



## Welcome to your newsletter

On a number of occasions we have talked about the changing face of funeral directing in the UK, never more so than in this edition of the Box newsletter.

Social trends, for instance, seem to be dictating that fewer and fewer people are saving up for some of life's necessities, including funerals, whilst, at the other end of the scale, the very same generation that appears to be 'living for today', used that 'instantaneity' to make sure that a lonely soldier did not die unloved and forgotten by a world he probably fought to protect.

Read about both in this edition.

And then there is the continuing 'roll out' of the Death Café initiative. Bereavement is a very natural aspect of our life as funeral directors, however, for the majority of people it remains a sensitive subject and, in many instances, taboo. Death Cafés however, are seeking to change that and, today, you can read about this

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## Pauper Funerals Loom – Warning!



**The failure by millions of people to put money aside for a 'rainy day' could have major ramifications for funerals in the future.**

That is the stark warning from Richard Box after a Scottish Widows survey discovered that around one third of the UK population – or 15 million people – were not saving on a regular basis.

The tough economy and the need to help other family members struggling with high living costs, means that many people are living on a "financial precipice", with little or nothing to fall back on, according to Scottish Widows.

Some 31% of people maintain they are not currently placing any cash aside.

However, only one in nine (11%) of those surveyed, expect the economy to pick up this year,

and 17% have no money to fall back on at all, the Savings and Investment report said.

"There was a time when saving money was the most common thing in the world, certainly in the post war years. However, with the arrival of consumerism and credit cards, all that changed and people no longer save in the way they once did," said Richard Box.

He added: "From a funeral perspective this means that poor relatives of people dying in hospital – or the community - would have to make a case to either the hospital management or Social Services for a pauper's funeral.

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"If they were successful then both of those organisations would probably have a contract with a local funeral director like E.F. Box, who would make all the necessary arrangements. The funeral would be very basic. It is not ideal but, sadly, this problem is happening more and more and certainly in bigger cities like Manchester and Leeds," said Richard.

One quarter of people surveyed, who had families, said they had handed out loans, averaging £15,000, to their children, which were often just to help them cope with high living costs as wages stagnate.

Older generations were also feeling the strain, with grandparents saying they had lent £3,665 on average to their grandchildren.

Two-thirds of people across the survey said that a general lack of any spare cash, was holding back their ability to save.

## UK's First Social Media Funeral?

The power of the internet came to the fore when a 70 year old man, with no family or relatives, died and the vicar, fearing there would be no mourners, put out a Facebook appeal.

More than 200 strangers finished up attending the funeral of former Royal Marine James 'Jimmy' McConnell.

Reverend Bob Mason contacted the Royal Marines Association and posted a message on Facebook, saying that care home workers in Southsea, Hampshire were likely to be the only people at Jimmy's funeral.

But hundreds of Facebookers were determined that the valiant serviceman would not say farewell to this world by himself, put out the word and 200+ mourners, as well as the national media, turned up.

A small procession through the cemetery was led by Royal British Legion standard bearers followed by a group of flag-bearing motorcycles and the service concluded with two buglers from the Royal Marines Band playing the Last Post.



Last post for James McConnell

Edward Box said: "This proves the power of social media and, in this instance, Facebookers were able to give Jimmy the send-off he really deserved."

## Iconic Funerals: Louis Armstrong (1900-1971)



However, his biggest hits as a recording artist came late in his life, among them "Hello, Dolly!" and "What a Wonderful World" in 1968.

By 1970, his health had declined to the point where he could not play at all, and could only walk a few steps at a time. He passed away of a massive heart attack at his home in Queens.

Armstrong's New York funeral at the National Guard Armory attracted a crowd of 25,000 and a string of celebrities including Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Duke Ellington.

Later, his hometown of New Orleans staged a memorial service in the French Quarter culminating with a traditional Jazz funeral march down Bourbon Street.

His posthumous honours included a record star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and a 1978 Charter induction into the Big Band and Jazz Hall of Fame. Louis Armstrong is buried in Flushing Cemetery in Queens, New York.

Source: [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)



Born in the slums of segregated New Orleans, Louisiana, Louis Armstrong had a tough beginning which saw him scavenging for food in garbage cans.

However, despite a period in the New Orleans Waif's Home he got by with a string of low paid 'survival' jobs until he met well known jazz artist, Joe Oliver.

Oliver became a pivotal figure in young Louis' life, taking on the role of mentor, teacher and father and eventually inviting Armstrong to join his band in 1922.

Within three years Louis had formed his own band and recorded his first album. In 1931 his motion picture career began and, the following year, a London music journalist inadvertently wrote about 'Satchmo' in his editorial, giving rise to the nickname he would keep for the rest of his life.

By the 1940s, the era of the Big Band was over and Armstrong organized a small band called the "Louis Armstrong All Stars", which became one of the most well-known jazz groups in history.

## Breaking The Taboos of Death

Café culture is taking on a new meaning in some areas of the country with groups meeting to enjoy coffee, cake and conversation about death!

It's part of an initiative called Death Café, aimed at removing some of the taboos that still surround bereavement.

Organised by Jon Underwood, the Death Café concept stems from the work of Swiss sociologist Bernard Crettaz.

However, the meetings are not just for the newly bereaved. Some individuals might need guidance on how best to help others, whilst someone might simply want to know how to become a funeral director.

"I've always felt that if we were more sorted about death, the world would be a much, much better place," said Jon.

"Our society has a silence around death, yet reflecting on death can help us to enjoy life more; it adds perspective and maybe makes us a bit more resilient," he added. To date, over 40 Death Cafés have been offered to over 300 participants worldwide.

Source: *Funeral Services Journal* & [www.deathcafe.com](http://www.deathcafe.com)





# Burials Through Time... MALAGAN

Malagan culture is the general term for the traditions in the area where Malagan ceremonies take place, namely much of New Ireland province in Papua New Guinea.

The word malagan comes from the Nalik language of northern New Ireland, and Malagan ceremonies are the most large-scale and famous of the many events that take place within this culture. They may take place infrequently but, typically, are large and complex events, taking several days, and requiring months or years of preparation.

Whilst a Malagan ceremony is always held in the name of one or more people who have died in recent years, it is not just a mortuary rite. Many other interactions take place within the overall event, including announcements, repayment of debts, recognition of obligations, resolution of disputes, and many other customary activities.

Malagan carvings, now world-famous, are the wooden carvings which are created for use in Malagan ceremonies. Traditionally

these were burnt at the conclusion of the event. However, in modern times, most are now retained since the carving tradition is now only known by a few.

There are several groups of the Malagan carvings – vertical figures (“kobokobor”), horizontal figures (“murumarua”), stacked figures (“eikuar”) and helmet masks (“tatanua”, “miteno” and “wanis”).

The tatanua masks are used in the traditional dance and locals believe that the spirits of the ancestors are present in the mask worn by a dancer.

Source: <http://traditionscustoms.com>



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fascinating project that can only do good.

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](mailto:philh@theh2.co.uk), or even go onto the Eric F. Box website ([www.efbox.co.uk](http://www.efbox.co.uk)) and make your thoughts known to us there.

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