



Welcome to your newsletter

Strippers and funerals aren't two words that you tend to use in the same breath! However, we could not fail but to mention the publicity that the former seem to be attracting across the globe.

These so-called ladies of the night, probably more at home in some kind of oriental go-go bar, are occasionally called upon to deliver an alternative form of service – drumming up crowds at Buddhist funerals!

However, it doesn't take a lot of imagination to realise that the practice, certainly outside Taiwan, is viewed with disbelief and, in some quarters, is frowned upon. Nevertheless if it is one of life's more unusual 'funeral rites' then we want you to know about it!

This is our last 'Burials Through Time' column and, next edition, we will be introducing our new 'Aspects of Life...& Death' column which will be taking a look at all facets of the 'business' of funerals from the

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A Warning From History!

As one British local authority unveils proposals to offer funeral services, Richard Box has flagged up a note of caution for politicians eager to generate much needed income in times of austerity – “be careful of swimming into deep water!”

A few years ago a West Midlands council, adopting a similar mindset, decided that 'monumental masonry' – gravestones in layman's language – might be a good way to generate more cash. Months later the business was out of business!

“As a family we have spent more than 160 years perfecting the art of funeral direction, not only running a successful company but, at a more meaningful level, helping families to genuinely come to terms with bereavement. Get that wrong and you leave people in emotional turmoil.”

He said the proposal by North East Lincolnshire Council was overly naïve.

“I have no doubt that it looks good on paper but the practical realities are very different. The 'business' of funerals is far more than simply 'providing a service'.

“So many funeral firms are long established family businesses where the directors completely understand the concept of bereavement. Will councils operate outside their usual 9-5pm remit? Will they open on Saturday mornings? Offer a midnight call



Richard Box

out service? To us those things are 'normal'.

“We dealt with one local authority bereavement officer who briefed us about a death and, five minutes later, went on holiday for a week. But she knew everything would be sorted out and that the following week all she had to do was sign off on the mandatory paperwork which would be ready and in order. Those skills – let alone the trust element - are learned over decades.”

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NE Lincolnshire Council has said it wants to set up a new organisation to deliver an 'affordable' funeral service.



However, the National Association of Funeral Directors has objected strongly to

the proposal, accusing the local authority of being anti-competitive by exempting itself from business rates.

"There is certainly a business issue," added Richard Box, "but, overall, it is the families I worry about. People are not commodities and should not be seen as 'income generation'. Funeral directors have a duty of care and I am not convinced that local authorities are to be trusted with this mantle."

Box's Bright Spark Idea!

Box's has joined the international army of eco warriors – in Dewsbury at least! – with its latest fleet acquisition, a 100% electric car.

The BMW i3, which officially joined the team earlier this year, travels approximately 80 miles on a full battery charge before needing a top up.



Edward Box said: "We do an awful lot of journeys in the local area and, whilst an electric car might not be the vehicle of choice for a long distance sales rep, because of the practical constraints on battery life, it is absolutely perfect for the team at our Dewsbury funeral home.

"We now have a battery charger in the main garage so, whilst the car represents a considerable investment, it is already saving us money whilst also enabling us to be eco-friendly. It can even be charged via a domestic plug."

The vehicle is used primarily for visiting families and nearby burial and cremation sites. "It is virtually silent," said Edward, "and may well be the way forward for future 'run around' cars," he added.

Iconic Funerals: Jane Austen (1775-1817)



Novelist, Jane Austen, an icon of English literature, was one of those rare people whose light burned brightly during the short time they lived.

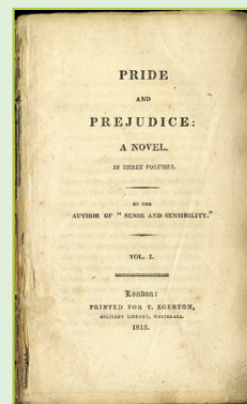
Born on 16 December 1775 at Steventon Rectory near Basingstoke in Hampshire, she was the seventh of eight children and her father was the local vicar.

The Parish Register, kept in the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester, records Jane's baptism on the day following her birth.

However, just 41 years later she would have departed this world having changed the way people would view the English novel for decades to come.

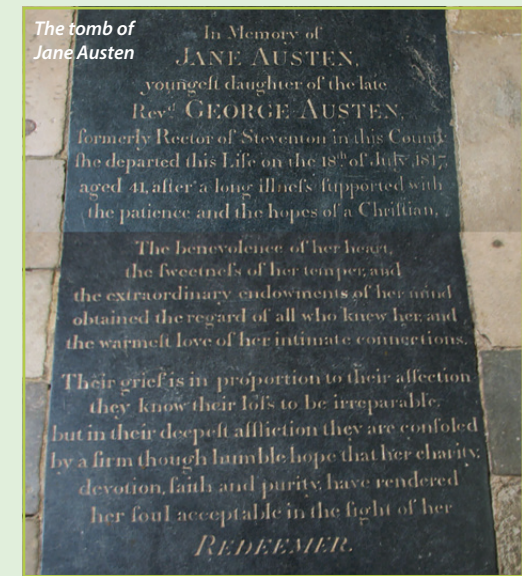
Early in 1817 Jane began to write Sanditon, but became ill and the book was never finished. She was referred by her

Pride and Prejudice is one of Austen's best know novels



doctor to another medic in Winchester and moved into lodgings in College Street for the remaining weeks of her life. However, although she bravely kept up her spirits, she died on 18 July from what is now known as Addison's Disease, an illness characterized by progressive anaemia and low blood pressure.

Jane's funeral was held in Winchester Cathedral and she was buried in the north aisle. However, just as her novels were published anonymously, the inscription on her tomb makes no mention of her literary talents.



It read, in part: "...JANE AUSTEN..... She departed this Life.....after a long illness supported with the patience and the hopes of a Christian. The benevolence of her heart, the sweetness of her temper, and the extraordinary endowments of her mind obtained the regard of all who knew her and the warmest love of her intimate connections. Their grief is in proportion to their affection, they know their loss to be irreparable, but in their deepest affliction they are consoled by a firm though humble hope that her charity, devotion, faith and purity, have rendered her soul acceptable in the sight of her REDEEMER."

A brass tablet was added at a later date expounding her virtues as a writer.

Digital Autopsies Please Muslims

People in Dewsbury and its surrounding districts, now have access to a digital autopsy service in Bradford, signalling an end to the long running campaign, by Muslims, for an MRI scan option to replace more invasive methods of autopsy.

Andrew Box said: "An autopsy exists to establish the cause of death. However, the traditional method involves key organs – like the heart and liver - being physically examined, something Muslims – and indeed many Christians – have not always been entirely comfortable with.

"There have been two key drivers behind their campaign to get an alternative non-invasive MRI scan option. Firstly their funeral rites require that bodies be buried within 24 hours of death, hence the 'speed' element. MRI scans are much quicker.

"Allied to that scans are also deemed to be more respectful since they do not require organs to be

removed. Again Muslim funeral rites require that individuals are buried with all their limbs and organs intact, so the scan removes any family concerns."

The service, which costs individuals several hundred pounds, is available to everyone, but is only offered by the Coroner's Office.



MRI scans - for the living and the dead



Burials Through Time... FUNERAL STRIPPERS - TAIWAN

In Taiwan respect for the recently deceased includes a lavish funeral complete with exotic dancers.

These so-called 'funeral strippers' work on Electric Flower Cars (EFC), which are trucks that have been converted to moving stages so that women can perform as the vehicles follow along with funerals or religious processions. However, there is a great deal of debate about whether this should be allowed to continue.

In Taipei, Taiwan's capital, middle and upper class men are sometimes said to complain about the harmful effects of this rural practice on public morality. But, in contrast, people in the industry see themselves as talented performers and fans of the practice say that it makes events more exciting.

Most Taiwanese practice Buddhism with burial rites usually featuring a procession. In this practice it is believed that the louder and rowdier the procession, the easier it is for the deceased to cross over to



the after-life. Rè Naò, meaning "hot and noisy" in the Chinese language is an indispensable part of such a funeral.

A rowdy procession not only symbolizes the status of the deceased as having lived a fulfilling life with an abundance of family and friends, but it also creates a celebratory mood that is meant to signify the living's willingness to let the dead move out of the physical world and thus, make a smooth journey to the after-life. It also represents an occasion for celebration rather than mourning.

In order to garner crowds and create a successful and exciting public event, strippers are hired to win attention and more importantly, attendance.

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Coroner's Officer to the Death Certificate.

Until then, if you would like us to include anything in particular please contact our editor, Phil Hopkins on philh@theh2.co.uk or 07931 343836 and he will make a note of your comments.

Meanwhile enjoy the read and, as always, we welcome your comments be they in writing, verbally or by email.

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

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