



Welcome to your newsletter

Life, as they say, is all about balance, but when you are in the business of death that balance can be particularly sensitive when it comes to cremations and burials.

If there's one thing we always try to be it's fair and reasonable and, whilst we applaud Wakefield Council's upgrade of the town's crematorium – digital funerals are now a tangible reality as you will read in one of the article's – there is always a trade off.

In this edition we have attempted to explain why families are having to wait up to three weeks for a cremation when, in the local media, they have been reading about huge upgrades to Wakefield Crematorium's facilities. How could that happen? As always, there is an explanation.

That said, we also outline the wonderful digital facilities now available at the same location, and how, again, the digital revolution is changing the way cremations are

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

Cremation investment good for accountants!

Wakefield Crematorium



A half million pounds investment in Wakefield's crematorium may have delivered a range of eco and cost benefits, however, there is another less positive side to the improvement programme, according to Box's management team.

As far back as August 2012 the political decision was taken to install two new cremators at Pontefract and a third at Wakefield, each costing in excess of £500,000.

The improvements were designed to deliver a more efficient and greener service, in line with national government guidelines aimed at reducing emissions. And, according to Wakefield Council's website, the changes would also enable the local service to 'undertake more cremations.'

But reality has delivered a very different outcome,

maintains Richard Box.

"There were always two cremators at Wakefield. However, last year's so-called investment saw the removal of both as one state-of-the-art machine took their place, effectively halving the number of cremators.

"On paper everything stacks up if you divide the number of annual cremations by the number of cremation days available. It probably comes in at four or five services a day which, in the accountant's office, makes perfect sense, because it means one machine still has considerable capacity. However, that's where the comparison ends," said Richard.

He said that Excel spreadsheets and statistics failed to take account of the 'human condition'.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Sadly people do not die to order which means that in Summer there may only be a couple of cremations a day. However, as the colder weather kicks in, this figure jumps markedly, not just at our firm, but also at other funeral directors across the area. When you then take this scenario collectively, it means massive pressure is placed upon the crematorium at key points of the year, as the death rate 'spikes', resulting in under capacity," said Richard.

"Over the last few months, despite a relatively mild Winter, funeral directors have been having to wait up to three weeks to book families into Wakefield Crematorium. Sometimes, accountants would be well advised to speak to the people on the ground. Paper is great but life – and death – is reality," he added.

As the newsletter was going to press, Wakefield Council's cabinet was due to decide on the future of bereavement services across the district. Watch this space!

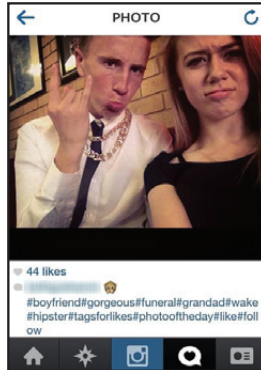
Service above self(ie)?

Should people be uploading pre and post funeral photos of themselves to the internet? That's the question being asked by many people as so-called 'Selfies' continue to dominate the headlines.

Named as 2013's word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries editors, a Selfie is: "a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically..... with a smartphone or webcam, and uploaded (it) to a social media website."

Recently the online magazine fastcompany.com raised the issue of funeral 'selfies:'

This is when young people, usually teenagers, post self-taken photos of themselves on the likes of Twitter or Instagram, picturing themselves either before or after a funeral, in all their bereavement finery, invariably with a caption like, for example: 'Love my hair today, hate why I'm dressed up.'



Edward Box commented: "The world is changing and trying to halt progress is like King Canute trying to hold back the tide.

"Whilst we always encourage respect during funeral ceremonies and cremations, the nature of information exchange is such that 'selfies' have now become another way of mourning someone's passing. We can't stop them."

Iconic Funerals: Luciano Pavarotti (1935-2007)



Luciano Pavarotti was said to be one of the 20th Century's finest tenors and, when he died, the Italian Air Force's equivalent of the Red Arrows – the Freccia Tricolori – flew across Modena Cathedral in tribute to one of Italy's most famous sons.

Born in 1935 on the outskirts of Modena, Northern Italy, Pavarotti's father was a baker and amateur tenor, whilst his mother Adele Venturi, worked at the local cigar factory.

After abandoning dreams of becoming a goalkeeper, the lifelong fan of football giants Juventus FC, studied music and went on to become one of the greatest classical singers of all time.



Whilst undertaking an international "farewell tour," Pavarotti was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in July 2006 but, despite major surgery, succumbed to the disease, dying at his Modena home on 6 September 2007.

Within hours of his death, his manager, Terri Robson, noted in an e-mail statement: "The Maestro fought a long, tough battle against the pancreatic cancer which eventually took his life. In fitting with the approach that characterized his life and work, he remained positive until finally succumbing to the last stages of his illness."



Pavarotti's funeral was held in Modena Cathedral. The then Prime Minister Romano Prodi and Kofi Annan, who served as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations, attended.

After a funeral procession through the city, Pavarotti's coffin was taken the final ten kilometres to Montale Rangone, a village part of Castelnuovo Rangone, and was entombed in the Pavarotti family crypt.

The funeral, in its entirety, was telecast live on CNN. The Vienna State Opera and the Salzburg Festival Hall flew black flags in mourning, and tributes were published by many opera houses, such as London's Royal Opera House. The Italian football giant Juventus F.C., was represented at the funeral, and posted a farewell message on its website which said: "Ciao Luciano, black-and-white heart" referring to the team's famous striped shirt.

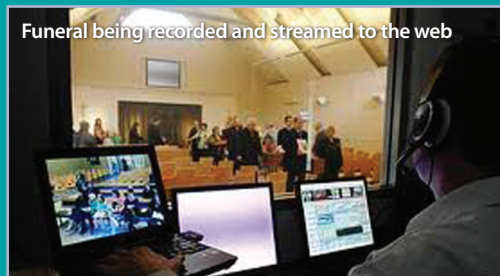
Web cam funerals benefit long distance relatives

The days when 'long-distance' relatives were unable to attend cremation services are fast disappearing, thanks to the advent of Webcam 'streaming' at Wakefield Crematorium.

Funeral directors using the West Yorkshire facility can now request a user name and password unique to each service. Family members living a long way off can then log on to the internet at a pre-ordained time, and watch the unfolding service.

"It's all done utilising Microsoft Silverlight, which is a powerful tool for creating and delivering rich Internet applications including media broadcasts," said Andrew Box.

"We have already streamed several funerals to foreign countries including two to Australia, and another, more recently, to Cambodia. The footage is



then kept on a secure server for seven days, enabling families to view it again.

"We hear so much negativity about the internet, be it security of information issues or the possible dangers to children, however, it is good to also see how this powerful tool can be used in such a constructive way to benefit families."



Burials Through Time... BON VOYAGES TO THE SPIRITS!

The Feast of the Lanterns, or Obon, is more than 500 years old and is a Japanese Buddhist tradition that honours ancestors' spirits.

It is also a time of reunion when families visit and clean their ancestors' graves.

Lasting for three days, the festival of Obon is organized on varying dates because in the Meiji era (1868-1912), the whole of Japanese society was transformed and the Gregorian calendar replaced the lunar one.

However, not all of Japan's regions chose to accept the changes immediately, accounting for the different times of the year when Obon is celebrated.

"Shichigatsu Bon" is celebrated around the 15th of July, "Hachigatsu Bon", the most popular amongst Japanese, around the 15th of August, and "Kyu Bon" on the 15th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, hence why timings for it vary each year.

Traditional dance performed on



the Obon is called Bon Odori and the legend goes that Mokori was a disciple of the Buddha, and used his supernatural powers to take care of his deceased mother. However, she suffered considerably whilst in the kingdom of Hungry Ghosts and Mokori asked Buddha for help.

Buddha told him to make offerings to the Buddhist monks, which he did, and his mother was set free. Mokori was so happy that he started to dance and it is from this dance that Bon Odori comes.

Versions of Bon dance vary from region to region and, as the Obon is held during summer, participants in Bon Odori wear light kimonos called yukata. Songs performed can be related to the spiritual message of Obon.

Source:
www.traditionscustoms.com



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conducted. We hope you find the editorials interesting, we did!

Enjoy the read and, as always, we welcome your comments be they in writing, verbally or by email. You can always drop our editor, Phil Hopkins a line on philh@theh2.co.uk, or even go onto the Eric F. Box website (www.efbox.co.uk) and make your thoughts known to us there.

Editor Richard Ande

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

Eric F. Box Funeral Directors Ltd,
Bradford Road, 7 Kingsway,
Dewsbury, Ossett,
WF13 2EW WF5 8AB
T: (01924) 465402 T: (01924) 271612

E: funerals@efbox.co.uk
W: www.efbox.co.uk

