge Brothers is dedicated to supporting families with dignity, respect, and a personal touch. Their longstanding reputation is built on over two centuries of excellence and trust in their communities.

**About Wilcox Limousines:** *Wilcox Limousines is a leading UK provider of luxury funeral vehicles, renowned for its innovation in craftsmanship and technology for over 75 years. As a third-generation family business, Wilcox combines heritage with modern advancements, delivering high-quality vehicles and dependable aftercare to funeral directors nationwide. For further information, please contact our marketing team at [enquiries@wilcox.uk](mailto:enquiries@wilcox.uk) or call us on +44 (0) 1942 259 860.*



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