



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.

The profession has been in the news again but, unfortunately, for all the wrong reasons! In a recent survey it has transpired that road ragers have been giving funeral corteges a hard time, although we beg to differ slightly with the national trend. You might be interested to hear Edward's comments, the BBC were!

And, in this edition, we have featured Judy Garland in our Iconic Funerals slot after receiving a phone call from one enthusiastic reader, who specifically asked us to feature the Wizard of Oz star. We hope you enjoy the read!

And in a passing reference to Rising Damp comedy star, Leonard Rossiter, we give you a quick overview of how the profession has changed over the last 100 years and, indeed, how funeral trends have shifted massively since the 1960's, to the point that more and more women are now dying alone.

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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Kirklees Motorists Get Thumbs of Approval

Edward Box found himself on the BBC airwaves recently when he was asked to comment on the widely publicised 'funeral road rage' survey conducted by Co-operative Funeralcare.

The survey of more than 2,000 drivers, found that half of those questioned had witnessed incidents against slow funeral processions such as rude hand gestures, verbal abuse or threatening behaviour.



And, according to statistics, there has also been a rise in people cutting into processions, playing music loudly and engaging in aggressive overtaking.

But, when Edward went live into the Adam Pope mid morning show on BBC Radio Leeds, he felt able to paint a more favourable picture of drivers in the Kirklees area, thanks to a technique that Box's have been using for over a decade.

The firm always provides black magnetic flags which are placed on the roofs of any private vehicles in cortège line ups.

Edward told Adam: "We have been operating this policy for nearly 12 years,

and people in the Dewsbury area know and recognise cars in an Eric F. Box cortège, because they always feature black magnetic flags."

He said that people not only asked for them when booking the services of Box's, but that the wider motoring public had been 'educated' over the years, into appreciating that the flag was symbolic of a bereavement or, indeed, evidence of a slow vehicle procession to either the cemetery or crematorium.

Speaking for this edition of the newsletter Edward added: "I appreciate that, nowadays, people are very busy and, invariably, in a rush, so whilst we personally have not experienced huge problems in Dewsbury, I can appreciate that this might not always be the case in busier areas. There is also the added consideration that people who have never experienced a bereavement, might not even know what a cortège is."



It's a Lonely Life – Increasingly So

The systematic breakdown of family life in the UK means more and more people are facing old age living alone, according to new evidence.

In 1961 just 12% of the population lived alone, representing 1.9 million households. However, by 2005, this had risen to 29% of the population, accounting for 7 million households. Now nearly half of the one-person households are pensioner-only, and more than three quarters of women living by themselves, are aged 65 or over.

Some have called it Eleanor Rigby syndrome, a passing reference to the 1966 Beatles song in which the lyrics hauntingly referenced this modern phenomenon before it had even happened: "Eleanor Rigby died in the church and was buried along with her name. Nobody came."

Golden Charter, the UK's leading provider of funeral plans to independent funeral directors, is witnessing the results of this trend.



Spokesman Jim McDermott, said: "We are seeing a rise in the number of old people living alone and who are dying without anyone available to make funeral arrangements – it's very sad, but it does seem to be a growing trend.

"The Office for National Statistics reports that while 25% of men die

as widowers, the figure for women dying as widows is 59%, primarily due to the fact that women live longer. Consequently, we can expect to see increasing numbers of funerals like that of Eleanor Rigby's," he added.

John Weir, of the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) added: "As our population ages, over-75's represent a growing proportion of total registered deaths. In England and Wales this age group accounted for 39% of all deaths in 1951, but 66% in 2004. The Office for National Statistics shows the average age at which women die is 81, while for men it is 76, so it means that single women will continue to make up the greater balance of funerals in the foreseeable future."

Original Story Funeral Service Journal

Iconic Funerals: Frances Ethel Gumm (Aka Judy Garland 1922-1969)

Judy Garland was an American actress and singer who attained international stardom as an actress in musical and dramatic roles, as a recording artist and on the concert stage.

Respected for her versatility, she won countless awards including a juvenile Academy Award, a Golden Globe Award, Grammy Awards and a Special Tony Award.

And, at the age of 39, she became the youngest recipient of the Cecil B. DeMille Award for lifetime achievement in the motion picture industry.

Making more than two dozen films with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, she is probably best remembered for her 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*.

Despite her professional triumphs, Garland battled personal problems throughout her life. Insecure about her appearance, her feelings were compounded by film executives who told her she was unattractive and manipulated her on-screen physical appearance. Garland, mother to Liza Minnelli and Lorna and Joey Luft, married five times, with her first four marriages ending in divorce.



On June 22, 1969, Garland was found dead by her fifth and final husband, Mickey Deans, in the bathroom of their rented Chelsea home in London. The coroner, Gavin Thursdon, stated at the inquest that the cause of death was "an incautious self-overdosage" of barbiturates; her blood contained the equivalent of ten 1.5-grain (97 mg) Seconal capsules.

Thursdon stressed that the overdose had been unintentional and that there was no evidence to suggest she had committed suicide. Garland's autopsy showed that there was no inflammation of her stomach lining and no drug residue in her stomach, which indicated



that the drug had been ingested over a long period of time, rather than in one dose.

Her death certificate stated that her death had been "accidental." Even so, a British specialist who had attended Garland said she had been

living on borrowed time due to cirrhosis of the liver. Garland had turned 47 just 12 days prior to her death. Her *Wizard of Oz* co-star Ray Bolger commented at Garland's funeral, "She just plain wore out."

An estimated 20,000 people lined up for hours at the Frank E. Campbell Funeral chapel to view her body. James Mason gave a eulogy at the funeral, which was an Episcopal service led by the Rev. Peter A. Delaney of Marylebone Church, London who had officiated at Garland's marriage to Deans. Garland was interred in a crypt in the community mausoleum at Ferncliff Cemetery in Harsdale, New York.

Burials Through Time... THE ABORIGINEES

There are many different myths telling of the origins and consequences of death throughout Aboriginal Australia, and there are many traditional methods of dealing with corpses, including burial, cremation, exposure on tree platforms, mummification and interment inside a tree or hollow log. The rites are designed to mark stages in the separation of body and spirit.

Aboriginal people believe in multiple human souls and, at death, the two types of soul have different trajectories and fates. The egoic soul initially becomes a dangerous ghost that remains near the deceased's body and property. It eventually passes into nonexistence, its absence often marked by destruction or abandonment of the deceased's property, and a long-term ban on the use of the deceased person's name by the living. Ancestral souls, however, are eternal. They return to the environment and to the sites and ritual paraphernalia associated with specific totemic beings and/or with God.

The funerary rites that enact these transitions are often called (in English translation) "sorry business." They occur in Aboriginal camps and houses, as well as in Christian churches because the varied funerary practices of the past have been almost exclusively displaced by Christian burial.

However, the underlying themes of the classical cosmology persist in many areas. The smoking, (a process in which smoke, usually from burning leaves, is allowed to waft over the deceased's property) stylized wailing, and self-inflicted violence are three common components of sorry business, forming part of a broader complex of social-psychological adjustment to loss.



INDUSTRY FOCUS: A conservative profession? Hardly!

Probably the most stereotypical British funeral director you will see on TV is Mr Sowerberry in the Oscar winning film, *Oliver!*, so ably played by the late theatrical master, Leonard Rossiter.

And yet, whilst his performance might have been a true reflection of the Victorian era, his portrayal of the mean spirited 'undertaker' could hardly be further from the truth.

Nowadays the industry has evolved and changed beyond recognition, with every conceivable form of funeral rite available to families burying their loved ones.

Woollen coffins, 'eco pods', send your ashes into space, living funerals, and even humanist ceremonies for the non religious, are just a few of the things that make up 2011's expanding 'services available' list for people talking to their local funeral director.

Interestingly Colourful Coffins became the first ever Corporate Member of the Society of

Bereavement Practitioners, after a bereaved family nominated them saying how one of their creative coffins had provided comfort on one of the most difficult days of their lives. The coffins are emblazoned with a range of imagery from country scenes to musical instruments or transport images.

Richard Box, Managing Director at Eric F Box, said: "I have worked in the profession for more than 50 years, and the changes since 1853, when the company opened, are almost beyond words.

"Even now there is a whole new layer of change entering the marketplace which, for many professionals, is hard to stomach. As well as dealing with the bereaved we now have the additional challenge of the internet, social media, the online purchase of gravestones, and even live funerals streamed to relatives abroad via the internet. Change is something we will always have to embrace."

DUG BROTHERS - FUNERAL DIRECTORS

