



The Family Funeral Service®

Staff Newsletter

August 2024



We are pleased to announce the acquisition of Chase and District Memorial Park, a prominent Cemetery and Crematorium located in Lichfield, West Midlands.

Chase and District Memorial Park is a relatively new addition to the community, featuring a Crematorium that has been operational for just 12 months on an eight-acre Cemetery site that has served the area for around 10 years. This acquisition marks a significant milestone for our company as we venture into this new area, which we believe will help future-proof our business in the evolving funeral market.

The site is expertly managed by Moria Tunnicliffe and James Shelley. They provide a range of services including traditional chapel services and direct cremations. The Crematorium's unique setup, housed in a separate building, allows for flexible service times throughout the day. Additionally, direct cremations are available to the public under the trading name 'We Are Direct Cremations'.

In the coming weeks, we will focus on expanding the team and offering additional support to Moria and James. Our goal is to enhance the site, bringing it up to the high standards synonymous with our company. We plan to promote full-service and direct cremations to local funeral directors, as well as redesign and relaunch the 'We Are Direct Cremations' website. This initiative will enable us to compete effectively with national direct cremation providers.

We extend our thanks to Pete for his diligent efforts in ensuring all documentation was meticulously prepared for the completion date. Special appreciation also goes to Ben, Gaz and Chris for their tremendous work on-site, making significant improvements right from the start.

This is indeed an exciting time for our family company. We are grateful for your continued dedication to maintaining our core business operations while we embark on this new venture.

Thank you all for your support as we look forward to this promising new chapter.



Pete, Moira, James and Matthew



The Chapel and offices



The crematorium building

'Our family serving your family since 1907'

Memoirs of a Funeral Director - Part 4

With 46 years of funeral experience, Mark is our most experienced non family member of staff. Nigel asked if he would write an article for the Newsletter, however 46 years is a lot to condense and in Mark's words the project 'has legs'. Here is the fourth instalment.

Thomas Davis 1981 – 1987

I could have walked in to the job I was offered at Thomas Davis in Bristol much earlier had I applied for it when it first appeared and then, secondarily, had I applied to the correct firm. A friend of mine in Kent had sent me a clipping from a trade journal which she had seen but which I did not feel I wanted to pursue at first but when I felt the time was right, having disposed of the cutting, I had written to another similarly named firm in Horfield on the northern side of Bristol called R Davies who kindly replied by letter with the original cut out job description for a Funeral Director/Embalmer from the FSJ and the correct firm's address. This similarity (and there was also a firm in the nearby satellite ex-coal mining and glass working town of Nailsea called Arthur Davey just to confuse things further) was always a point of contention, occasionally carrying out a funeral way out of our area or seeing Davies of Horfield steal one from under our noses, usually ascribed to the families approaching the 'wrong' Davis.



Thomas Davis offices

I started at Thomas Davis and, despite not being experienced, let alone qualified, in funeral arranging or directing, as a trainee in that field but also as an embalmer.

The company occupied two buildings in a leafy backstreet in Southville, part of the larger suburb of Bedminster on the south, Somerset side of the Avon (or 'Bedmonster' as I once mistyped it with a rather interesting Freudian twist).

Originally named 'Mona Lodge' (one of those unfortunate 'old' names that hasn't worn well with time as that of the road in which I lived at Kingston: Woodbines Avenue) the office, administrative and arranging side of the business was in the renamed Southville Lodge which also had attached half a dozen small chapels of rest which I remember on one occasion of heavy rain, being flooded and I desperately tried to sweep the flood water away to no avail.

On the opposite side of the road amidst lovely copper beeches and horse chestnut trees was the old vicarage (built in 1860) which the company had acquired and converted to sixteen chapels of rest and also housed the embalming theatre and coffin store. The company's proudly pronounced ethos was that everyone in its care was placed in their own private chapel (all named after a Saint) as soon as possible and remained there until the day of the funeral. We also ordered our coffins fully prepared from another local funeral director and coffin manufacturer, Cottons, so we had no workshop as such.

These buildings lay in the shadow of St Paul's Church, a late 1950s reconstruction of its predecessor which was blitzed during the many bombing raids Bristol suffered in the Second World War.



Thomas Davis Chapels of Rest

Thomas Davis had the reputation of being the 'better' funeral directors in the city (also County – Bristol was given county status in 1372 and was for a long time England's second city). I experienced the city going through a

renaissance – it was a boom town – this was the 1980s – the western end of the Silicon Corridor – Hi-Tech companies and financial institutions flooding in to the West Country’s regional capital - there was certainly a buzz here and what I felt of Bristol was mirrored in the same I felt for Thomas Davis which was also reflected in my own self-esteem as I flourished and developed in this ‘Rolls-Royce’ of companies.

I quickly procured rooms in a trendy, modern, split level house owned by a doctor in Kingsdown which overlooked the quaint old Kings Square and the colossal modern shopping centre of Broadmead which had, phoenix-like, risen from the totally bombed, devastated old city. My walk to work would take me down through the old Victorian financial centre (which had survived), alongside the old docks through what was called ‘The Centre’ and past a converted warehouse which was home to the modern arts centre of Arnolfini. At the time I was entranced by the advertising poster for a group of artists called The Ruralists, an exhibition of whose work was showing at the time. The picture used in the poster was by David Inshaw, a West Country artist, another work of whose, Our Days Were A Joy and Our Paths Through Flowers, I discovered shortly afterwards in the Bristol City Art Gallery which had a deeply meaningful effect on me.

There was still a Davis presence in the Company (B----) but he was, by the time I was there, frequently absent, the place being run by his Managing Director who was another B----- who originally came from Suffolk and worked for a long time in Ballards in London and it was his somewhat old-fashioned mores and standards that I readily respected and emulated.

His ethos would certainly seem stuffy and dry today and, there were even things at the time that I felt were a little ‘over the top’ (he would cover up the photographic magazines he brought in to the office if they had pictures of scantily clad young women on the cover in the presence of M---- our receptionist and refer to certain aspects of life as ‘women’s work,’ pictures being ‘women’s pictures’ and even King Charles Spaniels being ‘women’s dogs’) but my persona at the time and my expectations and hoped-for future fitted in so well with his standards and teachings if only about the profession. I have always let everyone know where I am (at home and work) because of him. Always let everyone else have their lunch before you do was another one of his doctrines, never ask anyone to do anything he couldn’t and wouldn’t do himself and he would never leave the office before all the staff were back at base and all was accounted for no matter how late in the day.

In the office were four funeral directors: the old retainer, a local man, who was coming up to retirement, another East Anglian who was ‘senior’ and was 41 (exactly twenty years my senior) and indeed was made up to Company Director whilst I was there and N-----, 31, a Moonraker (a native of Wiltshire) who was a devout church-goer with whom I became very friendly and from whom I learned a good deal about the finer points of the ecclesiastical aspects of funerals.

There was an office-based funeral arranger and, holding the whole place together was the receptionist/secretary.

A lesson I learnt fairly early on was to be myself. I saw the senior funeral director as how I pictured myself to be (or thought I wanted to be). I felt I even looked a little like him. I emulated him in dress (acquiring various sharp three piece suits from Austin Reed - which was certainly my ‘high end’ on my income at the time) and trying to imitate his character. I would have been better off trying to fashion myself on N---- who was altogether more sensitive, cultured and fun and, indeed, after a bit of a false start I realised the error of my ways and spent much time with him (he was my original mentor at work anyway) and we spent much time together out of it too. In those days we were open all day Saturday and, teamed up with N----, we would be together during this time.

He was Anglo Catholic, a member of the very ‘High’ All Saints Church in Clifton and I readily took to that idiom as well another colleague’s Roman Catholicism (as well as a friend of mine at the time who was Roman) and it was these influences which made a great impression on my response to clients’ liturgical wishes. It was a time when most if not all families requested a religious funeral, many in church, and I learnt of all the nuances in the Church of England, adapting to each of our local clergy, respecting that they all had different requirements in the carrying out of a funeral. Respect of ecclesiastical niceties has lasted me all my working life.



All Saints, Clifton

The clergy were generally good, Reverend Roger Salter being a lovely vicar from St Oswald's Church on Bedminster Down who, together with myself, were likened to 'two angels' standing at the graveside by a very grateful client on one occasion.

There were others who were not so good. One who denied ever having been approached to take a funeral service who therefore, obviously, didn't turn up on the day, and another who successfully shut my arm in the limousine door as the family were about to be driven home as I had forgotten to give him his cheque beforehand and wanted to 'punish' me for being 'insensitive' in front of the family. I later received an apology from him for 'losing his cool' as he trendily put it.

On the personal front I was certainly developing, acquiring a ground floor flat which was my first self-contained home: 7 Luckwell Road, Ashton, in easy walking distance of work with views of Ashton Gate, Bristol City's football ground. After the death of my mother and subsequent death of her father a year later I acquired much antique furniture including a chiffoniere and Canterbury which are now in our Family Room at Carlton, a wind up gramophone, hundreds of books, Victorian fans and other old collections (78 rpm records, old family photographs, bird eggs, fossils etc.) for which I needed a home and this was the first repository for them all.

My front room window also gave views of the tower blocks in Duckmore Road one of which was probably better known to the world as Nelson Mandela House, Peckham, as this is where Only Fools and Horses was filmed as, indeed, further north in Redland another comedy programme, The Young Ones, similarly was filmed and produced.

I was never too involved in any football crowds at the distance I was away from Ashton Gate but it reminds me of another one of those particular traits I witnessed, not only in Bristol but also in later life in Bath and Gloucester, where the atmosphere in all these cities at the time of a Rugby Union match was so electric but peaceable compared to football crowds. Especially with having these three top Rugby Union teams at the time, if ever there was a local derby the 'friendliness' of the atmosphere in town, before or after the game, was palpable.

This is somewhat reminiscent of the atmosphere even late in the evenings in the area of King Steet and the Theatre Royal and the 'Berni Inn' - The Llandoger Trow - just off the docks in the city centre. There was often live jazz playing on the pedestrianised streets and I can honestly say the atmosphere was always good, high-spirited but peaceable. It certainly made me come up with the phrase:

"Bristol, to misquote Duke Ellington (and how I love to misquote Duke Ellington) is the centre of civilisation."
The first ever funeral arrangement I made was a somewhat impromptu affair. I had been given various 'mock' arrangements by my colleagues and was told that I might be able to arrange my first in about six weeks. To prove yet again that lovely old Jewish saying: "Man makes plans and God laughs," after a fortnight or so a family came down to the office (we didn't work on appointment systems in those days) and there was no one to see them except for me. They were lovely, a mother and son as I remember and the arrangement was relatively straight forward and gave me that boost of confidence needed.

I was taught to arrange a funeral on a small piece of lined card, eight by five inches (not quite a fag packet), with no headings at all. All the information needed was written in a certain space and the whole was written up in a huge hide-bound ledger. None of our current day arrangement forms nor (obviously) computers! I still find myself, if caught on the hop taking a first call, using a blank piece of paper and writing down all the information in the way I would have done all those years ago, so entrenched that learning is in me.

I soon afterwards began conducting funerals, also quite a different situation to what rookie funeral directors would experience today. This was 1981 and, certainly in Bristol, the profession was trying to get away from the 'old' and 'traditional,' we were not allowed to page, did not possess top hats or canes and only wore short black jackets with striped trousers (never tails).

The funeral director would always say goodbye to the family at the crematorium or cemetery and the Chauffeur would take them home (very rarely was there a wake or reception).

As well as training me as a Funeral Director I was also given driving tuition so that in September 1981 I passed my driving test and acquired the company car which went along with the position: a small Datsun Cherry estate car. So pleased with this was I that I took myself off on the first free Sunday afterwards to Dinmore Manor in Herefordshire and Castell Coch near Cardiff. That taste of freedom was amazing and a life-changer.

Funeral Directors however would never drive the funeral cars which were the big bulbous Daimler DS 420s (in midnight blue) which looked impressive but, from what I could gather from those who had to drive and maintain them, not so good. One of our hearse drivers would hardly affectionately refer to them as “festering heaps of blue enamel.”

Now I was mobile I was able to be utilised for many other aspects of the job. We had a token branch in Whiteladies Road (home of the BBC) in Clifton. It is interesting to think that there are so many parallels I have made between Bristol and Nottingham: the huge part the tobacco industry has made in both (Wills and Players), the presence of Rolls Royce and the aerospace industry (Filton and Hucknall, both on the northern side of each town), the one which doesn't work is that both cities have their Cliftons. Bristol's is the snooty end of town, boasting huge Georgian and Victorian terraces, crescents and villas, foreign consulates, the zoo, the highbrow Clifton College, Clifton Downs and Suspension Bridge, Roman Catholic Cathedral, gorge etc. etc. I was posted to the Clifton branch on a few occasions which, considering how quiet it was, was quite a doddle! I can remember teaching myself the Cyrillic alphabet on many occasions there, probably born out of, as well as my inveterate love for anything Russian, a chance meeting with an Orthodox priest one Saturday at a graveside service in Whitchurch Cemetery just to the south of the city.

I had been treading my singular spiritual path all this time, influenced by the Anglo and Roman Catholicism of my colleagues but could not quite find 'home' until having arranged my first Russian Orthodox service and being entranced by the music and chanting and approaching the priest, Father Kiril Leret (himself a Spanish Jewish, Roman Catholic convert) and subsequently attending the church in University Road in the lead up to Christmas of that year and then attending catechism in a pretty university building nearby whose garden was full of cats and honeysuckle. It was another of those immensely spiritual moments in one's life that one has no prediction of or control over. With my own Jewish roots, the Orthodox Church's essential evolvement from the Jewish tradition was very attractive to me and it seemed to be a natural synthesis in my lifestyle.

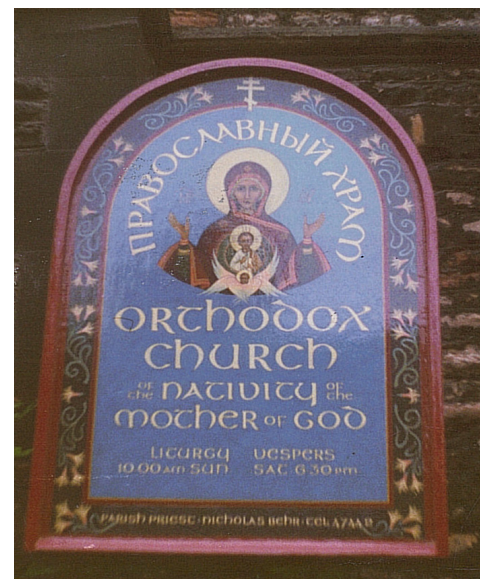
Similar occurrences had happened in the Colston Hall (Bristol's concert hall) where I had a regular season ticket for the resident orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony, and also attended the many other concerts funded by the (very) left wing City Council of Eastern European orchestras (this was long before the 'Wall' came down). I also attended the Theatre Royal regularly and this gave me a great grounding in the cultural side of the city's life.

Bristol had three crematoria: the city council run Canford and South Bristol and there was also the privately owned Arnos Vale which was the earliest in the city, built in a once beautifully landscaped Victorian Cemetery on a pronounced hillside on the Bath Road. It was full of beautiful chapels and monuments but was going to rack and ruin and the once beautiful cemetery, incorporating a substantial hilly area, was now a wilderness.

An especially spectacular memorial which was visible, situated beside the main circular driveway, is one of a traditional Bengali funeral chattri to the memory of Raja Rammohun Roy, the Indian philosopher who died on a visit to Bristol and was buried here in 1833.

Occasionally there would be a request for a grave to be reopened in the midst of veritable jungle and the cemetery staff would have to hack a way through to the site. It must have been virtually impossible to dig graves because of all the tree roots. Some years on, many ornate and interesting graves have been discovered and the place has been transformed, nurtured and cared for.

There was also a severe lack of professionalism in the way things were carried out. Indeed, these were the 1980s but even then we could compare the standards at the other cemeteries and see that Arnos Vale was sadly lacking. I can remember a gravedigger literally jumping on a coffin to make it go down in a grave dug too small....but no one complained: this seemed to be symptomatic of the times.



Bristol Russian Orthodox Church

The catafalque at Arnos Vale (which was the same in both the Council run crematoria) saw the coffin sinking (as if being lowered into a grave) but in true Arnos Vale fashion, once disappeared, a manually operated curtain would be sharply drawn across from below which invariably made mourners, and funeral staff alike, jump.

The cremation licence was taken away just after I left Bristol and since, thankfully, the Friends of Arnos Vale have taken on the running and preservation of the place, removing much of the undergrowth which restricted access to many parts of the cemetery which had evocative names like 'Sunshine Corner,' 'Three Ys,' and 'Top Plateau,' revealing fascinating gravestones and remarkable specimen trees including a magnificent larch I seem to remember.

At one stage there were scares that the owners of Arnos Vale were going to sell the site so that it could be used as a hotel which resulted in many applications for exhumations and, indeed, this is where I encountered my first one, providing an enormous coffin shell to accommodate the original coffin only to arrive early in the morning to discover that the groundsmen had contained all that remained in a few black rubbish bags.

Some memorable funerals I arranged and conducted included that of a renowned local singer who sang at the Avon Gorge Hotel (there was a nice article on her in the Bristol Evening Post at the time) and a member of a religious folk singing group 'Streetlight' at Christ Church Clifton. I also remember being impressed when I realised that I was arranging my first 'millionaire's' funeral from an enormous house in Failand just to the west of Bristol to the local church there.

There were other occasions of arranging and directing funerals to other small quaintly named Somerset villages in Nempnett Thrubwell, Farrington Gurney and Norton Malreward.

During my time in Bristol I was called upon to embalm Edgar Harrison, the actor who played Dan Archer in the Eponymous series on BBC Radio 4 and was also called to one of the large, rather run-down Georgian terraced houses overlooking 'The Cut' (a tidal bypass of the Avon, diverted away from its original course which had become the floating harbour of the docks) just downstream from where our office was situated where the deceased's husband refused his wife leave their house until the funeral. I had never seen such a treasure house of antique furniture and artefacts! The fact that I had to embalm 'at home' was a challenge which seemed much more prevalent in those days as it was often requested and our training made one's own techniques even in the embalming theatre much cleaner and conscious of not making mess or spills, taking all residue fluids away with one in jars carried in a couple of enormous cases.

My senior colleague was always asked to arrange any big civic funerals and N----- was always involved in what we termed the 'Showmen's' funerals. On one occasion a casket was to be taken home to a modest terraced house in Bedminster and, because of the size of it, the front bay window was removed by builders at the family's behest, rebuilt after the coffin was delivered, with the process repeated on the day of the funeral, the brickwork demolished and rebuilt after the cortège had left.

Nearby to our office in Stackpool Road was the site and scene of the first ever murder victim's funeral I was called upon to arrange. The background was that an old lady who had no close family had won a considerable sum of money (the football pools? It was long before the lottery) and her success was all over the Bristol Evening Post which resulted in some undesirables breaking into her home assuming, I suppose, that they would find piles of cash lying around her house. On being disturbed, they murdered the old lady for her troubles and it was a tragic and upsetting arrangement, six months on when the funeral was allowed to go ahead. I can remember being shocked at seeing her poor, frail body deep frozen when we collected her from the Bristol Royal Infirmary.

Embalming was still a large part of my work and I was beginning to find it less enjoyable. I had always been worried about the health aspect (certainly there were health and safety standards around and I am sure that Thomas Davis would have been at the forefront of respecting and upholding them) my pet fear being syphilis which is transmissible after death through contact with body fluids. I can remember telephoning the B.R.I. mortuary one Saturday morning (yes, Saturday!) to enquire about the cause of death of a certain lady before I embalmed her, fearing it was syphilis to be told that it was pemphigus, the condition's huge open sores being reminiscent of my nemesis and that, as long as I took great care, I would be fine (I am still here). It was not only for my own health I was worried but also for anyone close to me and then, of course, this being the 1980s, there came the scourge of AIDS and the terrors this unknown disease created which made me even more apprehensive and dreaded the unknown when it came to embalming.

There was no proper study course for the Diploma in Funeral Directing so I met up with a lady in Weston Super Mare who had recently set up her own company and we met to read through the manual and bounce off each other any queries which arose.

By this time I had moved to the Somerset coastal town of Clevedon (just to the south west of Bristol and easily commutable) which is on the way to Weston and we made the journey in 1984 over the Severn Bridge to Cardiff together to take the practical examination. I can remember the trip as being taken in horrendous, driving rain and, being at the height of the Miners' strike, seeing the convoys of coal trucks complete with grids over the windows and mesh over the lights: veritable tanks ploughing through the elements.

Thankfully we were both successful although there was no Scales Award for me! I had completed the embalming examination fresh from taking my 'A' Levels. Now, six years on, I had discovered that learning and the assimilation of knowledge was no longer that easy.

Another incident that did not end that well was when we took a deceased home to a traditional (we called them) gypsy encampment near Bristol's International Airport at Lulgate.

After a long drive we then discovered that we had no trestles with us and, after a couple of attempts to improvise, the main family refused and we had to return to Bristol to collect the real thing. From this I learnt that this is one of the many things to check before setting out. Of course it was long before the time of the televisual funeral directors in their hybrid uniforms who would have, encased in their hearses, spare trestles, cardboard keyboards, hologram bearers, inflatable vicars and a jar of woogy grease. We didn't do this in the real world of the 1980s.

Another hard-learned lesson was in the subtle art of preparation. It was winter and I had an interment of ashes to perform early one morning in a churchyard in one of the small villages to the west of Bristol on the Somerset side of the Avon Gorge. My first problem was that I arrived at the wrong churchyard, there being two close together in two adjoining villages. I asked two young boys who were walking by whether this was Pill Church to which they said 'yes' and I wasted the first half hour trying to find the ashes plots and any which had been marked.

I somehow discovered that I was in the wrong location (I will never know whether the boys told me this out of malice, a prank, or pure ignorance) and subsequently, running out of time, found the right place with a conveniently marked plot but with the task of digging a suitable hole deep enough in the permafrost the winter conditions had presented me that morning. From then on I would always try to locate and prepare any ashes plot the day before.

I also remember the amusing incident in Dean Lane just down the road from our office where was situated Holy Cross Roman Catholic church and adjacent convent where, after a particular episode of Dallas, Canon Norris in his booming Irish accent slapped a little nun on the back and shouted "well, Sister. Who shot JR?" Incidentally this church, like All Saints Clifton and Holy Nativity on the Wells Road, had a splendid baldachino.

Dean Lane also possessed the wonderful anachronism of having a Dolls' Hospital just as the centre of Bristol possessed the Bristol Wireless Company, a record shop (bearing in mind these were the original days of vinyl, long before cassettes and CDs) which specialised in Soviet imports of traditional and more obscure modern Russian music which was a vital venue for my shopping expeditions as was Athena in Broadmead from where I populated my house with prints of Kroyer and Delveaux, Nash and Inshaw, Leman and my mother's own paintings which I had acquired after her death. I also began to build up my collection of expensive colognes and Royal Doulton china from the House of Fraser department store Dingles from where I also purchased items for my new home in Clevedon including large amounts of black velvet for curtaining, never having experienced this store before having shied away from Bristol before working there, limiting myself to the House of Fraser stores Jollys in Bath and Cavendish House in Cheltenham and the still privately owned Ricemans in Canterbury and Beales in Bournemouth - all being usual destinations with family or friends.



Holy Cross, Roman Catholic Church

An abiding memory of Bristol is the local dialect: any word ending with an 'a' having an 'l' added: 'Americal,' 'Amandal,' 'ideal' etc. (indeed Bristol's name apparently was formed from 'Bridge Stow' with the added 'L') and the various phrases which bring back memories: "they der dooze it lovely," "Yerr. Tha ain't never roit," "Oi'll askee wherreez to," "Tharsee, inner." A much-used local word was 'dap' (meaning to walk, move, go etc.) and we all found ourselves dapping to the crematorium or asking a colleague if they could dap down the town for them.

I remember notable characters who worked for us: J---, a lovely man with a strong local accent who was quite naive in many ways but always there to help – we carried out a lot of private hire work with our fleet of limousines and he had a 'regular' whom he took to London and we heard about a particular journey to 'Arrols' (which we took to be Harrods and 'this big 'ouse' which turned out to be Buckingham Palace. B---, a very old retainer (in his eighties perhaps?) in the chapel of rest building who was so short that, when he walked around the outside of the office, all you could see was a trilby hat moving outside above the window sill who would always attract the attention of his colleague Terry with: "Yerr, Turry," followed by whatever communication he wished to make.

And there was F---, who started as a chauffeur but semi-retired into the role of handyman who perfected the art of moving slowly so it was only one notch above stationary and was characterised by his way of answering the telephone in his Welsh accent: "Mr Beesyurr!" He was another stalwart of ours who helped liberate Belsen at the end of the War and developed a dreadful stammer as a result.

I can also remember a near nightmare experience when J---, one of the hearse drivers, was driving me back in the deep snow after a funeral and, to avoid gridlocked traffic because of the conditions, had diverted via Clifton and Hotwells. If anyone knows that part of Bristol (as indeed J--- did) they will know that it is a world of narrow streets, tight bends and very steep hills. I think we encountered the steepest, Granby Hill, that afternoon and how we lived to tell the tale I do not know as the huge Daimler slid down the treacherous slope to an uncertain fate at the bottom! We survived and so did the hearse but, to quote Woody Allen, I still can relive that journey and feel that the aftershocks of the experience make me 'smile a lot and laugh out of context.'

There was a large Irish community in the areas of Knowle West and Filwood Park with whom I built up a good rapport and I have an abiding memory of a particular family who lived off Jacobs Wells Road where I repatriated a younger man home to Ireland and also arranged for his close family to travel on the same flight. I arranged to have them picked up at 2.30 in the morning in one of our limousines to take them to the airport and met them at their home in my own car to see them off safely. On their return I was invited around to the house one Saturday lunchtime where I was plied with Irish Whiskey and made most welcome as a thank you. How I drove back to the office and stayed awake for the rest of the day I do not know!

There were various large care/residential homes in Bristol which we frequented often because of our reputation: the St Monica Home of Rest on Clifton Downs, St Peter's Hospice in Knowle (the first such establishment that I had come across) and the St Josph's Home in Cotham where, in the lead up to the Requiem Masses, one of the nun's would play the organ and I can distinctly remember being introduced to many Catholic hymns through this medium: when I hear Immaculate Mary I am instantly transformed back there!

Up until about 1986 my company cars had all been 'hand downs:' old and less old Datsun Cherries and Violets so imagine my pleasure when I was given a brand new Ford Sierra not too after this innovative vehicle had entered the market to replace the stalwart Cortina. I can remember thinking that Ford had got it seriously wrong with this outrageous design but of course....history proved me wrong.

There are another couple of little asides I want to mention, if only to show how times have changed with the passage of forty years or so, and that is how I was quite shocked when I embalmed a woman in her eighties who had a small tattoo on her arm (something which was unheard of at the time) and also another occasion when I was quite startled when, on asking a client for a signature, saw that they marked the page with a cross. How the world has moved on and changed.



Mark at a wedding, whilst in Bristol

Bristol seemed to be a city of churches, the city centre skyline boasting so many of all different styles and ages. Apart from the Cathedral, the most magnificent is the parish church of St Mary, Redcliffe, described by Queen Elizabeth I as “the fairest, goodliest and most famous parish church in England.” Surviving the blitz unlike the surrounding residential area, the church spire competes with the modern tower blocks that surround it now and are its new parishioners and in its churchyard (otherwise turfed, totally devoid of monuments) are two touching memorials: one, a small square tablet, for



Tablet for 'The Church Cat'

‘The Church Cat’ and the other, a more sinister remnant of the war: a section of tramline which was blown up and left where it landed in the turf at a forty five degree angle as a permanent reminder of those dark days. This church also saw a touching service for one of its humble parishioners, a lady with whom I discussed her own funeral arrangements (we did such things in those days although it was not ‘pre-paid’ in any sense). Part of her wish was for the service to be in St Mary’s and, after having left my job in Bristol by this time, I received a letter from the curate, Reverend Keith Jones (another lovely clergyman), saying that Sylvia (for whom he was executor) had passed away and, in her papers he had found my correspondence about her plans and wishes and, despite having left, he wondered whether I would like to attend. We carried out her wish in July 1987 (no one else was there as she had no family or friends) and I attended to ensure her wishes were carried out.



Redcliffe Tramline

Some of the city churches were closed but I arranged a funeral (again at the request of the deceased) in St Thomas’s Church with its lovely Regency interior which we arranged to be especially opened.

St Mark’s Chapel on College Green, the Lord Mayor’s Chapel, is reputedly the only church in the country to be owned by a local authority and, indeed, it was the scene of many ‘high profile,’ civic funerals that we, naturally, as a company carried out.

At the other end of the church spectrum the Nonconformists also had plenty of representing clergy. I especially remember Tony from Bedminster Down and the almost apocalyptic feeling to services in Philip Street Baptist Church.

I have never professed to understand the Baptists and do not know how the church works although I can see that it seems vastly different now to how it came across to me in the early 1980s. I can remember the fervour generated by the resident minister in the considerably lengthy, well-attended services and, to quote Lonnie Donnegan, the heightened tensions, hellfire and brimstone made you quake and tremble and hear yourself singing: “You might think its Satan that’s a-comin’ down the aisle!”

I apologise if have enthused about Bristol inordinately but I loved and love the city, remembering Sir John Betjeman’s words stating that in his opinion it is the finest city in England and Sir John Summerson’s comment “If I had to show a foreigner one English city...to give him a balanced idea of English architecture, I should take him to Bristol.”

Apparently there had always been a rivalry between Bristol and Bath. Indeed my new boss recommended that I did not broadcast the fact too much that I came from Bath when I started and I can remember years before my maternal grandmother was convinced (and had convinced us as children) that Bristolians slept with one eye open! In my later working life I was to see the same vying between Gloucester and Cheltenham. I don’t know if there is a similar feeling between Derby and Nottingham....or perhaps the world has outgrown such things now as it has many others.

However I loved Bristol and often admitted to being Bathonian by birth but Bristolian by adoption and the feeling has lingered down the years.



Bristol Cathedral

Welcome to.....

*Kane Richards
Driver / Bearer,
Nottingham*

'My name is Kane and I am 33 years old. I am recently married and a father to three children, Ava (12), Rome (9) and Rio (6).

I was born and raised in Nottingham but with Caribbean roots, from my Grandparents who come from St. Vincent and The Grenadines.

I enjoy time with my family and support The Gunners (Arsenal).

I'm excited to represent and start my career with A.W. Lymn. This is a brand new industry for me but I can see already that I fit into the team at Robin Hood House, and I have been given all the tools to hit the ground running.'



*Iiona Walker
Funeral Arranger,
Beeston*

'My name is Iiona but I don't expect any of you to be able to pronounce it, I am however very excited to meet everyone.

I am not new to the funeral industry, as I come from a family funeral business in Poland where I have worked for several years for my dad.

I have a westie-doodle called Walter that I love to bits and very much like him I cannot sit still. I constantly do DIY around the house and if I'm not doing that I spend time with my family or baking.

See you all soon.'



Congratulations to Jessica Raynor (Arnold) and Charis Bull (Hucknall) who have successfully passed the Institute of Advanced Motorists, Advanced Driving Test.



Take Your Child to Work Day

from Emma Percival

In June, I was asked to participate in "Take Your Child to Work Day," a day designed to give children a glimpse into the professional lives of their parents and guardians. George (age 13 and great, great, great grandson of Arthur William Lymn) joined me at work.

George's day began with a welcome tour from Kevin Browne. Kevin provided an overview of the company and introduced George to some of the people and processes that make our workplace.

Following the tour, George had the opportunity to visit Eden PR, where he learned about the world of public relations. Emily at Eden shared insights into her daily work, including writing press releases and managing media relations.

In the latter part of the morning, we visited Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium. This visit was a unique and educational

experience, providing George with an insight into the operations of a crematorium where he was shown all aspects of the facility.

The afternoon was spent at Robin Hood House, where George had

the chance to meet and work with different departments, gaining a better understanding of the diverse roles.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to make George's visit informative and enjoyable.



With Charis completing her training and gaining her British Institute of Embalming Membership, she has moved to Hucknall to take up the position of Funeral Arranger, whilst she studies for her Diploma in Funeral Directing.

John from Mansfield Woodhouse, has hung up his chauffeurs hat and has joined Izzy in the mortuary as a trainee embalmer.



Questionnaire Data

After each funeral we send a questionnaire out with our invoice. Every questionnaire asks the client to mark the service they received out of 10. Below are the average scores by funeral home for July.

Arnold	9.67	Hucknall	n/a	Rainworth	10.00
Aspley	10.00	Ilkeston	10.00	Ruddington	10.00
Beeston	10.00	Littleover	9.00	Shirebrook	9.50
Bingham	10.00	Long Eaton	9.50	Spondon	10.00
Bulwell	n/a	Mansfield	10.00	Stapleford	9.50
Bottesford	10.00	Mansfield W.house	9.75	Sutton-in-Ashfield	10.00
Carlton	9.80	Nottingham	9.90	West Bridgford	10.00
Clifton	10.00	Ollerton	10.00	Wollaton	10.00
Cotmanhay	n/a	Osmaston	10.00		
Derby	10.00	Radcliffe-on-Trent	9.75		
				COMPANY AVERAGE	
					9.85

Clients are also asked to mark the Drivers and City Flowers as Excellent, Good or Satisfactory. The tally from the questionnaires is

Drivers
Excellent – 55
Good – 3
Satisfactory – 0

City Flowers
Excellent – 24
Good – 8
Satisfactory – 0

Crematorium Open Days



Mick and Nikki attended Amber Valley



Neil and Jane attended Bramcote



Stacey and Nev attended Sherwood Forest



Kevin, Neil and Fiona attended Trent Valley

Spondon Safari

Fiona took part in the "Spondon Safari", filled with sweet treats and vibrant decorations.

As well as serving coffee and cake, she created a stunning window display, crafted with the creative assistance of our talented florists.



Annual Service for Bereaved Parents

Stacey and Wendy along with some of the doves, were pleased to attend the Annual Service for Bereaved Parents at Kings Mill Hospital on Thursday 18th July.

The doves were released at the end of the service.



If you would like to be deleted from this mailing list, please email rev.letter@wlymn.co.uk. The monthly mail memo is attached.

STAND WE WALK TOGETHER

The new name for LEGS 4 AFRICA

from Dominic Lister

I have sent a package to Stand (The new name for Legs 4 Africa) this week, with the prosthetics we have collected this year.

Stand (Recycle Prosthetic Legs | Amputee Charity I STAND) is a charity that amongst other things, recycles unwanted prosthetic legs and gives them to people in need in African countries.

Our first contact with the charity was in 2017 when we were asked to dispose of a prosthetic leg that was no longer required and the family mentioned the charity to us, since then we have added them to our services brochure and I have sent packages when we have had any legs for them.

I know from experience that there are many prosthetic legs at funeral homes and in peoples homes that they don't know what to do with and they could be used by the charity to help to improve the life of someone in need.



Remembering the Crew of Wellington Bomber W5795

On 12th July, Kevin and I had the honour of attending the remembrance service for the Wellington Bomber W5795, which tragically crashed in Stanley Village on the same date in 1942. The ceremony was a poignant tribute to the five crew members who lost their lives that day, and it was an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices made during World War II.

Kevin represented our company by laying a wreath at the memorial, and we were privileged to provide the Order of Service for the event. The ceremony included a moving flyover during which poppy petals were released as the Last Post was played. This was followed by the reading of the names of the five fallen crew members, and their family members laid wreaths and crosses in their memory.

In addition to remembering the crew of W5795, the War Memorial received a rededication. This included adding the names of the Wellington Bomber W5795 crew alongside those from both World Wars. The names of all the fallen were solemnly read aloud, serving as a reminder of their bravery and the enduring legacy of their sacrifice.

The service was attended by Mrs. Elizabeth Fothergill CBE, the Lord-Lieutenant of Derbyshire, who delivered a personal message from the King, adding a special significance to the occasion.

It was a touching and memorable event, honouring not only the crew of W5795 but all who have served and sacrificed for our freedom. We are proud to have been a part of this important remembrance, ensuring that the bravery and stories of these heroes are never forgotten.



from Neil Reeves



The
A.W. LYMN
Centenary Foundation

The A.W. Lymn Centenary Foundation was formed and is continually financed by the Company to mark its first 100 years of service. Its aim is to help those in the communities the Company serves.

Applications for funding can be made by any local person, group, committee or organisation to Ben Percival at centenaryfoundation@lymn.co.uk for consideration by the trustees; Jonathan Baker, Joanna Bossart, Mark Chapman, Chlöe Lymn Rose and Ian Moorman.



The Foundation has donated a new motorcycle to Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes, a remarkable organisation dedicated to supporting the NHS by providing essential medical transport services.

Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes was founded in 2013 and is a registered charity composed entirely of unpaid volunteers with the primary mission to transport essential medical items such as blood products, patient samples, medical files, surgical equipment, and medication. They operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, providing an invaluable service to the NHS, in situations where NHS resources are stretched or unavailable.

Without the critical services provided by Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes, NHS facilities would face additional burdens, including increased operational costs and potential service delays. The charity's ability to mobilise quickly and efficiently is a lifeline, particularly during out-of-hours periods when alternative transport options are limited. This contribution goes beyond mere logistics; it directly impacts patient care and outcomes.

Pictured is trustee Ian handing over the keys to John from Nottingham Blood Bikes.

To
The Trustees of the
A.W. Lymn Foundation
Thank you so much for
your very kind donation
which will help fund
the plants required at
the beautiful entrance to
Spondon Cemetery
Heartfelt Thanks
Friends of Spondon
Cemetery xx



At a recent Rolls-Royce Rally Ben was approached by a gentleman, who then followed up their conversation with a letter and photograph....



For the Attention of Mr Ben Percival

Dear Sir,

Picture of my Brother and I, with one of the fleet of Phantom Limousines in the early 1980's.

Further to meeting you at the recent Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts Club Rally at Burghley House and our subsequent conversation, please find enclosed as promised a copy of the above photograph.

As I informed you during our conversation we were staying at our Uncle and Aunts in Nottingham when one Saturday morning our Father decided to take us into the City to show us the Old Markets where his Mother would take him. Whilst walking round he informed us about the premises of A W Lymn who had Rolls-Royce cars. As we approached the premises I spotted the Rolls-Royce's and asked if we could have I look. The garage was open as the cars were being washed and I asked the Gentleman if it would be possible to have a look at the cars, he very kindly showed us around the cars in the garage and workshop and those in the yard, where dad was allowed to the take the photograph.

In subsequent years when we met people at the Rally and were discussing my interest in Rolls-Royce cars, Dad would often relate the story of us visiting the Funeral Directors to see the cars.

I hope that you find the photograph of interest and thank you for your time speaking to me at the Rally.

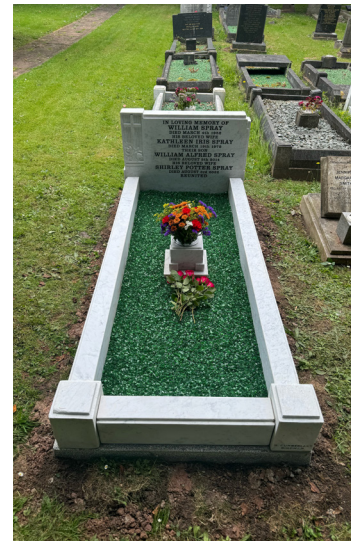
Yours Sincerely

BIE Meeting

Jackie, Jonathan and Stacey were pleased to invite members of the British Institute of Embalmers to the Old Farm, for the quarterly meeting for the Midlands Division.



Before and after, grave restoration



Caption Competition

Does anyone have a caption to accompany this photograph of Andrew and his new friend?

Please enter via email or text; emma.percival@lymn.co.uk
07916 140 406 .

All entries must be submitted by 9am on Wednesday 14th August 2024.

The winner can choose between a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates.

GOOD LUCK



The 'Best Practice of the Month Award' nominations are:

Neville Carridice has nominated **Frank Don, Gary Seymour, Grant Redwood, Kirby Cranshaw and Neil Reeves.** 'I would like to nominate the drivers Kirby, Gaz, Grant, Frank, and NDR for their remarkable endurance. They faced a seven and a half hour drive back from Plymouth, with the M5 being closed from 14:30 and not reopening until 23:00. Despite this challenging situation, they managed to keep spirits high after a successful day at the funeral. They truly went the extra mile — over and over again.'

Jackie Lynn Rose has nominated **Isabel Walton** 'I nominate Izzy for embalming a deceased lady in the presence of five Environmental Health Officers from three local councils. The purpose of the prearranged exercise was to further their understanding of embalming and the positive effect on presentation of the deceased for the benefit of the bereavement and for enhancing the environment of the funeral home, the outcome was outstanding and much appreciated by all present.'

Pete Jeffery has nominated **Emma Hind** 'Unfortunately, we had an 11-year-old deceased in our care. The family did not want to see their son in a coffin, so we arranged a bed with quilts, pillows, and other comforts in the chapel. Emma went above and beyond by bringing children's books and teddy bears to make the chapel feel more like a bedroom. This thoughtful gesture made the setting much more comforting for the family.'

Skye O'Neill has nominated **Kirby Cranshaw** 'I nominate Kirby because last week, I witnessed an extraordinary level of dedication. She worked tirelessly, running around late into the night, and then, with less than 12 hours' notice, drove to Plymouth.'

Fiona Hallam has nominated **Gary Seymour** 'Can I nominate Gaz for his exceptional attention to detail? On numerous occasions, Gaz has demonstrated his vigilance and dedication. For example, he noticed that there was no coffin spray for a funeral recently. Thanks to his quick thinking and bringing it to my attention, we were able to arrange flowers in time, ensuring the family never knew there was an issue. Additionally, Gaz has been instrumental in maintaining the garden areas of RHH, which are now looking beautiful thanks to his efforts.'

Joe Buckeridge-Parton has nominated **Matt Schinagl and Simon Mason-Wright** 'I would like to nominate Simon and Matt for their quick and compassionate response during an incident at Edwalton Cemetery. While fixing a headstone, they heard screams for help and immediately ran towards the sound. They found an elderly gentleman outside his house next to the cemetery who had fallen and was unable to get up. Simon and Matt helped him to his feet, and when he still couldn't stand on his own, they took him into his house, sat him down, and asked if there was anyone they could call for him. Their swift actions and willingness to assist made a significant difference.'

The winner is **Emma**



Amazing nominations this month!

I'm incredibly impressed with the outstanding nominations. What a great team we have!

Nigel

Stan Barnes and friends all ready for his prom night, in a Rolls-Royce Phantom VIII

