



**British Institute of Funeral Directors**  
*Educating the Funeral Profession*

# JOURNAL



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2021-2023  
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JULY 2022 | VOLUME 4

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# JULY



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*The BIFD Journal is an official publication of the British Institute of Funeral Directors and is published online quarterly.*

*Whilst the Journal aims to encourage the fullest freedom of opinion and expression, it should be understood that unless stated, views and opinions, including those of the Editor and Deputy Editor, should not be construed as being policy of the Institute.*

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**Paul Stibbards, Dip. FD, LMBIFD, MBIE**

## **National President**



Dear Members, Fellows, Students and Associates.

It's that time again for a "few" words from your President to start another excellent publication by Hayley and Lucie from the Journal Team.

Since my last letter to you, I have been busy attending events on behalf of the Institute. One major event was the National Funeral Exhibition at Stoneleigh Park, Coventry. It was a fantastic weekend, and I enjoyed speaking to our members and associates face to face. At the event, our team, the new design of our stand and perhaps the sparking Presidential chain attracted a lot of interest from potential new members, sponsors, and students.



The atmosphere was buzzing with excitement and enjoyment. It was pretty hard to top the feeling of connection with many members and the gathered team; I hope this connection will continue long into the future. My thanks to all members of our team who gave up their time to support and promote the Institute at the exhibition.

Unfortunately, the NFE had to end after three days, but my work for the BIFD did not. Living in Southend, my little piece of England, the trip to the NFE took me halfway up the country, but after, my journey had to continue to Durham and then on to Stirling, Scotland, for the dedication of Stirling crematorium.

Scotland is becoming a second home to me this year, not that I'm complaining; it's a beautiful country. Learning my lessons from my last visit, I booked hotels with electric vehicle charging points.



As your National President, I was invited by the Westerleigh group to attend the delayed dedication ceremony at Stirlingshire crematorium.

Stirling crematorium sits on a hill overlooking the Castle and the Wallace monument. We were treated to the music of the Gospel chorus and a lovely lunch; it was great to spend time talking to the team members and, of course, various members of other kindred organisations. There will be a press release from Westerleigh in upcoming issues. Among those Present were Westerleigh Ambassador Alan Jose, President (at the time) of the Federation of Burials and Cremation Authorities, David Marren, Phil Halliday, President of the FFMA, among other dignitaries, including our very own Scottish Region Director Graeme Easton.



Stirling Crematorium, Scotland



*I'm not sure how I ended up almost centre stage, but I guess I was lucky.*

David Marren also attended my second official function on 21st June, the Cremation & Burial Communication and Education conference held at the Hilton at the Ageas Bowl, Southampton. Where David passed the Presidial Chain to Mike Halliday.



*We spent time Networking on the Cricket Terrace at the Ageas Bowl, Southampton*

We were joined by John NAFD President, David Barrington, BIE President, Richard D. Van Nes, President of SAIF, Jo Parker, and ICCM Deputy President, Marian Webb.

The Ageas bowl was a lovely venue, and guests spent most of the evening on the cricket terrace networking with those present.



Of course, whilst I was touring the country, there was still significant work to be completed on behalf of the Institute, and technology has now made it possible to join board meetings from afar, in fact, as far as Stirling. The Board of Directors and the Education Committee have been looking at how we can support the many enquiries we now have due to the success of our new website and, of course, how to best utilise the website to promote the Institute, our courses, CPD sessions and support our members, Student members and potential members.

Enquiries of interest in the Institute are now at record highs, and Jem and Karen Mead at National Office are doing a fantastic job of managing these enquiries. There is increased awareness and understanding of who the BIFD are, what we are doing and can do, and how we are supporting individuals within the profession, with our CPD, website, and the restart of Regional Meetings.

With Regional Meetings and CPD in mind; I am holding a Meeting jointly with my own Region F, and neighbouring Region K with a fantastic CPD opportunity in Chelmsford on Saturday the 30th of July; all members, fellows, students and their partners are welcome to join us - please register your interest with me so that I can arrange refreshments: [paul@stibbards.co.uk](mailto:paul@stibbards.co.uk)

I also hope to arrange a weekend of CPD for all members to attend.

Please also remember that my conference in Southend is now only a few months away, there are limited spaces available, so book your place soon by contacting Conference Secretary, David Gresty: [david-gresty@hotmail.com](mailto:david-gresty@hotmail.com)

Until next time, take care

***Paul Stibbards***  
***BIFD National President***



## The British Institute of Funeral Directors

### Conference: 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022

*Holiday Inn Airport Hotel Southend*

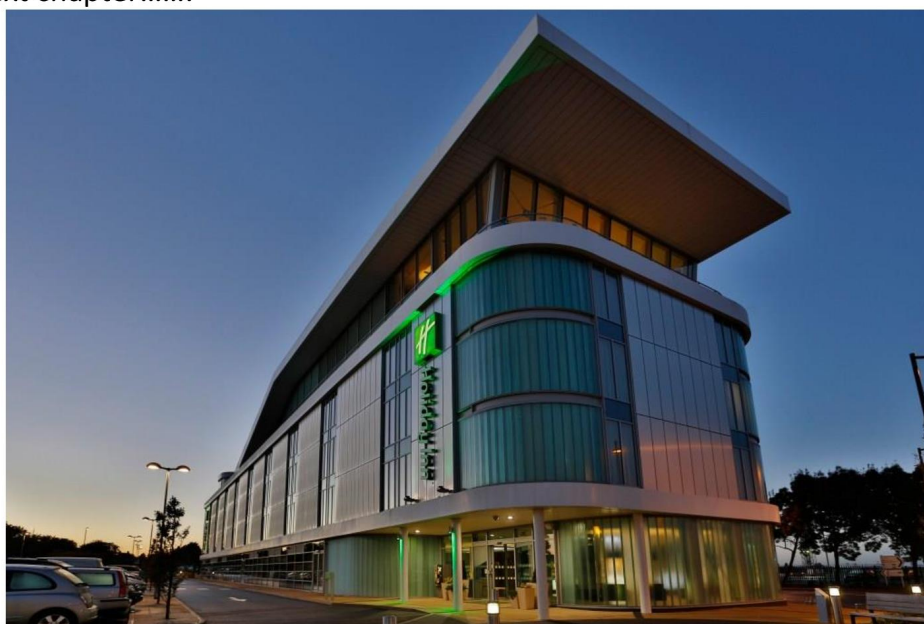
77 Eastwoodbury Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6XG

## BIFD 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference & Gala Celebration Dinner

The BIFD was established in 1982 by a group of funeral directors who believed in education and training for their profession; so that members of the public seeking to use the services of a funeral director should be able to choose wisely and get the best possible professional services on offer. It was the last Institute to have 'British' in its name. The BIFD places the educational and professional development needs of Funeral Directors at the heart of its work and promotes best practice through continual professional development. The BIFD is run by professionals for professionals; the BIFD prides itself on responding to what individuals, companies and the funeral profession needs to best serve the bereaved, now and in the future.

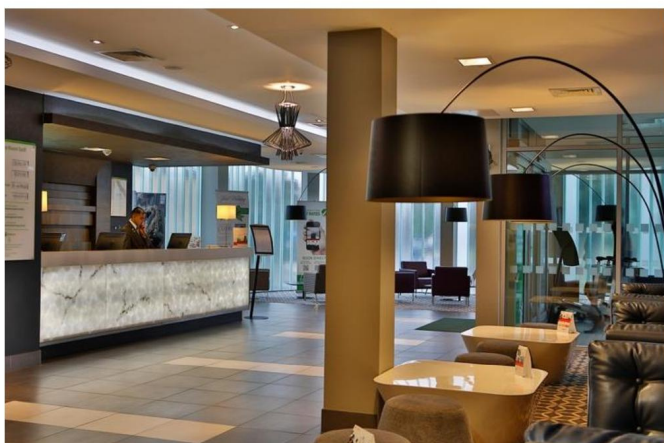
Under the current National President, Mr. Paul Stibbards, Board of Directors and Education Committee, the Institute has a progressive team dedicated to the profession and education. Now 40 years old, the Institute wants to celebrate the changes that have taken place in the profession and funeral education.

Please join us on the 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022 to celebrate the Institute's birthday but also to be there influencing the next chapter.....



## Venue For 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference & AGM

### The Holiday Inn Airport Hotel Southend:



The Holiday Inn Southend is situated just a short walk from London Southend Airport and a short drive from Southend Pier, making it perfect for business or leisure. The fresh, bright and **sound-proofed bedrooms** are the perfect place to relax after a long day. The award-winning rooms are designed to offer a range of facilities to enhance your stay; with comfortable beds, free Wi-Fi, flat screen TV and well-equipped bathrooms. You can also enjoy complimentary tea and coffee in your room with ample on-site car parking.



As the BIFD celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday, The Holiday Inn Southend will be celebrating its 10th Birthday.

The 4 Star Holiday Inn Hotel Southend is gearing up to celebrate its 10th birthday throughout October 2022. Exactly ten years ago in October 2012, the Holiday Inn Southend opened and to celebrate the hotel's anniversary, Holiday Inn Southend is planning five weeks full of surprises and special promotions. For the month of October, the Rooftop Bar at the Holiday Inn Southend will be offering a host of signature cocktails for ONLY £5.00 and all you have to do is mention their 10th Birthday to enjoy a host of unique signature cocktails, any day of the week. Throughout the five-week celebration, the 1935 Rooftop Restaurant will also be offering a 2 for £29 lunch menu. Guests can enjoy a 2-course lunch; choose from a list of starters, main courses or home-made desserts and include a drink for only £29 for two people. Lunch is available Monday to Saturday from 12pm to 2.30pm. Pre booking is required.



The Holiday Inn Southend will be marking their official ten-year anniversary with a free glass of Prosecco for all guests visiting the hotel on Thursday 27th October 2022. You are invited to come along and celebrate with their dedicated staff, who will be on hand to share many of the funny stories they have encountered in the hotel over the past ten

years.

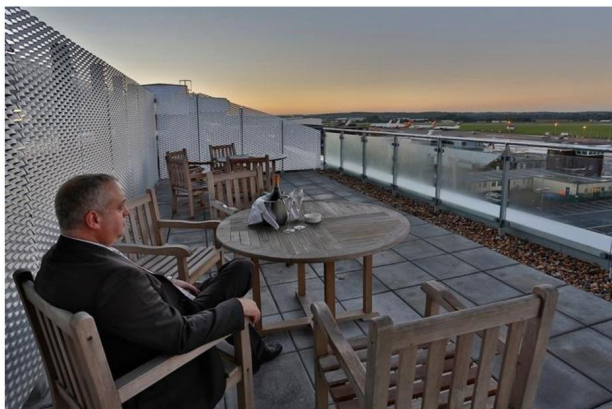
The Holiday Inn Southend has had the honour of hosting 481,4927 guests in its ten years. Over one million pillows have been plumped, over 69,000 kilograms of potatoes have been peeled, while staff at the hotel's 1935 Rooftop Bar have popped over 8,000 bottles of Prosecco. To achieve this, 70 employees from 13 different nations work both front of house and behind the scenes to ensure the perfect and personal IHG service is delivered on time, every time.

With 129 rooms and suites, a ballroom and four conference rooms, as well as Essex only rooftop bar and restaurant, it is a gem on the outskirts of Southend which delivers a personal service with a focus on community responsibility. In May 2017, the hotel won the prestigious Green Tourism Award, the world's largest sustainable certification programme.





## The 1935 Rooftop Bar



The 1935 Rooftop Bar is this the only rooftop bar in Essex, offering amazing views over the runway of London Southend Airport. Whilst enjoying dinner on Friday Evening, you will be able to enjoy breath-taking views of the surrounding Essex countryside and perhaps watch a plane or two take off from London Southend Airport.

The name 1935 Rooftop Bar originates from the year London Southend Airport officially opened as Southend Municipal Airport, on 18th September 1935. The start of the Second World War saw the site requisitioned by the

RAF with several squadrons from all over the world based at Southend. During this time the runways played home to the Supermarine Spitfires, Hawker Hurricanes and Bristol Blenheims.

London Southend Airport is still home to the **Avro Vulcan XL426**. Due to its British aviation heritage and as a tribute to the men and women who flew the Vulcan during the Cold War, a local volunteer group known as the **Vulcan Restoration Trust** purchased and now maintains the Vulcan B2 XL426 in live ground running condition at the airport. It opens to the public at the Visit the Vulcan Days held throughout the year just a few minutes' walk from the hotel.





# The British Institute of Funeral Directors Conference 2022:

28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022

*Holiday Inn Airport Hotel Southend*

77 Eastwoodbury Crescent

Southend-on-Sea

SS2 6XG

## The 40<sup>th</sup> BIFD Conference 2022 Tarif Rates

### 1. Friday Evening To Sunday Morning – THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

<i>Friday Dinner</i>	<i>.....Double Room (2 People) £470</i>
<i>Saturday &amp; Sunday Bed &amp; Breakfast</i>	<i>.....Single Room (1 Person) £315</i>
<i>Saturday AGM: On Arrival Tea, Coffee &amp; Biscuits</i>	
<b><i>Saturday Lunch Included</i></b>	
<i>Saturday Evening Drinks Reception</i>	
<i>Saturday Gala Dinner – Includes 4 Course Meal Followed By Tea &amp; Coffee</i>	

### 2. Friday Evening To Saturday Morning - ONLY

<i>Friday Dinner</i>	<i>.....Double Room (2 People) £180</i>
<i>Saturday &amp; Sunday Bed &amp; Breakfast</i>	<i>.....Single Room (1 Person) £130</i>
<i>Saturday AGM: On Arrival Tea, Coffee &amp; Biscuits</i>	

***Saturday Lunch Is Available On The Day At £25 PP***

### 3. Saturday To Sunday Morning - ONLY

<i>Saturday AGM: On Arrival Tea, Coffee &amp; Biscuits</i>	<i>.....Double Room (2 People) £275</i>
<i>Saturday Evening Drinks Reception</i>	<i>.....Single Room (1 Person) £180</i>
<i>Saturday Gala Dinner – Includes 4 Course Meal Followed By Tea &amp; Coffee</i>	

***Saturday Lunch Is Available On The Day At £25 PP***

### 4. The Gala Banquet Dinner Only

*.....£60 Per Person*

<i>Saturday Evening Drinks Reception</i>	
<i>Saturday Gala Dinner – Includes 4 Course Meal Followed By Tea &amp; Coffee</i>	

### 5. AGM ATTENDANCE ONLY

*.....Free To All Members & Students*

<i>Saturday AGM: On Arrival Tea, Coffee &amp; Biscuits</i>	
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***Saturday Lunch Is Available On The Day At £25 PP***

## **ROOM UPGRADES AVAILABLE (Subject To Availability)**

<i>King Executive Room</i>	<i>.....£25 extra per room per night</i>
<i>Superior Suite</i>	<i>.....£35 extra per room per night</i>

## **TO STAY BEFORE OR AFTER THE CONFERENCE DBB**

<i>.....Double Room (2 People) £145</i>
<i>.....Single Room (1 Person) £120</i>



# The 40<sup>th</sup> BIFD CONFERENCE 2022

## BOOKING FORM

Members Name: ..... Membership Number: .....

Address: .....

Post Code: ..... Contact Telephone Number: .....

Email Address: ..... Number of Rooms Required: .....

Special Dietary Requirements: Yes/No Details of Diet .....

Arrival Date: ...../...../..... Departure Date: ...../...../.....

Attending **Partners** Name: .....

Attending **Guests** Names: .....

Attending **Children's** Names & Ages: .....

### See Rates Page To Complete Payment

#### Tariff (1) – Full Package

Double Rate: £.....

Single Rate: £.....

**Please return your completed booking form and cheque, made payable to 'BIFD' for the appropriate amount to the Conference Co-ordinator:**

#### Tariff (2) – Fri to Sat

Double Rate: £.....

Single Rate: £.....

**Mr. David Gresty**

The British Institute of Funeral Directors

National Office

10 St John Road

Wroughton

Wiltshire

SN4 9ED

07803 955 230

#### Tariff (3) – Sat to Sun

Double Rate: £.....

Single Rate: £.....

david-gresty@hotmail.com

#### Tariff (4) – Gala Dinner Only

Total Attendees £.....

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#### Tariff (5) – AGM Only

£ No Charge

**Total Amount Due £.....**



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# British Institute of Funeral Directors 40th Anniversary

Members  
Noticeboard

The Institute was founded on 6th February 1982 by a number of experienced funeral directors, each with an interest in education and sharing their knowledge with persons coming in to the funeral profession.

Over the past 40 years the BIFD has grown into one of the leading providers of education within the funeral service and its Diploma in Funeral Service is the highest qualification available to those within the profession. Indeed our mantra is 'Educating the Profession'.

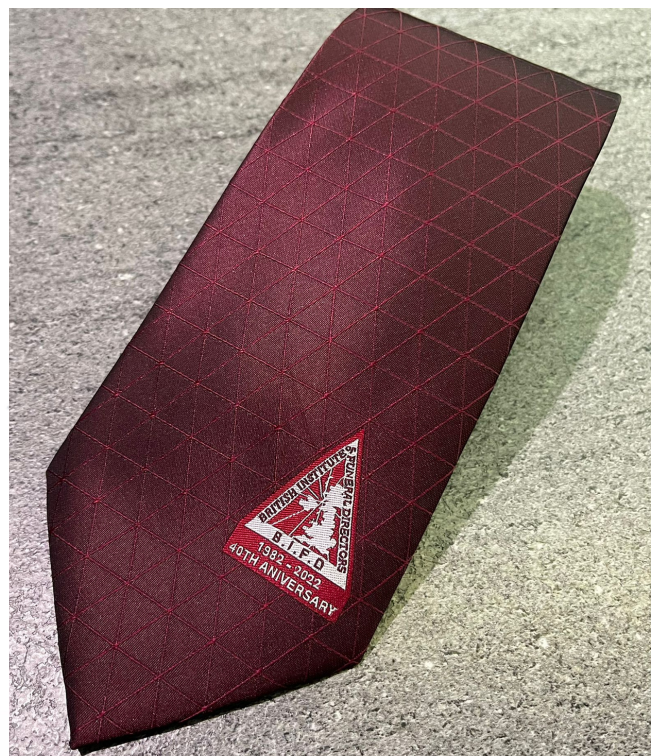
Our qualified Tutors offer two courses: the Certificate in Funeral Service and the Diploma in Funeral Service. Both these courses are accredited by the University of Greenwich.

The BIFD strongly believes in the Continuing Professional Development of its members and those who choose to attain the required level of 12 hours annually become eligible for the Licence to Practice offered by the Institute.

With over 300 members nationwide, you can be assured there is a BIFD member close to you. "Look for the Licence".

To commemorate our 40th year, we have a stunning tie designed by Past President, David Capper available to buy for £20.00, which includes p&p. Proceeds from the sale of the ties will be donated to National President, Paul Stibbards' chosen charity: The RNLI.

Contact Jem & Karen Mead at National Office to buy one of these exclusive 40th Anniversary designs [admin@bifd.org.uk](mailto:admin@bifd.org.uk)





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Editor's Desk

**Hayley Bell, Dip. FD, LMBIFD**  
**Editor of the Journal**



It seems impossible that July is already here and it's been a whole month since we all came together at the National Funeral Exhibition. I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with the BIFD team talking to Funeral Directors about the importance of Education, and with the inevitability of regulation, how important licensing and Continued Personal Development (CPD) is.

As well as our Certificate and Diploma courses, we have exciting opportunities for those of you who are interested in becoming an accredited Tutor to teach these courses, you can register your interest today, and information will be sent to you about training.



With education at the forefront of our ethos, I was invited (along with other BIFD members who attended on different days) by Roger Clark to join him at a local school where we spoke to year 7 students about Grief and Bereavement, Funeral Rites and dispelling some myths about Funeral Directing. We even had a VIP Parking space!

I shared my story about how I became a Funeral Director at the age of 17, and the importance of Qualifications in the profession.

The students asked some amazing questions during these sessions, and we even taught the teachers a few things!



*VIP Parking for Mr Clark*

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the school, and recommend that you consider reaching out to schools/colleges in your local area to see if you can do something similar. Roger created a PowerPoint presentation, some of the slides you can use alongside your own knowledge. If you would like a copy of this slideshow, please get in contact with me: [journal@bifd.org.uk](mailto:journal@bifd.org.uk)

As an experienced Funeral Director, you can also consider becoming a presenter for the Introduction to Funeral Service Course for those who are interested in a career within the profession. We have all the materials for you to be able to hold in-person or online sessions, including a PowerPoint presentation you can get more information about becoming a presenter by contacting National Office: [admin@bifd.org.uk](mailto:admin@bifd.org.uk)

Until next time, I hope you have the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful weather we're having, failing that stay cool, and hydrated, and I'll see you in the next issue.

*Hayley x*





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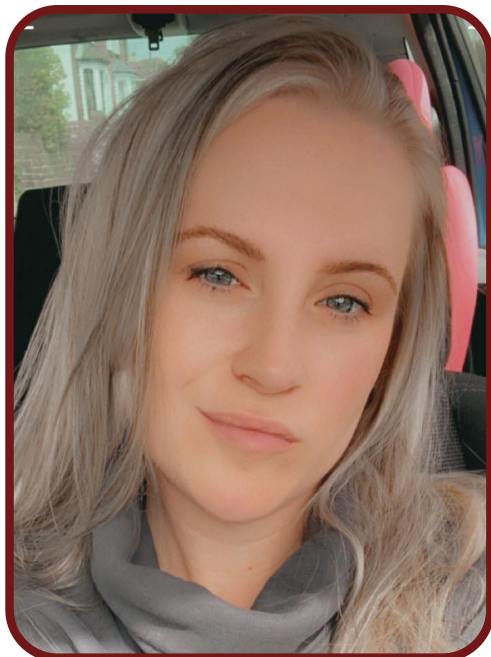


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Deputy Editor's Desk

## *Lucie Kibbey, Cert. FS*

*Deputy Editor of the Journal*



**Hello Everyone, I hope you have all been enjoying the beautiful weather! It has been a real treat for some of us out on services, I'm sure (note the sarcasm!)**

**Please stay sun safe – drink plenty of water and slather the sun cream on every few hours. Especially when on a service. Mother knows best ;-)**

**As summer holidays approach I am looking forward to some days out we have planned with the children, and as always, working on the garden to get it to where we want it. I do hope you all get the chance for some time off, with friends and family, or simply to enjoy sitting in the evening warmth with a nice cold glass of something.**



Covid is beginning to rear its ugly head again, we are seeing a dramatic increase in cases in the local area, and having seen my husband fight with it recently, this new strain is a nasty one. Please remember to be cautious, we spend so much of our time in and around groups of strangers who we cannot possibly know are infectious, so protect yourselves if you can.

I'm looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Annual Conference, if you haven't decided if you are attending yet, take my word for it, it's well worth coming. With lots of fun to be had around some fabulous learning opportunities and getting to know your fellow colleagues and BIFD representatives. I'll be at the bar!

Take care everyone, and I'll leave you with "a brief history of funeral directing"

All the best

*Lucie x*



### *A Brief History Of Funeral Directing Lucie Kibbey, Deputy Editor*

Often, I sit in the office at work, and wonder ... How did it all start? So, I've done a bit of digging and researching and have put together a brief history about our wonderfully rewarding profession.

For as long as human beings have cared for their dead, there have been funeral directors. The ancient Egyptians were possibly the first society to support full-time funeral directors with specialist priests spending up to 70 days preparing deceased royalty and nobility for the afterlife.

In medieval Britain, an undertaker was originally anyone who performed an 'undertaking'; there were those who undertook weaving as well as those who undertook funerals. Eventually, however, the funeral undertaker was shortened to undertaker, and other trades abandoned the designation to avoid being associated with the funeral profession.



The first undertakers were woodworkers - furniture makers and carpenters - that had the skills required to make a coffin. In rural areas, if they had a horse and cart, they also provided transport, although with most people dying at home, friends and family often carried the coffin to the local churchyard.

As society became more urban, walking funerals became less practical and funeral transportation more necessary.

Over time, moonlighting carpenters moved beyond making the coffin and transporting the deceased. They took on all the elements we consider to be an integral part of the modern funeral director's role, from care and preparation of the body to organising the funeral service.

It is not clear when the funeral director title was first used, but the British Undertakers' Association became the NAFD back in 1905.

The switch from undertaker to funeral director is possibly a reflection of the increased responsibility involved in 'directing' every aspect of the modern funeral service. These days, we have come to rely on the profession's experience and specialist knowledge to ensure that our loved ones get the final send-off they deserve.

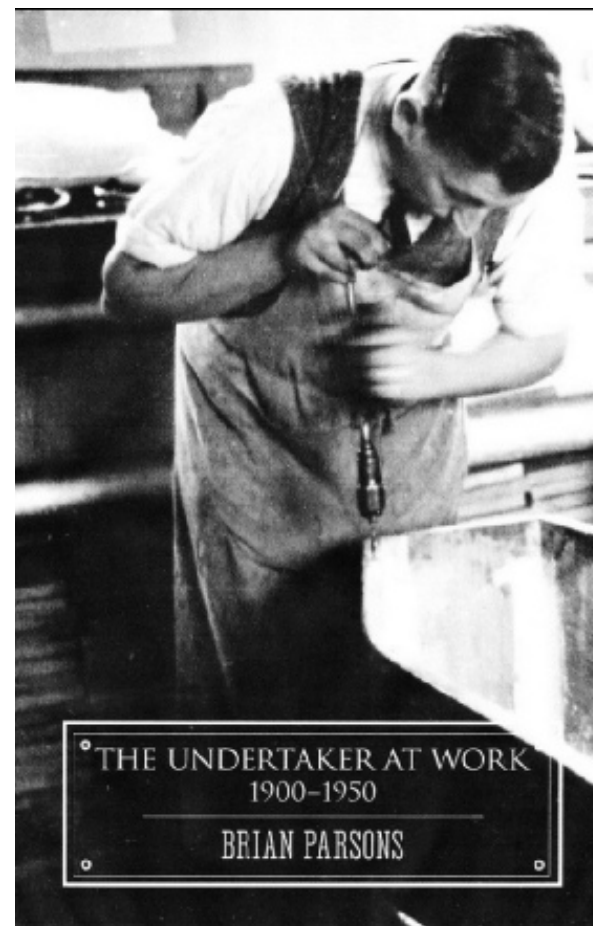
It is also an acknowledgement of the care that is taken behind the scenes by a trade trusted with looking after the body of a loved one, from collection to chapel of rest.

Author and academic Brian Parsons says the most important evolution in the funeral director's role has been this care of the deceased.

"In 1900 we were pretty hands-off, people died at home, people stayed at home. Now that has completely changed. Death now happens in the institution, whether it's a nursing home, a hospital or a hospice, and the body doesn't rest at home between the death and the funeral."

"The funeral director is now very much the custodian of the body, preparing the body and allowing access to it. Really that's just because society has changed, the way we care for the living has changed and then the way we care for the dead has changed."

Many of the UK's independent funeral directors are long-standing, family-run businesses that can trace their roots through their local communities. All provide a modern compassionate and professional service, before, during and after the funeral service.



THE UNDERTAKER AT WORK  
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# Not Sure What To Post Online and Social Media?

**Eimer Duffy**

**Social Media/Digital Marketing Consultant**

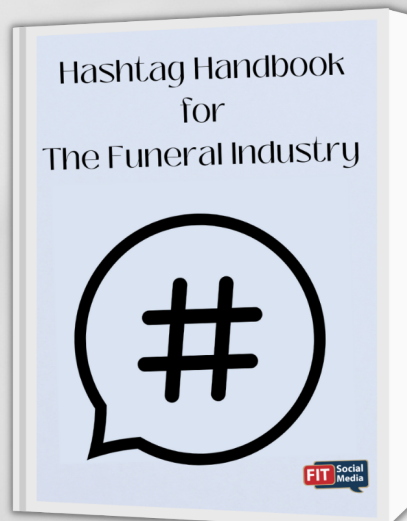
Are you looking for unique social media post ideas for your funeral business on social media, but aren't sure where to start? Having a hard time keeping up with your social media schedule?

Social media is a great way to help spread the word about your Funeral business. It's important that you pay attention to what content you're posting. Whether it's providing information about your services, announcing news and promotions, or simply giving people a behind-the-scenes view of your business. Below is a list for post ideas for funeral homes on your Google Business Profile, WhatsApp Business and your social channels etc...



## Here Are Some Post Ideas:

- **Post articles on funeral industry news and events.**
- **Share customer testimonials and photos after funerals or cremations.**
- **Share photos of beautiful cemetery and memorial garden designs.**
- **Share photos of new products and services offered by your funeral home.**
- **Post information about upcoming seminars or continuing education classes that you offer at your facility, such as grief support groups or grief counselling workshops.**



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**And as a last thought: The best way to think about creating posts is to consider your target audience, what they expect to find when they click through. It's true that creating post content can at times be challenging and just as vital is to consider posting frequency. With such a high level of competition out there, creating insightful social media content and posting on a regular basis with quality photos and videos will give your funeral business the edge over the rest.**

### **Want More Ideas Or Help?**

**I hope you found this helpful. If you would like more questions answered or want more information on having an online presence, using social media and how to leverage it for your funeral business, or anything else do contact me:**

<https://fitsocialmedia.ie/>

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## Patrick The Pony Is Making A Real Difference In Torbay



*Sandra Murphy, Area Development Manager for Funeral Partners (blonde hair) and Funeral Arranger Jade Cross with Patrick*

**The team from a funeral home in Torquay are helping the local community by supporting a charitable organisation that provides pony therapy.**

**Torbay and District Funeral Service, which is part of the Funeral Partners network of high-quality funeral homes, has a long-standing relationship with the organisation Community Pony which supports local people through Patrick, their 4 year old Miniature Shetland therapy pony.**

**They have donated over £1000 towards Patrick's training to become a therapy pony and sponsor the van which transports him around to enable him to visit people.**

**Sandra Murphy, Area Development Manager for Funeral Partners, said: "The team and Torbay and District Funeral Service have continued to support Patrick the Pony in his work as a therapy pony, providing support to local people in Torbay.**

**"Pony therapy can be so beneficial to many people and Patrick has an invaluable role in helping with the service we provide of supporting bereaved families. As well as supporting Patrick's work as a therapy pony, we helped to make Patrick a mascot for the Purple Poppy Appeal, which remembers animals that fall victim to war. We even bought him a smart new coat to wear on his mascot duties."**



**Pony therapy has been known to reduce blood pressure and overall cardiovascular health. It can help release endorphins that provide calming effects, this can help alleviate pain, reduce stress, anxiety and improve overall psychological state.**



*Sandra and Jade with Kirk Petrakis, Director of Community Pony and Patrick.*

**Kirk Petrakis, Director of Community Pony, said: "We originally bought Patrick with the intention of using him to pull a small carriage for our three children but soon realised that he was better suited at interacting with people and that is when we decided he would make a great therapy pony.**

**"We are really grateful to Sandra and the staff at Torbay and District Funeral Service for their support with our therapy pony project. The money they donated has helped with Patrick's training and gone towards the cost of equipment.**

**"Patrick is now fully insured as a therapy pony. He has visited hospitals, schools and recovery groups, and we have taken people on walks with Patrick, which has helped many with anxiety and stress. We have attended wakes, where Patrick has brought comfort to those affected by grief and bereavement.£**

**Sandra adds: "We are really pleased that we have been able to support such a worthwhile cause. It is great to see the progress he has made and to know we are part of it."**





## Greater Manchester Funeral Director Supports Knife Crime Clampdown

**A Stretford funeral director is supporting a campaign to reduce knife crime in the area after helping with a three-day knife amnesty.**

**The amnesty was organised by Father Ged Murphy from St Ann's Roman Catholic Church in Stretford, Greater Manchester, in conjunction with Greater Manchester Police.**



*Paul Birkett (left) with Father Ged at St Ann's church*

**Father Ged, who felt compelled to do something about knife crime after seeing first-hand the effect it had on families who have suffered losses, asked members of the local community if they could help by monitoring containers for people to dispose of their knives safely and without judgement.**

**Staff from C L Birkett and Sons Funeral Directors in Stretford, the longest established funeral director in Stretford and Urmston, had no hesitation in taking part, including Paul Birkett who manages both funeral homes.**

**Paul said: "As a father of four young children the thought of them growing up around knife crime inspired me to get involved. With too many knives being carried by people in the Greater Manchester area and several deaths from knife crime in recent months, we knew something had to be done.**

**"I felt proud that Father Ged approached us to help with this worthwhile project, and we were pleased to take part. It is important that we work together to help our local community by stamping out knife crime and deterring youngsters from carrying these lethal weapons."**





St Ann's Roman Catholic Church

**Paul and the other volunteers monitored the knife disposal bins which were situated inside the Church foyer.**

**Paul added: "As volunteers we all did shifts to monitor the bins and acknowledge the people coming in to dispose of knives. While we don't know the exact number of knives that were collected over the three days, feedback from the volunteers indicates that we had a good response. We hope this will help to reduce knife crime in our community."**

**Father Ged is considering teaming up with other churches to run another knife amnesty in the future.**

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# We Are Not Denying Death!

Ben Whitworth, CFSP, Dip FD, LMBIFD, MBIE, MEAE, MNZEA

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How many times have we heard the statement 'Embalming is denying death!?' It is one of the most frequent claims I hear when providing training seminars. This claim is often followed by others 'Its barbaric!' or 'Its unnatural!' and my favourite 'Its poisoning the environment!'. You don't have to do much by way of searching online for negative and somewhat bias reporting of embalming and there is also a wave of fairly damning videos on YouTube. Worst still are some of the demonstrations which are a long way away from the embalming that we as funeral service professional's practice. With some of this in mind, we must ask ourselves why embalming gets such bad press?

Arterial embalming and preparation have come a long way, and from its very humble beginnings, has become very valuable. Anatomists were able to prepare and keep anatomical cadavers for much longer, furthering their study and investigation of the human organism. The deceased were able to be repatriated from place of death to other regions within a country or even overseas in a dignified and hygienic manner. Funeral services could be delayed allowing for travel and more importantly time. Funeral directors did not need elaborate cooling coffins or a healthy supply of dry ice to stave off decomposition. Embalming allowed funerals to change and develop, to focus not only on the deceased but also the bereaved. As professionals, we could offer and provide much more and funerals could be more gentle and even...pleasant and valuable!

In a recent conversation with a friend and colleague about decomposed cases, I was asked about the preparation of extreme cases and was viewing still possible. I answered that there was a lot that could be done and that I have achieved very successful and positive viewings with very severely decomposed cases. The conversation continued and my friend told me of a badly decomposed case that they had been unable to treat. Contained in multiple body pouches and wrapped up within the coffin, the odour from the case was so bad that at the funeral, the coffin remained inside the hearse with the tailgate open, while the mourners took their seats in the service chapel. This was surely a bad day for funeral service and I wonder how many of the mourners at the service questioned the ability of the funeral director to handle such cases. We talked more and I reviewed how the cases could have been treated, not to enable viewing as such, but to manage and contain any odours and ensure a better experience for all concerned. As a result, he has now ordered some additional products and has a plan in place. The point to this is, that the application of certain embalming products and other items would have prevented this situation from occurring in the first case.



Returning to the opening sentence of this article 'Embalming is denying death', as a funeral director and embalmer of many years now, I must challenge this! I am going to state here and now that whilst I whole heartedly believe in and promote embalming, I will not use it for every single case in my care. I will always attend to the deceased and provide a minimum level of care to every deceased person in my charge, however that may not include embalming. The deceased will be removed from their wrappings, disinfected and bathed, the facial features set, hair cleaned, dried and brushed into a tidy style and the fingernails cleaned and clipped if required. I may go as far as to remove any nail polish residue if it is chipped or damaged. The deceased will then be dressed in a basic shroud and may be placed into a clean body pouch if required. With this completed, the body may then be placed into a coffin, casket or cremation container. This process allows for the full checking of any jewellery or personal effects that may be with the deceased. Any implants such as pacemakers or defibrillators may be observed and any problematic conditions, such as skin slip, blisters, ulcers or other potential areas of leakage or odour may be attended too. With this complete, the deceased may then be kept in a clean and dignified manner until final disposition takes place. If at the last minute there is a request for a private viewing for personal or ID reasons, it can usually be offered as basic care will have been performed. Imagine having to open a coffin, casket or cremation container at the last minute, in front of people to check something or recover some item. It may not be the immediate family in front of you, but others that may need to be there are all opinion formers. What opinion would they form of a company where a deceased human body has just been placed in a receptacle with no attention, left in soiled sheets or wrappings and in an unsanitary condition?

We must examine the purpose of viewing the deceased human body and what impact it can have on the bereaved. Seeing the dead human body, allows the bereaved an opportunity to confront and acknowledge that a death has occurred. It may also remove some of the unpleasantness of a final memory when a love one has died suddenly, suffered a long and protracted final illness or when there has been significant trauma involved. Prior to his death, my maternal grandfather had been a larger-than-life man, not only in character, but in stature. With a barrel chest, jowly neck and large hands he was instantly recognisable. Throughout his final illness he lost a considerable amount of weight. His neck and jowls diminished and his face became thinner. His hands although large became thinner and finer and his belly reduced. The night that he died, my mother and aunt saw him and the next day when we as a family met to discuss funeral arrangement and make plans, this came up in conversation. It was not him and all my mother and aunt could talk about was his loss of stature and how his mouth was gaping open. Would he still look like that and should anybody else see him in this way?







I asked for some time and said that I would let them know when I had finished embalming him and that when he was dressed and, in his coffin, they might like to see him again. I promised I would do everything I could and that I was sure his appearance would be much improved. Creating a good mouth closure using the needle injector and using some Inr Seel with the Heavy Compound Injector I was able to restore the natural shape and contours of his mouth. Mixing an arterial solution that contained Plasdopake and a generous amount of Restorative as well as Proflow and Rectifiant, his face, neck and hands filled out and plumped nicely and his jowly neck appeared. A little feature builder injected around the eyes and the

temporal region give him a peaceful and natural look, not quite as before his final illness but so much better than his last month! My mother and aunt viewed the following day and were so grateful of this time and were able to spend time and say those things, that would otherwise have been unsaid in a safe and comforting environment.

Gramfy's funeral was due to take place six weeks after the embalming and final preparations were completed and this was during a relatively hot summer. There was great comfort in the fact that he would spend this time resting in the viewing room and not be returned to a fridge or cold room. Initially many of the other family members had decided against seeing him, but as these things work out, the night before his funeral service, my grandmother, uncles, siblings and cousins decided they wished to see him. Their relief was palpable and after spending an hour or so at the funeral home, everyone was glad of that last opportunity and a pleasant memory.

The point to this is that there was a need to view. My family needed to confront the death of a deeply loved patriarch, in a safe and beneficial way. Embalming allowed that opportunity and ensured that no last-minute change of heart would cause any problems. From my own point of view, there was a wonderful catharsis in the whole process. While I could only look on and visit during his final illness, after his death, I was able to provide suitable, gentle care and restore dignity with the application of our craft. Without embalming, his mouth wouldn't have closed in a satisfactory way, his stature would not have been reinstated and we most certainly would not have been able to see him in a good condition six weeks later. Embalming him was not about denying his death, but allowing us as a family to confront his death in a safe and positive way.

When death has been sudden, due to a traumatic incident or been undiscovered for some time, there is more often than not a desire to see the deceased person. Embalming is a tool that allows us to facilitate this desire in most cases. As practitioners, if we challenge ourselves and continue to develop and upskill, we are able to deal with almost all situations and achieve a positive outcome. These outcomes allow confrontation of death in as safe, beneficial and let us not forget hygienically a way as possible!



An embalmed deceased body can look as if it is just asleep and some will question this and its value, but let us explore this a little further. Would a sleeping person be resting in a coffin or casket and placed into a viewing room or chapel in a funeral home? These subtle points help further in the subconscious realisation that the death has occurred. As a former tutor and mentor of mine would say 'You don't put a living person in a coffin!'.

The continuing Covid-19 pandemic is an example the desire of the bereaved to see the deceased in a positive and safe way. At the height of the pandemic, sick loved ones were alone in hospitals and other care facilities and relatives were prevented from visiting to reduce the spread of the virus. Families may not have seen a loved one for weeks and then death occurred. The deceased may not have received the 'normal' level of personal care during this time and could be in a fairly poor condition. Further, there was a perceived risk of infection from Covid-19 positive deceased human bodies. For those who decided to, embalming was an effective way of dealing with these cases. An acceptable pre mortem appearance could be created, the risk of infection was negated and families could confront death and say goodbye.



We could provide a level of care that was unavailable during the final illness. From a more technical point of view, embalming provided a highly effective way of managing deceased human bodies as we experienced longer and longer delays for cemetery and crematoria availability. At one point, the funeral home where I help out and embalm for, from time to time, had an 8 week wait for crematoria slots and 40 deceased people in their care. Embalming allowed all of these cases to be safely and effectively managed and not to resort to hiring in temporary refrigerated storage. Not that this was readily available at the time anyway. This also allowed families time to be able to come together for funeral services as some family members may have been sick themselves or in periods of self-isolation.

If we look back through the history of mankind, there has always been a need to see the deceased human body and have the body present through some form of service. Approaches to this have changed over the centuries but there is still a need and embalming allows us to facilitate this better than just about any other option. When we talk about denying death, let us, examine how our language and terminology has had an impact on denial. We might ask ourselves, do people die anymore, or do they expire? If we look at the vintage comedy of Monty Python and the famous 'Dead Parrot Sketch', we are given a summary of some the euphemisms for death, where people; Expire, Pass Away, Circle the Drain, Cease to be, Pass Over, Pass On, Shuffle off this mortal coil, Grow tired of life, Give up this oxygen habit, Fade Away, Run down the curtain and join the choir invisible, Go to Ground, Go to God, Slip away and croaked! While some of these may seem a little outrageous for general use, the point remains valid. We are not confronting death with our own language!





We in our own profession have done the same. Do we still use a hearse, or is it a funeral coach or ceremonial vehicle? While the deceased awaits attention and preparation, do they rest in a mortuary or morgue or is it a care centre? I know of facilities where deceased persons who are prepared and coffined or casketed wait in 'departure lounges'. It makes one wonder if they are awaiting a flight to some far-flung land on an A380 or to be taken with care and dignity to the cemetery or crematorium in a hearse? Are funerals still funerals, or are they 'memorial services', 'celebrations of life', 'ceremonies', 'end of life events' or 'solemnities'? Do funeral homes remain as such or do they in turn become something else? How long before our establishments become a 'bureau of funerals' or a 'business that provides interment or cremation'?

For me, providing the opportunity to see a deceased loved one is the cornerstone of our profession. We are charged with the custody and safekeeping of the deceased and, in doing this, we fulfil part of our obligation to the bereaved. We help them to confront death in a safe, peaceful and positive way. The language and terminologies that we employ may need some thought and potentially some revision but by being thorough in our work, establishing the needs and expectations of the bereaved, and embalming to the highest possible standards, we confront death, not deny it. This surely is in everyone's best interest. Is it not?

*Ben Whitworth, CFSP, Dip FD, LMBIFD, MBIE, MEAE, MNZEA*



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# BRINGING IN A SECOND GENERATION

*Paul J King, Dip. FD, LMBIFD*

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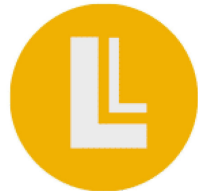
At their February meeting two new members were welcomed into the Lodge. Shown here is WBro Paul J King a Funeral Director from Essex who was allowed by the Master to Chair the meeting to enable him to bring in Taylor his 22-year-old step-son.



*WBro Paul J King & his Step-Son, Taylor*

There are a couple of other Masonic Funeral Directors from other Lodges who are joining the ranks of Acacia at the October meeting.

If you are a mason already and wish to visit, or have an interest in starting your masonic journey by joining Acacia Lodge please email Paul King [pauljking@pauljking.com](mailto:pauljking@pauljking.com)



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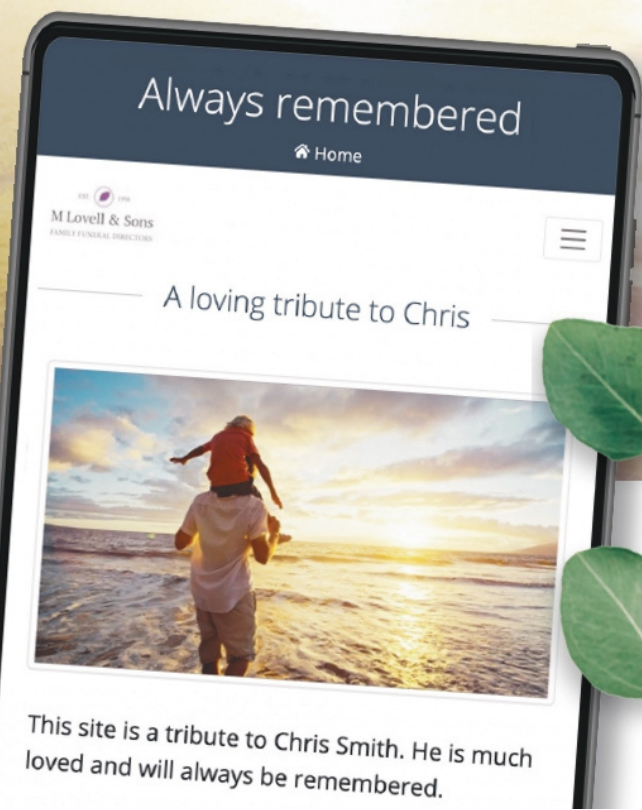
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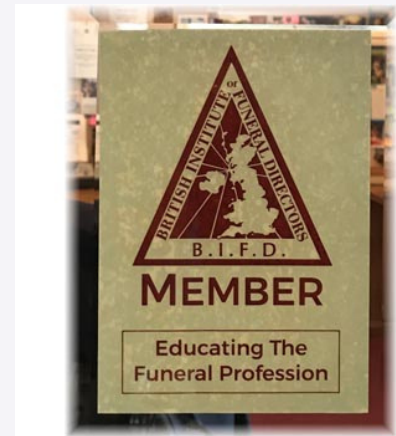


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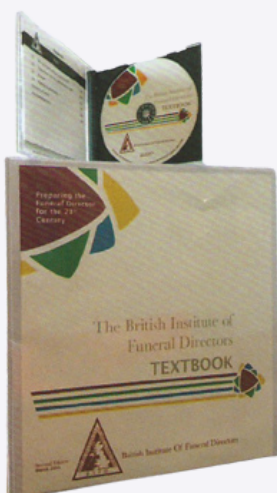
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## Keeping Ashes In The Home

*Tributes Ltd is a leading supplier to the funeral sector, well known for its innovative products, which help families to remember their loved ones. Many families now choose to keep ashes in the home following a cremation, and there are a number of options which can help support them in this situation.*



If the choice is to keep a large amount of ashes at home then a sensible and practical option is an ashes casket, which usually takes the form of a wooden box. There are a range of choices including those made from more sustainable woods such as bamboo. Some options even have a photo frame lid, where a favourite picture can be placed. These boxes can also be engraved with subtle images or messages to make them even more individual and special.

Alternatively, some urns are, to all appearances, simply a beautiful photo frame. The latest photo frame urns have a cleverly concealed ashes casket housed in the back. And it can be a comfort knowing that while the photo is visible, the true purpose of the frame is much more special, understood only by the family, or who they choose to tell.



Many people find it comforting to place a small amount of ashes in a keepsake. Some options such as candles, can be left on the mantelpiece at home and others, including memory stones, can be kept close by.



*Keepsake Heart*

A heart shaped keepsake is a good choice if the family are looking for a small item which physically reflects their love for the person lost. Wooden hearts are the perfect size to hold in the palm of the hand, or display on a stand, and can hold a tiny quantity of ashes, along with photos and other small mementos such as a ring.

An eternity candle is another lovely option, and can be engraved with a name and a message. These candles can provide a focal point for contemplation, and an opportunity to quietly remember a person. They can also help to create a peaceful atmosphere on certain occasions, including birthdays or anniversaries, when family and friends might wish to remember, share stories and celebrate their life.



*Eternity Candle*

If the preference is to hold the keepsake close at all times, a Memory Stone is a good alternative. These understated black, polished stones, with space for a short engraving, provide a subtle memorial. With their smooth, solid feel, they are designed to be held, providing a comforting tactile tribute. The strength and durability of the stone might also evoke a sense of enduring love, and they can be easily carried given their small and discreet design.



*Memory Stone*

It can also be a comfort for the family to personalise a chosen item with an engraving to include the name of the loved one or something which expresses their feelings. Whatever the message, this can be a worthwhile way to turn a beautiful object into a truly personal tribute.

**For more information about Tributes please visit [www.tributes.ltd.uk](http://www.tributes.ltd.uk)  
or contact Tori Bush on 0345 388 8742**

## Photo Urns - New system 2022

Redesigning our urns for the future. This easy to use discreet photo urn has now been designed to be more eco-friendly and also hold a larger capacity of ashes.

Screw in secure fit

Made from recycled paper

Magnetic closure





**Question: What do these coffins have in common?**



**Give families complete confidence in the quality of your coffins**

**Answer: It's the Symbol of Approval**

### **The FFMA scheme**

A universally-recognised accreditation scheme, the Test Protocol, which is funeral industry recognised.



### **The benefits**

Your families can choose with complete confidence.

**For more information visit the FFMA website: [www.ffma.co.uk](http://www.ffma.co.uk)**

FFMA, 28 Cherry Blossom Close, Ipswich, IP8 3ST. Tel: 07803 562008 Email: [chiefexec@ffma.co.uk](mailto:chiefexec@ffma.co.uk)





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