



## Welcome to your newsletter

Welcome to the twenty-fifth edition of Eric F. Box News, the newsletter compiled by some of the country's leading experts from the UK funeral industry.

In this edition we want to share our exciting news about our new chapel of rest in Ossett, whilst our Industry Focus section looks at how people find comfort and companionship from pets during times of grief and solitude.

St Gemma's Hospice in Moortown, Leeds, features in our Hospice profile section, whilst our 'Burials Through Time' editorial examines the extravagant and lavish traditions of the Victorians.

Finally, our Iconic Burials feature explores the controversy surrounding the untimely death of Princess Diana, who tragically lost her life in a car accident in Paris in 1997.

We hope you enjoy your read and if we can assist you in any way, please contact us. Remember, if you have any questions or subjects you would like us to include in future editions, please let us know.

In the event of a death at any time of the day or night, contact us at:

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## Box opens new Ossett funeral home

This month we are delighted to introduce you to our new Ossett funeral home which formally opened its doors at the beginning of December.

As many of our readers will be aware, Eric F. Box's was established in 1853 and, for much of its 150+ year history, has had a strong presence in Dewsbury and, more recently, Ossett.

Richard Box said: "We originally opened in the town six years ago in response to the fact that we were already working with many families

in the area. We wanted to take a more intrinsic role in community life and decided to open our first premises in Station Road.

"Box's presence in the town has worked brilliantly, and we have been so well received by both families, and the local business community. And this new development shows that we are here for the long term."

Work on the firm's stunning new premises in Kingsway, which feature a chapel of rest and family rooms, began as far back as

September and were completely gutted before the new opening.

The double fronted building is located just opposite the Co-op food store off the main

town roundabout, and for those of you who are local, it was formerly occupied by Chadwick Lawrence solicitors.

Edward Box, added: "Very often people walk past a funeral directors believing it to be a place that they can't enter, however, we don't want that to be the case.

"My father Richard, myself, my brother Andrew or another member of the team, will always be inside so please call in and say hello, just introduce yourself. We are members of the business community and want to get to know our neighbours better.

"The redevelopment of this premier site, marks the firm's major commitment to Ossett for decades to come. We have always been well received by locals and look forward to becoming a more integral part of the community and serving families in the future," added Edward.

See the Eric F Box website at [www.efbox.co.uk](http://www.efbox.co.uk)



## Spotlight on the Hospices

St Gemma's Hospice and its near neighbour, Wheatfields, really hit the headlines in the early 1980's, when the Yorkshire Evening Post adopted them as part of its 'Half and Half Appeal' which has now raised well over £2.5m and is still going strong.

Today, we focus on St Gemma's which continues to be a major provider of specialist palliative care for people with life threatening illnesses, although predominantly cancer.

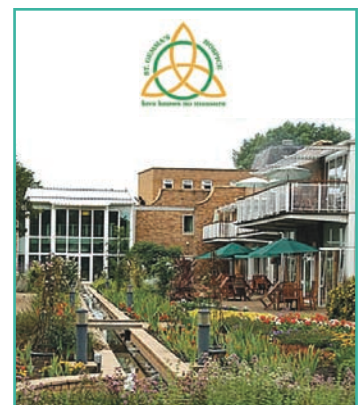
Opened in 1978, it is now the largest hospice in West Yorkshire and the fourth largest in England, following expansion in 1982 and 1991, and refurbishment in 2000. But, without the likes of the YEP and, indeed the thousands of families who continue to support it, St Gemma's, like so many other

hospices, would not be able to provide the wonderful service it does; the hospice costs almost £20,000 a day to run.

The 220-strong workforce is headed by Chief Executive, Bill Kilgallon, who joined the team in 2007 after a distinguished career in local government, the NHS and social care.

Under his watchful guidance, St. Gemma's continues to improve its standard of care with every passing year. In 2007-2008 the Hospice received 927 new referrals, cared for 597 in-patients, carried out 2,980 home visits and oversaw 1,896 day hospice attendances. Few appreciate that 38% of patients admitted to St Gemma's return home, after an average stay of 12 days.

Of itself St. Gemma's says: "We recognise each person's need for respect, dignity and independence as we care for adult patients, from all backgrounds, with active, progressive, advanced illnesses, and provide continuing support for their families and carers."



# Iconic Funerals: Princess Diana (1961-1997)

The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, is one of the most highly speculated in recent history.

Many conflicting accounts and conspiracy theories have arisen since 31st August 1997, when the Mercedes that she was travelling in crashed into a central pillar of the Place de l'Alma underpass in Paris.

Following a fifteen-year marriage, the Prince and Princess of Wales divorced on 28th August 1996. A year later Lady Di was in Paris with Dodi Al Fayed, son of Harrods owner, Mohammed Al Fayed, when the accident happened. Dodi's father claimed his son and the Princess were engaged.

One conspiracy theory is that Diana's love for a Muslim would "embarrass the state", so the pair were murdered by order of the Royal Family.

However, the inquest in 2007 concluded that the grossly negligent driving of their chauffeur, Henri Paul, who was under the influence of drugs and alcohol, coupled with the pursuing paparazzi cars, were the reasons for the crash.

News that Diana had been tragically killed was met with extraordinary public expressions of grief.

More than one million bouquets were left at her London home, Kensington Palace, reaching a depth of five feet in places. At her family's estate of Althorp, people were asked to stop bringing flowers, as the volume was causing a threat to public safety.



On the day of her funeral, 6th September 1997, more than a million people lined the route of the funeral cortege; some of the crowd wept, some applauded quietly, but most watched in silence.

A four-mile procession brought Diana's coffin from Kensington Palace to Westminster Abbey. The two young princes, William and Harry, walked behind the coffin with their father, Prince Charles, and their Uncle, Lord Spencer.

The Royal Family were joined by politicians and celebrities in a subdued congregation, including Hillary Clinton, Luciano Pavarotti and Sir Elton John, who played his re-worked version of Candle in the Wind.

Diana's brother, Lord Spencer, described her as the "very essence of compassion" during the service. He also criticised the paparazzi for pursuing Diana's car in Paris, to which the congregation ignored protocol and applauded.

Over 2.5 billion people watched the service worldwide, making Princess Diana's funeral one of the largest in history.



A very public day of mourning ended with a private ceremony at which Diana was finally buried on an island in the heart of the family estate at Althorp. A visitors' centre is now open at the site during summer months, with profits going to the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

## Burials Through Time... THE VICTORIANS

Nowadays death is almost taboo, but for the Victorians it was a time for pomp, ceremony and celebration!

Funerals could be grand affairs but became lower profile, over the decades, as people became more and more reticent about discussing death. Euphemisms became the norm...passing away, shedding his mortal coil, and so on.

However, as we have so often said in the Box newsletter, 2009/10 has seen a return of a new openness whereby people celebrate someone's life, rather than commemorating their death.

During the Victorian Era, no expense was spared when arranging a burial and, with such a high mortality rate, it was not uncommon for people to save for their children's funerals, sometimes to the detriment of life's necessities.

A Victorian funeral procession was an extraordinary sight. Led by various foot attendants, the first coach was the black hearse, decorated with silver and gold, covered by a huge canopy of black ostrich feathers, and pulled by six black horses also sporting black ostrich feather plumes on their heads.

Family members usually followed the hearse in other coaches: men wore mourning suits with crape bands around their top hats, while women wore black crape gowns, veils and gloves, and carried mourning fans made, again, of black ostrich feathers.

The procession travelled along main roads, often taking detours to achieve maximum display at important local areas.

Following a dignified service, the coffin was either lowered through the floor into catacombs or buried, however, only men witnessed interment.

A feast was held at the home of the deceased after the funeral, but occasionally before the ceremony with the body of the deceased present. Ham, cider, ale, pies and cakes were the usual fare.

The mourning period following burial depended upon a person's relation to the deceased. A spouse, parent or child was expected to wear mourning clothes and curtail social behaviour for 12 months (six for grandparents and siblings; two for aunts and uncles and so on).

It was thought that whilst wearing black, the living were invisible to the dead, so this would stop the deceased returning.

## INDUSTRY FOCUS: A dog is for life...

Florence Nightingale, the so-called pioneer of modern nursing, once wrote that a pet "is often an excellent companion for the sick, for long, chronic cases especially."

Today, the ability of pets to provide comfort to humans in times of grave illness or grief, is widely recognised by medical professionals, therapists, and hospice workers around the world. People facing death or mourning the loss of a loved one, are often calmed and reassured by the loving companionship of a pet.

Pets are known for their unconditional love and, in times of stress, many seem to know instinctively just how to respond. Most pet owners can tell you of a time when a loyal pet has laid by their side, attentive and patient, while they were in bed with flu. That same kind of response can provide immense comfort during a period of loss or bereavement.

But, as Director and Funeral Director of Eric F. Box, Andrew Box, points out: "Although animals can be a great comfort in times of grief, we would not recommend buying a pet specifically for this purpose following a bereavement, as the responsibility of caring for an animal is an unnecessary strain during an already difficult period."

For people facing death or living with bereavement, pet ownership isn't always practical.

"Many pets are abandoned in times of pressure, and with the number of abandoned dogs and other pets already rising following the festive season, it is more vital than ever to stress the importance of caring for these pets properly. After all, they may have been there to help at a difficult phase of someone's life, so they should be rewarded accordingly, not abandoned."

### DUG BROTHERS - FUNERAL DIRECTORS

