



Welcome to your newsletter

There was a time when the words 'funeral director' seemed to be spoken in hushed tones! Now, however, the profession appears to be on TV at every turn but, as we highlight in this Autumn edition of our newsletter, maybe that isn't an entirely bad thing.

Kirklees is again in the headlines with plans for a controversial new cemetery in the green belt steaming ahead – but is it necessary?

And we all remember John Lennon's tragic death. In this edition, we throw the spotlight on his controversial assassin, Mark Chapman, whilst hopefully educating you a little more about African funeral rites.

And try not to smile too much at the suggestion that you throw a 'will party'! The lady who came up with the idea has good reason for making her comments and, as with so many things, it is all about 'education' and making people think a little harder about life's serious issues.

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

Green light for cemetery



Castle Hill, Almondbury
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Controversial plans to build a new cemetery in the South Kirklees green belt have been given a sensitive welcome by Eric F. Box Funeral Directors.

Councillors had been under sustained pressure to veto plans for the site at Berry Brow which is about 700 metres from Castle Hill, at Almondbury, Huddersfield. It is a scheduled Iron Age monument that has been settled for at least 4000 years, and which can be seen for miles around.

But politicians have now supported recommendations, from the council's bereavement services, for the site off Hey Lane to go ahead, despite an outcry that it would harm the setting of Castle Hill and the Grade II listed Victoria Tower. Objectors claimed the cemetery would look out of place in an area surrounded by

farmland and woodlands, whilst others maintained it was overly rural and too far from their homes.

Edward Box, said: "In some ways a new cemetery is no different to a greenfield housing estate, it will have its supporters and its detractors, however, in this instance, there was a clear need and, however controversial, the cemetery has to go somewhere.

"No doubt all parties will have had valid concerns, but death is a reality of life and when loved ones have passed, families need to bury them somewhere, and there has been a very real need in Huddersfield for some time."

The facility will provide burial space for the next 20 to 30 years and include Muslim and open burial areas.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The report which influenced the planning committee, said that development of a cemetery was appropriate to the green belt, in that it would preserve the openness and character of the area whilst providing an important community facility. It was also deemed 'sustainable development.'

The district only has capacity for the next 12 to 18 months in the three South Kirklees cemeteries at Lockwood, Kirkheaton and Almondbury. Currently 120 burials take place each year and this figure is predicted to rise to 200 by 2015.

"Hopefully with the passing of time, people will realise that a cemetery is, in many ways, far less intrusive than a housing estate, and, indeed, very much part of any multi cultural community," added Edward.

TV awareness dispels taboos

The funeral director's profession has been in the spotlight recently with yet another TV documentary playing its part in opening up this historically 'taboo' world.

The BBC's three parter, 'Dead Good Job', was given prime-time billing over three weeks, and focussed on various aspects of the profession in multi-cultural Britain, including a look at Muslim, Christian and Hindu burial rites.

Richard Box said: "Britain is an increasingly multi cultural society and, whilst we, as funeral directors, have a greater appreciation than most about the varying funeral rites of different cultures, the wider public still needs educating.

"In years gone by there was some controversy over plans to allow Sikhs to scatter the

ashes of their loved ones on the flowing River Aire in Leeds, however, programmes like Dead Good Job go a long way to creating greater understanding across cultures.

"For fear of stating the obvious, more people need to appreciate that death is as certain as life, and that different religions deal with it in different ways. Some may jar with the other but neither are wrong.



Iconic Funerals: John Lennon (1940-1980)



John Lennon's death, not unlike Martin Luther King's, was the result of a brutal assassination when he was gunned down by a deluded Mark Chapman outside New York's Dakota apartment building. It was December 8th and Chapman, who had a history of obsessive compulsive behaviour, is reported to have bought a copy of *The Catcher in the Rye* from a New York book store, in which he wrote "This is my statement" and signed it "Holden Caulfield," the name of the protagonist of the novel.

He then spent most of the day near the entrance to The Dakota apartment building where Lennon and

Yoko Ono lived, talking to other fans and the doorman.

Around 5pm, Lennon and Ono left The Dakota for a recording session at Record Plant Studios and Chapman shook hands with the star, holding out a copy of Lennon's new album, *Double Fantasy*, for him to sign. But, when Lennon, returned later that evening, Chapman fired five hollow point bullets from a .38 special revolver, four of which hit the former Beatle in the back and left shoulder.

He remained at the scene, took out his copy of *The Catcher in the Rye* and read it until the police arrived. Recognizing that Lennon's wounds were severe, police transported him in their police car to St Luke's Roosevelt Hospital Center where he was pronounced dead at 11.07pm

Chapman was arrested without incident. In his statement to police three hours later, Chapman stated: "I'm sure the large part of me is Holden Caulfield, who is the main person in the book. The small part of me must be the Devil."

Lennon was cremated on 10 December 1980, at the Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, New York. His wife Yoko Ono decided not to hold a funeral. But six days after his death, millions of fans around the world gathered to honour her request of a 10 minute silence for Lennon.



Millions of fans gathered to hold a 10 minute silence for John Lennon

Where there's a will, there's a way

First there were divorce parties, then funerals for the living, now there's the ultimate suggestion from a nurse in London; 'will parties'!

In a bid to make death more 'straightforward and open', Miss Morris makes her suggestion in the National Death Handbook.

"Bereavement is one of the biggest causes of debt in the UK. People don't plan their goodbyes, their final moments, but you wouldn't go away on holiday without checking everything was in order, let alone go permanently," she said.

Andrew Box commented: "Miss Morris has a point. A little more thought by all members of any family is beneficial. Some people are amazed when we tell them that surviving relatives bury their loved ones and then announce that they can't afford to pay the bill.

"Perhaps a 'will party' or some honest dialogue between family members, while everyone is still alive, would raise pertinent issues in advance, and facilitate better planning. Once someone has died you can't ask whether they wanted cremating or burying."



John, second from left, with The Beatles





Burials Through Time... AFRICAN CUSTOMS

Death in African religions can be a hazardous occupation for the 'living' because if surviving relatives get it wrong, they face the prospect of being haunted by the deceased!

Death is one of the last transitional stages of life requiring passage rites and the deceased must be "detached" from the living. However, if the correct funeral rites are not observed, the deceased may come back to trouble the living relatives.

Ancient customs are adapted in many South African urban funerals. When someone has died in a house, all the windows are smeared with ash, all pictures in the house turned around and all mirrors and televisions and any other reflective objects covered.

The beds are removed from the deceased's room, and the bereaved women sit on the floor,

usually on a mattress. During the time preceding the funeral—usually from seven to thirteen days—visits are paid by people in the community to comfort the bereaved family.

A ritual animal killing is sometimes made for the ancestors, as it is believed that blood must be shed at this time to avoid further misfortune. Some peoples use the hide of the slaughtered beast to cover the corpse or place it on top of the coffin as a "blanket" for the deceased.

Traditionally, the funeral takes place in the early morning - often before sunrise - and not late in the afternoon, as it is believed that sorcerers move around in the afternoons looking for corpses to use for their evil purposes. Because sorcerers are asleep in the early morning, this is a good time to bury the dead.

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Enjoy the read and, as always, we welcome your comments be they in writing 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.

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