



IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH
AT ANY TIME OF THE DAY
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ISSUE SEVENTEEN | FEBRUARY 2008

NEWS

Welcome to your newsletter

Welcome to the 17th edition of Eric F. Box News, compiled by some of the country's leading experts from the UK funeral industry. In this edition we take a look at the changing face of bereavement services in Kirklees, consider what the proposed EU ban on the use of formaldehyde could mean for our industry and continue our 'History of Cremation' series started in our last edition.

There is our regular feature, "Burials from around the world", and this month we explore the Jewish tradition. In our Royal funerals section, the life and death of King Edward the Confessor falls under the spotlight.

We hope you enjoy reading this first newsletter of 2008 and if we can assist you in any way; please contact us. Remember, if you have any questions or issues you would like us to include in future editions, please let us know.

Edward
Andie Richard

If you would like to receive a PDF version of our newsletter, please visit our website. www.efbox.co.uk

The dark cloud is lifted from Kirklees Bereavement Services

The decision by Kirklees Bereavement Services to continue running the district's facilities themselves rather than outsourcing them as part of a public private partnership, has received a cautious welcome from Edward Box.

Two years on from when the debate originally started Edward said: "The question now is whether this has been a wasted opportunity or a great opportunity for Kirklees to modernize and revolutionize its bereavement services.

"There is part of me which thinks that it has been a wasted opportunity as one of the tenders was of a very high standard. Indeed the standard it set was higher than the benchmark set by Kirklees in the tender document.

"One has to question, therefore, whether or not it would have been good to have a fresh approach to the service with new ideas, management, and investment

/ modernization, even though it would have meant a private operator running the service." However, Mr Box said there was another part of him that believed that Kirklees had taken the correct decision.



Dewsbury cemetery

"It will only prove to have been the correct decision if the council backs up its actions with serious investment and improved management that results in a modern, high quality service. The authority has to make this investment

otherwise people will ask why they turned down a very high standard private tender bid."

Mr Box said the benchmark for the service had to be, as a minimum, the level of the highest standard tender. "If it isn't then the public will lose out and the decision will be proved, over time, to have been the wrong one. If this happens, which I hope it doesn't, someone in the council will have to take responsibility."

Senior management within Kirklees Bereavement Services will now have until next month (Feb 2008) to submit a five year investment strategy to the Budget Committee. It is hoped to be around £7 - 8 million.

"I would welcome feedback on this decision," said Edward, "so anyone wanting to make comment can post their comments on our website www.efbox.co.uk or let us know via either of our offices in Dewsbury and Ossett.

History of cremation: part 2

In this edition we look at some of the challenges faced by The Cremation Society to building the UK's first crematorium.

At a meeting on 14th Jan 1875, The Cremation Society agreed to investigate suitable cremation furnaces for its needs. A fund was also established to build a crematoria and to appoint trustees to take responsibility for the land. They were also anxious to determine whether cremation was legal.

In 1875 the directors of the Great Northern Cemetery in North London, offered land, chapels and other

accommodation for use as a crematorium, however, the Bishop of Rochester forbade the building of such a facility on consecrated land.

The Society had to look elsewhere and in May 1878 bought an acre of land in Woking, commissioning Professor Paulo Gorini to oversee the building of his cremator design.

Outraged local residents mounted a campaign - lead by the Vicar of St Johns, Woking - to prevent cremations taking place and the Home Secretary forced the Society to pledge not to cremate any bodies until

the legal position had been clarified.

Six years would pass before the cremator was finally used. However in this period four events would prove crucial to the Society being able to use the cremator.....and we'll tell you about them in our next newsletter. Watch this space!



Woking Crematorium

ROYAL BURIALS: EDWARD THE CONFESSOR (C.1003 - 1066)

When does a premier saint become a second division saint? When he's been usurped by St George of course!

And that's exactly what happened to Edward the Confessor, architect of Westminster Abbey and England's first patron saint until the dragon slayer was appointed to the role in 1348, some 282 years after Edward died!

So who was Edward? Brought up in Normandy from the age of 12 and cousin to William, the future Conqueror,

he succeeded to the English throne in 1042, marrying Edith, the daughter of Earl Godwine. The new King was extremely pious and devout and had longings for a monastic life.

Edward is most famous for having founded the Abbey of St. Peter on Thorney Island in the misty low lying marshes that then edged the River Thames. Otherwise known as the West Minster, to distinguish it from the other Cathedral within the city, St. Paul's, Edward delighted in his construction project and considered the Abbey's creation his greatest achievement.

In November 1065, King Edward fell sick from 'a malady of the brain' - possibly a stroke or a haemorrhage - and on Christmas Eve suffered another seizure. He was far too ill to even attend the consecration of Westminster Abbey on 28th December and drifted into a coma.

Edward the Confessor died on the stormy night of 4th -5th January in the momentous year of 1066, famous for the Battle of Hastings. His shrine remains where it was after the final translation of his body in the 13th century - at the heart of Westminster Abbey.

He was canonised in 1161 and is considered a saint by the Roman Catholic Church which regards Edward the Confessor as the patron saint of kings, difficult marriages, and separated spouses. He also remains patron saint of the Royal Family.

And why 'Confessor'? When Edward was canonised he became 'Confessor' because he died of natural causes. If he had died a martyr, he would have been Edward the Martyr.



BURIALS FROM AROUND THE WORLD BEREAVEMENT IN JUDAISM

A Chevra Kadisha, meaning "holy society", acting as a "burial society", is a loosely structured organization of Jewish men and women who see to it that the bodies of Jews are prepared for burial according to Jewish law.

Two of the main requirements are the showing of proper respect for a corpse, and the ritual cleansing of the body and subsequent dressing for burial. The task of the Chevra Kadisha is considered a laudable one, as tending to the dead is a favour that the recipient cannot return, making it devoid of ulterior motives.

At the heart of the society's function is the ritual of purification whereby the body is first thoroughly cleansed of dirt, body fluids and solids, and anything else that may be on the skin, and then it is ritually purified by immersion in, or by a continuous flow of, water from the head over the entire body.

Once the body is purified it is dressed in tachrichim, or shrouds, of white pure cotton garments made up of ten pieces for a male and twelve for a female, which are identical for each Jew. Once the body is dressed, the casket - when used - is sealed.

The society may also provide shomrim, or watchers, to guard the body from theft until burial. This role - symbolic in many communities - has become a way of honouring the deceased. It's often done by relatives.



INDUSTRY FOCUS: FORMALDEHYDE - AN EU BAN?

EU attempts to ban formaldehyde-based solutions, which are used to disinfect and temporarily preserve human remains, could be some way off thanks to the British Institute of Embalmers.

The BIE is leading the fight against an EU directive originally voted through Parliament in 1998 which, at worst, would result in the eventual phasing out of formaldehyde.

However, the BIE, which is representing the European funerals industry, has established a fighting fund and has until October 31st to submit a dossier

to the German authorities - appointed as agents by the EU - giving scientific evidence about formaldehyde and explaining why it is used and the implications of its withdrawal.

And, providing nothing happens in the interim to see the political withdrawal of the substance, it will be at least 2014 before anything happens due to the bureaucratic nature of the EU

Andrew Box, head embalmer at Eric F. Box, said: "It is the ability of formaldehyde to fix human tissue that produces the tell-tale firmness of flesh in

an embalmed body.

"Whereas other heavier aldehydes also produce a similar firming action, none approaches the completeness of formaldehyde".

He said that banning the use of the chemical would have far reaching implications. He added: "In simple terms its use prevents the decomposition of bodies, however, without its use some airlines could refuse to accept bodies for repatriation, and traditional 'viewing' of the deceased's body will be severely limited because of problems with decomposing."