BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS

THE JOURNAL



Conference Edition

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National President's Chosen Charity

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Reflecting on a Year of Leadership: An Interview with Clive Pearson, Immediate Past President of the BIFD



Dear members,,

As I reflect on the past 12 months, it has been an absolute privilege to serve as your President. One of the greatest highlights of this year has been the opportunity to travel and meet members across our regions from Scotland and Northern Ireland down to the Southern parts of England.

Throughout my presidency, the CPD provided by the Institute has truly been second to none, offering members a fantasticchance to come together, connect and learn from one another. As I leave my post of President, I can do so knowing that I am leaving the Institute in a strong position and doing exactly what it should be doing; providing exceptional education through both the courses offered and the CPD sessions we provide.

The new team put in place earlier this year has guided the Institute in a positive, forward direction, working cohesively as a whole team. I have been immensely proud to have been a part of that team.

Both Leanne and I have thouroughly enjoyed our role representing the Institute, and we will always cherish the new friends we have made along the way.

As Phil now starts his 12 months as President, I wish him all the very best in his new role. I know he will excel as he carries on visiting members around the regions and representing us proudly at the various Kindred Association banquets.

Before I close this final letter, I would strongly urge you all to support the upcoming Education Day on 6th March 2027, which will be the first of many as we move forward into the future together.

Thank you all once again for the wonderful support you have given both myself and Leanne during our time in office.

Clive

Clive Pearson

Immediate Past President, Region C

A HEARTFELT FAREWELL: REFLECTING ON MY JOURNEY IN THE FUNERAL INDUSTRY

Victoria Wells



As I write this, it is with mixed emotions that I announce this will be my final article as Deputy Editor for the BIFD. I have truly enjoyed my time in this role and sincerely hope that my articles have been of interest and value to our readers over the years.

My journey in the funeral industry began when I was just 22 years old. It started in West Yorkshire, where I took my initial steps on an embalming course with the British Institute of Embalmers (BIOE). From there, my pathway led me to London to work at Levertons—the esteemed royal funeral directors. Studying for my first ever funeral exams under the mentorship of David Grainger at Levertons was a profound privilege and a masterclass in professional care.

My career subsequently took me to Co-op Funeralcare in West London before evolving into funeral celebrancy. Without a doubt, some of my most enjoyable and fulfilling professional years have been spent as a celebrant. It has allowed me to meet truly incredible people and work alongside exceptional funeral directors —notably W Sherry & Sons in London, with whom I had the pleasure of working closely with for many years.

Reflecting back, so much has changed in the funeral service over time. It will be exciting to see how our industry continues to adapt and innovate in the future, whatever challenging times may lie ahead.

I am particularly delighted to be finishing my time here on a high note, having passed my Diploma qualification earlier this year. Achieving this—and benefitting so rich a learning experience—is something I am immensely proud of. I want to extend a special note of gratitude to my tutors, Clive Pearson and Hayley Owen, for their unwavering guidance, support, and tuition throughout the process.



Although I am now stepping away from the industry full-time to embark on an exciting new chapter working for a children's charity, I won't be leaving completely. On my days off, I still look forward to officiating the occasional funeral as a celebrant.

It gives me great comfort and pleasure to hand over the reins to Beth Harron. Beth is not only one of the most capable and caring people I have had the privilege to work with, but she is also deeply passionate about our work and heavily invested in the educational future of our profession.

I know she will do an outstanding job, and I wish her the absolute best of luck in her new role with the BIFD!

Thank you to all the colleagues, friends, and readers who have supported me along the way. I wish you all the very best for the future.

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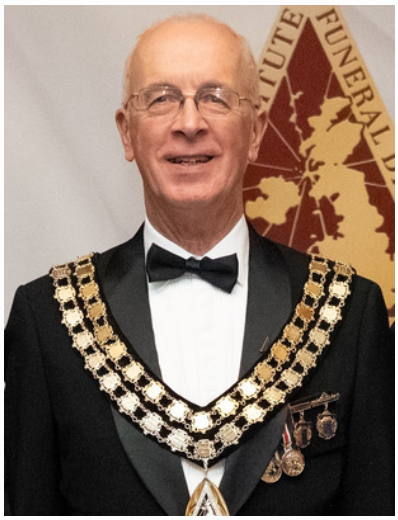
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MADE IN BRITAIN

INTRODUCING

Dr Phil Gore

National President



Philip joined Gore Brothers Ltd in Margate in January 1978, after a decidedly mediocre spell at Chatham House Grammar School, trained with Lears of London as an embalmer in September 1978 working at 369 Clapham Road, qualifying in 1980.

He briefly 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. A chance encounter at a conference pointed him in the direction of post graduate activity. 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 dead in contemporary England', completed in 2005, kept him very well occupied for years. In addition he has overseen the expansion of the family firm from premises in Addington Rd Margate, originally acquired in 1862, to a location more in keeping with dynamic pace of contemporary funeral practice. The addition of five branch offices from the mid-eighties onwards has also kept him quite busy.

Philip is a first responder for Kenyon International Emergency Services as an international repatriation specialist and has attended 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 business partner, also working in the family firm, Amy who, after a degree at Oxford is now the logistics director for GT embalming and Nick, a solicitor, married to Ruth. The addition of eight grandchildren in recent years has been very widely appreciated, as has also the afternoon snooze, following their visits.

Any residual time not taken up with things at work, home, ballroom dancing or choral singing within a small chamber choir, where he successfully brings down the tone and being a trustee of a local Margate-based Alms house is very rare. However local history is of great personal interest and researching (on a very part-time basis) the distant roots of Gore Brothers Ltd, from its Nineteenth century elements, when the company described itself as 'furnishing undertakers' back through a nautical boat building element in the later Eighteenth century, and finally back to 1736, when John Gore in Margate inserted a notice into the local paper that he was now going to provide the soft furnishings (vital to funerals at the time) has produced a tantalising clue to the origins of his family company, now dating back ten generations.

INTRODUCING

Judith Dandy

1st Vice President



Looking back to October 2025, stepping into the role of Second Vice-President of the British Institute of Funeral Directors was a personal and professional privilege that I was very excited about, though also met with a little apprehension.

During the first few months, I was very grateful to my fellow Directors for their encouragement and guidance as I deepened my understanding of the functions, policies and responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the potential for my role.

It has been a privilege to support Clive during his year as President of the BIFD. I have had opportunities to co-attend meetings when he has represented the Institute, and I have deep admiration for his commitment to the best interest of our organisation and being steadfast in his focus to develop the Institute. His character, integrity, discernment and wisdom have enabled the Institute to respond thoughtfully to the challenges we have faced, modernise our structure as we look ahead, and also grow our membership. Thank you, Clive. Also, our gratitude to his wife Leanne and family, who have shared their time with him, with us!

Alongside the education the BIFD provides through the Certificate and Diploma courses, I have pursued my interest in supporting CPD opportunities for members. For this purpose, I am moving forward to coordinate an Education Day will be held in March 2027 (please see poster within this Journal, with programme and booking details to follow). During this dynamic phase of change within our profession, it will be good to have an opportunity to meet with colleagues, to share experiences, and extend our knowledge of themes and changes in our sector through an engaging itinerary of speakers.

So now, moving to First Vice-President of the British Institute of Funeral Directors, I am feeling very positive about the opportunities I am committed to, for the membership. Please keep in touch! Share your ideas and reflections; let's grow together, to enhance the service that we provide to the people we support.

INTRODUCING

Darren Carpenter

2nd Vice President



I am extremely honoured and proud to be taking on the role of Second Vice President of the British Institute of Funeral Directors.

Having dedicated nearly 40 years to the funeral profession, including serving as National President of SAIF, I have gained a wealth of experience and a deep appreciation for the dedication, compassion and professionalism that our industry represents.

Next year will also mark a significant personal milestone as I celebrate 30 years of running my own independent funeral directing business, something of which I am immensely proud.

As Second Vice President, I look forward to working closely with and supporting our President, Phillip Gore and our First Vice President throughout their term of office.

The funeral profession continues to evolve, bringing both challenges and opportunities. I am committed to supporting the Institute, embracing positive change and helping to ensure that the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and care remain at the heart of everything we do.

I look forward to contributing to the continued success of the BIFD and supporting its members in the years ahead.







INTRODUCING

BETH HARRON

New Deputy Editor, Region C

ABOUT ME

I was interested in the Funeral Industry from a young age because of my dad Frank Harron. I started working at Hayley Owen Funeral Directors in 2022. During this time, I have achieved both the Certificate and Diploma qualifications in Funeral Services with The British Institute of Funeral Directors. I am also apart of Kenyon International Emergency Services. I take pride in my work and hope to give everyone in my care a dignified Funeral.

HOBBIES

In my free time I enjoy spending it with my Fiancé, Seb whether that is going on walks or travelling countries. We are also spending this time together to plan our Wedding in 2028.

I love looking after my family dog, Dobbie. He is a Show Cocker Spaniel and he keeps me on my toes. I enjoy going round to see my family on the weekend.

I also enjoy crocheting and sewing. I like to make little gifts for my friends and family especially my Goddaughter, Hermione.







I am very honoured to be part of the Journal with The British Institute of Funeral Directors. My aim is to gain the interest of the younger generation within the industry and to support the institute that I strongly believe in. I also look forward to educating the future members whilst gaining knowledge from other professionals with in The BIFD.

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On Thursday 4th June 2026, Clive Pearson and his team took on the Yorkshire Three Peaks to raise funds for the Leek and District Samaritans. Despite some horrendous weather conditions on the day, they managed to raise £4775 throughout the year.

Well done to everyone who took part and those who have donated..

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SATURDAY 24TH OCTOBER - AGM

After a relaxed Friday night, we held a very successful AGM meeting at 10.30am





































SATURDAY 24TH OCTOBER - CPD SESSIONS

CPD sessions were held by Matthew Hall from Mazwell, Janeen Key from Obitus and Alan Jose from the Westerleigh Group



























SATURDAY 24TH OCTOBER - GALA DINNER

A night of Dinner, celebration and dancing. (A shame we can't put the video of Clive Pearson and David Gresty dancing to The Birdie Song)


































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IN 1896, Launching Poles were supplied and a grant of £150 was given to T J Emptage who sustained an injury whilst painting the Lifeboat House.

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In 1925, the first Motor Lifeboat was sent, with the first station closed in 1927.

In 1953, abnormal high tides in January caused the Lifeboat House to become damaged and the floor had to be replaced.

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Margaret Dow and
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Obitus

The 44th Annual BIFD Conference

By Beth Harron

I had the privilege of being able to attend The Annual BIFD Conference on the 23rd to 25th of October. I felt it was an amazing weekend to celebrate an institute that works with their members and cares about the education in the industry.

Friday 23rd October

On Friday it was a lovely relaxed environment to give you the chance to socialise and network with fellow members. I was sat with Alan and Karen from the Westerleigh Group and Dominic Watson(How to retire like a rockstar). I was also sat with Hayley, Dave and Hermione who I work with at Hayley Owen Funeral Directors.



Hermione

Saturday 24th October

On Saturday I attended the Annual General Meeting in the morning and then refreshments were kindly provided. After this we had 3 CPD sessions which were unique and interesting.





Mazwell

Presented by Matthew Hall



Matthew from Mazwell gave us a presentation on the embalming of 'Gladys' the cow that they did 7 years ago for Edinburgh Veterinary College to help students study the anatomy of a cow.

In particular this session interested me the most because I found it fascinating how similar a cows anatomy is to a humans and how they carried out the embalming.

As of today 'Gladys' is still being used at the college.

Another interesting fact is that the subject had 95 Litres of embalming fluid injected and they drained 4-5 gallons through venus drainage.

Obitus

Present by Janeen



Janeen kindly presented the next session talking about ‘Keys to an attended service’ and what could sway people to go for a direct cremation instead of a full service. She also discussed how important it is to give families options no matter what their circumstances are.

I was interested in the upgrades that she spoke about and the Obitus Academy that is available to us.

Westerleigh Group

Present by Alan Jose



Last but not least, Alan from Westerleigh Group gave a talk on their new super venues.

This CPD session was particular interesting to see how the industry is modernising and trying to keep up with the changing times.

The super venues give families more of a choice and be able to personalise their loved one service.

Gala Dinner

On Saturday night, we got to celebrate Clive Pearson's year as president by having a banquit dinner with him. The tables were decorated with resin coffins that Hayley Owen had made and notebooks from the sponsors.

The meal was lovely and it was nice to socialise with fellow members of the institute. We also did a raffle to raise money for Samaritans, and over the year we had raised just short of £5,000 which is amazing !!

One of my favourite parts of the evening was watching 4 students receive their diplomas - Andy, Victoria, Bethany and Thomas. It was amazing to celebrate their achievements with them.

Before Clive handed over the chains, he played a video tribute to showcase what he had got up to as president over the year. I though it was such a lovely touch for him to show is appreciation to everyone he had met over the year.

Finally Clive handed over the chains to Dr Phil Gore for his presidential year. I look forward to seeing what Phil gets up to in the institute.











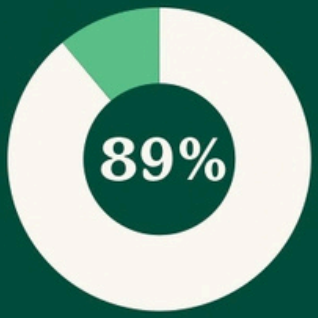




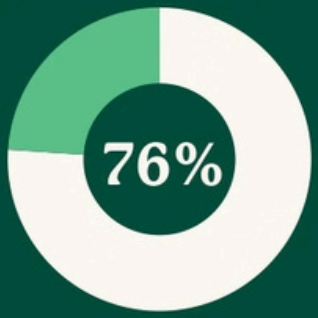
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Obitus

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS

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