



Welcome to your newsletter

Thank you for reading the latest issue of Eric F. Box News, the newsletter compiled by some of the country's leading experts from the UK funeral industry.

Death is always a sensitive subject and the topics we cover in this edition will no doubt spark both debate and sympathy.

In cemeteries in our towns and cities the pressure on finding enough space for burials is reaching breaking point. What to do? We explore some of the alternatives available in an urban environment.

Assisted suicide is a very hot topic at the moment. Whatever your views on having the right to die – and the TV programme made by author Terry Pratchett - it is an issue that we are sure will continue to excite public debate.

One man who certainly lived his life to the full was Sir Winston Churchill and we touch on his passing overleaf.

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

Edward Richard Anderson

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

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A matter of life and death

The controversial BBC film of a man being helped to die polarized the nation.

Sir Terry Pratchett, the author who has Alzheimer's disease, witnessed the death of a man with motor neurone disease.

The moving *Choosing to Die* featured 71-year-old Peter Smedley travelling to Switzerland and taking a lethal dose of barbiturates given to him by the Dignitas organisation.

In offices and shops everywhere, people were asking the same question: "Was it right to allow this to happen?"

On one side members of the clergy and disability campaigners were clear that it was wrong to promote assisted suicide.

Sir Terry contested that it should be possible for someone stricken with a serious and ultimately fatal illness to choose to die peacefully with medical help, rather than suffer.

After making the programme, Sir Terry said that seeing what Dignitas did had not changed his mind.

The debate struck a very clear note with Edward Box of Funeral



Directors Eric F. Box.

In dealing with death every day of his working life, Edward is well placed to take a view on the subject. "It sent a shiver down my spine," he said.

"The programme didn't sit well with me. Of course everyone is entitled to their own opinion and my belief is that life is for living.

"There needs to be an educated debate on this. It is so difficult to know where you draw the line."

In the last 12 years more than 1,000 people from all over Europe have gone through assisted deaths with Dignitas.

The company includes cremation as part of its service, which excludes British funeral directors.

Do you have a view on assisted suicide? If so, please drop us a line with your thoughts to the address opposite, or send an email to: funerals@efbox.co.uk

Space issue up in the air

As the population increases in our towns and cities, space is at a premium.

Whether it's squeezing new homes onto a plot, or finding a vacant spot to park your car, the issue is never far away.



It's no different in cemeteries. Room for burial space in some areas of the country is hard to find and it has led to the industry reviewing how best to cope.

One method is to reclaim old graves. In London it is permitted to reclaim grave rights that are older than 75 years and recently permission was granted to also reuse old graves.

In a pilot scheme at London's Manor Park cemetery, a section containing public graves is being cleared to provide new burial space. After a notice period, human remains are cleared and reburied in a designated grave, freeing up the land for new burials.

However, Richard Box of Eric F. Box Funeral Directors, urges caution

before moving down a similar path in the north.

"This is a very sensitive matter," says Richard. "Exhuming a grave poses huge moral and ethical questions.

"It is a very emotive subject. What time limit do you put on clearing a site? Fifty years? 100 years? And who's to say that there aren't relatives who will object?"

Rural settlements are unlikely to come under the microscope, but urban areas will soon have to face up to the thorny issue of space.

Adds Richard: "There is so much to consider and I wouldn't want to be the person who has to say yes or no to allowing this."

Iconic Funerals: Sir Winston Churchill (1874 – 1965)

For a man voted the greatest Briton, it was fitting that the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill was a grand occasion.

He was the first statesman to be given a state funeral in the 20th century – former prime ministers, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Henry Palmerston and William Gladstone, had preceded him in this posthumous honour in the 19th century.

Sir Winston was known for his leadership of the United Kingdom during the Second World War and is regarded as one of the great wartime leaders. He served as Prime Minister twice and was also an officer in the British Army, a historian, a writer, and an artist.

He died aged 90 following a stroke from which he never regained consciousness.

A total of 321,360 people filed past the catafalque during the three days of lying-in-state, while millions around the world watched the funeral procession at home and abroad as television pictures were beamed from cameras placed along the route.



Sir Winston's wife, Lady Clementine Churchill, his son Randolph and daughters Mary Soames and Lady Sarah Audley, led mourners. The Queen and other members of the royal family, the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, and representatives of 112 countries attended the service.

The funeral cortege was accompanied by a 19-gun salute and an RAF fly-past as it began the journey to Sir Winston's final resting place.



At Tower Hill, the coffin was piped aboard a launch for the voyage up the Thames.

At Waterloo Station, the coffin was placed onto a train drawn by a Battle of Britain locomotive named Winston Churchill. Thousands gathered to pay tribute at stations along the route. At many football matches a two-minute silence was observed. Sir Winston was finally laid to rest in the Oxfordshire parish churchyard of Bladon, near to Blenheim Palace where he was born 90 years before.

- A BBC survey in January 2000 voted Sir Winston the greatest British prime minister of the 20th century. BBC viewers and users voted him the greatest Briton in November 2002.



Silent crowds lined the streets to watch the gun carriage bearing Sir Winston's coffin leave Westminster Hall as Big Ben struck 0945. The procession travelled slowly through central London to St Paul's Cathedral for the funeral service.

Burials Through Time: NATIVE AMERICANS



Native Americans have long practised eco-friendly burials.

Their traditions follow the belief that the natural world is truly sacred. Many religious ceremonies are tied to a specific location and to harm that place would be contrary to Native American beliefs.

Burial traditions follow the specific customs of each tribe, though most Native Americans believe that birth, life and death are the elements of something much larger – an endless life cycle.

Families take care of the deceased, making all funeral arrangements. They transport the body themselves and their burial techniques are considerate of the environment.

The body is placed in a simple shroud, or wooden casket. Although the body is often honoured for up to four days, embalming fluids are not used; the body is preserved prior to interment by being kept cold using dry ice.

To participate in Native American services means understanding the principles that guide their spirituality.

These views include:

- Western beliefs, such as heaven and hell, are not compatible with Native American views
- nature should be revered, not as simply evidence of a Creator, but sacred in itself
- death is a journey to another world.

Personal items are often placed in the coffin. Native beliefs hold that death is not the end of a life and sympathy is welcome to help ease the loss of the loved one.

INDUSTRY FOCUS: The green option to cremation

The world is becoming more environmentally conscious by the day – and that also applies to the funeral industry.

Resomation is a little-known term, but one that may be increasingly heard once it becomes legal in Britain when considering alternatives to burial or cremation.

In simple terms Resomation is a process that dissolves the body to its chemical components. Instead of a cremation, the coffin enters a Resomation machine and after two to three hours, liquid and ash remain.

The process produces less carbon emissions and uses a fraction of the energy of a cremation.

But while Resomation may be better for the environment, it could be a long time before the practice is commonplace. Cremation took more than 50 years to become widespread in Britain!

And qualified embalmer Andrew Box, of funeral directors Eric F Box, believes it may take decades for

Resomation to become understood and accepted. "People thought cremation was a crazy idea when it was introduced in the 1890s," said Andrew. "It may not be us, but the next generation who embrace Resomation."

Though it is likely to be cost, rather than scepticism, that proves a stumbling block this time. As Andrew explained: "This looks like a timely green alternative, as crematoriums are being asked to lower their emissions.

"However, money will have to be spent to install these new machines, and as we all know councils have a very tight squeeze on budgets both now and for the foreseeable future.

"I can see this coming, but when it will arrive is another matter! As with everything, there is a cost involved – both to the authorities and then the people who pay to use the facilities."

Although developed in this country, Resomation will be used first in the U.S.

DUG BROTHERS – FUNERAL DIRECTORS

