

30 January 2014

Mountsett Crematorium Performance and Operational Report



Report of Graham Harrison, Bereavement Services Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee with an update relating to performance and other operational matters.

Performance Update:

Number of Cremations: for the period 1 September 2013 to 31 December 2013

2. The table below provides details of the number of cremations for the period 1 September 2013 to 31 December 2013 inclusive, with comparative data in the same periods last year:

	2012/2013		2013/2014	Change
	Sept	Dec	Sept-Dec	
September	100		85	- 15
October	109		92	- 17
November	144		97	- 47
December	115		90	- 25
TOTAL	468		364	- 104

Gateshead	98
Durham	236
Outside Area	30
Total	36

3. In summary there were 364 cremations undertaken during 1 September 2013 to 31 December 2013, compared to 468 in the comparable period last year, a decrease of 104 (or 22%).
4. In the October 2013 report it was noted that there had been a decrease in cremations previous to that period, and also that this had offset the increase in the previous reporting period. We continue to monitor the usage and for the period April-December 2013 there have been 150 less cremations when compared to the previous year (2012). Prudent assumptions built in to the

Financial Monitoring report project a financial year reduction in cremation numbers of 93 as at 31st March 2014.

5. The table below shows how the numbers of cremations vary on a year by year basis and are affected by many things, the main factor for the winter period is the weather, with this year so far being unusually mild when compared to previous years. The team continue to have a good relationship with clergy and funeral directors and improvements to the facilities including the recent installation of the Wesley tribute system have made the facility more attractive to service users.

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Average
1212	1188	1258	1404	1157	1244

6. Notwithstanding the prudent assumptions that were built into the base budgets (1250 for 2013/14) the forecast outturn has been based on the levels of usage in the final 3 months of 2009/10 (the lowest of the years above).

Memorials

7. The table below outlines the number and value (exc. VAT) of the memorials sold in period 1 September 2013 to 31 December 2013 inclusive with comparative information for the same period last year.

	Sept-Dec Number	2012/13 £	Sept-Dec Number	2013/14 £
Large Plaques	14	4,592.00	10	3,280.00
Total	14	4,592.00	10	3,280.00

8. In overall terms the number and value of memorials 10 / £3,280 in 2013/14, compared to 14 / £4,592 in 2012/13– is a decrease of 4 / £1,312 year on year.

Operational Matters

Staffing

9. Members will recall that, at the meeting held on 14 June 2013, it was agreed (to further ensure business continuity for the longer term) to employ a Business Administration Apprentice. I can now confirm that this appointment has been made and the new member of staff has settled in well.
10. In terms of the new trainee Crematorium Attendant position, this has been advertised and interviews are to be held week commencing 13th January 2014. The post has been covered by a member of staff from DCC Clean and Green Service over the last 6 months.
11. Members will also recall that, at the meeting held on 4th October 2013, it was agreed (to further ensure business continuity for the longer term) that the Bereavement Services Manager continue to run both crematoria in Durham. The continuation of this arrangement on a permanent basis has been factored into the budget for 2014/5. The net effect equates to a £21,447 saving against the

2013/14 budget. This has also been factored into the 2013/14 provisional outturn (£23,547, 10 months)

12. Since September the operations have continued day to day satisfactorily with progress on feasibility studies and other strategic responsibilities. A review will be undertaken in the coming months in relation to current working practices and overtime and honorarium levels.

Green Flag Application

13. As Members will recall that we were successful in obtaining a Green Flag Award in 2013. We are again submitting an application for the 2014 Award and I will report back at a future meeting.
14. A management plan for this will be updated to help maintain the award although works are required any financial requirement is covered by existing budgets.

Recycling of Metals Scheme

15. I am pleased to inform the Committee that a cheque was received from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management to the sum of £3,472 for Age Concern. Arrangements were made for the Cheque to be presented to Age Concern by the Committee Chair and the Bereavement Services Manager on 12 November 2013. (See Appendix 2).

ICCM Conference 2013

16. A summary **The INSTITUTE OF CEMETERY AND CREMATION CONFERENCE** which was held on 30th to 2nd October 2013 can be found in Appendix 3.
17. There were a number of good papers ranging from the work Sands (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society) had carried out, to controlling the cost of funerals and a relevant paper about Funeral poverty.

Mountsett Crematorium: Replacement of Cremators and Installation of Mercury Abatement Plant

18. At the meeting held on 4th October 2013 it was agreed that Option 1 would be supported in principle. Members agreed that the logical way forward would be to run the existing cremators and generate more space.
19. An 'Options' paper has been further developed and will be presented to members along with financing options at the April meeting.

Recommendations and Reasons

20. It is recommended that Members of the Mountsett Joint Committee consider and agree:-

- The content of this report with regards to current performance of the crematorium and forecast changes.
- The current situation with regards to the sale of Memorial Plaques.
- The current situation with regards to the appointment of a trainee crematorium attendant.
- Note the future submission with regards to the Green Flag.
- Note the recent presentation of the ICCM metal recycling scheme.
- Note the feedback from the ICCM Conference.

Contact: Graham Harrison, Bereavement Services Manager

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

As identified in the report.

Staffing

There are no implications

Risk

There are no implications

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no implications

Accommodation

There are no implications

Crime and Disorder

There are no implications

Human Rights

There are no implications

Consultation

None, however, Officers of Gateshead Council were provided with a copy of the report and given opportunity to comment/raise any detailed questions on the content of the report in advance of circulation to members of the Mountsett Crematorium.

Procurement

There are no implications

Disability Issues

There are no implications

Legal Implications

As outlined in the report

Appendix 2: Letter of thanks from chosen Charity



The new name for
AGE Durham County
Concern

13 November 2013

Mr T Robson
Finance & IT Manager
ICCM National Office
City of London Cemetery
Aldersbrook Road
Manor Park
London
E12 5DQ

Dear Mr Robson

Re Donation received via ICCM Recycling of Metals Scheme

Our organisation was delighted to be contacted by Graham Harrison from Durham County Council with regard to your donation of £3472 from the above scheme.

I was very pleased to be able to accept the donation on behalf of Age UK County Durham on Tuesday 12 November 2013. Graham arranged for Durham County Councillor Owen Temple to present the cheque to us on your behalf. Michael Chipperfield, Assistant Superintendent Registrar and Graham were also present on the day and the local press were also invited.

The donation and presentation was then reported in the Northern Echo today and I have enclosed a copy of the article for your information.

We have identified that the money will be best used via our Information and Advice Service – which supports older people in the County with a wide range of issues including welfare benefits, housing issues etc.

Once again, please accept my thanks and that of our organisation for supporting our work with this donation.

Yours sincerely

Harriet Gibbon
Chief Executive
Age UK County Durham

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Age UK County Durham is a trading name of Age Concern Durham County, which is a registered charity (1122008) and company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales number 6431030. Registered office: Age Concern House, 7 Atherton Street, Durham DH1 4DJ. ID10603 07/12

Crematorium donation to help elderly



CHEQUE GIFT: Councillor Owen Temple, right, presents the cheque for £3,472 to Harriet Gibbon, chief executive of Age UK County Durham, with Michael Chipperfield, assistant superintendent registrar, and Graham Harrison, bereavement service manager for County Durham, at the Mountsett Crematorium, in Dipton
Picture: DAVID WOOD

A CHARITY has received a donation of £3,472 from a crematorium.

Age UK has been given the cash by the joint committee of Durham and Gateshead councillors based

at Mountsett Crematorium, in Dipton, near Consett.

The cheque is the third contribution that the crematorium has been able to make to charity as a result of joining a national

scheme for recycling metals arising from the cremation process.

The donations now total £11,805. Durham county councillor Owen Temple, committee chairman, said: "At a time of grief, families are still

making the selfless response of approving this scheme so that the suffering of others can be alleviated.

"It's a tribute to the generosity of spirit within our community."

**Appendix 3: INSTITUTE OF CEMETERY AND CREMATION
CONFERENCE – NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE 30th to 2nd
October 2013**

The conference was opened by the ICCM President, Natasha Bradshaw who welcomed delegates from the U.K., Japan, America, France, Italy, Australia, Netherlands and Germany.

Robertson and the Early Years of the National Association of Cemetery Superintendents

The first paper was given by Dr. Brian Parsons; BA PhD Dip FD MBIE AICCM who gave a most interesting talk on John Duncan Robertson and the early years of what is now the ICCM.

Dunstable War Graves

Kate Dimmock MICCM, MSBP OF Dunstable Town Council, gave a very interesting paper which took a look at some of the stories of the soldiers buried or remembered in Dunstable cemetery.

Living for the Dead: Who are they really?

A most interesting paper was given by Cath Brew, BL Arch, Grad Dip Heritage Studies of Red Plait Interpretation LLP who explained that in years gone by, cemeteries were community places where the living could gain a real sense of the deceased, their beliefs, attitudes and possibly the way in which they died. Today, epitaphs include basic biographical information with, at best, a poetic phrase. The dead have now only become known to us through the living. But memories fade and remain private to loved ones. If we don't attend the funeral, how do we really know who are our dead? How do we feel part of the continuum of generations if we can't access our dead?

This paper explored how death has been represented on headstones historically and the ways in which cemeteries have come to 'hold the trauma' – thus reinforcing the fear of death.

Death and the 'Spirit of Place': assessing cemeteries as a heritage asset

Dr Julie Rugg, University of York's Cemetery Research Group, gave a very interesting paper on an exploration of how to assess the significance of all types of burial space.

The paper discussed the unique selling point of burial space compared with other heritage assets– An ability to demonstrate changing attitudes towards death, This distinctive element means that many cemeteries and burial grounds have a particular 'spirit of place'. The 'spirit of place' makes a major contribution to the likelihood of a site's designation on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

The New Charter for Green Burial Operators

This paper was given by Nicky Whichelow MA (Dis) MCIM FRSA Charter Marketer of Greenacres Woodland Burials and Ian Quance, FICCM (Dip) MSBP BA (Hons) PGCE of the ICCM Natural Burial Committee.

The Institute is launching this Charter at its annual Learning Convention being held on 30th September to 2nd October at the Forest Pines Hotel, North Lincolnshire.

A vital function of the Institute is to set standards of service for the industry, and this has been achieved by the development and implementation of the Charter for the Bereaved. The Institute's board has extended this Charter in order to promote natural burial as an equal alternative to traditional burial and cremation.

Natural Burial may take place in a Natural Burial Ground, in part of a conventional cemetery or on private ground. It may be defined by the resulting landscape; by the materials and practices used or by other environmental considerations such as the type and rate of decomposition. The term Natural Burial encompasses woodland; meadowland; farmland; green; orchard burial etc., but does not define them.

Natural Burial was started by Ken West MBE in Carlisle Cemetery in 1993.

There are now more Natural Burial Grounds than crematoria in the UK (265 vs. 260).

The majority are in Municipal cemeteries.

Our recent survey showed 25% increase in demand in the last 5 years.

Factors widely considered to define Natural Burial include the use of a biodegradable coffin; reduced use of embalming as a procedure; burial clothing made of natural materials; the lack of a conventional memorial and ultimately an enriched and preserved environment. Sustainability is also an issue.

Rip Off! Or: The British way of Death

This paper was given by Ken West MBE. Hon MA (Durham), DMS, Life Member ICCM (Dip) ILAM (Dip)

Ken has written a book which gives an insight into Can the British laugh in the face of death and Funerals? Do they really want to know what happens when they hand their body over to the men in black? You are a short time alive and a long time dead! This fictionalised tale of real and astonishing events beginning in 1993. At times deadly serious; at times deadly funny. It's the mysterious world of the funeral directors, as they try to kill off burial under trees and oppose DIY funerals. It's a world of embalming, pink glitzy shrouds, crappy coffins, brawling at funerals and girl power. Nobody's resting in peace. It spawns a revolution but twenty years later, who is really in control? Find out; if you dare!

Shortage of Burial Space

This paper was given by Alex Strangways-Booth, Senior Journalist at BBC News who explained that BBC English Regions conducted a survey of burial authorities in England, asking how many years before they ran out of burial space. They had approached 699 authorities and a quarter of 358 local authorities responding to the BBC said they would have no more room for burials within a decade. Cemetery experts warned of a looming "crisis", while managers called for a change in law to allow graves that are more than 75-years-old to be reused. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) said the issue was "under constant review".

Many of the councils surveyed, including those in Gosport, Mole Valley, Crawley and Rother, said they had five years or less before they ran out of room. Other areas - such as Tandridge district council in the South East - said they had already run out of space. Some 44% said they had 20 years or less before burial space ran out. About 74% of people who died in 2012 in the UK were cremated, but the cremation rates have levelled off - and there is still a demand for full burial and burial of ashes.

Sands – Working to improve services for bereaved parents

This paper was given by Judith Abela, Group Manager with Sands, who gave an overview of the aims and structure of Sands and how they provide services for bereaved parents. Focusing on the parent perspective and challenges facing professionals working with bereaved parents whilst providing support meetings, telephone helpline, e-mail support, links to local hospitals and fundraising

Controlling the Cost of Funerals – The Cardiff Council Funeral Service

Martin Birch FICCM (Dip) from Cardiff City Council gave a most interesting paper on how Cardiff Council set out to Control the Cost of Funerals for local residents through the introduction of a Fixed Price, Low Cost, High Quality funeral service available to anyone.

Cardiff City Council produced a funeral specification and Tender exercise to all local Funeral Directors was sent out requesting the most competitive price for that spec. Discussions were then held with the preferred winner and the a tender was issued.

This service was then promoted via local press, events etc.

Average UK Funeral Cost -**£3,456**

Average Funeral Cost in Cardiff -**£4000**

Cremation

Funeral arrangements and provision of the specification £1030

Cremation Fee at Thornhill Crematorium £480

Doctors Fees £157

Total cost of funeral including Disbursements £1667

Burial

Funeral arrangements and provision of the specification £1030
EROB New Grave2 depth 100 years £650
Interment Fee £580
Chapel Fee £80

Total Cost of Funeral including Disbursements£2340

Benefits & Risks

Retains business

Reduction in public health funerals

Good news story

Something Helpful and Positive in current economic climate

Funeral director gets repeat business

Raises profile

Can sell extras at the family's request

Funeral Celebrancy – 12 years on!

Anne Barber BA (Hons), MBA OF Civil Ceremonies Ltd gave an update on the survey of Funeral celebrants which was recently carried out on how they found working with crematoria across the UK.

Lots of interesting information and views came back along with insights into this growing area.

The Birth and Death of Ichabod Smith, or: How to teach Best Practice 'Care and Management of the body' to trainee Alternative Funeral Directors - without a body

Angie McLachlan MA BA (Hons), MBIE, MEAE of Red Plait Interpretation LLP gave an interesting presentation about designing and building an interactive body that will be used to train people to care for some of the common complexities of death.



Respect Shrouds for Burial and Cremation

Gordon Tulley HNC Engineer of Respect GB gave an interesting presentation. Respect was led into investigating shrouds by customer demand for a more natural way to go. However, the current American products are very expensive! as too are the UK versions and not suitable for Cremation. Respect chose Bamboo because Bamboo forests are sustainable! Respect Everybody Shrouds are spun into yarn & produced in the UK Produced to ISO 9001 quality standards. Most importantly produced to ISO 14001 environmental standards. These shrouds were then put through tests and provided suitable for use in a cremator. Tests proved THE SHROUD IS actually slow to ignite this is so important especially at the charging stage.

A Coffin Standard for Cremation

Richard Barradell DMS of the Funeral Furnishing Manufacturers Association gave a presentation about coffin standards and how they would go about this. To defining & establishing a comprehensive standard, together with an associated test programme, to warrant that all coffins presented for cremation are 'fit for purpose'.

Avoiding (Unintended) Fires in Your Crematorium

Kim Stopher of Stopher Associates Ltd gave an interesting presentation on some of the recent fires which have occurred at Crematoria in the U.K. The potential causes of fires were discussed, and advice given on how to reduce their likelihood, as well as a review of the general requirements of fire safety in the workplace.

Without Intervention, Funeral Poverty is set to soar (and it's already at record levels)

Simon Cox DM OF Sun Life Direct gave a most interesting talk on Sun Life Directs 7th annual Cost of Dying research which revealed Funeral Poverty is at a record level. Rising funeral costs 2004 – 2013. Non discretionary costs up 80% since 2004. Now standing at £5,462, what is driving the rising cost of a funeral? Disbursements is a description of essential funeral costs that are not within the control of the funeral director Burial and Cremation fees are largely dictated by the local authority Ministers fees sudden rise is the consequence of a 60% rise from C of E.

Historically funeral director fees are the largest single cost of a funeral.

This is the first year since our research started that the monetary rise in disbursements was higher than the funeral directors. If trends are maintained Disbursement fees will exceed funeral directors fees.

Over half (and an increasing proportion) of consumers who had arranged a funeral said funeral costs were more than they expected.

Funeral Poverty up 50% in 3 years as 1 in 5 struggle with funeral costs.

18% struggle with funeral costs

Average shortfall £1,277

If representative of 573,000 UK deaths, funeral poverty = £131m

Funeral Poverty is up 50% since 2010 (from £85m)

Social Fund Funeral Payment: incredibly important but increasingly inadequate

Local authorities and Funeral Directors will be alarmed at the diminishing value of a SFFP compared to the retail cost of a funeral.

- Average SFFP award of £1225 leaves a significant (and growing) gap
- Those who claim are exposed to a flawed process driving many into debt
- A SFFP payment meets barely a third of the retail cost of a funeral

If we use our trend data, by 2033

- The number of deaths per annum c700, 000 pa.
- Increased deaths, better investment returns eases some pressure on funeral inflation
- Systemic problems remain meaning prices still running above inflation
- Basic funeral costs approaching £10,000
- Disbursements the largest element of funeral costs
- A SFFP worth approximately £2500
- Funeral Directors increasingly have to turn away SFFP applicants
- SFFP scrapped absorbed into universal credit or
- Funeral grants and public health funerals all administered by local authorities exceeding 100,000 claims a year.

What needs to happen?

- Recognition that there is a confluence of of inter-related issues conspiring to drive sustained above inflation rate funeral costs, resulting in funeral poverty.
- Inter-related issues are cross sector, cross party, cross industry yet currently there is no parliamentary appetite to deal with the problem, interested groups need to work together to gain political attention
- Its not the Governments fault, its not local authorities being greedy or funeral directors profiteering who are to blame –but it is everybody’s problem

- As it stands “Paupers funerals” are a thing of the future not just of the past.
- Without intervention funeral poverty is set to soar, and it is already at record levels.

Funeral Photography – Helping the bereaved

Rachel Wallace of Farewell Photography gave a brief history of funeral photography, its purpose as an aid to grief past and present. Rachel is an accomplished photographer who began specialising in funeral photography almost 10 years. She produces Memory Books which clients find a great comfort and help in healing their grief, giving them something to literally “hold on to” after the event.

Fasten Your Seatbelt for the Next 100!

Charles Cowling BA of the Good Funeral Guide gave the final presentation which examined likely funeral trends in the light of longevity, secularism and new technologies