



Eric F. Box Funeral Directors Ltd
Celebrating lives with meaningful funerals

NEWS

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Welcome to your newsletter

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

We have no doubt that many of you will have seen the newspapers in recent months and been privately appalled by the actions of mindless thugs vandalising cemeteries. So, it is with this in mind, that we highlight some of the work being done by two of the industry's professional organisations to help combat this growing problem.

You can also read about the tough life of young men in Sparta, whilst also celebrating the life of one of our great comic heroes, Stan Laurel.

And, what's your opinion about 'traffic light funerals'? Are the demands of modern life placing too much pressure on our crematoria? Should we be building more facilities or simply accepting that even the dead have to form an orderly queue and not take too long to say their farewells?

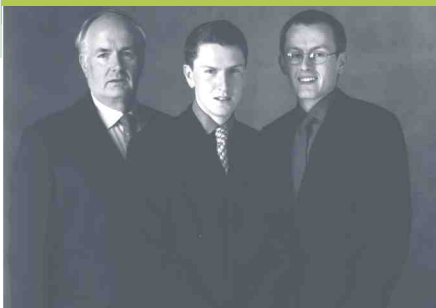
And, if youth is everything, then all hail to our teenage funeral directors!

Thanks for your varied comments. They are always welcome and help us to feature those issues that are pertinent to our discerning readers.

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

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Challenging The Gravestone Vandals

As mindless thugs continue to hit the headlines for desecrating gravestones in West Yorkshire, Britain's funeral professionals have been responding with new innovations aimed at deterring vandals.

Last month the Yorkshire Evening Post reported how 24 graves in Harehills cemetery in Leeds, had been targeted by thugs who pushed over a gravestone and ripped away name plaques.



However, with more and more reports of desecration in cemeteries, the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) and the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM), have developed their own grave fixing system, to

But according to Andrew Box, the industry has been trying to overcome some of the challenges of modern society by introducing a special grave fixing system.

He said: "Years ago headstones were simply fitted onto a number of three inch dowels, cemented into place and, by and large, they would last a lifetime, but that assumed headstones were not going to be targeted by vandals."

respond to both vandalism and the challenges of health and safety legislation.

Andrew added: "Many local authorities now do their own gravestone topple tests and one authority, deciding that many of its old gravestones, were not up to scratch from a safety perspective, laid them flat, prompting NAMM and BRAMM to think again.

The result is a fixing system which is both safer and much more vandal resistant. Now, a foundation stone is put in place, the headstone is mounted on top of it, and special anchoring mechanisms pass right through both, from top to bottom, making them more rigid than earlier gravestones.

"In many ways it is a sad indictment of modern society that we have to think about everything from a 'vandal proof' perspective, however, there is also the added element of health and safety, and there's no doubt that the modern system is far safer," added Andrew.

Britain's Teenage Funeral Directors

Can a young person cope well with the emotional trauma of death? That seems to have been the question posed by the British mass media, recently, as they turned the spotlight on some of the country's youngest funeral directors.

Britain has always been preoccupied with the youngest and the oldest! And so it was when funeral directors Laura Stapley, 18 and Paul Gillett, 19 were featured in a Channel 4 documentary as among the youngest professionals in the country.

Edward Box said: "Being a funeral director can be challenging. My brother Andrew and myself are the sixth generation of the family to enter the firm so we were introduced to death and bereavement at a very young age.

"However, for someone without the benefit of this 'transferred'

knowledge, or indeed, just a young person, the job can be emotionally demanding because it involves working with the dead – adult or child – and sometimes decomposed or mutilated bodies.

"And, of course, professionals need the emotional maturity to be able to work with the newly bereaved who may be upset, or simply treating the process as a business transaction if they have had little or no connection with the person who has died."

In 2003 Chris Harrison joined Box's as a funeral operative and trainee

funeral director after leaving school the previous year. He was only 16 and there had been no family connection with the funeral industry.

"I had been on work experience to Box's whilst still at school and, somehow, I knew it was for me. It is not for everyone and you definitely need a certain demeanor and, indeed, emotional maturity, to cope with the job's varying demands," said Chris, who qualified as an embalmer in 2009.

Below from left to right: Edward Box, Andrew Box and Chris Harrison



Iconic Funerals: Arthur Stanley Jefferson (AKA Stan Laurel 1890-1965)



Stan Laurel was born in his grandparents' house on 16 June 1890 at Ulverston in Lancashire. His parents, Arthur and Madge Jefferson, were both active in the theatre, so it was no surprise that young Stan joined Fred Karno's troupe of actors in 1910 alongside Charlie Chaplin. The Karno troupe toured America, and brought both Chaplin and Laurel to the United States for the first time.

By 1924, Laurel had forsaken the stage for full-time film work, meeting up with Oliver Hardy in 1927. The two became friends and their comic chemistry soon became obvious. The rest is history.

On 7 August 1957, Oliver Hardy died and a devastated Laurel decided he would never act again without his long-time friend.

In 1961, Laurel was given a Lifetime Achievement Academy Award for his pioneering work in comedy. He had achieved his lifelong dream as a comedian and had

been involved in nearly 190 films. He lived his final years in a small apartment in the Oceana Hotel in Santa Monica. Always gracious to fans, he spent much time answering fan mail. His phone number was listed in the telephone directory and fans were amazed that they could dial the number and speak to Stan Laurel.

Laurel was a heavy smoker until suddenly giving up when he was about seventy years of age. He died on 23 February 1965, several days after suffering a heart attack. Just minutes away from death, Laurel told his nurse he would not mind going skiing at that very moment. Somewhat taken aback, the nurse replied that she was not aware that he was a skier. "I'm not," said Laurel, "I'd rather be doing that than have all these needles stuck into me!" A few minutes later the nurse looked in on him again and found that he had died quietly.



Laurel's friend, Dick Van Dyke, gave the eulogy at his funeral. Silent screen comedian Buster Keaton was overheard at Laurel's funeral giving his assessment of the comedian's considerable talents: "Chaplin wasn't the funniest, I wasn't the funniest, this man was the funniest."

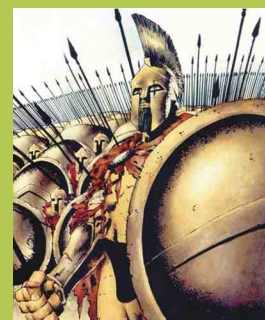
Laurel wrote his own epitaph: "If anyone at my funeral has a long face, I'll never speak to him again." Another statement was later found written down, which said: "If anyone cries at my funeral, I will never speak to him again." He was buried at Forest Lawn - Hollywood Hills Cemetery in Los Angeles.



Burials Through Time... THE SPARTANS

Life in Sparta was almost a daily exercise in survival.

Sparta, or Lacedaemon, was a prominent city state in ancient Greece which rose to become the dominant military land-power in the ancient country from around 650BC.



It was largely a militarist state, and emphasis on military fitness began virtually at birth when the mother of the child bathed it in wine to see whether the child was strong. If the baby survived it was brought before the Gerousia by the child's father. The Gerousia then decided whether it was to be reared or not. If they considered it "puny and deformed", the baby was thrown into a chasm on Mount Taygetos.

This was, in effect, a primitive form of eugenics, which advocates the use of practices aimed at improving the genetic composition of a population.

At the age of seven boys entered the Agoge system which was designed to encourage discipline and physical toughness. They lived in communal messes and were deliberately underfed to encourage them to master the skill of stealing food and, as well as physical and weapons training, boys studied reading, writing, music and dancing.

At the age of twelve, the Agoge obliged Spartan boys to take an older male mentor, usually an unmarried young man. However, it is also reasonably certain that they had sexual relations as part of their culture.

At the age of eighteen Spartan boys became reserve members of the army and some were sent into the countryside to seek out and kill any helots as part of the larger program of terrorising and intimidating the helot population.

But when Spartans died, marked headstones would only be granted to soldiers who died in combat during a victorious campaign, or women who died either in service of a divine office or in childbirth.

INDUSTRY FOCUS: traffic light funerals!

There was disquiet in Scotland recently when Perth Crematorium introduced a 'traffic light' system aimed at funeral parties who were overstaying their welcome!

Presumably because of pressures on facilities, the controversial new warning system was brought in to keep people to time and to avoid 'traffic jams'.

However, as always, that's only one side of the story! An anonymous local funeral director suggested that the controversial system was indicative of an attitude problem at the crematorium, and that time had never previously been an issue.

Richard Box said: "In West Yorkshire we have a number of crematoriums including those at Lawnswood and Rawdon in Leeds, Huddersfield and Halifax and, at times, there is quite literally a queue of funeral cars waiting to take loved ones into the chapel.

"It can be incredibly awkward for funeral directors at the back of the queue if the resulting backlog throws their day's schedule by several hours.

"They might have commitments later in the day at another crematorium but, if the hearse is unexpectedly delayed, this cascades across the whole day affecting everyone.

"I can sympathise with the comments of the funeral director in Perth, however, it can be a very different kettle of fish in regions with large populations. Cities the size of Leeds have thousands of funerals every year, so it stands to reason that there will be huge pressures placed on the city's crematoria. And, when that happens, local authorities, short of building new facilities, are bound to respond with some kind of time limit system," added Richard.

Original story courtesy of the Funeral Service Journal.

DUG BROTHERS - FUNERAL DIRECTORS

