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Preface

- The rights and standards set out in this document form the Charter for the Bereaved. This is intended to improve and update cemetery and crematoria services and related aspects of bereavement. The Charter was created in response to the Citizens' Charter initiative, which continues to be supported by all the major political parties.
- The Charter seeks to generate interest in and educate people about bereavement. It also helps to influence the expansion of services and clarify the various roles and responsibilities of those involved.
- The Charter is a commitment to improving the service by confronting rather than disguising or ignoring death.
- The Charter is intended to define the rights of every individual who experiences bereavement. In achieving this aim, it also sets standards of service related to burial, cremation and funerals. It is a written statement of what can be expected and enables people to judge the quality of the service received.

How the Charter affects you

- The Charter acknowledges that your views and needs should be given much greater recognition than in the past.
- The Charter enables you to recognise a responsive service, one that meets your expectations and one that is delivered with the right attitude and with a genuine desire to be helpful. Where these human qualities are combined with the requirements of the Charter, the highest standards will be achieved.
- The Charter enables you to recognise that bereavement services are critical to the health of the nation. The therapeutic benefits of accepting and handling bereavement are immeasurable, influencing both the physical and mental well being of us all.
- The Charter will help you realise that ignoring death can increase stress for your relatives and friends. It leaves the problem of your death, as well as your estate, to another person, usually your partner or children. As a consequence, the crisis is made worse for these people, whom we call the bereaved.
- The Charter will increase your awareness of “interest” groups and how they influence the bereavement process. These include local authority staff, the clergy, Funeral Directors, embalmers, monumental masons, hospital staff and others.
- The Charter will give you greater influence over the arrangements of funerals thereby controlling costs and obtaining greater satisfaction.

How can you use the Charter?

The Charter is set out in sections covering individual issues related to bereavement. Each section is divided into three parts: INFORMATION, RIGHTS and TARGETS. These offer you the following benefits:

1. INFORMATION

The effectiveness of you, as a customer or bereaved person, depends on how much you know, both about your local services and the alternatives that are available elsewhere. Bereavement is surrounded by cultural taboo, rumour and misinformation, the things you can supposedly do, or not do! There is also a wide difference in the provision of services over the UK as a whole.

The information is of a general nature, which may be of interest to you and which you have a right to know, as a means of empowerment. This gives you the knowledge to bring about change, where you feel it is necessary, or simply gives you an improved base on which to make decisions. Ultimately, you are given the opportunity to make an “informed choice” and not to suffer from ignorance.

In some cases, the information is given as a means of advancing the public interest, even though the information may not directly involve the provision of a burial or cremation service. An example is the environmental aspects of both burial and cremation.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

This section sets out your specific rights, where these have been clearly identified. These rights will be promised to you by Charter members.

3. CHARTER TARGETS

Due to various reasons, some services are not nationally available and cannot be placed under Charter Rights. Because of this, these services are outlined under Charter Targets for future consideration. This gives you the opportunity to recognise that such services may be provided elsewhere, and your Charter contact will be able to advise accordingly. With this information, you will be able to lobby for the provision of these services.

As the Charter develops, it is intended to identify services that should be nationally provided. Consequently, more Charter “Rights” will become available.

Who has adopted the Charter?

The Charter has been adopted by local authorities, private companies and others providing burial and cremation facilities throughout the United Kingdom. A list of Charter Members can be obtained from the ICCM National Office (contact details are contained in Appendix C) These are defined as follows:

BURIAL

Most cemeteries are provided by a district or parish Council. The district cemetery serves the wider area with the parish cemetery usually reserved only for the use of parishioners. In London, borough councils or the Common Council for the City of London provide cemeteries. In addition a number of privately owned cemeteries and woodland burial sites exist, a small number operated by a Trust or "Friends" groups.

CREMATION

Many of the burial authorities mentioned above, with the exception of parish councils, extend their service by providing a crematorium. There are currently 242 crematoria operating in the UK provided by both the public and private sectors.

It is important to note that the range of services offered by individual Charter members does vary. Some will offer burial **and** cremation facilities, whilst others may offer **only** cremation or burial. You can write to a Charter member to comment or complain about the service you receive or any aspect related to the Charter. Your views on increasing rights and improving standards are welcomed. If you remain dissatisfied about any aspect of the Charter or the response of a Charter member, you can contact the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) through the National Secretary (see Appendix C).

Your comments and/or complaints, whether to Charter members or the National Secretary, will be recorded and analysed on a nation-wide basis. This feedback will be seen as an integral part of the Charter relationship. Complaints will be seen as part of the learning process leading to a continuous improvement of the Charter.

The Charter complies with all legal requirements. These are outlined in Appendix E.

What do you do when somebody dies?

This Charter sets out many details about death and funerals, as individual topics. As it may be difficult for those with no experience of a death to understand how everything interrelates, this section describes what occurs in the period before a funeral.

Death at home

When a person dies at home, the next of kin or executor and the family doctor should be informed. The doctor who cared for the person during the last illness will complete a free Certificate of the Cause of Death (called the “death certificate” hereafter). If cremation is intended, this doctor will complete cremation Form B and will arrange for another doctor to complete the confirmatory Form C. The second doctor will need to view the body at some stage. These forms are provided free of charge from the administration office of the crematorium. The two doctors completing these forms will require payment for their completing with this cost being included in your Funeral Directors account. If you are arranging the funeral without the use of a Funeral Director you will be required to pay these charges directly. These forms are not required if the death is taken over by the Coroner “(see “Coroner” below).

The death certificate must be taken to the Registrar of Births and Deaths for the District in which the death occurred within five days. (At the time of writing, a review of the registration service was underway. It might transpire that a more flexible approach is taken to death registration in the future and your Charter member will be able to advise of any changes). In Scotland, you can visit any Registrar of Births and Deaths within eight days. Ensure you visit the correct office and check opening times, as they may operate limited hours. The doctor may send the death certificate direct to the Registrar, and not give it to you to take.

Death in hospital

If someone dies in hospital, the death certificate will be issued there. The next of kin may be requested to authorise a post-mortem. If cremation is intended, the hospital will arrange the necessary documentation.

The deceased will be transferred to a mortuary. Arrangements to deliver the death certificate to the Registrar of Births and Deaths and to register the death are as above, under “Death at Home”. The Registrar will be the one covering the Hospital area, which may be different to the home address of the deceased.

If the death occurs in a residential or nursing home, they may follow a similar routine as for that in hospital. In addition, they may have an arrangement with a Funeral Director for the removal of the body to a mortuary or a Chapel of Rest. This Funeral Director does not necessarily have to undertake the funeral for you. You may select any Funeral Director, or you can organise the funeral yourself.

Coroner

(Note: In Scotland the Procurator Fiscal has jurisdiction over the body of a person who has died unexpectedly. Throughout this Charter any reference to the Coroner will relate to the Procurator Fiscal in Scotland)

If the death was sudden or due to an accident, or no doctor had attended for some time, the Coroner must be informed. On some occasions the Registrar of Births and Deaths may also report the death to the Coroner. The Coroner will decide whether to hold a post-mortem and/or an inquest. As most cases are found to be due to natural causes, inquests are rarely required. The Coroner will then notify the Registrar that the death can be registered. The person registering the death will need to visit the Registrar to do this. The Coroner's Office will keep this person informed about what to do. As these arrangements may cause delay, you should not arrange the funeral until authorised by the Coroner's Officer. The Coroner will issue an Order for Burial (white certificate) or for Cremation (yellow certificate) without charge. The certificate should be given to your Funeral Director or sent to the cemetery or crematorium as soon as possible.

Again, you may select any Funeral Director, or you can organise the funeral yourself.

Registrar of Births and Deaths

The Registrar can register the death only if he/she is given or has obtained the death certificate or has received notification from the Coroner. He or she will need to know the following details about the deceased:

1. FULL NAME – including any other names by which they were known.
2. MAIDEN SURNAME – if the deceased is a married woman.
3. DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH
4. OCCUPATION – and their husband's full name and occupation, if the deceased is a married woman or a widow.

You will need to confirm the date and place of death. Other questions will be asked about the date of birth of the surviving spouse and information about the state pensions and allowances the person was receiving, including war pensions. The NHS number will be requested and the medical card of the deceased should be surrendered to the Registrar, if it is available. If the number is not known, and the medical card is unavailable, you can still register the death.

The Registrar will issue a free social security form to ensure that benefits are being paid correctly. If the Coroner is not issuing an Order for Burial or Cremation, the Registrar will issue a free certificate for this purpose. This should be given to your Funeral Director or sent to the cemetery or crematorium as soon as possible.

The Registrar will advise you over any further certificate copies you require and the cost involved. These will be for obtaining Grant of Probate or Letter of Administration, to show banks, social security or building societies, and to claim insurance.

The Deceased

While the above procedures are taking place, it is essential that the deceased is cared for. With death at home, if you are using a Funeral Director, he or she should be called as soon as possible. They will remove the deceased and complete laying-out and possibly embalming. The deceased may remain at their Chapel of Rest or may be returned home, should you so wish. If the death was in hospital, the staff usually complete laying-out and your Funeral Director will collect the deceased and carry out your instructions.

If you are not using a Funeral Director, and the death occurs at home, you may complete laying-out, or have this done by a district nurse or some other person. The deceased can remain at home and must be kept as cool as possible. For obvious reasons it is necessary to make arrangements for the burial or cremation to take place as soon as is possible as in some cases deterioration of the body may become rapid with the obvious consequences occurring. Your local mortuary, cemetery or crematorium may have facilities to hold the deceased pending the funeral. If the death was in hospital, the deceased will be taken to the hospital mortuary. You can collect the deceased yourself, provided you have a coffin and suitable transport. You can keep the deceased at home, or you may be able to use the mortuary until the day of the funeral.

These arrangements are not mandatory and can be varied in accordance with ethnic or other needs.

Death Abroad

Refer to your Charter member for further advice.

Conclusion

It is assumed that whoever arranges the funeral is aware of the wishes of the deceased, whether a will exists and who the executor(s) is. It is important to note that executors have the right to choose burial or cremation, whether it accords with the wishes of the deceased or not. If there is no will, and therefore no executors, someone (usually the next of kin) will make these decisions. With a greater number of people taking out funeral plans and insurance, it is important to check whether the deceased subscribed to a scheme or policy. The personal effects of the deceased should be checked to see if Rights to a family grave already exist.

The Charter sections on "BURIAL PROCEDURE" and "CREMATION PROCEDURE" will describe what happens next, as the arrangements for either type of funeral proceeds. The remaining sections of the Charter enlarge upon specific topics, to enable you to consider all the issues involved with a funeral.

Burial procedure

1. INFORMATION

This Charter item considers burial in cemeteries, which has changed little since Victorian times. Churchyards not controlled by local authorities and burial at sea are outside the remit of the Charter. Your Charter member may be able to advise you about these options. As Charter members are often the only local source of advice about burials on private land, this topic is included in the Charter.

In the earlier Charter item, "WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SOMEBODY DIES?" the arrangements immediately following a death and up to Registration were considered. This item outlines all the subsequent arrangements of a funeral, where burial is intended. The procedure is described in the sequence that a Funeral Director or anybody organising a funeral without a Funeral Director would routinely follow.

PROVISIONAL FUNERAL BOOKING

As soon as the death has been certified and the availability of the minister (if needed) is confirmed, the cemetery is telephoned and a provisional funeral booking is arranged. The cemetery office should be available for booking during normal office hours and, ideally, over weekends. The following information will be required:

- Cemetery location – the office may control a number of cemeteries and the precise one should be identified.
- Funeral date and time – this will be when the funeral arrives at the cemetery gates. Normally, a minimum two days notice is required, although sufficient time must be available to Register the death and obtain all certificates.
- Name and address of the deceased.
- Grave number – if Rights to a grave already exist, the number will be shown on the grave Deed. The cemetery will confirm whether sufficient space exists for a further burial. If a new grave is required it will be necessary to define the maximum number of burials required. It may be possible to select the location of the grave. The Charter item "GRAVE CHOICE" gives you information on this subject.
- The name and telephone number of the Funeral Director or the person arranging the funeral, who will also pay the required fees. A table of fees is available upon request.

The details above are the minimum necessary for a provisional booking. These will be sufficient to enable cemetery staff to locate an existing grave or allocate a new one, and to prepare for the excavation. If a memorial is present upon an existing grave, it may have to be removed for the burial.

The details below can be given by telephone at this early stage, or sometime later, or entered on the "Notice of Burial" (see below).

- Coffin or container size – this is the overall size, including handles. See the Charter item on "COFFINS AND ALTERNATIVES" for details.
- Funeral type – this will depend upon how the funeral is organised. If a service is held before the arrival at the cemetery, you may go "straight to grave" when you arrive. The grave will be dressed with grass mats; and a "committal" service, or any other ceremony you may prefer, can take place at the graveside. Bearers will be necessary to carry the coffin from the vehicle to the grave, and to lower the coffin. Your Funeral Directors will provide bearers or alternatively, if you are arranging the funeral yourself, some cemeteries may provide bearers for a fee. If a cemetery chapel is available, for which a fee may be payable, the funeral service can be held there first. Information about the service is given in the Charter item "CEREMONIES AND BELIEFS".
- Religion of deceased – this is to enable the cemetery staff to anticipate the style and length of service and ensure the correct plot is used. For example, some religions require dry soil to be made available to sprinkle upon the coffin at the committal stage.

NOTICE OF BURIAL

A formal notification of the burial must be delivered to the burial authority as soon as possible. A regulation requiring a minimum 24 hours notice is often specified for the receipt of this form. It is issued free of charge, by post if requested. The completed form is regarded as a binding contract over the work and costs involved, which may be payable even if the funeral is cancelled or transferred to another cemetery.

The Notice of Burial should be accompanied by a Coroner's Order for Burial or a Registrar's Certificate, which is obtained as outlined in the Charter item "WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEBODY DIES". Some authorities may accept the Order or Certificate when the funeral arrives at the cemetery. Where a certificate is mislaid, the burial authority can accept a written declaration in a prescribed form to that effect. This applies when it is believed the Certificate or Order has been issued.

The funeral cannot proceed until an Order or Certificate is given to the burial authority. Alternative arrangements apply when the death occurred outside the country and your Charter member can advise in these situations.

This completes the formal arrangements that involve the bereaved. Other sections of the Charter offer further information about organising and holding a funeral, although the provision of funeral wreaths and obituaries in newspapers are not considered. These sections also ignore what the burial authority actually undertakes behind the scenes and these operations are now described.

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

When the provisional booking is made, the registers are checked to locate the correct grave, to check ownership of the Grave Rights and a site visit may be carried out to check the memorial on the grave. When necessary, the burial authority will advise about transfer of ownership of the Grave Rights. Transfer of rights is required in certain circumstances where the registered owner of the grave rights is deceased. The transfer of rights is a legal process and will be carried out by your Charter Member. You will be required to produce a grant of probate or letters of administration. If these were not issued a statutory declaration will be prepared for you that takes the place of the aforementioned documents.

If a new grave is required, one will be allocated. As soon as confirmation is received, an order to excavate the grave will be issued; this may involve using a contractor. A grave for two burials will normally be excavated to a depth of at least 1.83m (6ft 0in) and shored. This will leave sufficient depth for the burial of the second coffin without disturbing the previous burial. The grave will be covered by boards and will be regularly checked by cemetery staff during the time between excavation and the funeral taking place in case of collapse and/or water build-up.

Before the funeral the grave will have planks and boards placed around the edge to support bearers and mourners and provide a safe and secure platform from which dignified lowering of the coffin can take place. The grave will be dressed with artificial grass mats unless otherwise requested. These should be in good condition and should cover all the soil removed from the grave as well as the previously mentioned platform around the grave. A suitably dressed cemetery employee should meet and guide the funeral during the whole of the period in the cemetery. At no time should the funeral be attended by employees dressed in overalls, donkey jackets, etc.

Cemetery staff will guide the funeral to the correct grave and will direct the bearers. They must place the coffin, with the head at the correct end, on two wooden spars. These are placed adjacent to two or three tapes or webbing, across the grave. With the coffin resting on the two spars, often called putlogs, the tapes or webbing are folded around the coffin, often through the handles, with an end being taken by each of four or six bearers. At a given signal, they lift the coffin, the member of the cemetery staff (or member of the Funeral Director's staff) removes the putlogs, and the coffin is lowered slowly into the grave with due regard to dignity and respect. The bearers then stand back and the service continues. The cortege will leave the cemetery as soon as the mourners are ready. Where possible, access by vehicles should be allowed in cemeteries. Where roads are restricted in size or lead into cul-de-sacs, or are steep, this may not be possible.

The method of using putlogs and lowering the coffin varies in different parts of the country; and this aspect should be confirmed.

Cemetery staff overseeing the burial will stay at the graveside until all the family and mourners have left the site. The grave backfilling staff, who should be available in case of occurrence of any unforeseen circumstances, will stay

out of sight until called forward. Unless specifically requested to do so the cemetery staff will not commence backfilling the grave until all mourners have left the cemetery. Some ethnic and religious groups require that they assist in backfilling the grave themselves. In these circumstances the cemetery staff overseeing the burial will seek cooperation of those taking part in the backfilling in order that the safety is maintained and to allow cemetery operatives to remove shoring equipment as backfilling proceeds. They will backfill the grave, leaving the site neat and tidy, with the wreaths and flowers carefully placed. It is preferable that the backfilled soil is compacted every six inches in depth by treading, to reduce the need for excessive re-instatements. Nonetheless, the grave soil will sink as compaction occurs, and particularly after heavy rainfall. Sinkage should be topped up regularly by cemetery staff free of charge as a sunken grave could upset bereaved relatives.

Any memorial removed for the burial may be inscribed by a mason, providing the bereaved or executor instructs one, and re-fixed as soon as the backfilled soil is sufficiently settled. Whenever a memorial is re-fixed it should be stipulated that it is re-installed in accordance with the code of practice issued by the National Association of Memorial Masons.

During periods of inclement weather, difficulties may be experienced. The inability to drain a grave and pedestrian access to graves through deep snow are two particular problems. It must also be realised that pouring rain and extreme cold are uncomfortable for mourners, increasing haste and preventing the calm, reflective mood generally desired at a graveside service.

The cemetery office will maintain contact with the Funeral Director or person arranging the funeral. This is to accommodate any changes requested by the bereaved.

After the burial, the cemetery's statutory registers and records will be completed. The Registrar or staff will record the burial in the Burial Register, and in the index to this record. An entry will also be made in the Record of Graves alongside the appropriate grave number. An entry for a new grave will be made in the Register of Grants, recording the purchase of the Right of Burial and the period that this covers. A Grant of Right of Burial will be prepared and posted to the grave purchaser. New purchased graves will be "marked off" the cemetery grave plans. Since 1986, when legal approval was given, many authorities now maintain burial records on computer. These records must be maintained forever and are available for enquiries and research.

Within 96 hours of the burial, the detachable portion of the Coroner's or Registrar's Certificate, must be sent by the Cemetery Registrar to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages indicating the date and place of burial. It is important to note that the place of burial is not actually recorded by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and subsequently locating the place of burial through the Registration Service is not possible. The burial is recorded only at the appropriate cemetery office.

The cemetery office remains the focal point for any further concern with the grave or burial. Many of the contacts will be associated with any memorial placed on the grave. After the first burial in the grave, a memorial may be ordered. The memorial mason involved will send the relevant application to the cemetery office. The application will be checked to ensure the memorial design accords with any regulations and the precise names and dates in the inscription will be checked against the burial record. If approved, and upon payment of any fee, the mason will be given permission to place the memorial. The design and erection of the memorial must be safe and the construction and a member of the cemetery staff will verify correct location. Subsequently, the mason will apply to place additional inscriptions on the memorial, upon payment of any fee, as further burials take place.

AVOIDING ERRORS

Burials must take place in the correct grave and proper administrative procedures are an essential component of this. In some instances the most serious errors can occur and errors take longer to identify when the administrative office is separate from the actual burial site. This situation can only be avoided if office staff make regular visits to burial sites for the purposes of undertaking checking procedures i.e. ensuring that correct graves are prepared, memorials are erected on correct graves etc. For example, this can result in the burial being allocated a grave by the office staff, without any confirmation that the burial actually took place in that grave. In some instances, the grave plans in the administrative office are not identical to those used at the cemetery. These errors can continue for long periods without being noticed, with every burial being incorrectly placed. This can be avoided by appointing a staff member to check the excavation of every grave, to attend the burial service and to check the coffin plate before burial. Where this does not occur, the burial authority should be able to demonstrate that they are ensuring the correct coffin is placed in the correct grave.

Problems can arise over the placing of memorials upon a grave and be overcome by routine, physical checks. Although it is expensive to complete these checks it is a necessary part of the service and costs may be recovered through charges.

The burial authority cannot be held responsible for errors arising from other people involved with a funeral although Charter members will strive to quickly rectify any error from whatever source.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) You have a right to organise and conduct a burial in a dignified and orderly manner, supported by competent, professional and caring cemetery staff.
- b) You have a right to inspect statutory cemetery records by appointment and free of charge.
- c) Charter Members will continually work towards improving facilities for mourners in cemeteries

3. CHARTER TARGETS

- (a) Charter members will develop a framework of national service standards regarding the reception and handling of funerals.
- (b) Charter members will consider how to improve protection against inclement weather at burial ceremonies.

Grave choice

1. INFORMATION

In the past, cemeteries offered a wide choice of grave types, with an associated variety of memorials. Due to various reasons, such cemeteries fell into disrepair. Consequently, grave choice became limited and, gradually, a perception developed that memorials were a nuisance and that they should be rigidly controlled as to size and design. Added to this was a concentration on grounds' maintenance costs. The result: the introduction of the lawn type grave. Whilst some would prefer the neat and uniform layout of the lawn section with its regularly mown grass there is evidence that where this is the only available choice some grave owners will attempt to personalise the grave and memorial by placing unauthorised fences and other articles. The rapid accumulation of unauthorised articles causes subsequent problems with maintenance of the lawn area which can increase maintenance costs and health and safety implications and defeat the object of the lawn section. Perhaps such persons who attempt to personalise the grave by the placing of unauthorised objects would prefer a more traditional type of grave and memorial where greater scope exists to personalise through design thus removing the need to place unauthorised objects in the first instance. Where a choice between lawn and traditional type graves is given it is vital that purchasers of new graves fully understand what can and cannot be done on each section before a final decision is made. Charter members are encouraged to provide good information to the bereaved and Funeral Directors in order to assist the decision making process and so prevent disappointment or possible disputes.

(In recent years the re-introduction of traditional type graves has gathered pace, as guidance on the future management of memorials is now available. The responsibility for the maintenance of a memorial rests with the grave owner and burial authorities and cemetery companies will underpin this understanding in regulations and via correspondence when an application to erect a memorial is received).

The lawn type grave design is perceived as offering the cheapest maintenance regime, allowing easy and unimpeded mowing of grass between parallel rows of identical headstones. The loss of individuality, artistic skill and any element of choice are evident, and this type of grave can be seen as regimented and boring. However, the lawn type grave reduces the many disadvantages of the traditional grave including the need for a more expensive memorial, the removal/replacement of the memorial for a burial and higher maintenance costs. The initial purchase cost and long-term maintenance cost should be considered in relation to the type of grave preferred.

The absence of full grave memorials and/or kerb surrounds enables people to walk unimpeded over the lawn grave. This upsets some and is disliked by certain religious groups. In reality, the grass on lawn graves is intensively mown, which is relatively expensive and wastes fossil fuel, thereby harming the environment.

This restriction on burial choice has occurred in parallel with the increasing adoption of cremation. Today, approximately 70% of deaths involve a cremation-based funeral. This increase has not occurred without adverse criticism. This is focused on the effect of cremation on the environment, and the accusations that a “production line” system has developed. These issues are detailed elsewhere in the Charter. It must be said however that the fact that 70% of deaths involve a cremation based funeral would indicate public acceptance and a preference for this form of funeral.

The extensive focus on the provision of cremation facilities is evident, even though there is now an increasing emphasis on burial provision. This is concentrating on offering a wider choice of graves, including a “green” or natural form of burial and, generally, to widen memorial choice. The latter aspect is detailed under “CEMETERY MEMORIALS”.

The green burial option is available as woodland burial in some parts of the country. This involves burial followed by the planting of a tree. Subsequently, the "return to nature" concept allows the graves to form a woodland nature reserve, without routine maintenance or the use of chemicals. Restrictions on the use of embalming and a requirement to use biodegradable coffins might apply. Schemes and costs do vary, particularly if you are not resident in the vicinity. Some private, farm-based schemes are now developing and variations on environmental burial, such as meadowland burial, may begin to arise. Such schemes may deny your right to place any memorial on the grave.

Most graves are "bought", thereby reserving them for the burial of specific persons. The reference to buying a grave is not strictly correct. The "Exclusive Right of Burial" is purchased, giving the owner control over the burials in the grave, and the right to place a memorial. The ground itself is still in the ownership of the landowner. By law, the right cannot be purchased for a period in excess of 100 years and much shorter periods are usually offered. You may be able to reserve the right in advance, if you wish to secure a grave close to other deceased relatives, in a certain area or if you wish to reduce the burden of cost on your family when you die. Most graves allow for two burials, however in areas where ground conditions are favourable this may be increased to three or four, one above the other. As each burial takes place you will be charged an additional interment fee to excavate and backfill the grave.

In the past, unpurchased graves, usually called common or public graves, were used for many burials. These graves are still available in most areas and, as no Right of Burial is given, are relatively inexpensive. They are used for the burial of unrelated people and normally no right to place a memorial is given however some authorities do allow for the provision of a memorial. Nowadays authorities use these graves in order to fulfil their duties under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 whereby the authority must make funeral arrangements where it is apparent that no other person is making such arrangements.

The choice of graves is limited to areas covered by detailed grave plans and a precise grave numbering system. Nonetheless, if you are concerned about the precise position, you should arrange to visit the cemetery and be shown the available unused graves.

In London only burial authorities have the powers to cancel and reclaim rights previously granted in perpetuity and use any available depth in such graves for new burials. It should be stressed that the law requires that a notification procedure is undertaken and any relatives coming forward can re-register an interest in the grave following which the rights will remain with the particular family. Also, at the present time, the law does not allow the disturbance of previously buried remains although the re-use of graves is under consideration throughout the country. This is in response to the absence of new ground for graves in some areas. In addition, it would also address the high annual cost of maintaining many acres of old graves. New legislation would be required and this scheme will not be introduced without extensive consultation. It would involve only graves that are no longer visited and in which the last burial was

over 100 years ago. This would take place only where there are no objections from relatives.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

- (a) You have the right to purchase the “Right of Burial” in a grave for a period not exceeding 100 years. (This Right sometimes includes placing a memorial).
- (b) You have the right to purchase the “Right to Erect and Maintain a Memorial” on a grave for a period not exceeding 100 years. (If not included in Right of Burial).
- (c) You have the right to be buried in an unpurchased grave.

3. CHARTER TARGETS

- (a) Charter members should expand grave choice to enable the bereaved to obtain individuality and some element of choice. The standard should include a minimum of three graves types, e.g. lawn, traditional and a natural option, such as woodland burial.
- (b) Charter members should consider the provision of a “traditional grave”. This should allow the placing of a full grave-size memorial, or kerbs around the grave. To reduce the maintenance liability, the grave should be entirely covered by stone or hard landscaping. The burial authority has no responsibility for maintenance of memorials and will act to make any memorial safe which becomes a hazard. The purchasers of this grave type must be made aware of the increased cost of such memorials and that additional costs arise when the memorial requires maintenance or is moved to allow further burials.
- (c) Charter members should consider the provision of a natural burial choice such as woodland burial. This should be designed and used in a manner that offers environmental benefits, including habitats for wildlife. Long term, the area may form community woodland, a country park or similar. The long-term economic and environmental benefits of well-managed schemes are considerable.
- (d) Charter members should be supportive of other Authorities proposing the re-use of graves. Support for other authorities contemplating re-use in areas where no ground for burial exists, is important in order to maintain a local burial option. Support of this concept may increase as it is gradually and sensitively introduced. The potential social and economic benefits of utilising this concept are very considerable.
- (e) Charter members should consider the maintenance period when grave rights are sold in order to reassess periodically the rising costs of maintaining graves. The historical transfer of maintenance to future generations creates a severe financial burden.
- (f) Charter members should consider the provision of graves specifically for the burial of cremated remains, in all cemeteries.
- (g) Charter members who combine Rights of Burial with Rights to Erect and Maintain a Memorial should consider separating these rights in order to retain more control over the future safety of memorials (see section headed Health & Safety)

Cemetery memorials

1. INFORMATION

A funeral experience falls into two distinct phases. The first phase is the time of the funeral, often using a Funeral Director. This is attended by speed and precision. The second phase is the period following the funeral, which is very different as the emotions adjust to the death. Speed is no longer imperative during this time of reflection and adjustment. The decision over a memorial should not be made hastily and should be delayed until after the funeral. The memorial will become a focal point that will remain for many years and as such careful thought is required as to the type and design of the memorial in order to avoid the disappointment of a hasty decision. You are advised to obtain several quotations for the provision of a memorial. Ideally, you should inspect examples of the work supplied through the monumental mason or Funeral Director involved. Some monumental masons are members of the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM). They offer advice regarding all natural stone memorials and have introduced a code of working practice regarding the proper methods of erecting memorials in cemeteries. This code of practice is available on their website – www.namm.org.uk. Over recent years, changes in the design and source of memorials have taken place that have almost destroyed local craftsmen being employed in sculpture. This can be partly attributable to the lawn type grave, upon which is typically placed a three-foot high headstone inscribed on the front face. Lines of headstones replicate the design of war graves, offering a neat though often visually boring appearance. As a consequence, the rich heritage of hand carved memorials is declining.

The stone used in memorials is now imported from all over the world, giving a wide range of colour and texture. These non-native stones, however, do not exist harmoniously with churchyards or other environments, nor are they readily colonised by native lichens. Computerised machines, creating an immaculate neatness but lacking in the human touch, generally complete the inscribing of the stone. Whilst the aforementioned may be viewed as disadvantages of imported material some might argue that such material tends to be cheaper and thus make a memorial more affordable.

If these issues concern you, discuss them with your monumental mason. You still find that, in some parts of the country, artists create memorials to individual design, although these may prove expensive. At present, many cemeteries will accept only standard lawn-type headstones and you should check these details before you order a memorial. The type of grave you choose may also restrict the design of memorial you may have. These aspects are discussed under the section on “GRAVE CHOICE”.

Every memorial and inscription placed in a cemetery is checked and approved by the burial authority against the registered details of the burial. Subsequently, the actual placement is confirmed to ensure it is located on the correct grave. A fee may be charged for this work, which will normally be paid by the monumental mason and re-charged to the client.

A requirement of the Charter is that colloquial words such as “mum” and “dad” will be acceptable to members. A flexible and supportive attitude will also be taken over the use of nicknames and other familiar terms. The wording of the inscription should be meaningful to the bereaved. Inscriptions should not be subject to rigid or insupportable controls.

Some restrictions, however, are necessary, such as prohibiting the use of glass, whether as vases, jam jars or bottles, for safety reasons. Similarly, plastic or wire railings placed around graves both impede maintenance and access to other graves and, as they degrade, become safety hazards.

Should the memorial be vandalised, the grave owner is responsible for any necessary repairs and not the owner or operator of the cemetery. It is advisable to discuss insurance arrangements with your monumental mason. Conversely, if the memorial is damaged during mowing, grave digging or other grounds work, the cemetery owner or operator must accept responsibility.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- (a) You have the right to place and maintain a memorial within the constraints of regulations in force or to leave the grave unmarked.
- (b) You have the right and responsibility to maintain the memorial upon the grave during the period of memorial rights granted to you, or any extension made to this period. The memorial cannot be disturbed or moved during this period, without your permission, unless it poses a safety hazard. The safe erection and maintenance of the memorial is your responsibility during the period of the rights
- (c) Except where Charter members are the sole supplier of memorials, you have the right to use any memorial mason of your choice, provided that the Charter member does not prohibit them.

3. CHARTER TARGETS

- a Charter members should, where possible, extend the range and variety of memorial options. Offering grave types that allow more extensive designs with increased opportunity to personalise the memorial through its design can do this. It can also be achieved by relaxing existing regulations in designated areas. Where regulations specify precise headstone heights, say three feet, these can readily be changed to “a maximum of three feet”. This then allows the bereaved to place an inexpensive vase, through a variety of designs up to the standard headstone. This widens choice and gives the bereaved greater control over costs and design.
- b Charter members should encourage greater artistic input into memorials. A memorial should reflect individuality and the spirit of the community. This could create local employment and help monumental masons to utilise locally sourced stone, creating memorials that harmonise with their surroundings. Regulations should be flexible, allowing for artistic use of both natural and artificial materials.
- c Charter members should allow for the use of wood as a memorial. Wooden crosses were a notable feature of cemeteries in the past and

are readily made by the bereaved family or can be purchased commercially. The aesthetic appearance of such items is not within the remit of this Charter and must be determined locally. More extensive memorials in wood should not be dismissed.

- d. Charter members should promote the benefits of using experienced monumental masons or artists to advise the bereaved over the design and placing of a memorial. This arrangement allows a greater amount of time to pass between the funeral and the purchase of a memorial. It also enables the bereaved to recover from their initial emotional distress and make a more meaningful purchase.
- e. Charter members will issue a free leaflet, upon request, offering guidance over the purchase of a memorial and the completion of inscriptions.
- f. Charter members will issue a free leaflet, upon request, offering guidance over the choice of graves available.
- g. Charter members will separate rights to erect and maintain memorials from exclusive rights of burial (if this is not already done). The length of the lease for erecting and maintaining a memorial should be issued for the same period as any guarantee given by the memorial mason. Rights can be renewed at the end of the period subject to an inspection and repair of any defects and further guarantee given by the memorial mason.
- h. Charter members will advise grave owners on the subjects of workmanship guarantees and memorial insurance.
- i. Charter members shall develop strategies to conserve the heritage value of established cemeteries ensuring that any changes in regulations to permit greater choice do not undermine such strategies.

Baby and infant graves

1. INFORMATION

Until recent times, a stillbirth or the death of a baby was something most families experienced. As a consequence, the bereaved parents obtained strong community support. They derived solace from the fact that relatives and neighbours had gone through the experience and were able to help. At that time, the parents, who were generally young, often suffered extreme financial hardship. Consequently, the routine burial of babies took place in common or public graves, in cemeteries throughout the country. It is still not unusual to place many babies in each grave. It is not always permitted to place memorial stones over such graves. This common grave form of burial persists in a few parts of the country as the only option for baby burials. Some families purchase a “private” grave for the burial to ensure that they can place a memorial.

As a consequence of medical and social improvements, a stillbirth or baby death is a rare experience in modern times. In view of the smaller numbers, the bereaved parents can feel isolated and need good advice and support. As part of this, it is essential that the funeral satisfies their needs. The development of more sensitive options is required to ensure that parents can grieve properly and do not suffer unnecessary psychological harm.

Baby funerals generally fall into two categories. Firstly, where the funeral is arranged through a hospital and secondly, where it is privately arranged by the family. This item considers burial facilities in cemeteries and you should refer to “CREMATION PROCEDURE” for that choice of funeral. Churchyard burials are outside the remit of this Charter.

(a) HOSPITAL ARRANGEMENTS

This usually involves an agreement with a “contract” Funeral Director and a specific cemetery. A special area may be designated at the cemetery for these burials, perhaps called the “Babies’ Memorial Garden” or similar. The burial, typically using a small white coffin, will take place at an agreed time, to which the family will be invited. The grave will be dressed with artificial grass mats and a service will take place, if desired by the family (see the section on “CEREMONIES AND BELIEFS”). It is important that such funerals are treated individually and are not subjected to a lesser quality than that offered for “private” funerals.

The hospital service is offered for stillbirth (a baby born after the 24th week of pregnancy) and babies born alive who subsequently die. In the case of a home delivery, this service may also be available. More recently, in some areas, this burial option has been offered in cases of foetal loss, from 16 to 24 weeks of pregnancy. This is to prevent these babies being placed in the hospital incinerator, landfill site or, even worse, consigned to the hospital macerator. (See below for further details on foetal remains).

The hospital authorities generally do not charge for these burial arrangements. They also pay any necessary cemetery fees, although many local authorities offer their cemetery service free of charge in these cases.

The arrangements between the hospital and the cemetery vary considerably throughout the country but should allow for certain basic requirements. As an example, schemes should allow for individual burial, in individual small graves. Any suggestion that this represents a common or public grave must be avoided. The expression 'paupers grave' must be avoided completely. The bereaved should be allowed to place a memorial, vases and tributes. Where successful schemes are operating, it is noticeable that the parents or family need to place teddy bears, dolls and other baby related items on the grave. This can be accommodated by the grave design (by a hard surface at the head of the grave) and should not be regulated against. The memorial regulations should allow baby related designs, i.e. teddy bears, angels, hearts, etc and accommodate inscriptions of a colloquial and familiar nature. See the section on "CEMETERY MEMORIALS" for more information.

The arrangements for the burial (or cremation) of foetal remains (up to 24 weeks gestation) vary throughout the UK. In general, foetal remains have been included with "clinical waste" and placed in hospital incinerators. Since 1995, many hospitals have been unable to afford the upgrading of their incinerators to accord with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and are discontinuing on-site incineration. Consequently, clinical waste, including foetal remains, is increasingly being transported to regional waste incineration plants. This fact, as well as treating foetal remains as clinical waste, has attracted adverse criticism. Some people consider that foetal remains should be treated as human remains and handled by local burial and cremation facilities. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management is co-ordinating action to improve this situation and has produced a Policy for the Disposal of Foetal remains. The Institute also worked with the Royal College of Nursing, which also has a policy for the treatment of foetal remains within hospitals. Your Charter member will be able to advise you on current developments, or suggest where information can be obtained.

(b) PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS

These must be made if the hospital option is not available or is otherwise unsatisfactory. Also if the parent(s) dislike the cemetery or graves used, they may prefer to make their own arrangements. When making private arrangements they may have the option to choose the scheme outlined above but may prefer to buy a "private" grave. The conditions that apply and the use of private graves will be similar to those that apply in the adult graves. These are outlined in the Charter section "GRAVE CHOICE", to which you should refer. The ceremony and other arrangements for the burial will be as indicated elsewhere in this Charter.

It is important that the parents consider their own death and funeral at this time. This is because many cemeteries will allow the parents to purchase a full size grave for an infant burial, with the parent(s) own burial(s) taking place above the infant many years later. This opportunity for the parents and infant to be together may be greatly appreciated. It is an important consideration and must be made quickly, before the funeral details are finalised. This will require the excavation of the grave to a greater depth and size, which may entail higher costs.

The privately arranged funeral will need to be paid for by the family. Advice should be obtained about any benefits available to help pay for the funeral. Some Funeral Directors reduce or waive their fees for infants, and this should be considered. The burial can be arranged without a Funeral Director and you should refer to the Charter item on this subject.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Some parents feel that, as an alternative to using a coffin, woollen shrouds, wicker or "Moses" baskets and other types of appropriate containers could be used. Should they so wish, this can allow the parents personally to place the child in what they feel is a more "comfortable" position. Increasing the personal input of the parents benefits them psychologically and helps in their subsequent grieving. Placing photographs or other personal items with the body or carrying the coffin or container are other examples of this kind of benefit.

Many parents appear to benefit from the location of baby graves in specific sections. This prevents the parent(s) from feeling that they are isolated and alone with their loss. They can see and meet other parents and experience the deaths of other babies through existing memorials and inscriptions. It is very important that the babies' graves are not seen to "fill-in" narrow verge edges, or pieces of land unsuitable for adult burial. Some cemeteries now offer baby and infant graves in sections focussed around a central memorial or feature.

Several charities offer support and advice to parent(s) who experience a stillbirth or baby death. Details of your local representatives can be obtained from your Charter member. This Charter will support the needs and requirements of these charities to enable them to offer help to parents. Charter members will discuss with these groups the design and use of the facilities and the process by which they are utilised. These arrangements will enable the Charter to define an improving standard of care throughout the country.

The complexity of arranging baby and infant funerals can prove difficult. It is important to speak to a Charter member to clarify the arrangements in each area.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- (a) It is your right to be offered an individual grave for a baby or infant. If this grave is “private”, your rights and period of grave ownership will be defined. Permission to place a memorial in accordance with the regulations in force will be given.
- (b) It is your right to be able to purchase an adult grave for the burial of a baby or infant, with sufficient depth remaining to allow adult burials.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- (a) Burial facilities should be developed to accommodate foetal remains, stillbirths and infants, deriving from local midwifery and gynaecology services. These facilities may be free of charge to parents, allow for an individual grave and burial and the placing of a memorial. Where this is not possible, due to shortage of land or other valid reasons, a cremation facility should be alternatively provided.
- (b) New burial facilities for babies and infants will not be provided without inviting the input of charities and support groups representing the bereaved parent(s).
- (c) Baby and infant graves should be on specific purpose-designed sections. The use of undesirable areas, such as narrow verges, should be avoided.
- (d) Charter members should support parents who wish to use an alternative to a standard coffin. Regulations should not prevent this choice.
- (e) Charter members will communicate with charities and support groups and hold meetings as required to discuss the needs of bereaved parent(s). Details of these groups and representatives will be available for parents upon request.
- (f) Charter members often correspond with the parents during or after the burial when the parents are shocked and numbed. A foetal, stillbirth or baby death is not anticipated or expected, as are many aged persons' death. It is important that letters or printed materials are written with warmth and without any bureaucratic tone. The baby's name should be used wherever possible, rather than reference to the “body” and the “burial”.
- (g) Charter members must ensure that informative literature on the above is readily available to parents.

Burials in Private Land

1. INFORMATION

Although burial principally occurs in purpose designed cemeteries or churchyards, there are some exceptions. Families with large estates have routinely built a mausoleum or similar building on their land, for the burial of family members. Some individuals have been buried in farmland and others in gardens, without this becoming generally known. More recently, this form of burial has obtained media coverage and numbers have significantly increased. Much of this has been due to the Natural Death Centre, a charity formed to support a less formalised routine for funerals, as well as a better approach to death generally. They have issued a handbook and a further publication called "Green Burial", which explains how to arrange these burials within legal and planning requirements.

There are several advantages of this form of burial. It allows you to organise a very personal funeral, in which you maintain total control. You are able to reduce costs significantly by not having to purchase a grave in a cemetery. Some families may make their own coffin and undertake the whole funeral themselves whilst others may use a Funeral Director. It is essential that you obtain permission to complete a burial, where you are not the landowner of the ground involved. You are also advised to notify any individual or mortgage company that has an interest in the property. Access to the grave may be denied or restricted by change of ownership.

The difficulties are also significant, although these vary according to the location. Most locations fall into two categories, on farmland and in a garden.

(a) FARMLAND

These locations are rarely overlooked and will not offend neighbours or the public at large. The gravesite should be on land with a deep water table and be sufficient distance from watercourses so as not to pose a pollution threat. Electrical or other services must obviously be avoided. A limited number of burials over a period of time may not constitute a "change of use" and no planning approval is thereby necessary. Information submitted by the Natural Death Centre states "Recent local authority Certificates of Lawfulness have decided that planning permission is not required for the non-commercial burial on private land of a limited number of family, friends or those living in the house. These decisions have not been tested in the courts. The Department of the Environment are more cautious, and accept merely that planning permission is not required for the burial of one or two person in back gardens".

Exceeding a "limited" number of burials may require planning approval for use as a cemetery or for "mixed use" if farming is also to continue.

Safe grave excavation would be a further consideration, as well as leaving sufficient depth of soil (three feet) over the body. If it is intended to fence or mark the grave(s) with a memorial, planning permission may be required. In

effect, a single burial in a farm situation can proceed without an approach to, or the approval of, any council or other official organisation.

(b) GARDEN

The situation in a garden is complicated by the proximity of neighbours. They may oppose a burial nearby and may be offended by the sight of a coffin or body. Although these may not pose legal objections, it may not be conducive to good relationships. Otherwise, the aspects outlined under farm burials above are broadly similar. The particular difficulty in these locations is the reduction of the property value due to the presence of a grave. Although figures of 20% are mentioned, this has yet to be proven. Undoubtedly, a significant fall will occur although the fact that many buyers would not even consider the purchase at all seems more relevant.

Two major concerns influence this choice of burial. Firstly, the body could be exhumed by any new property purchaser, and re-buried in a cemetery. This reason for obtaining an exhumation licence has yet to be tested, neither has the need to obtain consent from the near relatives. There are legal means (restrictive covenant) by which you can ensure the grave remains untouched, but this will involve costs and other uncertainties. Secondly, details of the burial will not be officially recorded, as they would be in a cemetery.

It would seem that the Registration of Burials Act 1864 would apply to both back garden and farmland burial and that an appropriate register should be kept. This register could be in the form of a notebook containing the necessary details of the burial(s). It would also seem appropriate to mark the precise location of the burial(s) on the plans of the property and retain these with the deeds.

A certificate for burial issued by a Coroner or Registrar of Births and Deaths will have to be obtained. The detachable section of this is to be completed and returned to the Registrar by the person arranging burial. It is important to note that, as explained above, the Registrar does not record the details of the burial, including the burial location. The Registrar is appointed to record population data and is not able to record the place of burial.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- (a) It is your right to receive factual information on burial in private land from your Charter member.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- (a) Charter members are encouraged to provide a green or natural burial option as an alternative to burial in private land.

Cremation procedure

1 INFORMATION

Cremation in modern times began at Woking, Surrey in 1885 and has consistently developed with 242 crematoria operating during 2003. The cremation rate is now slightly over 70% of all deaths. The procedure for arranging and organising a cremation has experienced many legal changes since that date but as these are now irrelevant, are ignored in this item. All cremations *must* take place in a crematorium approved for that purpose.

In the earlier Charter item "WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SOMEBODY DIES?" the arrangements immediately following a death and up to Registration were considered. This item outlines all the subsequent arrangement of a funeral, where cremation is intended. The procedure is described in the order that would be routinely followed by a Funeral Director or anybody organising a funeral without a Funeral Director.

PROVISIONAL FUNERAL BOOKING

As soon as the death has been certified and the availability of the minister (if needed) is confirmed, the crematorium is telephoned and a provisional funeral booking is arranged. The crematorium office should be available for booking during normal office hours, and preferably over weekends. The following information will be required:

- Funeral date and time. This will be when the funeral arrives at the crematorium chapel and will be met by a member of staff. Normally, a minimum three days notice will be given, but this is dependent on the time needed to obtain the cremation medical certificates and the Registrar's Certificate or Coroner's Order. Periods of high death rate may cause delay, however an increasing number of cemeteries and crematoria will provide additional service times during weekdays and possibly open at weekends in an attempt to reduce delays. The bereaved should not have to wait beyond a specified number of days for the cremation service. This issue is considered in the Charter item "COMMUNICATION". Services may be booked at fixed times and, dependent upon the crematorium, may be from 20 to 45 minutes apart. The time chosen is optional but will be limited to those available. It may be possible to book extra time if it is needed.
- Name and address of the deceased.
- The name and telephone number of the Funeral Director or the person arranging the funeral, who will also pay the required fees. A table of fees is available upon request.

The details above are the minimum necessary for a provisional booking. This enables the Funeral Director or person arranging the funeral to notify everybody involved, and ensures that they work within the timescales.

The arrangements that follow involve far more forms and bureaucracy than that which applies to burial. This is because cremation destroys the body, which, unlike after burial, cannot subsequently be recovered for investigation if crime or some other problem arises. The procedure appears complex, but is easily followed with the guidance of crematoria staff.

NOTICE OF CREMATION

This form provides notice of the cremation and forms a binding contract regarding the payment of fees to the cremation authority. The following details will be required:

- The full name and address of the deceased, age and occupation.
- Whether a coffin or casket is being used. See Charter item on "COFFINS AND ALTERNATIVES" for information.
- Service date and time. A time must be booked, even when a service is not being held. This is because every coffin is formally received through the chapel, without exception and cannot be accepted through the "back door".
- Service details, including minister's name, if attending, religion and music or other requests. See Charter item "CEREMONIES AND BELIEFS" for information.
- Details on the placement of cremated remains. The applicant for cremation will indicate what is to happen to these and sign the form. An immediate decision is not required as the cremated remains can be retained at the crematorium thus giving the bereaved time to consider options and make the best possible decision for themselves.

Other miscellaneous items may be requested on this form, including a choice of container for the cremated remains and whether the Chapel of Rest is to be used (see below for details). Some crematoria offer bearers or other facilities at extra costs, which need to be indicated. If the cremated remains are being buried in a churchyard, cemetery or some other crematorium, a Cremation Certificate can be requested. A small fee may apply, and the certificate is evidence that the Cremation Authority completed the cremation.

APPLICATION FOR CREMATION (FORM "A")

This is a statutory form issued under the Cremation Regulation 1930. It must be completed by the executor or nearest surviving relative. If not, a reason why some other person has applied must be given. The details required are quite straightforward, although the applicant must state that they have no reason to suppose the death was due to violence, poison, privation or neglect. A householder known to the applicant must countersign the form to validate the applicant's answers.

MEDICAL FORMS "B", "C" (AND "F")

These are statutory forms, with forms "B" and "C" being subject to a payment upon completion to the doctors involved (the fees for these forms will either be included in your account from your Funeral Director or will be required to be paid directly by yourself if you are arranging a funeral without the use of a Funeral Director). Form "B" is completed by the doctor who attended the deceased before death and Form "C" by a doctor who confirms the cause of death. The Form "C" is not required if the doctor who completes Form "B" is aware of the results of any post mortem before he/she completes the Form "B". In this situation, no payment will be required for Form "C". Questions will also be asked about whether radio active implants or a cardiac pacemaker are present in the body, as these must be removed before cremation.

Form "F" is completed by a doctor appointed as the Medical Referee to the Cremation Authority. He or she will sign the form, if satisfied that the statutory requirements are complied with, the cause of death has been definitely ascertained and there exists no reason for further enquiry or examination. The cremation will only take place after this form has been signed.

Forms "A", "B" and "C" must be submitted to the crematorium office together with the certificate issued by the Registrar, as outlined in the Charter item "WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SOMEBODY DIES".

Should the Coroner investigate the death then he/she may either order a post mortem examination or open an inquest on the deceased person. Once the Coroner is satisfied that further examination of the body is not required he/she will issue a certificate called Form "E" which takes the place of the previously mentioned Forms "B" & "C". This form is free, which benefits the bereaved as it saves the cost of doctors' fees for Forms "B" and "C".

Legislation in the form of the Cremation (Amendment) Regulations 2000 was introduced to cover the cremation of body parts removed during post mortem examinations. This piece of legislation introduced specific forms for the cremation of body parts i.e. Form AA – Application, Form DD – certificate on release of body parts, Form FF – Authority to cremate body parts.

Charter Members will be able to advise bereaved persons which forms will be required / forthcoming in relation to particular circumstances.

The above procedure applies to all deaths, including a baby that might die a short time after birth. The procedure is altered slightly for the cremation of a stillborn child, and it should be noted that foetal remains could also be cremated (It should also be noted that cremated remains may not be recovered following the cremation of foetal remains and, in some instances, stillborn children).

The above details describe the forms involved. The procedure in the office and then at the crematorium is now described. (NOTE: As at September 2003 a review of death certification was underway. Advice on any alterations to the current requirements as detailed above that might be made as a result of the review can be obtained from your Charter member).

OFFICE PROCEDURE

Following the booking of the cremation time, the cremation forms arrive at the office, either together or individually. These are collated, checked for errors and unanswered questions and, if complete, inspected and signed by the Medical Referee. This enables an identity card to be issued for each cremation and these, together with a list of daily service details, are passed to the crematorium staff early each morning. After the cremation, the details about the deceased, the applicant for cremation and the doctors involved, are entered under a sequential number in a Register of Cremations (Form "G"), which is retained forever.

An alphabetical index of those cremated is maintained, to facilitate searches in the future. These occur often as time passes, mainly to identify the position of the cremated remains, particularly when those of a partner are to be placed in the same location. The manager of the facility will send details of memorials available to the Applicant for Cremation. If the cremated remains are retained pending a decision, then details of the options available for the final placement will also be sent. Many crematoria retain cremated remains automatically, for a defined period, to allow the bereaved to consider the options available.

Finally, and within 96 hours of the cremation, the detachable portion of the Coroner's or Registrar's Certificate, will be sent to the Registrar indicating the date and place of cremation.

CREMATION PROCEDURE

The crematorium staff will place a list of all cremations that day, outside the crematorium chapel. The supervisor and/or chapel attendant will meet each funeral and, using information on the daily list issued by the office, will ensure that services run smoothly. This involves close liaison with ministers, organists and Funeral Directors. The removal of Christian symbols for secular services and playing tapes, CDs or records will be completed as required. See the Charter item on "CEREMONIES AND BELIEFS" for further details.

Where families are arranging funerals without a Funeral Director, the staff will advise and help. If a Chapel of Rest is available, where coffins can be kept between death and the service, the staff may help move the coffin to the chapel at the agreed start time. Staff may also act as bearers, using a wheeled bier or physically carrying the coffin and placing it on the catafalque, where it rests during the service. They will also control car parking and may monitor activities using camera surveillance.

The wreaths brought to funerals will be placed on the "flower terrace" or equivalent, and should be identified by a card or sign indicating the name of the deceased. The staff will also meet families wanting to preview the chapel(s) and facilities prior to a cremation service. Throughout the day, staff will help visitors considering or searching for memorials, cremated remains locations or any other enquiries. They may complete cleaning duties and care of floral tributes during quieter periods.

THE CREMATION PROCESS

The crematorium staff should all be qualified Cremator Technicians. Modern cremators cost approximately £150,000 (1994) for a single unit, which will complete 800 – 1000 cremations per year. The modern cremator must conform to the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, with strict limits on emissions. A review of the process guidance notes for crematoria (in progress September 2003) issued under this Act may require filtration equipment to be fitted to cremators which are designed to filter out mercury. Should filtration become a requirement the cost of cremation equipment and subsequently cremation fees may rise. This influences the design of coffins, which is explained in the Charter item “COFFINS AND ALTERNATIVES”. The Act requires the pre-heating of each cremator in order to reduce emissions, which has considerably increased gas usage. It also requires that qualified cremator technicians operate the cremators.

The cremator operator will transfer coffins, at the finish of each service, from the catafalque and through to the crematory. The nameplate on the coffin will be checked against the identity card prior to cremation. If there are identity anomalies, checks will be completed to ascertain why. The most common reason is that people use different names or nicknames and these can be entered on coffin nameplates. The coffin will be retained until a cremator is available. At this stage it will be placed on a charging bier or charging machine, from which it enters the cremator. Relatives, if desired can witness this charging process. If the cremated remains are to be collected on the same day and perhaps buried in the afternoon, the cremation will be programmed early. The cremator will have been pre-heated to 850°C prior to this stage and, using various gas and air jets, the cremation will be completed. In modern cremators, the process will be microprocessor controlled and little operator attention is necessary. The principal aim is to maintain temperatures and reduce emissions, with no emission of smoke.

Each cremation will take about 1 hour 20 minutes and may attain temperatures in excess of 1000°C. At the completion of the process, the cremated remains will be manually raked out, cooled and processed through a machine that reduces them to a fine, granular state. The identity card, which has followed through the process, will be placed with the cremated remains. These will be dealt with according to the instructions of the Applicant for Cremation. The choices available are described in the Charter item “CREMATED REMAINS AND MEMORIALISATION”. When the remains are either buried or taken away, the identity card will be signed and returned to the office. The location will be recorded in the Cremation Register and the card filed with the other cremation forms. The receipt of the signed card signifies the completion of the process.

The above process illustrates a gas cremator, and it should be noted that a small number of electric cremators are now in use. These operate in a similar manner, with gas jets being replaced by radiant electric elements.

Metal residue from nails, screws, staples, jewellery, medical implants or items placed in coffins, survives the cremation process in various forms. These are removed following the processing of the cremated remains and are interred in

the grounds of the crematorium. At the present time metal residue and medical implants are not recycled.

A review of the Secretary of State's Guidance note on crematoria is underway (as at September 2003) with the possibility that filtration equipment may be introduced to remove mercury emissions from waste gases. Should filtration become a legal requirement cremation authorities will be required to install the necessary equipment which may have an impact on cremation fees. An up-to-date position can be obtained from your Charter member.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR BURIAL AND CREMATION SERVICES

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management has created the Guiding Principles for use by Charter members. They cover the ethical, social and environmental issues relating to both burial and cremation. The Guiding Principles are printed after the Charter item on "INSPECTION".

Your Charter member should operate under the Guiding Principles for Burial and Cremation Services.

CODE OF CREMATION PRACTICE

The Federation of British Cremation Authorities (FBCA) maintains a Code of Cremation Practice, to which members must adhere.

BABY OR INFANT CREMATION

The information in this Charter section applies to baby or infant deaths, with the following exceptions. Often, a parent will carry the coffin of a young child and bearers are not needed. It is also important to note that with the cremation of a small child, there may be no cremated remains available after the cremation. This is because the cartilaginous structure can be entirely cremated, leaving no residue. This fact can upset parents and a procedure for warning them has been formulated for use by crematoria.

Many details in the Charter item "BABY AND INFANT GRAVES" applies to a cremation funeral and should be considered. The choice of cremation container may be restricted on safety grounds, based on the need to place this manually into an extremely hot cremator.

Although hospital funeral arrangements for stillbirth and other baby deaths often designate burial, some allow only cremation. It is extremely important not to cremate stillborn babies or children of those parents whose faith opposes cremation. With some hospital arrangements, foetal remains will be taken to the crematorium periodically, say each month. A service will be conducted, to which all parents may be invited and the cremation will follow. These procedures have developed in some areas, usually in response to an absence of burial space and/or reducing resources for hospitals. Each situation should be determined locally and after consultation with charities and support groups involved in such bereavement. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management is co-ordinating action to improve this situation. Your Charter member will be able to advise you on current developments, or suggest where information can be obtained.

CHAPEL OF REST

Some crematoria and cemeteries provide this facility.

This is a room that may be in the crematorium building or adjacent, for storing coffined bodies. It is used after the body has been collected from the place of death or mortuary, placed in a coffin and transported to the crematorium. This may be early on the day of the funeral, or some days previously. This chapel can be used by families arranging an independent funeral or by Funeral Directors who do not have such a facility on their own premises. A fee is usually charged for the use, based on the period the body is retained. The family may also be able to view the deceased privately, by arrangement.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

Most crematoria arrange at least one memorial service each year. The service relates to all the cremations that have occurred and offers solace and emotional benefits to the partners, relatives and friends who attend. The service is usually 20 – 30 minutes long and may be taken by one or a combination of ministers, often from different religions. A collection for a charity may be included and the opportunity to inspect the crematorium facilities may also be extended.

Some religious groups hold their own service in the crematorium chapel and it may also be possible to hold other services or meetings related to bereavement in the chapel. It should be noted that the crematorium chapel

can always be used for a quiet moment of prayer, by any individual, provided it is not in use.

FEES

A list of fees is available from your Charter member, which typically include:

- The cremation fee, which may include all administrative work, Medical Referee, use of chapel, organist and/or electronic music, the cremation and placing the cremated remains in the Garden of Remembrance.
- An increased cremation fee for non-residents of the area, where this applies,
- Reduced cremation fees for babies or children
- Fees for caskets and other containers for removing cremated remains
- A fee to send cremated remains by a secure carrier, anywhere in the UK
- If a Chapel of Rest is available, the fee for usage.
- A fee to place cremated remains from other crematoria in the Garden of Remembrance.
- The fees for purchasing memorials available at the crematorium

The fees that relate to a funeral are usually paid by Funeral Directors, as disbursements on behalf of their clients, and a receipt given. If a Funeral Director is not used, the fees must be paid by the person arranging the funeral. Receipts must be issued in all cases.

CONCLUSION

The facilities for cremation continue to improve and yet many limitations are evident. Many crematoria lack large, comfortable waiting rooms and interview facilities and few offer catering to visitors or those attending a funeral. These are issues that may be addressed in the future.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) You have a right to organise and conduct a cremation in a dignified and orderly manner, supported by competent, professional and caring crematorium staff.
- b) You have the right to inspect the crematorium under normal working conditions.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop national standards regarding the reception and handling of funerals whilst present in a crematorium
- b) Charter members will develop national standards for the holding of Memorial Services at crematoria
- c) Charter members will set a minimum period for retaining cremated remains that are not taken away and the period shall not be less than five working days. This is to enable the bereaved to consider the options available and make an informed decision before the final placement is made.

- d) Charter members will promote a reduction in the certification required for cremation and the associated costs of this to the bereaved.

Cremated remains and memorialisation

1 INFORMATION

The need for cremation memorialisation is not universally recognised. Opposition persists from the early days of cremation, when strewing the cremated remains over the Garden of Remembrance lawns and arranging a Book of Remembrance entry was the recommended procedure. In more recent times, the benefits of memorials in the alleviation of grief for some people has been widely recognised and is beyond dispute. In view of this, there should be options available to enable the bereaved to have a memorial if they so wish.

Following a cremation, the cremated remains are placed according to the directions of the “applicant for cremation”. This is the person who applies for and signs the cremation Form “A”. The signature or approval by letter of this person will be required whenever any changes of instruction take place.

It is a matter of choice whether the cremated remains are taken away or are left at the crematorium, these two options being considered below. This final location, of course, is closely associated with any form of memorialisation that is required, which is why these subjects are considered together.

CREMATED REMAINS – TAKEN AWAY

Some people wish to place the cremated remains in a favourite spot, perhaps a hill or coastal location. The law offers no restrictions although, in theory, you need the permission of the landowner. The crematorium will place the cremated remains in an inexpensive container, from which you can strew them. These containers might be plastic, aluminium or cardboard and will contain the 5lbs – 7lbs (2.2kg – 3.2 kg) of remains from each cremation. Some people strew them, or inter them in a casket, in their garden. In this case it is important to consider that you may ultimately leave your house, or die yourself. Also, if the cremated remains are of your partner or child, you may be unable to place your cremated remains together in the same location.

Other people may wish to place the cremated remains in a cemetery, a churchyard or another crematorium, perhaps in an area where the family have their roots. You need to check on the type of container acceptable at the location. Churchyards generally will not accept plastic, metal or wood containers, preferring the cremated remains to be placed in the earth without a container. Biodegradable cardboard caskets are available that might prove acceptable. Most cemeteries will accept a wooden casket. You should note that if a family grave previously used for burial is full, it might still accept a considerable number of cremated remains. Recording these on the memorial on the grave may use up all the inscription space. You may be able to overcome this by adding inscribed vases, or adding flat tablets or similar, in front of the existing memorial.

You will require a Certificate of Cremation, issued by the crematorium either free or for a nominal charge, to give to the person controlling the burial place. As well as this, you may be required to complete a burial application and pay a

fee. You can arrange a religious or secular service at the burial of the cremated remains, should you so wish. Many crematoria and cemeteries will complete a burial without your attendance, accepting the cremated remains via a secure carrier or Registered Letter post, and completing administrative arrangements by post.

CREMATED REMAINS – LEFT AT THE CREMATORIUM

The applicant for the cremation will be given details of where the cremated remains can be placed and of the memorial options available. This may be sent through the post or passed via the Funeral Director involved. The cremated remains may be automatically retained for a period, or may be retained upon request, whilst a decision is pending. In these circumstances and in the event of no decision being forthcoming after the initial period, the cremation authority may write to the applicant for the cremation seeking a decision. Where no decision is forthcoming the cremation authority are empowered by law to strew or inter the cremated remains in the garden of remembrance with due regard to respect and decency.

STREWING AND INTERMENT OF CREMATED REMAINS

Some people prefer to have the cremated remains strewn or interred in the grounds of the crematorium where the cremation took place. This ensures that the remains are placed in a secure, purpose built environment, which enables the bereaved to use the memorial facilities that are available.

The grounds of the crematorium are usually called the Garden of Remembrance, which is dedicated to the dead of all religions and non-believers. It is important that the grounds are attractive and welcoming, offering solace and solitude, to meet the special needs of the bereaved. Logically, exposed areas with very little planting would not meet these needs. The Garden of Remembrance is a memorial in itself and when cremated remains are placed in the grounds, it is your decision as to whether you need a personal memorial of your own. This may be available in the Garden of Remembrance or elsewhere. Some bereaved people benefit from a feeling of attachment and ownership of the grounds where the cremated remains of their loved ones lie. A memorial in the form of a tree or shrub-planting scheme may offer this. This feeling of attachment can be so great that people leave bequests in their wills to the crematorium.

A bereaved person may want to feel that the crematorium management cares, and has credibility and integrity. Formal gardens, bedding, manicured lawns, ecology areas and wildlife pools are evidence of care and competence. A theme for the grounds seems popular, including monthly gardens, heather gardens, cherry groves and such like. These all offer a sense of place and well-being to those who use the grounds. Visiting the crematorium, placing flowers and remembering anniversaries can be therapeutic following bereavement.

Cremated remains can usually be either strewn or interred in the Garden of Remembrance. These placements are usually free of charge, if the cremation took place at that crematorium. Strewing often results in the remains being visible on the surface, which can distress some visitors. If you wish to attend

the placing of the cremated remains, check that this is possible. Generally, a burial or strewing of cremated remains in the gardens does not offer the bereaved a specific location, only the approximate position in which they are placed. You are unable to put a vase on or otherwise mark the position, and you cannot recover the cremated remains. This is not satisfactory for some people, who might need a memorial on which they can see an inscription on every occasion they visit. They may feel that having the cremated remains where they can be recovered, rather than "lost" over a lawn is important. Undoubtedly, where the cremated remains are retained with a memorial, and the remains of the widow or widower can ultimately be placed with them, is important to many of the bereaved. Many people also appreciate a vase or other receptacle for the placing of flowers.

Too many memorials can spoil the natural appearance of grounds, look untidy and suggest to visitors that memorial income is the main objective of the crematorium management. Ideally, memorials are better contained in specific areas so that they do not intrude on those people who do not favour them

MEMORIAL TYPES

The range of memorials available varies greatly between crematoria and these should be considered carefully before a decision is made. Some crematoria do not allow any form of memorial to be placed with cremated remains and they have to be strewn or buried separately in the grounds. Any memorial will normally be an additional expense and is not covered by the fees paid for cremation. The traditional form of cremation memorial is the Book of Remembrance. Copies of the entry, in the form of Memorial Cards, may also be available for keeping at home or sending to absent relatives. The Book of Remembrance can only be viewed on the anniversary date, although some schemes, such as the computerised Book of Remembrance, are available that enable you to view every day. Artists, on high quality paper, complete the entries. Flower emblems, crests, badges and other artwork can be included. This memorial is usually displayed in cabinets in a Hall of Remembrance. A place for displaying floral tributes is usually located close by.

Various other forms of memorials can be seen at all times of the year, not just anniversaries. These may include leather or metal wall plaques in a Hall of Remembrance. Other types of memorial may be available that are placed in the grounds. These may include designs that enable you to place an inscription, as well as placing the cremated remains beneath or by the memorial. A Memorial Wall, Columbarium or Kerb plaque scheme, for example, may give you this facility. These schemes may be ideal for retaining cremated remains until the death of a partner, when both cremated remains can be placed together. Some schemes include a plaque adjacent to a rose, a tree or placing a plaque on a garden seat.

Most memorials are purchased (endowed) for a period, often 5, 10 or 15 years. This period can be extended, sometimes at a reduced fee from that paid originally, providing you notify the crematorium of any change of address. If cremated remains are placed with the memorial, you should ask what would happen if and when the endowment is not renewed. Should the remains be

buried below ground an exhumation licence will be required before removal can take place however the view has been taken that remains that are above ground level can be removed and scattered in the garden of remembrance. The Book of Remembrance is endowed forever and no renewal is required.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to be offered a Book of Remembrance memorial, set in a Hall of Remembrance. You must also be offered a designated place for floral tributes.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop standards of memorial provision. It is suggested that every bereaved person should be offered at least one type of inscribed memorial that can be visited daily over a prescribed period.
- b) Charter members will support the provision of memorials, and develop and encourage research into the benefits that memorials offer for the grieving process.
- c) Charter members will be sensitive to the psychological and therapeutic needs of the bereaved when they develop and manage the crematorium grounds. The grounds need to be accorded more significance than is given to a park or open space.

Ceremonies and belief

1 INFORMATION

All crematoria and many cemeteries maintain a chapel for use in holding a burial or cremation service. The form and religious tone of the service is entirely your choice and you do not have to conform to any specific requirements. You are able to hold a non-religious service or dispense entirely with a service, should you so wish. Nonetheless, difficulties do arise where atheists or followers of non-Christian religions use these buildings. Many crematoria and most burial chapels were designed and built when the Christian faith dominated this country. These buildings often look like traditional churches or contain fittings that comply with the traditional church interior. The names used in these buildings are similarly religious, with the term "chapel" or "vestry" in common usage. The chapel "space" is often rectangular and difficult to use. For example, the mourners may be unable to sit around the body and are forced to sit in serried ranks.

In recent years, a movement away from formal religious services has developed. This has seen the introduction of popular music on entry and/or exit from the chapel and the greater use of poetry, readings or dance. The use of musicians, singers and bands should not be refused. The use of "live" music or singing, rather than recorded, is considered to enhance the ceremony. The recording of services on tape or video is also acceptable, provided it accords with copyright requirements. As a matter of etiquette, the agreement of any minister taking the service should be obtained, as well as notifying the cemetery or crematorium involved. The content of services must not be offensive to people present at a cemetery or crematorium.

Where tape or CD facilities are not provided, you can use your own portable battery powered unit to provide music. In chapels where an organ is not permanently provided, it is often possible to obtain a portable organ for use at an individual service.

The principal limitation in changing and/or extending the format of ceremonies is the amount of time allocated to each service by the cremation or burial authority. In view of this and other reasons, the need to expand the allocated service time is considered important in the long term.

There is much more flexibility over where you hold the service than is generally realised. This could be held at the deceased's home, if space is available. Otherwise, your usual church or a Funeral Director's chapel can be used. In some areas, the entire service, including the committal, is held in the home church of the deceased. Subsequently, the body is sent to the crematorium for cremation without the attendance of any family or mourners.

Speak to your Charter member if you require more details about these or other aspects of the ceremony. Your Charter member will be able to give you information regarding local ministers and officiants of religious and non-religious organisations. In the past, a "rota" list was maintained of ministers performing services at a crematorium. As these ministers rarely met the families of the deceased until they appeared at the crematorium, the service tended to be formal and systematic. It was also much easier to book the rota minister and bypass the parish minister of the deceased, which meant that pastoral care was not available. In general, unless provisions for personal contact and pastoral care are met, the use of rota ministers should be avoided.

If you have a belief, you should consider whether to contact your minister, priest, elder, etc as soon as a death occurs. As part of their pastoral care, they gain much experience in funerals and can offer valuable advice. This might range from choosing hymns for the service to whether or not to view the body of the deceased. This advice is needed before you commit yourself to a Funeral Director and not afterwards.

Some people consider that the traditional funeral ceremony is morbid and formal, and allows little participation for those attending. As such, it may not be a celebration of the life of the deceased. This observation serves to remind us that everybody develops his or her own, specific community. This community attends the funeral and every person present reflects on their association with the deceased. The ceremony is an important element of the grieving of each person present. Although you are free to influence and enhance the form of service, most people lack the ability to devise and create ceremony. Guidance can be obtained from some art or community groups, for example in making better use of the space available and introducing artistic features. Speak to your Charter member for further information.

At a burial, you may wish to participate, in a token way, in the backfilling of the grave. It may also be possible to be involved when the grave is excavated. Your Charter member will advise.

You can obtain service sheets for use at a funeral. These can be drawn up only after you have seen your minister and/or you have devised your service format. Hymns and your choice of music or poetry can be included. Printing the name or even a photograph of the deceased on the front of the sheet adds a personal element to the funeral. It may be possible to add an invitation to the "funeral tea", if arranged and provide directions to the venue. Specialist printers will produce these before a funeral, at additional cost.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to be able to hold a burial or cremation service at a cemetery or crematorium
- b) It is your right to define the type of religious or secular format of the service, within the constraints of time and decency.
- c) It is your right to define the type of music or other ceremony you wish to have at the service.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Cemeteries and crematoria will be developed and managed for use in a multi-cultural society.
- b) The permanent placement of any religious symbol should be avoided. Where these exist, the opportunity to remove or obscure them should be available.
- c) Existing religious symbols, which should be provided for all faiths and whether portable or fixed, should be removed or covered for alternative forms of service. This should be done automatically when religious or non-religious requirements are known and not only upon request.
- d) The use of terms that imply religious connections should be reviewed. The introduction of terms such as celebrants' hall (chapel) and celebrants' room (vestry) may be more appropriate.
- e) The minimum time allocated for funeral services should be 30 minutes.
- f) The burial or cremation ceremony should be considered a highly individual and important occasion. Each funeral should arrive and depart without seeing other funerals; neither should they be delayed by the late arrival of other funerals. To help achieve this standard, a minimum service time of 45 minutes should be an objective.
- g) Facilities to play tapes and CDs should always be provided.
- h) An organ and organist should be available, upon payment of an additional fee, if required.
- i) Charter members will develop improved design of "chapels" to enable mourners to sit in the round, or vary the seating arrangements.
- j) Charter members will do their utmost to facilitate special requests.

Coffins and alternatives

1 INFORMATION

The dead have been buried in a variety of ways over the centuries. In pre-Christian times, the body may have been naked and laid in a stone "cist". Progressively, a desire to cover the body and prevent it coming into contact with the soil developed. The wealthy moved towards wood and even metal coffins, leaving the poor to shrouds. For a long period, the government decreed that wool be used in order to help the wool trade. The poor could have their bodies placed in the parish coffin, which was carried to the graveside, where the body was removed and lowered into the grave. The same coffin was re-used in this way for decades.

The Victorian period saw the general use of individual and privately purchased coffins, made in oak and elm and often heavily ornamented. As hardwoods became more expensive cheaper materials superseded them.

The standard coffin currently used by Funeral Directors is made of chipboard with a good quality veneer, which effectively makes the coffin appear that it has been constructed from solid wood. The nameplate, handles and inner linings are all made of artificial materials, mainly plastic. These coffins are used for both burial and cremation. It is evident that many people perceive these coffins as composed of real wood and the plastic handles as metal.

When used for cremation, chipboard coffins, MDF mouldings and plastic fittings cause the majority of the small amount of pollutant emissions that arise. It must also be appreciated that the manufacture of chipboard uses formaldehyde, which is not considered to be environmentally friendly. Coffins of wood and other natural material such as bamboo and wicker are available.

Many comments are made about coffins, which demonstrate that the public are uninformed about these issues. Consequently, it is suggested that crematoria are cremating and thereby wasting, vast quantities of "wood". As explained above, the majority of the wood is in most cases chipboard.

It has been suggested in some quarters that a "re-usable" coffin could be used for cremation and burial. This is a return to the Parish coffin concept mentioned above but it would now offer important environmental and cost benefits. A product to fulfil this need is currently being developed. This would consist of an attractive outer casket, which would contain a biodegradable cardboard coffin. This coffin would be withdrawn from the outer casket following the funeral ceremony and cremated or buried. At no time would the coffin or the body be disturbed. The outer casket would be repeatedly used in this way.

The reason why a re-usable option has not previously been developed is unclear. In the past, professionals in the funeral business have suggested that such schemes are undignified; lack commercial viability or that there is no "demand". These comments are rarely substantiated and generally reflect personal opinion.

Charter members will create awareness of the choices of coffins and alternatives available in order that they may make a choice based on their own particular needs and beliefs.

The coffin is probably the most symbolic and central item of the funeral. It can be the final and most telling statement after a person has died. Unless a choice of coffin or alternative is easily available, the deceased and bereaved are unable to express their needs or philosophy. The choice should allow for a range of containers from the ostentatious through to the simple. The ostentatious could include a coffin crafted in the shape of a car for a motor buff, or hand carved in natural wood by a joiner to last a few hundred years in the soil.

The bereaved have the right to choose from a selection of coffins ranging from American style and ornate coffins to those made of wicker or cardboard.

The coffin, of any type, can be personalised to reflect personal interests, e.g. a gardener, fisherman or football fan. The artistic options are individual, require skills and time, all elements that are generally missing with the current funeral arrangements. A wider range of coffins is becoming apparent and is indicative of changing attitudes to the needs of the bereaved.

Other options have developed in recent years. In 1994, three manufacturers of biodegradable (cardboard) coffins arose and some Funeral Directors, crematoria (and potentially cemeteries) are offering these products. This move was in response to the environmental burial schemes opening around the country, although these coffins were quickly utilised for traditional burial and cremation. Since 1994 many more suppliers of alternatives such as wicker and bamboo coffins have emerged. Little research has been done although findings in Europe suggest that "cardboard" coffins offer a significant reduction in pollutant emissions arising from cremation which could be due to the fact that no plastic is used in the construction. In addition, the cardboard coffin may reduce what many people see as the waste of resources, due to cremating standard coffins. This benefit has yet to be proven, and would probably require evidence of low wood pulp and high recycled paper content in the cardboard used. Nonetheless, the cardboard coffin immediately offered the advantages of wider choice, lower costs and biodegradable benefits when used for burial. Most cardboard coffins are rigid, carry well and retain any potential leakage of body or embalming fluid that may arise. Charter Members are encouraged to avoid a design that could allow a leakage of body fluid.

Some people rapidly labelled the cardboard coffin "cheap" and lacking in "dignity". This, of course, is a matter of opinion and, where a person requires ostentation, the cardboard coffin is not an option. The word dignity is defined as "true worth" and where a person has a belief in protecting the environment, or in having a humble or modest funeral, then the cardboard coffin has true worth to that person and they should be given the choice. An added advantage is that cardboard coffins can be painted attractively, or personalised, by an artist or by the family themselves. Paint can be extremely flammable and some crematoria may restrict this option, because of flashback when the coffin is charged into the cremator. It is worth noting that water based paint does not pose this problem. Also, where the box shape or cardboard finish is felt to be upsetting visually, it is a simple matter to cover the

coffin with a pall. This is a velvet-type cloth, often with gold braid edge, traditionally used in the past to cover coffins. These are often available from Funeral Directors or may be provided by crematoria or cemeteries, for use at a funeral. Alternatively, home made palls, patchwork quilts or similar could be used, provided they are large enough.

Another recently developed “green” option is the burial shroud. This consists of a board, upon which the body is laid, the whole being wrapped in a large piece of woven, soft, wool cloth. The shroud is sold with black, pure cotton ropes that are attached and used by four or six bearers. The shroud is suitable for all forms of burial, but not for cremation. Wool is not mandatory and any natural material could be used.

If you are arranging a funeral and you are unable to obtain a coffin, your Charter member has a minimum requirement to facilitate the supply of a biodegradable coffin.

If you wish to make your own coffin or container, contact your Charter member for advice over suitable materials, design and dimensions. Other materials that are biodegradable may be ideal for containing a body. Plaited willow, bamboo or straw are possibilities.

As a rule, coffins for burial should be constructed to the smallest size possible, as this reduces the size of the grave excavation and improves safety margins. Smaller and, thereby, lighter coffins also reduce the weight carried by the bearers, which may reduce physical risks posed by manual handling. For cremation, the design, construction and materials used in the coffin must be such that it minimises possible emissions of pollutants and the use of fossil fuels.

It is important to note that the manufacturer of a coffin, whether a commercial concern or a private individual, has a “duty of care” to those who will subsequently be involved with it. Obviously, it is necessary to ensure that it is strong enough to hold the body whilst being carried. Less obviously, if varnishes or oil based paints are used, these could cause a flashback when the coffin is placed into a pre-heated cremator.

The Federation of British Cremation Authorities (FBCA), which represents a large proportion of cremation authorities in the UK, issued a directive on coffin design. This prohibits the use of materials, such as PVC, pitch or zinc, which pollute the atmosphere. It is important to consider the explosion or pollutant impact of anything placed in a coffin, especially for cremation. Heart pacemakers, implants, batteries, pressurised containers, even coconuts (that have not been punctured), have all caused explosion. A doctor, a mortician or the Funeral Director can remove medical implants. Even clothes made of man-made fibres, shoes or any rubberised materials can cause smoke and pollution. As crematoria have to operate within the Environmental Protection Act 1990, these can cause serious operational difficulties. Most metals, including jewellery, bolts or screws, artificial joints and bone splints, pass through the cremation cycle without difficulty and are withdrawn at the finish. Jewellery melts and is unrecognisable, forming small pieces of aggregate.

These, and all other metallic residue, are buried in the grounds and are not removed off-site or sold for re-use. The re-use of metallic joints, splints, etc is considered under the Charter item "ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES". The use of balms, scents, flowers and other natural materials should not pose any difficulties. Check with your Charter member if you are in any doubt.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to choose the type and design of coffin, within the constraints of availability, regulations and safe materials.
- b) It is your right to receive information on obtaining a coffin (biodegradable type) via your Charter member.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will promote greater choice and will offer advice and source of supply over all available coffins, containers and shrouds.
- b) Charter members will have a pall available for use by Funeral Directors or the bereaved.
- c) Charter members will provide a diagram illustrating the construction of a simple, homemade coffin.

Communication

1 INFORMATION

Communication is vital to the bereavement process and where communication fails, the quality of the service declines. Although computers and electronic communication are increasingly utilised in bereavement, the value of human contact cannot be over-emphasised. When skilled staff talk to a bereaved person, they quickly recognise doubt or concern in a person's facial or body response.

Staff involved with bereavement often need to be a confidant and teacher to the bereaved. Opening up dialogue is an essential form of communication and creating the right atmosphere is an important element. Staff name badges are valuable in this respect, suggesting an invitation to be approached and a desire to help. Where these are used, a widow or widower will telephone a member of staff and ask for that person by their name. This opens up informal discussion and, inevitable, problems are solved and better decisions made.

COMMUNICATION ASPECTS

Staff training, which included communications skills and standard setting, is essential in the bereavement profession. All telephone calls should be answered quickly and efficiently. Enquiries about the time and date of forthcoming services should be immediately answered and staff that can deal with all but the most difficult enquiries should be available. Where there is a need to leave a message, a response should be made within an acceptable period. The telephone service should extend throughout the normal working week, with some means of contact, especially for emergencies, at weekends. Recording machines are helpful, but impersonal. Many people, some of whom will not leave a message, dislike them. Most crematoria, and larger cemeteries, will have a member of staff on duty at weekends that can answer the telephone and personally assist people.

Many people communicating in writing about a burial or cremation matter are agitated and stressed. They are also mostly aged, perhaps suffering some form of illness. It is essential that a reply is not prolonged and many cemeteries and crematoria reply the same day where some stress is apparent. In general, even routine replies should not take more than one week. A specified response time is part of a good service standard.

Letters, brochures and leaflets also communicate the quality of service. Some authorities use designer paper, which comes in a variety of design, i.e. with a flower border or overlaid with a dove of peace, etc, to show specific concern for bereavement. This paper, allied to a warm, helpful writing style, opposes the bureaucratic letter that might be anticipated, particularly from council departments. Likewise, using re-cycled paper shows concern for the environment.

Communicating about cemeteries, crematoria or any related bereavement service under unsuitable “umbrella” departmental names can be offensive to the bereaved. Letterheads stating Leisure Services, Public Protection, Pest Control or Engineering Services conveys an inappropriate message to those in a grieving situation.

Waiting to receive a service is particularly irritating to any customer and with bereavement it has many implications. For some people, the wait between death and the funeral is particularly stressful, as they feel unable to commence mourning. Some communities also have a need and desire to organise a funeral quickly. It is essential that service standards specify acceptable waiting times. There should be a process for matching supply with demand, to ensure that delays, which currently attain two weeks in some areas, do not occur. These delays also overload mortuary facilities and may require that bodies be embalmed to prevent a body decaying however should this situation arise the next of kin can make private arrangements for cold storage elsewhere should they not wish the deceased to be embalmed. It is also necessary to explain why delays are occurring, as “explained waits” can reduce distress to the customer.

The use of burial or cremation services is made more difficult for Funeral Directors, masons and the bereaved, due to the variety of forms in use throughout the country.

Although the legally required cremation forms may be identical, they are often laid out in different formats. The non-legal forms, such as the preliminary application for cremation, the notice of burial, transfer of graves, permission to erect memorials, etc, all vary considerably. This also makes it more difficult to use forms from one area at a cemetery or crematorium elsewhere.

COMMUNICATING KNOWLEDGE

There is an undoubted need to improve the knowledge of those using bereavement services throughout the country. This Charter represents an important move forward in this respect. Nonetheless, at the local level, it is necessary to issue guidance on the service available and details about how to use the services and what to do if the service does not meet needs.

Educating people to handle bereavement is important, as it creates an “expectation” about the service. If the service fails to meet that expectation, the bereaved person may recognise the failure and may be able to do something about it. Open days at the crematorium help, but these tend to concentrate on practicable parts of the service, i.e. cremators, and often do not address the quality of the experience. More recently, courses on bereavement for professionals and on improving funerals for the general public have become more common. Where Charter members are involved in these courses, their knowledge and experience can be utilised.

It is important to recognise that communication is often dependent upon relationships. If cemetery walks or crematorium garden walks are organised, the relationship between the walk leader and the public creates an informal “leisure” rapport. The leader might be referred to by their forename and people will ask questions that will never arise in a formal setting. This is an important element in improving communication and fostering relationships.

RECOGNISING NEEDS

The sensitivity of bereavement has historically prevented burial and cremation authorities surveying families about their experience of the services provided. In view of this, the provision of services has relied upon the “gut” feeling of staff and reliance upon feedback from Funeral Directors, clergy and suchlike. This process tends to maintain the status quo and discourages innovation and new services. As bereavement appears to be invoking more general interest, the possibility of surveying families about the quality of their funeral experience is becoming more important. Other information is needed, such as the reasons why people choose cremation as against burial and how they coped with the bereavement after the funeral.

PROMOTION AND ADVERTISING

Cemeteries and crematoria have historically ignored promoting their services, leaving this instead to an intermediary in the form of the Funeral Director. This has resulted in the cemetery or crematorium becoming faceless, tending to shun publicity and being quite naïve about how it is perceived by the community. This results in most people seeing the Funeral Director as the crux of the operation. The community fail to recognise that the funeral process, the cremator, the grave, the forms, the booking system, conforming to legal requirements and long term maintenance are all organised at the cemetery or crematorium.

Marketing and promoting the service communicates more effectively and helps people to make informed choices. Green forms of burial, biodegradable coffins and personalised funerals might only be promoted by the cemetery and /or crematorium providing such services. Promoting services through the media and developing a public profile are necessary so that customers can recognise the value of the cemetery and crematorium.

COMMUNICATING FUNERAL NEEDS

Individuals have a responsibility to communicate their wishes regarding their death and funeral. Otherwise, the widow, widower or children are confronted by two difficulties; firstly the death and, secondly, the need to organise a funeral. This increases stress, apart from often causing family strife over whether “dad wanted burial or cremation”. These issues are considered in the Charter item on “DIGNITY, DEATH AND YOU”. Communicating with the cemetery or crematorium where your funeral will take place is useful and helps everybody to use the service to its full extent.

FEES

Informing people about fees and charges and what they include is vital communication. The fees table lists all the fees charged for the various burial and cremation services, memorials and other ancillary items. The fees list should be clear and easily understood. For instance, the cremation fee should be inclusive of fees that are not optional, e.g. for the medical referee. The fees must not be combined to the point where they obscure what they actually include and thereby lose their “transparency”. As these fees will form the disbursements paid out by Funeral Directors, the customer must be able to identify them and recognise what elements of the service are included. This will enable them to analyse their funeral account and realistically apportion costs to the cemetery or crematorium and to the Funeral Director involved. The ability to recognise how much or how little each of the parties contribute to the funeral is important in ascertaining value for money. Funeral Directors on behalf of the person paying for the funeral usually routinely pay the cemetery or crematorium fees. The Funeral Director should be given a receipt for all payments and the person paying for the funeral should reasonably expect to be passed the receipt. It is important that Funeral Directors are routinely updated on fee changes and forewarned about impending increases, particularly where the increases exceed inflation.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to receive a prompt response to any form of communication with a Charter member, within published service standards.
- b) It is your right to be given a table of fees upon request.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop strategies for promoting better understanding of bereavement throughout society, which will enable people to identify their needs and communicate these to their family or executor.
- b) Charter members will promote research into attitudes about death and how funeral services can be developed to satisfy identifiable needs.
- c) Charter members will develop standard application forms, which are “user friendly” and can be used at any facility.
- d) Charter members will specify maximum funeral waiting times and will develop strategies for handling high death rates.
- e) Charter members will survey users to ascertain satisfaction levels and will make this information available to the general public.

- f) Charter members will permanently display a table of fees where the public can view it. A user-friendly format for the table of fees should be developed for adoption by all members.
- g) Charter members will adopt a national standard to enable the public to contact them, e.g. a free entry in yellow pages under classification "Cemeteries and Crematoria".
- h) Charter members will make their services accessible via the internet through e-business strategies.

Dignity, death and you

1 INFORMATION

This Charter has been created in the belief that all individuals have the right to organise their death and funeral in accordance with their wishes during life. In view of medical advances and environmental concern, some people wish to make a statement about their life, through their death and funeral arrangements.

In the past, all deaths were followed by burial in churchyards, adopting the rituals of the established and other churches. The mode of death and the funeral followed traditional and unvarying patterns. In recent decades, this situation has altered considerably. An increasing number of people wish to dispense with traditional patterns; The Charter recognises and accommodates such views.

The way in which we die, indeed, the actual definition of death, has become much more difficult to understand. Life can be prolonged by science for many years and the actual control of our death can be a decision taken by others. This Charter accepts that many people wish to maintain dignity and have greater control. The right to die at home, or not to have your life artificially prolonged, are fundamental considerations. The "Living Will" concept appears to offer greater control in this respect. Readers are referred to the Natural Death Centre for more information.

Subsequently, following death, an increasing number of people now choose secular and/or "green" funerals. These desires are often intended as a positive challenge to established religions or to the way in which we live. In general, the completion of a Will and the appointment of an executor will ensure that your wishes are carried out, apart from many other benefits. It is essential that the Will be read before the funeral takes place. A Will rarely describes in detail how the funeral will proceed and this needs to be considered. If you wish to set out precise details of your funeral, you should make these known to the person who will be arranging it. You are advised to read this Charter and visit your local crematorium or cemetery to discuss and consider your wishes. You may, for instance, wish to purchase a grave in advance and ease the subsequent arrangements when you die.

It is not mandatory to use your local burial or cremation facilities. For instance, you are at liberty to choose any crematorium if it offers facilities not available locally. An additional fee may be charged if you are not resident in the area of the crematorium. For burial, the use of other cemeteries is more restricted. Many local authorities deter residents of other areas using their burial space by charging very high fees, especially if there is a shortage of land.

It is important to note that you cannot leave binding instructions, even through a Will. Your executor or whoever organises the funeral can change your wishes. This is why it is important that your executors are in agreement with and understand the strength of your feelings. Completing an "advance funeral directive" can specify precise funeral details.

The dignity of your funeral and the subsequent arrangements can rely upon you giving instructions during your lifetime. In recent years, an increase in couples living together without marriage, split marriages and divorce, have all influenced funerals. In many cases, funerals are organised and decisions made that are intended to deliberately offend relatives of the deceased. For example, an existing partner may organise the funeral and memorial in order to exclude children of another partnership. Where this occurs it may severely increase the effects of the bereavement. It is, therefore, important to organise a Will and executors in order to minimise these occurrences.

The law is unspecific where an executor does not exist and a variety of people can and do apply for cremation and burial. In general, where an executor has not been appointed in a Will, a person stating they are the “nearest surviving relative” can apply. The law does not require anything more than a statement to this effect, and monitoring the veracity of this statement is neither required nor possible. Disputes about whether the right person applied, i.e. a brother or sister, common-law wife, often arise subsequently and may have to be resolved through legal action, which may be distressing and expensive. In cremation, especially, disputes can have a very profound effect because the applicant for cremation has lawful possession of the cremated remains and takes the ultimate decision over their final placement.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

(No rights are identified in this heading).

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will promote the completion of a Will and an advance funeral directive, to support the right of each person to organise a funeral in accordance with their wishes.

Environmental issues

1 INFORMATION

Environmental issues have not featured prominently with regard to bereavement, possibly due to the sensitivity of the subject. This view is changing as environmental issues become increasingly important. The inclusion of the cremation process in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is the most recent example of this. The services associated with bereavement have more impact on the environment than might be initially considered. Improvements in this area are very relevant to: "Acting locally – thinking globally".

Environmental issues are also covered elsewhere in the Charter under "COFFINS AND ALTERNATIVES", "MAINTENANCE OF GROUNDS AND GRAVEDIGGING" and in Appendix B, "INFORMATION ON EMBALMING".

Environmental concerns are summarised below:

CREMATION

Cremation has progressed from coke fired through to gas and electric cremators over a period of 100 years. Almost all cremators use gas. The use of gas, a finite reserve, and the creation of air pollution, are adverse criticisms of this process. To keep this in perspective, the historical factors that support cremation need to be considered. Cremation was introduced in response to the ever-increasing use of land for burial. Using the land for producing food was important, particularly following the last world war. In addition, the clean and clinical impact of cremation was seen as "modern".

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 required that all cremators must comply with specified emission requirements by 1998. Consequently, a massive cremator replacement programme was undertaken, which has greatly increased the cost of cremation. The new cremators also require a threefold, or even higher, increase in gas consumption in order to meet the requirements of this Act. The question of exhaust gas filtration has been raised with the possibility that mercury filtration may become a requirement. The installation of filtration equipment at crematorium, should this become a legal requirement, will increase costs further.

The problem of disposing of metal residue from cremation in the form of orthopaedic implants has become an increasing problem at crematoria. It is normal practice to bury such residue in the grounds of the crematorium (or adjoining cemetery at certain locations) which in itself is not an environmentally friendly action. As such residue is resultant from cremations it is difficult to find an alternative means of disposal. Modern thinking suggests that orthopaedic implants and other metal residue should be recycled. The ICCM Board of Directors has discussed the feasibility of the establishment of a recycling scheme with any benefits derived being distributed to charity. The ICCM will encourage Charter members to consider becoming involved in any recycling scheme that might be established.

BURIAL

Burial is sometimes suggested as a more environmentally acceptable alternative to cremation, as no air pollution is created. Such comments ignore the impact of herbicides and petrol mowers routinely used in cemeteries, often over long periods of time. In addition, the effects of interring chipboard coffins and plastic fittings are unknown. Finally, the pollutant effect of burial on water supplies is generally un-researched. The benefits of the new woodland burial schemes appear to overcome many of these problems, particularly where they are associated with the use of biodegradable coffins and a reduction in embalming. Further research into these issues is urgently required.

The environmental and visual value of cemeteries to the local community has generally been ignored. The older sections often date back to Victorian times. They usually contain the oldest trees in the locality and provide habitats for mammals, wildflowers, insects, bats and birds. The old stone memorials are often the only available habitat for lichens and mosses. Changing mowing regimes, placing bird and bat boxes and replanting herbaceous borders with butterfly plant species, are small yet effective parts of this process. These improvements to the older sections can complement intensive high quality maintenance in current and more recently used burial areas.

The environmental benefits of turning old burial areas into wildlife reserves are twofold. Firstly, there is a reduction in fossil fuel and herbicide usage. Secondly, the increasing birds and wildlife create a valuable resource, offering benefits to the grieving process as well as increasing leisure/educational possibilities for the community. This process does not impact on graves visited by mourners and is generally supported by the majority of those using the grounds.

The value of nature in improving the grieving process is rarely identified and yet is very important. A singing bird, a beautiful tree or a colourful bedding display is all therapeutic and symbolic of new life. The alternative is the cemetery blighted by weed killer, without trees and a true harbinger of death.

More recently, increasing support for burial as opposed to cremation has emerged. This may be partly in response to adverse criticism of the "factory line" process levelled at crematoria. Further support arises from the potential re-use of graves, which precludes the creation of sprawling, Victorian-type cemeteries which when full become a financial burden as income from burials ceases. Many of these cemeteries can then be subjected to a lowering of maintenance standards and take on a neglected appearance. In 2001 a Parliamentary Select Committee commenced an inquiry into the problems facing our cemeteries. This committee acknowledged the benefits to the environment that exist in cemeteries and the fact that these facilities are valuable community assets. The question of sustainability was explored with the recommendation that the reuse of graves is the only way forward in protecting the long-term future and security of cemeteries and the heritage contained. The Select Committee also deduced that the public require local and affordable burial provision. Should a burial authority be able to afford the purchase of new land for burial the result may well be an increase in burial fees which would offset the land costs. Also, and particularly in urban areas,

the only available new burial land might be some considerable distance away from the population. A change in the law to allow the reuse of graves would enable the reopening of the old Victorian cemeteries for new burials and thus provide the public with affordable local burial space and produce income for the long term maintenance of such cemeteries thus transforming once neglected cemeteries into valuable community assets. The ICCM will continue to lobby for a change in legislation to allow the reuse of graves using the lift and deepen method which is designed to protect those previously deceased persons and provide continuing new burial space.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Other environmental issues involved with bereavement have been identified but have not received any specific attention on a national scale. This is due to the sensitivity of the issue and, in some cases, difficulty in identifying the actual owner of the item or materials involved, e.g. Prostheses belong to the NHS.

The issues include:

- The use of environmentally friendly chemicals to clean memorial stones, as an alternative to caustic acids.
- Composting a greater amount of mown grass, leaves, flowers and other plant material removed from the grounds.
- A reduction in the use of herbicides/chemicals and peat used in grounds maintenance.
- Retaining cut timber in habitat piles, rather than burning, which release carbon content.
- Increasing tree planting in order to offset carbon dioxide emissions.
- Reducing the use of moss and lichens in the construction of wreaths and other floral tributes.
- Re-using wreath frames and associated fittings (generally plastic) as an alternative to their destruction.
- Sourcing alternatives to teak, mahogany and other hardwoods, used in the construction of garden seats, burial caskets, etc.
- Recycling the metal content of hip and other bone repair implements (prostheses) following removal from cremated remains.

Other issues have been identified that involve bereavement but are beyond the remit of the Charter, e.g. the environmental damage caused by the production of cut flowers and quarrying of stone in foreign countries, which are then imported into the UK.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) You have a right to be made aware of all known environmental issues relating to bereavement services. Information will be available through this Charter and by direct contact with your local Charter member.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members should strive to improve environmental efficiency and understanding, relating to bereavement. Due consideration should be given to the conservation of wildlife and management according to sound ecological principles.

- b) Charter members should establish researched environmental impact data for all aspects of bereavement.
- c) Charter members should co-ordinate their efforts in order to improve the aspects outlined under "Further Information" above.
- d) Charter members should create strategies for enhancing the wildlife value of cemeteries and crematoria grounds. This is particularly important in the creation of new cremation and burial facilities.
- e) Charter members should introduce services that directly enhance the environment, as an integral part of the bereavement experience. Woodland and wildflower graves are an example of such initiatives.
- f) Charter members should contribute to a reduction in global warming by reducing their total energy consumption.

Social and community aspects

1. INFORMATION

Cemeteries and crematoria are important community resources and assets. They become the focus for developing services that enable people to hold funerals meaningful to them. As every member of the community must use the service, it is essential that everybody has a right to expect similar standards. These factors are identified in a leaflet issued by the Local Government Ombudsmen, which states:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

“The Local Government Ombudsmen are committed to providing an equal service to all members of the public and seek to ensure that no complainant receives less favourable treatment than another on grounds of gender, colour, race, nationality, ethnic, regional or national origins, age, marital status, disability, political or religious belief, class or sexual orientation”.

Communities vary greatly in their make-up and have differing needs. Assessing these needs is complex and must rely, to some degree, upon local judgement. Although this Charter sets out a national standard, it cannot be allowed to dictate policy or reduce the flexibility necessary for a more appropriate local response.

The Charter also recognises that the dominant religious or ethnic groups often perceive their needs as the norm and these views tend to dominate. This can leave smaller, less active groups without a voice. Some of these issues are discussed in more detail below.

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Various religious and non-religious needs can be readily accommodated in crematoria, though greater difficulties may arise in cemeteries. In the crematorium, the un-denominational chapel is booked for the duration of the service, which can be religious or secular. The cremated remains, if not taken away, are then placed in grounds that are not demarked according to belief.

The situation in cemeteries is very different, and developed as a consequence of problems in the parish churchyard. The churchyard was always consecrated, which is a ceremony only preformed by the Church of England. It became the legal right, which still exists, of every member of the parish to be buried in the churchyard, whether they were Christian or not. Many non-Christians were unhappy with the prospect of being buried in consecrated ground. When cemeteries were developed in the Victorian period, the law decreed that parts of the cemetery must remain unconsecrated. This was recognition that Catholics, Methodists and non-believers had the right to burial outside the rites of the established church. Many cemeteries now have separate Church of England sections, with perhaps adjacent Catholic and Muslim sections. More recently, cemeteries have tended to dedicate land to all religions and they do not have areas formally consecrated by a Bishop.

Reserving sections for individual religions, including the Church of England, creates a precedent. Consequently, other groups, including Catholics, Hebrews, Muslims, Free Church and even Humanists or atheists, are entitled to equal treatment. This would lead to each cemetery having to reserve individual portions to each group, which ties up large parts of the cemetery. In contrast, a single section used for everybody is equal, much easier to administer and much less expensive to operate. Unfortunately, this can create real difficulties for some religions and this should be recognised and considered. For instance, the single section system is generally covered by lawn graves. For those of the Muslim faith, this poses a number of problems. The Koran prohibits anybody sitting or walking upon a person's grave, yet this cannot be prevented on lawn-type graves. Logically, providing the traditional grave choice, which allows that grave to be covered by a memorial or kerbs, overcomes these problems. In addition, it offers more choice to people of all religions, particularly if they do not favour the lawn grave. Charter members are encouraged to convene user groups where these issues can be discussed directly with interested parties.

Further details are included in the Charter item on "GRAVE CHOICE".

Most cemeteries contain a burial chapel for services. These are often built in Gothic or church style and may not be appropriate for secular services or some ethnic groups.

EQUITY

Services should not differentiate between those who can pay and those who cannot. In the UK, only a few decades ago, the poor were put in pauper graves and the right to place flowers was refused. Even today, in the USA, some of the commercially operated cemeteries maintain the same process. They place these graves near untidy margins, removing all tributes or markers placed by families, leaving the graves to become a visible symbol of social deprivation.

Pauper graves are better called unpurchased graves and are a necessary service. There is no need to restrict the placing of markers or tributes upon the grave. These graves should be placed among the purchased "private graves", their presence being indistinguishable, except that a memorial would be absent. By allowing smaller and cheaper memorials in general, the wide variation in memorial types also makes it less easy to identify those who have fewer resources.

Equity can have a social dimension. As an example, the need for equal access, regardless of wealth, to high quality midwifery services has been recognised as a fundamental social right. Yet the social dimension of death has not been accorded the same standard. The free provision of funerals and facilities is not seen as a necessary social service. This may reflect the fact that the only people who worry about death are the old, a group who have little representation in our society.

The government has recognised this problem and the Social Fund contributes towards the cost of approximately 6% of funerals for those who rely upon certain state benefits. This, of course, leaves a very high proportion of the population above the benefits level, who nonetheless, pay the same for a

funeral as wealthier members of society. There is a need to widen the choice and enable people to choose a funeral arrangement that is financially acceptable to them.

Many people perceive that dying is expensive, which may then encourage people to buy pre-need funeral plans. It is important to recognise that many people suffer stress as a consequence of worrying about funeral expenses and perhaps feel that obtaining competitive quotes is not appropriate. Whilst recognising that dealing with the death of a relative is a stressful situation the purchase of a funeral can nevertheless be regarded as a purchase and competitive quotations can be obtained. Funeral Directors offer a range of services and it is important for the bereaved to understand that they have control over expenditure and can arrange a funeral that meets with their needs and requirements within the constraints of their own particular budget.

It is not equitable when some funerals are delayed. This can be due to insufficient service time being allowed at crematoria, which can routinely cause delays because the preceding funeral ran over the allotted time.

In some areas, particularly in some London Boroughs, residents are denied the option of burial due to the absence of new burial space and have to use the cemetery of a neighbouring authority with an additional fee being applied to those non-residents. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management has proposed a solution to this problem, which involves the re-use of old graves, mostly situated in Victorian cemeteries. This will require public support as well as new legislation. Your Charter member will update you on the current situation and progress of the Home Office Burial & Cemeteries Advisory Group that was established following the Select Committee Inquiry into Cemeteries that took place in 2001. The work of the advisory group includes overhaul of legislation relating to cemeteries. The reuse of graves is a prominent feature of the consultation process that will take place.

DISCRIMINATION

This word means distinguishing one person from another, so that a person is adversely treated. It is also about ensuring that people who lack mobility or have language difficulties can access the services offered. There should clearly be a will to consider all users and ensure they can make the best use of the services available.

There are a number of issues to be considered, not all of which can be mentioned here. The hard of hearing can participate in a funeral service if an induction "loop" system is installed. Large print and Braille service books should be available for the partially sighted and blind. Service books and leaflets can be provided other than in English, for different communities. Those in wheelchairs should be able to gain easy access to chapels and should be placed amongst mourners and not in a prominent position, such as the aisle. A toilet with access for the disable must be available for use. Ensuring the wheelchair access is good everywhere also benefits many users of the facilities, particularly the aged and infirm. A spare wheelchair is useful to have available for the infirm and for people who collapse due to emotional stress. Car parks must be located as close to chapels as possible. This

benefits everybody, particularly during inclement weather and when ice makes paved surfaces dangerous. The desire to lay visually attractive road and path surfaces, such as cobbles and sets, should be opposed if the surfaces are thereby unsuitable for the infirm and the aged.

In cemeteries, unimpeded access to graves may not be possible. The placement of memorials, sloping or wet ground, trees and similar obstructions can create difficulties for everybody. Many authorities employ an Access Officer, whom you can contact about these issues.

Discrimination can occur with other issues. Placing stillbirths in untidy areas or unsuitable plots of the cemetery discriminates against the parents. This fails to recognise that the parents are already isolated to some degree, by being amongst the minority who lose a child. This is a bereavement that cannot be anticipated and one that strikes at a time when family resources are directed at raising children, and not paying for funerals. Society should positively address these issues and offer better facilities than expected to reflect a caring community.

Discrimination may be evident in the current disposal of foetal remains. The majority of these are classified and disposed of as clinical waste, usually by hospital incineration or landfill site. The Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM) has campaigned to change the legal status of foetal remains and has produced a policy and guidance document covering the sensitive disposal of foetal remains. The ICCM has also worked with the Royal College of Nursing who has a similar policy dealing with the handling and sensitive disposal of foetal remains. Details about this are included under the Charter item "BABY AND INFANT GRAVES".

Deaths that are AIDS related have been discriminated against in recent years. In at least one case, a coffin was sealed into a grave using concrete. Such cases are evidence of ignorance and bias. These deaths pose no additional risks to anyone at a cemetery or crematorium, than any other cause of death. A caring service will ensure that no discriminatory requirements are demanded that identify one funeral from another.

The success of cremation has created major difficulties for some groups in the community. In particular, the demand for services is so great that service times can be programmed as short as 20 minutes apart. This can be seen as discriminatory. For example, when a death occurs in a Hindu community, the support for the deceased's family is very strong. This leads to a very large congregation at the service, which cannot assemble, hold a ceremony and leave in only 20 minutes. Consequently, the possibility of delaying subsequent funerals will arise. To overcome this, such funerals are often restricted to the last in the day, thereby allowing more time. Whilst not condoning this practice, it is necessary to recognise that every service should be given sufficient time to fulfil the needs of that community. Any limitation imposed by time restriction must reduce the essential right of the individual to hold a meaningful funeral.

What might be termed cost discrimination is routinely used in bereavement. It can arise as a positive attempt to reduce usage of graves where limited ground

is available. Consequently, graves in some London Boroughs are very expensive. It can also be used to obtain more income for the burial or cremation of people who live outside a local authority area. This might be seen as regional discrimination. No evidence exists that this type of discrimination has been successfully challenged.

Political discrimination has arisen on at least one occasion. A cremation authority has been known to refuse a Book of Remembrance application that included the word "communist" in the obituary. This was allowed upon appeal to the Ombudsman.

Discrimination on marital status is not evident, but questions are often posed on this problem. This arises because cemeteries and crematoria routinely accept burial or cremation applications signed by the "wife" of the deceased. No evidence of marriage is required and many applications subsequently prove to be made by a common-law wife.

This can become apparent when the legal wife, or her children make contact, perhaps by a solicitor acting for them. This may be over obtaining possession of the cremated remains or disputing the ownership of grave rights or a memorial.

Following a death, and where no funeral arrangements are made, the Local Authority or Health Authority is required to organise and pay for the funeral. They can recover funeral costs from any money or possessions owned by the deceased, if these exist. It is important that these funerals are organised along traditional lines and are not discriminated against. The use of an unpurchased grave is usual, where there is no estate. If money is available, a "private grave" and memorial may be purchased. The burial in an unpurchased grave should allow for the purchase of the grave, should any family approach the authority subsequent to the burial. They are then able to place a memorial without having to exhume the body, which can be very expensive. If the family wish to purchase the grave, it may be necessary to inform the Local Authority or Health Authority who paid for the funeral, as they may require recompense.

THE DEAD CITIZENS' CHARTER

This Charter was launched as a consultative document on 31 January 1996 by the National Funerals College. This Charter calls for the rights of both the dead and the living to be recognised and makes recommendations to improve funerals and care for those left behind. The Charter for the Bereaved implements many of the recommendations suggested and supports this initiative by the National Funerals College.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to receive a service that recognises your needs, without unfairness or discrimination.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will meet representatives of their community, to identify the needs and wants of every individual. Individual needs

should be met where this does not impinge upon the majority. The formation of community “user” groups, to consider how the service meets the needs of the bereaved, should be considered.

- b) Charter members will recognise that they have the ability to influence services that will benefit the entire community. Members will be receptive to suggestions that challenge conventions, to improve choice and service delivery.
- c) Charter members will promote cemetery and crematoria design that offers fair and equitable services to all members of the community, and not be excessively influenced by dominant groups.
- d) Charter members will ensure that the service is accessible to all members of the community, regardless of age, infirmity, language, etc.

Funerals without a Funeral Director

1 INFORMATION

It is often assumed, quite wrongly, that funerals can be completed only with the use of a Funeral Director. Although a Funeral Director will be invited to organise the majority of funerals, some people prefer to organise funerals themselves. The details in the individual sections of the Charter give sufficient information to achieve this. Your Charter member will also supply you with a leaflet giving you local information.

The Funeral Director organises the funeral by collecting and moving the body, arranging embalming (if required) and viewing of the deceased, ensuring that statutory certificates and other information is relayed to the cemetery or crematorium office, providing a coffin, hearse and liaising with the cemetery or crematorium office regarding the service in the chapel or at the graveside. Carrying out these services relieves the bereaved from doing what they may feel are unpleasant and difficult tasks at a difficult time.

Some people do not wish to use a Funeral Director. This can be for a wide variety of reasons. They may feel that passing the body of a loved one over to strangers is wrong. Some feel that personally organising the funeral is their final tribute to the deceased person. Others may simply wish to save money by doing everything themselves.

The bereaved family can handle the entire funeral and Charter members are able to assist in facilitating this. Such a funeral is referred to as "Family Arranged", rather than the possibly offensive term "DIY" funeral.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to organise a funeral without the use of a Funeral Director.
- b) It is your right, as executor (or next of kin) to be given the body by a mortuary, hospital, etc, in order to carry out a funeral without a Funeral Director.
- c) It is your right to obtain information from your Charter member on how to obtain a coffin (minimum biodegradable type).
- d) It is your right to obtain a Family Arranged funeral leaflet from your Charter member describing how to arrange such a funeral

3. CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members should ensure that the bereaved are aware of these rights,
- b) Charter members should increase coffin choice wherever possible. Coffins need not be stocked, provided a reliable source is identified. Where green burial options are offered, a biodegradable coffin should be available.

Maintenance of grounds and grave digging

1 INFORMATION

CEMETERIES

The majority of cemeteries are operated by Local Authorities although some privately owned cemeteries do exist. The standard of a cemetery depends upon the resources made available by the local council or owner and the level of staff expertise. Unfortunately, cemeteries are often a low priority on the budget of councils and standards can be poor. This ignores their potential benefits. Firstly, the quality of the bereavement experience can be greatly affected by the standard of the grounds. A good standard reflects a good service and aids the grieving process. An attractive combination of trees, shrubs and bedding contributes to a harmonious and peaceful setting at a funeral. Conversely, an absence of planting and row upon row of memorials creates a stark, bleak picture.

Secondly, a cemetery is a major green space in many towns and cities and a valuable community resource. It offers philosophical, psychological, ecological, historical, artistic and social benefits. Interpretation boards, leaflets and guided walks, can enhance these. Skill and planning is needed to combine the needs of the bereaved and the community while overcoming the problems of maintenance.

Few cemeteries attain the ideal. Many are maintained at minimum cost and standard, relying upon chemicals to kill the herbage around headstones, and even grass growth retardants to hold back growth on lawn areas. The excessive use of chemicals offers short-term gain and on environmental grounds, is best avoided. Often, chemical leaching leads to the gradual death of trees and shrubs over many years and can pollute watercourses.

A cemetery is not a park and the compromise between the needs of the bereaved and maintenance costs is important. Cemeteries offer excellent conservation opportunities and these are outline under the charter item on "ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES".

Good conservation and management plans can progressively improve a cemetery. One of the most expensive and problematic areas of maintenance is grass cutting and defining acceptable standards is difficult. The quality of grass cutting is the principal measure of this. The minimum standard would be cutting every four weeks, seven times per year (April to October). This is a standard often applied to older, generally unused grave sections. A high standard would be cutting every two weeks, about sixteen times per year (April to October). This is a standard often used on lawn type graves, on areas used regularly by the bereaved. The mowing operation should not damage memorials, vases or floral tributes left on graves. Vases that impede mowers may need to be moved aside and replaced afterwards. Some authorities will regulate against placing items on the grass.

The problem of grass cutting has led in some cemeteries to the wholesale removal of old memorials. Apart from the environmental damage, these

actions place maintenance needs before the needs of the bereaved. Some regulations also do this by limiting memorial design, e.g. lawn graves (refer to the Charter item on "CEMETERY MEMORIALS" for more details).

Maintenance should include the regular removal of litter, usually weekly, and the removal of dead wreaths from recent funerals. Water supplies should be available and located a reasonable distance from graves. It is the responsibility of visitors to collect and dispose of the floral tributes, which they have placed on subsequent visits. Christmas wreaths are normally collected from graves two to six weeks after Christmas, by the burial authority. This is because many of them are placed on grass, which they ultimately kill unless removed. Access to graves should be via clear paths and safe walking surfaces that are suitable for the elderly, infirm and wheelchair bound.

Contractors under the old requirements of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CTT) now maintain the majority of large cemeteries. (There is evidence emerging that the contracting situation may not be seen as "Best Value" in the cemetery situation with some authorities taking maintenance back in-house). The contracts require a specification setting out precisely the standard of maintenance. You can obtain details of the standards from your Charter member. Where CCT applies, the staff working on the grounds are not employees of the burial authority, and may be unable to advise or help visitors. It is necessary to direct enquiries, complaints, etc to the "client" section, who control the contractors. Sometimes, the staff that operate the cemetery burial service may not be involved with grounds maintenance. This can lead to liaison difficulties and a problem identifying precisely who the responsible person is. Your Charter member will advise you about this. Charter members who have in-house maintenance arrangements will be able to provide a statement of service standards, including items such as grass cutting and other maintenance frequencies.

Cemeteries consist of a massive patchwork of graves, the majority of which are "privately" owned. As such, there is no implicit requirement on the cemetery management to maintain these graves, unless a specific maintenance clause was included in the "Rights" sold. Consequently, the burial authority could cease or reduce maintenance whenever they wished. Generally, of course, the community at large would not sanction this. Nonetheless, it is possible that in future, cemetery authorities may specify limited periods of maintenance. For instance, where burial rights are sold for fifty years, the maintenance included could cover the first ten years at a specified level. Subsequently, unless a further maintenance fee was paid, the maintenance level could be reduced to a lower standard.

GRAVEDIGGING

Grave owners may be concerned when graves nearby are excavated. The excavated soil must be placed on adjacent graves, which can prevent access for a day or more. Although there is no easy solution to this problem, it is important to minimise the effect as much as possible. Firstly, the soil should be placed on any unused grave adjacent to the excavation. If this is not possible, the grave surface should be covered by boards and after the funeral, all soil removed, especially from any memorial. All damaged turf must be

repaired, any soiled memorials made clean and the grave left tidy. Care should be taken to avoid damage to the memorial or any floral tributes on the grave.

CREMATORIA

The crematoria service can operate profitable compared to the considerable deficits that arise with the maintenance of cemeteries. Consequently, more money is spent on the facility to increase usage from rural and other peripheral areas. Often, bedding schemes, planting and grounds maintenance are of a high standard to reflect a better level of service. The credibility of the cremation service can depend on the first impressions gained from viewing the grounds. A high standard of maintenance would include a weekly grass-cutting schedule.

The development of conservative areas in existing crematoria grounds is difficult. This is because a high standard of maintenance is expected by the bereaved, particularly where this has existed for some years. Changing the standard may deeply upset visitors and generate complaints. New crematoria, with grounds designed from inception to benefit the environment, may arise in the future. More details about crematoria grounds are contained in the Charter item on "CREMATED REMAINS AND MEMORIALISATION". Well-maintained, clear signs are especially important in the crematorium and its grounds. The large number of visitors, principally by car, requires precise road signs, followed by directions to and from chapels and toilets.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to be shown a specified standard of grounds maintenance. Where standards fail to meet the specification, you have the right to complain.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop minimum national standards of maintenance.

Health & Safety

1 INFORMATION

Access and General Site Safety

Burial and cremation authorities as owners and occupiers of their respective sites have a duty under health and safety legislation to do all that is reasonably practicable to protect the health and safety of persons who enter their sites. Authorities control risks through a process of hazard identification and assessment of the associated risks. The results of the risk assessments are used in two ways. Firstly, they are used to formulate procedures for the various tasks that are undertaken by members of staff working on the site. These procedures are not only intended for the protection of the members of staff but will consider the effects of their actions on visitors. Site owners have a duty to consider the effects that their actions will have on others. 'Others' includes visitors, persons attending and officiating at funerals, in fact every person who enters the site. For example, a danger would exist to a member of the public visiting a grave in proximity to grounds staff carrying out strimming of grass. A stone could be thrown out by the strimmer, strike the visitor and cause injury. This fact would be identified during the process of risk assessment with procedures subsequently written to advise staff to cease strimming in an area where a person is attending a grave and not return to the area concerned until the person has left. A sound, considered, common sense approach is all that is required.

Secondly, and through a process of inspection, hazards not associated with work procedures will be identified with associated risks being assessed and actions taken to eliminate or significantly reduce risk. Hazards and risks identified could be associated with buildings, trees, pathways and any other part of the fabric of the site. A loose roof tile, hanging tree branch or unstable memorial could cause serious injury or a fatality should the potential of such a hazard be realised. Regular, formal site inspection will greatly assist in identifying these types of hazard. Inspections will also assist in ensuring that members of staff are adhering to operational procedures. Where discrepancies are identified additional training in procedures may be required. For example, an unattended, open grave presents the risk of a person falling into it. Whenever a grave is left unattended it should be securely covered, ideally with a lockable lid. Regular inspection will identify whether staff are complying with this requirement.

Where a hazard has been identified which cannot be eliminated immediately the placing of a warning sign or cordoning off the danger area may take place. This action is considered a temporary measure with action to remove the hazard being taken as soon as possible.

Gravedigging – Protection of Mourners

During the process of excavation of graves the gravediggers will install shoring equipment designed to support the ground and prevent collapse. Shoring is required to protect the health and safety of the gravediggers and subsequently the mourners, clergy and Funeral Directors staff attending at the burial service. Should no shoring be incorporated into the grave not only is the safety of the gravediggers compromised during excavation but also that of those in attendance at the funeral. Should the grave collapse during the service the possibility exists for people to fall and become

seriously injured. Should a collapse occur at the moment of committal it could cause the pallbearers and/or coffin to drop into the grave. Even if no-one is injured the effect on the bereaved would be devastating. The common sense approach dictates that shoring is installed on every occasion and remains in place until final back-filling of the grave takes place.

It is customary for some ethnic and religious groups to backfill graves themselves. This situation has potential dangers for those back filling the grave and a liability for the burial authority. Some burial authorities have banned mourners from backfilling graves however this conflict between cultural need, customer care and health and safety can be overcome. Should mourners wish to back fill the grave it is essential to seek the cooperation of the Funeral Director, main mourner and member of the clergy. The cemetery official at the commencement of back filling can directly supervise a limited number of mourners at a time and request the cessation of the operation at intervals whilst gravediggers remove shoring. Boards/planks should remain in place on the surface of the ground surrounding the grave in order to prevent mourners treading on unprotected grave edges. With the correct supervision and cooperation the task can be completed safely and to everyone's satisfaction.

Memorial Management

The national problem of unstable and dangerous memorials has been well publicised with reports of falling memorials causing the separate deaths of five children in recent years. Numerous reports of serious injury to people caused by unstable memorials have also received publicity. The Home Office Advisory Group established a Memorials Sub-group following recommendations made by the Parliamentary Select Committee such is the serious nature of the problem. This sub-group is investigating ways of installing memorials which will ensure that they remain safe for the period of the rights granted. The sub-group is also looking into the problem of how to properly treat old memorials that are potentially dangerous.

Responsibility for the safety and maintenance of the memorial lies in the main with the owner of the memorial however memorial masons have a responsibility to ensure that the memorial is installed and left in a safe condition. The selection of a memorial and memorial mason is dealt with under the section entitled 'Cemetery Memorials' within this Charter.

For the vast majority of old memorials in cemeteries the burial authority has the responsibility for safety when the grave owner or his/her heirs cannot be traced. This is part of the authority's duty of care. In such circumstances authorities have acted to remove hazards posed by dangerous, unstable memorials by laying them flat or cordoning them off whilst attempting to trace owners. This action has met with adverse criticism and accusations of management vandalism and desecration. It must be stressed that burial authorities are duty bound to protect persons visiting their sites and must make memorials safe in order to comply with the law and allow access. The only alternative is to lock the gates and refuse access. This action would be unacceptable to the bereaved and in an ideal world memorial owners would be fulfilling their responsibility and maintaining their memorials.

Many burial authorities have commenced the systematic inspection of memorials to identify those that pose a hazard and then to take action to eliminate the risks posed.

Immediate action may be to either lay the memorial flat or cordon off the area. It must be said that laying a memorial flat will not only remove a hazard but will effectively prevent the memorial falling and becoming broken. Burial authorities carrying out inspections will notify the registered owner of the grave should the memorial require attention. Unfortunately for the majority of the older memorials no grave owner is forthcoming with the authority having to then decide what further action to take. A few authorities have decided to re-erect certain memorials that are of specific interest and to protect the heritage and aesthetics of the cemetery.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to enter a cemetery or crematorium that is, as far as is reasonably practicable, without risk to your health and safety.
- b) It is your right to be shown a copy of the authorities health and safety policy, risk assessments and procedural documentation on request.
- c) It is your right to be shown a copy of the authority's policy relating to the inspection, testing and making safe of memorials

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will establish local memorial mason's registration schemes (in the absence of a national scheme).
- b) Charter members will insist that all memorials are erected in accordance with the National Association of Memorial Masons Code of Practice.
- c) Charter members will use the ICCM Management of Memorials Guidance document to manage the inspection and installation of memorials. This Document can be obtained from the National Secretary free of charge.
- d) Charter members will manage the burial process by using the ICCM Code of Safe Working Practice for Cemeteries.

Regulations

1 INFORMATION

Regulations have always existed in cemeteries, most of which date from the Victorian period. Modern regulations are based upon the situation that developed about 40 years ago when authorities began to address the problem of derelict cemeteries. Levelling old plots and creating the simpler, lawn type graves dominated cemetery management. In most Local Authorities, regulations were created to support easy maintenance and smaller, safer memorials. The creation and reliance upon regulations has continued since that period.

Regulations are a necessary requirement of managing a burial or cremation facility, and yet they also restrict the rights and choices of the individual. They often become “written in stone” and are subsequently difficult to amend or change. People and especially staff and councillors fear that relaxation means a sudden upsurge in unsuitable actions or materials will occur. This, of course, depends upon the purpose of the regulation and some currently exist that defy logic. For instance, would removing the regulation that “seashells shall not be placed on graves” see a sudden upsurge in this activity take place? If it did, would it really matter?

Regulations can also indicate a bureaucratic organisation, one that prefers to control rather than to consider. Regulations, and their arbitrary application, can be utilised by staff that know little or nothing about the needs of the bereaved. They can mask an unfeeling and uncaring organisation. The essence of bereavement is to allow people the freedom to express the individuality of death and not to conform to some universal idea or “sameness”. Reducing the scope and extent of regulations requires an increase in staffing expertise. The Charter does not call for a completely unrestricted situation, simply that regulations should reflect a more caring and responsive management.

If regulations are sensible and serve a purpose, they will be supported and not seen as a limitation on rights. Regulations on the safety of memorials and road use are logical and necessary. It is necessary to regulate for neat, tidy grounds and the safety of people working. The prohibition of glass and plastics in cemeteries is based on these items becoming a hazard when mowers are used. It is not based upon aesthetic considerations.

Other subjects, though, pose greater difficulties. The most sensitive area is where regulations arbitrarily set standards of dignity, decency and artistic quality. Not only do they restrict choice, they can also freeze new developments. A good example is the historical tendency to ban the use of wood for memorials. This seemed sensible when graves were sold in perpetuity and wood could last little longer than 100 years. Now that graves are sold for a maximum of 100 years, it would seem sensibly to allow the use of wood, which will naturally degrade over the period of grave rights. By allowing wood, the employment of a sculptor might arise, who would create a more person and community based memorial heritage. Similarly, regulations

for memorial stones have favoured the commercial, uniform and bland memorial design that readily fits into a coloured brochure. This has seriously diminished the artistic quality of cemetery memorials. It has also seen the decline in local employment, as both the stone and much of the memorial work is completed outside local communities.

Regulations often cover the form and type of inscriptions allowed on memorials, which can be controversial. Recently, a dispute arose about the use of language on a memorial. The application to incorporate “mum” and “dad” in an inscription was refused, causing great distress. This type of situation should not arise under the requirements of the Charter. The language used in inscriptions has historically reflected the colloquial use of words. This has always been valuable for research into the changing use of language. Currently, the use of the deceased’s “nickname”, of poetry and of extracts from popular songs has become commonplace in cemeteries. This is very important if it allows the deceased’s partner to place something meaningful, something which brings the deceased “back to life”, through reflection. Restricting this choice, using regulations to formalise every inscription, is not acceptable.

It is worth considering that, in the past, people appear to have passively accepted regulations without question. Currently, people are more aware of their rights and anticipate less, rather than more bureaucracy. It is relatively easy to contest regulations, which cannot be enforced by law. The regulation must be seen as fair and sensible, otherwise the authority or company will experience adverse criticism, particularly from the media. Any media attention about unreasonable regulation tends to reflect poorly on the service provided, and is best avoided.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) You have the right to be given a list of regulations used by your Charter member.
- b) You have a right to be given a written explanation why a particular regulation has been used to restrict or otherwise influence your rights. Where you remain dissatisfied, you can utilise the grievance procedure set out in the Charter.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop a standard list of regulations for use throughout the UK.
- c) Charter members will ensure that regulations allow more artistic and individualistic input, particularly where this may create employment in the community.

Staff and expertise

1 INFORMATION

The involvement of local authorities and private companies in cemetery and crematorium provision dates from the Victorian period. Prior to that date, burial in churchyards was the normal practice. The first cemetery managers were designated as a sexton, which combined manual work with simple administrative duties. Progressively, the post changed to Superintendent and the designation Registrar was subsequently added. The post often expanded to include crematoria as such facilities were opened. The term Manager has gained in recent years and Bereavement Services Manager is the most recent designation. The post has become almost wholly managerial and administrative, except in smaller authorities, where the combined manual/administration post is not unusual.

The staff employed in cemeteries and crematoria vary greatly in ability and competence. A nation-wide standard has never been developed and this has created some anomalies. Many authorities still see the post as principally a manual appointment and offer poor salaries. As these staff are neither managers nor administrators, various elements of the work have to be completed by other staff, often situated in civic buildings remote from the facility. Authorities in this situation have experienced incorrect burials and other such serious errors. No less significantly, casual dress and attitudes, poorly drafted letters and a general lack of expertise can profoundly influence those using the services. In more recent times, such staff have been unable to respond to environmental and social needs related to bereavement and, consequently, such issues may be ignored. With cemeteries in particular, the day-to-day operation may not have been changed since Victorian times. This lack of expertise may be recognised by a reliance on bureaucracy, on regulations and in a fear of embracing new ideas. This has resulted in decrepit cemeteries and a poor service.

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) recognised this lack of expertise and have developed a professional qualification for its members. The full "Diploma" course, which is accredited by BTEC to HNC standard, includes the following subjects however the modular system allows members of staff at all levels to obtain a qualification relevant to their position: -

- Management of Financial Resources
- Organisation and Behaviour
- Crematorium Management including horticulture and conservation
- Cemetery Management including horticulture, conservation and closed churchyards
- Management of Human Resources
- Managing Activities
- Law of Burial, Cremation & Exhumation

On gaining the Diploma candidates can produce a Thesis to achieve Honours.

This is a distance learning course and attendance at an annual seminar and training events provides extra support to those studying.

Although the Diploma has been an important development, it has not been universally adopted as a pre-requisite for all appointments. This is a major disincentive to improved service provision and the promotion of the Diploma qualifications is a major objective for the Institute. Elements of the Diploma should be the minimum qualification and other higher management qualifications should be a natural progression to develop and maintain wider skills. The cost of such expertise is recouped through improved services, better techniques in grounds maintenance and more efficient financial performance. The ICCM attempts to keep managers fully informed of all matters relating to the service through its education and training programmes. More recently the Parliamentary Select Committee recognised the importance of education and training and has suggested the setting of a minimum level of qualification for cemetery and/or crematorium managers.

The ICCM has also established the Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme, which focuses mainly on health and safety but encompasses consideration of the bereaved and customer care in all elements of the courses provided.

Other qualifications have become recognised, such as the Proficiency Certificate for Cremator Technicians organised by the Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme operated by the ICCM. This qualification is now required under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and has greatly improved expertise in this field. The Charter supports the development of other management qualifications and training generally in order to introduce innovative and improved standards of service in the bereavement sphere. Each Charter member is required to enrol at least one member of staff as their Charter representative to the ICCM. It is anticipated that this person will possess or will be studying for the Diploma.

Previously, senior staff have been principally male, with a notable small contingent of women. It is evident that this is changing and in 1994 the number of female students in training exceeded that of males for the first time. This may be recognition that bereavement work is no longer seen as “manual” work, and is suitable for caring men and women. It is also possible that the emotional element of the work is attractive to women, who in the past were prominent in caring for the dead.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to receive a quality service provided by trained and/or qualified staff. Where service standards fail, you have a right to question the level of expertise shown and to receive assurances regarding the ability of those involved.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will promote the employment of qualified staff in senior posts.
- b) Charter members will ensure that training programmes are developed and that staff attain a high level of competence.
- c) Charter members will support the employment of members of all ethnic groups, particularly where the community served is composed of various groups.

Inspection and guiding principles

1 INFORMATION

Many aspects of cremation and, to a lesser degree, burial is unseen and little understood by the community. For this reason, doubts arise about the process and these lead to rumours and misinformed, often malicious, comment. Suggestions of impropriety can further upset the bereaved and leave them feeling uneasy about the service.

To disprove rumours and misinformation, Charter members welcome anyone who wishes to inspect the premises and see, at first hand, exactly what occurs.

The cremation process can be viewed in two ways. The first is whilst services are taking place, when coffins may be seen and the cremators may be in operation. If you consider this upsetting, the second option is to arrange a time when services are not taking place and the cremators are not in operation. During periods of high death rate, such as January, you may find that very few quiet periods are available.

You can inspect by making an appointment, by telephone or post. If you are at the crematorium, you can approach any member of staff, who will arrange, at the first convenient time, for somebody to accompany you on the inspection and describe the process. You cannot make the inspection alone, due to the confidentiality that must be maintained. This is in regard to the cremated remains that are being retained and the actual cremations taking place at that time. You can see the entire process, or check specific elements of the process. This may be a desire to see how the correct identity of each cremation is maintained, that all coffins are cremated and not re-used or that each coffin is cremated separately, etc.

If you wish to inspect the crematorium ground, then specialist grounds maintenance staff may be necessary to give you the information you require. This may need more time to arrange.

Burial is a more open operation, with most of the process taking place outdoors and within sight of any person in the cemetery. Nonetheless, aspects of cemetery design, of grave digging, memorial design and suchlike are less obvious and may be of interest to you. An appointment to inspect can be made by contacting your Charter member. As cemetery management staffing is often low, now that remote contractors do much of the grounds maintenance, you may need to wait for an appointment.

Each cremation and burial is required by law to be registered, either by hand or by computer. These records will be maintained forever.

If you are the applicant for the cremation you can be given a certified copy of the entry in the cremation register upon request. A small charge may apply. This must be done during office hours and can be arranged through your Charter member.

The public does not have a legal right to inspect cremation forms and certificates.

The law relating to the inspection of burial registers and records is different with access being allowed to any person at any reasonable time, free of charge. Should you wish cemetery staff to make searches of registers to assist with research of your family tree then a fee may be applied.

If you have specific enquiry or concern that does not require a formal inspection, you can resolve this by personally visiting your Charter member.

Both burial and cremation facilities can be operated under the Charter “Guiding Principles for Burial and Cremation Services”, which are set out on the following pages. Alternatively, your charter member may be operating a cremation facility under the Code of Cremation Practice issued by the Federation of British Cremation Authorities (FBCA). A copy of this can be obtained from your Charter member. Both the Code and the Guiding Principles are complimentary, except that the latter also relates to environmental issues and extends to burial.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to be offered an inspection of burial or cremation facilities or records at any reasonable time.
- b) It is your right to be given a copy of the “Guiding Principles of Burial and Cremation Services” by your Charter member.
- c) It is your right to inspect burial registers free of charge at any reasonable time.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop greater community awareness of cremation and burial facilities in order to reduce ignorance about the process.

ICCM Guiding Principles for Burial and Cremation

CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

All cremation and burial facilities shall be managed with competence and efficiency, to ensure that the entire bereavement experience occurs without error or insensitivity, and meets the religious, secular, ethnic and cultural needs of the bereaved.

The service shall comply with all statutory and Health and Safety requirements.

SERVICE SENSITIVITY

The burial or cremation of a human body is a highly emotional occasion for those taking part. Each cemetery and crematorium must be managed to create and maintain an atmosphere of solace and respect throughout the entire proceedings. This sensitivity must extend to all staff and contractors working at facilities, through the application of bereavement sensitive specifications.

Members will respond sympathetically to individual funeral needs and shall give a justifiable reason for refusing any specific request.

STAFF

All staff should possess qualifications and undergo recognised training specific to their duties. The following should be seen as minimum requirements:

Cemetery Chargehands/Sextons - Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme (Course 1)
Senior Crematorium Technicians - Cremation Technicians Training Scheme Certificates
Cemetery Manager - ICCM Cemetery Management Certificate
Crematorium Manager - ICCM Crematorium Management Certificate
Senior/Joint Service Managers should be in possession of, or working towards, the full ICCM Diploma.

The appointment of all staff must emphasise the need for proper conduct and demeanour, as well as technical expertise. Staff must act and speak in a manner that recognises the sensitivity of bereavement, both during and outside working hours, and should not accept gratuities.

All staff should be willing to operate flexible working hours to meet the requirements of the service. Pay and conditions of service should be suitably adapted to reflect such flexibility.

All staff should be identified by name badges.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Every Charter member shall minimise the impact of bereavement upon the environment. This should encourage the greater use of earth friendly materials and environmentally friendly practices, particularly in:

General

- Ensuring the use of suitable coffins and containers used for burial or cremation. The use of plastics should be minimised with natural materials encouraged wherever possible. Zinc or lead lined coffins cannot be cremated.
- Employing the use of the most environmentally friendly materials in the maintenance of grounds
- Recycling of green waste from grounds maintenance works
- Recycling, where law permits, of any other material for which permission of the applicant for cremation or burial has been obtained

Burial

- Ensuring the most effective use of land for burial.
- Where possible providing or partnering a provider of woodland burial
- The use of suitable ground for burial so that water borne pollution shall not occur

Cremation

- Emissions to air are of great concern to the public. All Charter members should actively seek to reduce emissions to the air by the provision of suitable abatement equipment at the earliest possible time.
- Promoting the most effective use of energy within the crematorium. This could include consideration of heat exchange units to capture energy that is currently wasted.
- Ensuring the optimum usage of crematorium plant and equipment including longer operational hours.
- Advising that clothing the deceased in clothes made of natural fibre/materials is acceptable whereas plastic, nylon and other synthetic materials are not acceptable due to the impact on the environment via emissions.

INDIVIDUAL DISPOSAL

The importance of human beings as individuals and the manner in which they inter-relate with relatives and friends does not diminish in significance following death. It is important for the bereaved to know that the burial or cremation is individually carried out, and the following requirements must, therefore, be met:-

General conditions

- i) No coffin/container/shroud shall be accepted at a cemetery unless the name of the deceased therein is clearly shown.
- ii) The identity shown on the coffin/container/shroud shall be verified at every funeral.
- iii) If burial is to occur, the body and its coffin/container/shroud shall be placed in the identified grave.
- iv) If cremation is to occur, the body shall be cremated individually and the correct identity shall be maintained throughout the process.
- v) If requested by the Applicant for Cremation or Burial the lid of the coffin or container may be removed for the duration of the chapel service and subsequently replaced prior to the committal (This action cannot be permitted in cases where cause of death is a notifiable disease).

Requirements relating to burial

- i. After the coffin/container/shroud and body have been committed into the grave, they shall not be removed or otherwise disturbed except for lawful exhumation, by licence and/or faculty or by the order of a Coroner.
- ii. Immediately after the mourners have departed the graveside, the grave shall be entirely backfilled and made tidy. This work will be completed on the day of the burial and must not extend overnight.

Requirements relating to cremation

- i) A body shall not be removed from the crematorium after the service of committal, except by order of a Coroner or for some other valid reason.
- ii) The container and the body shall be placed in a cremator and cremation commenced no later than 72 hours after the service of committal. Where cremation may not be carried out on the same day, the Applicant for Cremation shall be notified.
- iii) The coffin or container with the body inside shall not be opened or otherwise disturbed after the committal other than in exceptional circumstances and then only in the presence of and with the permission of the Applicant for Cremation, or for a lawful purpose as directed by a higher authority.
- iv) Once a coffin or container has been placed in a cremator, it shall not be disturbed until the process of cremation is complete.
- v) On completion, the whole of the cremated remains shall be removed from the cremator and reduced to granular form, except where this is specifically not requested, and shall be disposed of or released according to the instructions of the Applicant for Cremation.
- vi) Cremated remains placed in the Garden of Remembrance shall be treated with reverence and respect. If strewn, they should be obscured by soil or brushing. Where

a local practice of strewing in the form of a cross or other pattern has developed, it is acceptable providing it does not result in the unsightly build-up or prolonged visibility of the cremated remains. Cremated remains must be labelled and released in suitable, unused containers, and where sent by registered post or secure carrier, capable of withstanding transit without damage.

COMMERCIALISATION OF PRODUCTS OR RESIDUES OF CREMATION

The products or residues of a cremation shall not be used for any commercial purpose

INSPECTION

Everyone has the right to inspect the crematorium or cemetery during normal working hours, upon application to the manager of the facility.

The ICCM Guiding Principles will be regularly reviewed, and updated where appropriate, to ensure that they remain relevant and meet the changing needs of the bereaved, the environment and the society in which we all live.

Copyright ICCM

Grievance procedure

Any form of service failure during a funeral can have a traumatic effect. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management recognises this fact and the Charter was conceived as a means of reducing and addressing failures. Sadly, things do go wrong or are misinterpreted, and we recognise the importance of taking these instances seriously. If you have a grievance, we ask you to take the following action:

- *Stage 1*
Always complain “on the spot” if you have the opportunity. If you cannot do this yourself, you may be able to use your minister or Funeral Director as your advocate. If you fail to obtain a satisfactory response, move to the next stage.
- *Stage 2*
Contact your Charter member, either by telephone or in writing, and describe your grievance. If you fail to obtain a satisfactory response, move to the next stage.
- *Stage 3*
Put your grievance in writing to the National Secretary (address in Appendix C), who will send an acknowledgement within 7 days. Your grievance will be investigated, by reference to your Charter member or any other relevant person, and a written reply will be sent to you within 4 weeks of the date of acknowledgement. Where the matter is urgent, the response will be immediate, either by telephone or by fax.
- *Stage 4*

If you continue to feel aggrieved, the National Secretary may offer to refer your complaint to an arbitrator. The arbitrator will be appointed by agreement with you.

- *Stage 5*
Whether or not arbitration is agreed, if the matter relates to a local authority, you have the right to refer your grievance to the Local Government Ombudsman in England Wales and Scotland (address in Appendix C). The Local Government Ombudsman can look into complaints only about actions taken by a local authority and that authority should first have had the opportunity to investigate and respond to the complaint.

Appendix A

Information on using a Funeral Director

This Charter is unable to offer you rights and standards related to the use of a Funeral Director. In view of this, information is included to help you understand how funeral directing operates. It will enable you to ask questions appropriate to your needs when you consider the arrangement of a funeral.

Although Charter members can advise you about funeral arrangements, they are not able to recommend a particular Funeral Director. You can obtain details about contacting your local Funeral Directors in telephone directories, newspapers or through your Citizen Advice Bureau or Charter member.

Funeral directing, as a profession, appeared in the latter part of the 1700s. Prior to that date, funerals were organised through individuals, such as a joiner, a gravedigger and the clergy, followed by a churchyard burial. In Victorian times, the commercial involvement in death was developed, and this led to the greater use of the Funeral Director with the hearse, coffin and black attire. The Funeral Director developed the role of organiser, providing the furnishings and the transport to carry out a funeral. A proportion of Funeral Directors are members of professional organisations, who operate a code of conduct, a complaints procedure and provide educational courses relating to their service. The National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) and the Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) are examples of these.

MUNICIPAL FUNERAL SERVICES

Municipal funeral services are available in some parts of the country. They are formed by local authorities, usually contracting the service out to an existing Funeral Director. They offer fixed price funerals, but otherwise follow

traditional patterns. As the funeral is usually sold as a package, price transparency may not be offered. Nonetheless, the cost of the package may be less expensive than with a private Funeral Director. As in all cases, it is essential to obtain quotations before a decision is made.

THE LAW

Common law recognises that funeral consists of a sequence of tasks and events, all of which must be satisfactory. Where even a single element is performed unsatisfactorily by the burial or cremation authority or Funeral Director, the payment of the appropriate part of the funeral account or in fact the whole account may be disputed by the person paying for the funeral.

It would be noted that whoever orders the funeral becomes liable for the funeral costs. In some cases, a friend has organised a funeral only to find that the deceased had no estate or monies. Consequently, they have found themselves liable for the whole cost of the funeral.

PAYING FOR THE FUNERAL

“Which” magazine (February 1995) suggested that most Funeral Directors should be able to supply an estimate of a basic funeral and should not be used if they cannot do so. You should reasonable expect to be given an itemised price list of the components of the funeral, which should include disbursements.

Many people are concerned about their ability to pay for a funeral. Media reports about the high costs of funerals reinforces the perception that funerals are expensive. This worry can be reduced by considering the funeral in advance. This will enable costs to be identified and possibly reduced. The information in this Charter will enable decisions to be made and quotation obtained in advance.

Some people alleviate the worry of paying for a funeral by purchasing a “Funeral Plan”.

If a Funeral Plan is purchased it is necessary to choose a cremation or burial package that meets your needs. These plans need to be considered very carefully, as some of the basic options may not prove sufficient when you actually die. For instance, extra may have to be paid for viewing the body, or embalming if these parts of the funeral were not included in the plan. The plan may also be restricted to the use of a named Funeral Director. The Office of Fair Trading investigated funeral plans in 1994 and has recommended a number of safeguards to protect money paid into such schemes. It is necessary to ensure that the funds are held in trust, with independent trustees.

Funeral Plans may be paid by instalments or by a lump sum payment. This enables the funeral to be paid at current prices, without further worry about escalating funeral costs in the future. Payment can be made through any participating Funeral Director, or direct to “Golden Charter”, “Chosen Heritage” or similar scheme.

The Government has introduced regulations relating to pre-paid funerals with the regulatory authority being the Funeral Planning Authority (FPA). Whilst the FPA is self regulatory it does set a minimum standard for its members and also offers a complaints system. Details of the FPA can be found in Appendix C – useful addresses.

Insurance companies offer policies to cover funeral bills, which you can pay over a number of years. Also, some Funeral Directors will open a joint account with you, or offer other options, to deposit money to pay the funeral account in the future.

If the person responsible for the funeral or their partner is receiving certain benefits, financial help to pay for the funeral may be available from the Social Fund. A priority order has been introduced to establish who should be considered “responsible” for the funeral payments. This may be one or more relatives. No commitment towards paying the funeral should be made until the responsible person (s) has been established.

Good advice on paying for the funeral and about funerals generally can be found in the publications issued by the Benefits Agency or Social Security. These include “help when someone dies” (leaflet FB29) and “What to do after a death” (leaflet D49). Age Concern is prominent regarding funeral advice and offers a fact sheet called “Arranging a funeral”. Other organisations offer help and the local Citizens’ Advice Bureau are a useful source of information. A grant can be obtained for the next of kin of those who at the time of death were paying full national insurance contributions and were below a pensionable age.

Purchasing some elements in advance can reduce the ultimate cost of a funeral. For a burial, a grave can be purchased and a memorial placed prior to death.

Finally, when a person dies in hospital and there is nobody prepared to arrange and pay for the funeral, the Health Authority will fulfil this obligation. Similarly, local authorities have a duty to arrange a burial or cremation of any person who has died in their area. It must appear to the authority that no suitable arrangements for the disposal of the body have been or are being made otherwise than by the authority. The local authority can reclaim expenses from any estate. If there is no estate, a basic funeral will be arranged which may include the use of an unpurchased grave.

DONATIONS AT FUNERALS

Some people are concerned at the excessive expenditure on wreaths and floral tributes at funerals. This is particularly evident in winter when the flowers may be damaged by frost or inclement weather within hours of the funeral. An alternative course is to organise a collection for a named charity, hospice or other deserving cause. Requesting “family flowers” only or “no flowers by request” usually facilitates this. Your Charter member or Funeral Director can provide further details and assistance.

Information on using a Memorial Mason

To ensure that a good purchase is made it is advisable to obtain competitive quotations and be armed with as much information as possible before making this major purchase.

Charter members are encouraged to establish local Memorial Mason's Registration Schemes in order to ensure that only competent and reliable masons carry out work in their cemeteries. Your Charter member should be able to provide you with a list of local Memorial Masons that are registered to the scheme. A registered mason will have signed up to the scheme by making statements of intent to work to nationally accepted standards and to abide by the cemetery regulations etc. Workmanship guarantees are also being encouraged which will cover the safety of the memorial for a defined period.

When you commence obtaining quotations ask the Memorial Masons for details of their workmanship guarantee, memorial insurance and intention to install the memorial in accordance with the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) Recommended Code of Practice. Not all Memorial Masons are in membership of NAMM however most will be aware of the Code of Practice as an increasing number of burial authorities are insisting on compliance with this Code through their cemetery regulations. Should you wish to view this Code of Practice it is available on the NAMM website at www.namm.org.uk

As a memorial is a major purchase and will commemorate the deceased for many years to come it is important to gain as much information as possible before obtaining quotations. Your Charter member will be able to provide you with a copy of the cemetery regulation, list of registered masons and perhaps a leaflet concerning choosing a memorial. All of this information will assist in selecting the memorial that fits with your needs, complies with cemetery regulations and will remain safe and secure into the future.

In the future it is hoped that a National Memorial Mason's Registration Scheme will be established and work is underway to achieve this. For the bereaved this will mean that using a nationally registered mason will ensure the competence of the company and staff has been established via training and certification and inspection of premises and practices. The National Scheme will provide a complaints procedure by which action can be taken through your Charter member should you have cause to complain about your Memorial Mason. A disciplinary procedure for registered Memorial Masons is also included which emphasises the need for the bereaved to employ only registered Memorial Masons.

Appendix B

Information of embalming

Embalming is defined as the preservation of a body from decay, originally with spices and, more recently, through arterial injection of embalming fluid.

Historically, the process is identified with the Egyptians and the mummification of bodies. In fact this complicated and extreme method was abandoned, although in recent centuries ways of preserving bodies has received considerable attention. Varying levels of success were achieved but probably due to expense, they were utilised by very few people.

The current use of the word “embalming” is misleading. The process is generally referred to as hygienic treatment. It is used to improve the visual appearance of the body and to prevent deterioration in the period leading up to the funeral which would make the viewing of the deceased by relatives a less distressing event. It has no long-term preservative value and cannot be compared with the Egyptian concept of preserving bodies.

The decision as to the merits of embalming must lie with the individual although a number of issues should be considered:

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The embalming process involves removing the body fluids and replacing them with a solution of formaldehyde, often containing a pink dye. The body fluids are treated and disposed of via the public sewer. The embalming fluid normally consists of a 2% solution of formaldehyde, an irritant, volatile acid.

Those who have concerns that embalming fluid may pollute the environment have a right to stipulate that this is not carried out on their body after death. Similarly, executors or nearest relatives making funeral arrangements can specify that embalming is not carried out on the deceased.

In some burial schemes, such as woodland burial, all chemicals may be prohibited. This restriction may apply to embalming fluid as well as to horticultural chemicals:-

DO YOU HAVE A CHOICE?

You should reasonably expect to be informed about the embalming process.

If you are opposed to embalming, it may be advisable to expressly forbid it.

Appendix C

Useful addresses (correct at September 2003)

INSTITUTE OF CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM MANAGEMENT

For any enquires regarding Institute activities or Charter grievance procedure contact:

National Secretary
ICCM National Office
City of London Cemetery
Aldersbrook Road
Manor Park
London
E12 5DQ

Tel: 020 8989 4661
Fax: 020 8989 6112
email: Julie@iccm.fsnet.co.uk
Web site: iccm-uk.com

To enquire about local services and issues, approach your Charter member.

CONFEDERATION OF BURIAL AUTHORITIES (CBA)

Robert Coates
Chief Executive Officer
The Gatehouse
Kew Meadow Path
Richmond
Surrey
TW9 4EN
Tel: 020 8392 9487
Fax: 020 8392 2997
email: rncoates@aol.com

The Local Government Ombudsmen

Further information can be obtained from www.lgo.org.uk

The contact numbers below were correct at September 2003)

England

There are three Local Government Ombudsmen in England. Each of them deals with complaints from different parts of the country:

London boroughs north of the river Thames (including Richmond but not including Harrow or Tower Hamlets), Essex, Kent, Surrey, Suffolk, East and West Sussex, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and the City of Coventry: Tony Redmond

Local Government Ombudsman

Millbank Tower

Millbank

London SW1P 4QP

Phone: 020 7217 4620

Fax: 020 7217 4621

London Borough of Tower Hamlets, City of Birmingham, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and the north of England (except the Cities of York and Lancaster):

Local Government Ombudsman

Beverley House

17 Shipton Road

York YO30 5FZ

Tel: 01904 380200

Fax: 01904 380269

London boroughs south of the river Thames (except Richmond) and Harrow; the Cities of York and Lancaster; and the rest of England, not included in the areas of Mr Redmond and Mrs Thomas:

Local Government Ombudsman

The Oaks No 2

Westwood Way

Westwood Business Park

Coventry CV4 8JB

Phone: 024 7682 0000

Fax: 024 7682 0001

Local Government Ombudsman for Wales

Derwen House

Court Road

Bridgend

CF31 1BN

Tel. No. (01656) 661 325

Fax. No. (01656) 673 279

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

23 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7HX

Tel: 0870 011 5378

Fax: 0870 011 5379

Northern Ireland Ombudsman

33 Wellington Place, Belfast BT1 6HN

Tel: 02890 233821

Freephone: 0800 343424

Fax: 02890 234912

**FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE FEDERATION OF BRITISH CREMATION
AUTHORITIES (FBCA)**

The Secretary

41 Salisbury Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3HA

Tel / Fax: 020 8669 4521

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT NATURAL STONE MEMORIALS

National Association of Memorial Masons

27a Albert Street

Rugby

Warwickshire

CV21 2SG

Tel: 01788 542264

Fax: 01788 542276

email: enquiries@namm.org.uk

Website: www.namm.org.uk

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FUNERAL DIRECTING

The National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors

SAIF Business Centre
3 Bullfields
Sawbridgeworth
Herts
CM21 9DB

Tel: 01279 726777
Fax: 01279 726300
email: mervyn@saif.org.uk
Website: www.saif.org.uk

National Association of Funeral Directors

618 Warwick Road
Solihull
West Midlands
B91 1AA

Tel: 0121 711 1343 or 0845 230 1343
Fax: 0121 711 1351
email: info@nafd.org.uk Website: www.nafd.org.uk

British Institute of Funeral Directors

National Office
140 Leamington Road
Coventry
CV3 6JY

Tel: 024 7669 7160
Fax: 024 7669 7159
Email: enquiries @bifd.org.uk

London Association of Funeral Directors

32 Gregories Road
Beaconsfield
Bucks
HP9 1HQ

Tel: 01494 730011
Fax: 01494 680101
email: mkenyon@clara.co.uk

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT EMBALMING

British Institute of Embalmers

Anubis House
21c Station Road
Knowle
Solihull
West Midlands
B93 0HL

Tel: 01564 778991
Fax: 01564 770812
email: enquiries@bioe.co.uk
Website: www.bioe.co.uk

**FOR INFORMATION AND PUBLICATIONS ON DEATH, GREEN BURIAL,
FAMILY ARRANGED FUNERALS, ETC.**

The Natural Death Centre

6 Blackstock Mews
Blackstock Road
London N4 2BT

Tel: 020 7359 8391
Fax: 020 7354 3831
email: ndc@albertyfoundation.org
Web site: www.naturaldeath.org.uk

FOR NON-RELIGIOUS FUNERALS

British Humanist Association

1 Gower Street
London WC1E 6HD

Tel: 020 7079 3580
Fax: 020 7079 3588
email: info@humanism.org.uk
Web site: www.humanism.org.uk

FOR GENERAL INFORMATION AND ADVICE

(Some counselling services may be available)

Age Concern

Astral House, 1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER

Tel: 020 8765 7200
Fax: 020 8765 7211
email: communicationsunit@ace.org.uk
Web site: www.ace.org.uk

The Samaritans

The Upper Mill
Kingston Road
Ewell
Surrey KT17 2AF

Tel: 020 8394 8300

Fax: 020 8394 8301
email: admin@samaritans.org
Web site: www.samaritans.org

CRUSE Bereavement Care

126 Sheen Road
Richmond
Surrey TW9 1UR

Tel: 020 8939 9534
Fax: 020 8940 7638
email: helpline@crusebereavementcare.org.uk
Web site: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk (site gives details of local offices)

**FOR INFORMATION AND ADVICE FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A BABY
OR CHILD**

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS)

28 Portland Place
London W1B 1LY

Tel: 020 7436 7940
Fax: 020 7436 3715
email: support@uk-sands.org
Web site: www.uk-sands.org

The Compassionate Friends

53 North Street
Bristol BS3 1EN

Tel: 0117 966 5202
Fax: 0117 914 4368
email: info@tcf.org.uk
Web site: www.tcf.org.uk

Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths

Artillery House
11-19 Artillery Row
London SW1P 1RT

Tel: 0870 787 0885
Fax: 0870 787 0725
email: fsid@sids.org.uk
Web site: www.sids.org.uk

For Information on Pre-Paid Funerals

Funeral Planning Authority Limited
Harelands
22 Bentsbrook Park
North Holmwood
Dorking
Surrey
RH5 4JN

Tel/Fax: 01306 740878
email: enquiries@funeralplanningauthority.com
Web site: www.funeralplanningauthority.com

Appendix D

Information about the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management

This section outlines the development, structure and purpose of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) who created this Charter.

BACKGROUND

The ICCM was founded in 1912, and still remains the only organisation, for those involved in the specialised services of burial and cremation.

The Institute has now developed such a wealth of specialist knowledge, experience and ability that local authorities, government departments and other organisations regularly seek advice when dealing with matter related to the disposal of the dead. The status and importance of the Institute in the field of public service was recognised in 1958 when the Board of Trade granted a Certificate of Incorporation.

The increasing public recognition of the Institute's work is attributable to the realisation that the proper disposal of the dead is not only a function for preserving the environment but one that greatly contributes to the maintenance of public morale. The public rightly expects that qualified staff should competently manage burial and cremation resources.

The Institute has come a long way since 1913, when a few cemetery superintendents decided there was a need for them to meet regularly to discuss mutual problems and thereby improve the efficiency of their public service. The original intention is still being pursued and developed today, by

members from cemeteries and crematoria right across Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

MISSION STATEMENT

- TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT, ADVANCEMENT AND WELFARE OF OUR MEMBERS
- TO FACILITATE THE BETTER PROVISION, OPERATION, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CEMETERIES, CREMATORIA AND BEREAVEMENT RELATED SERVICES

PRIMARY PURPOSES:

To promote the improvement of cemeteries, crematoria and public services for the disposal of the dead.

To promote the advancement and welfare of people employed in the above undertakings.

To encourage technical and other studies in relation to the above and to improve and develop the technical and general knowledge of the profession.

To provide education and training, including lectures and conferences.

To provide library facilities

To distribute a journal and papers produced by the Institute.

To undertake investigations.

To engage people to act in a technical and advisory capacity.

To distribute trust funds

To promote, support or oppose initiatives (including proposed legislation) relating to burial, cremation and ancillary public services.

THE BADGE

Designed and adopted on 1920, the emblem is of historical significance in the profession of the Institute's members. The centre Fleur-de-lis, a symbol of importance in ecclesiastical history, was an integral part of the arms of the company of the Parish Clerks who were incorporated in the reign of Henry 3rd in the year 1233. The City Clerks at the time had a great deal to do with the Bills of Mortality for London as well as having certain control of the old City Churchyards – hence the connection.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The principal officers of the Institute are the President, Deputy President, and an elected Board of Directors. The Institute also employs three full time officers namely a National Secretary, Training & Development Manager and Office Administrator. A National Treasurer, Honorary Solicitor and Journal Editor are also employed on a part time basis.

Each branch has its own steering group and secretary.

MEMBERSHIP AND BRANCHES

There are eight branches throughout the UK. Each branch arranges regular meetings when members can discuss their work, listen to addresses and view new equipment and apparatus. These meetings are regarded as an extremely important forum.

The membership consists of 3 classifications: Associate (AInstCCM), Member (MInstCCM) and Fellow (FInstCCM).

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

The Institute holds an annual conference which has been designed as a learning opportunity for members and other interested persons. The annual conference supplements other seminars and training events arranged by the Institute.

TRAINING

This is the most important function of the Institute. Distance learning courses, regular training weekends leading to the Diploma, are administered for members in partnership with professional educationalists. These qualifications are recognised by the private sector and by the Local Government Management Board, the Local Authorities National Joint Council and the Scottish Vocational Education Council for promotional purposes. The Institute's Diploma is the passport to senior appointment in the burial and cremation service.

The Institute supervises the training of crematorium technicians who, on passing the prescribed examination, are granted a nationally recognised Certificate of Proficiency.

It is now a statutory requirement for crematorium technicians to be qualified and this course is recognised for this purpose by the Department of the Environment.

The Institute also administers the Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme in conjunction with a professional training college. The scheme provides comprehensive training via several courses for gravediggers, mechanical excavator operators and managers. These courses encompass all health and safety requirements and include consideration for the bereaved and customer care in all elements.

In addition to the above the Institute provides regional training days covering a multitude of disciplines and topics all designed to improve services to the bereaved.

THE JOURNAL

Regular contact with the membership and other organisation, and the dissemination of useful information, is maintained through this quarterly magazine published by the Institute. The Journal is free to Institute members but can be purchased by Burial and Cremation Authorities for distribution to elected members (councillors).

CONSULTANCY SERVICE

The Institute has accredited consultants whose services are available to members and their authorities. Site visits can be made and reports requested by contacting the National Secretary.

ADVERTISING AND RECRUITMENT SERVICE

The institute offers facilities for advertising within the Journal and also a personal service for circulating vacancies within the profession.

CONFEDERATION OF BURIAL AUTHORITIES (CBA)

The Institute formed this organisation in 1995 to represent the interests of burial authorities throughout the UK. Both the Institute and CBA are exploring ways of forging closer links in order to maximise efforts for the benefit of burial and cremation services and those who use them.

Appendix E

The laws and regulations involved with bereavement

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to give an overview of the legal framework covering burial and cremation. It primarily deals with the law applied to cemeteries and crematoria. For more comprehensive information you are advised to obtain a copy of *Davies' Law of Burial, Cremation and Exhumation (6th edition)* ISBN 0 7129 004 X, which is published by Shaw & Sons Limited, Shaway House, 21 Bourne Park, Crayford, Kent, DA1 4BZ. The book has a useful section on funeral arrangements.

Copies of these publications may be held at your local library. The library should also be able to provide copies of relevant statutes, i.e. Acts of Parliament and rules, regulations and orders made under them.

For general advice on the law and local regulations applied to burial and cremation contact your local Charter member, the Manager of your local cemetery or crematorium or the facility where the funeral is to take place. If you are using the services of a Funeral Director he or she should be able to deal with your queries or concerns.

BURIAL

England & Wales

The vast majority of cemeteries are now provided and managed by Local Authorities. Section 214 and 215 of the Local Government Act 1972 make all Local Authorities in England and Wales "Burial Authorities" and provide the main statutory duties and powers for the provision and maintenance of cemeteries. Under the powers contained in the 1972 Act a statutory instrument known as the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 was introduced. The 1977 Order contains the detailed provision for the management of municipal cemeteries in England and Wales.

Scotland

In Scotland cemeteries are provided and managed in accordance with the Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act 1855. Most churchyards in Scotland are operated and maintained by local authorities under the Church of Scotland (Property and Endowment) Act 1925.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland cemeteries are provided and managed under the Public Health (Ireland) Act 1878 and the Burial Grounds Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 whilst the provision of crematoria by local authorities is covered by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions)(Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

Private cemeteries may operate under a specific Act of Parliament and further information should be sought from the cemetery company. In many cases the provisions contained in the Cemeteries Clauses Act 1847 were incorporated into private Acts of Parliament for new cemeteries built thereafter.

CREMATION

Crematoria are provided by Local Authorities and private companies who operate them under the legal requirements set out in the following key statutes and statutory instruments:

England and Wales

- Cremation Acts 1902 and 1952
- Cremation Regulations 1930 (and subsequent amendments)

Scotland

- Cremation Acts 1902 and 1952
- The Cremation (Scotland) Regulations 1935 (and subsequent amendments)

Northern Ireland

- Belfast Corporation (General Powers) Act (Northern Ireland), 1948
- New Towns Act (Northern Ireland) 1965
- Cremation (Belfast) Regulations (Northern Ireland), 1961
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

Appendix F

Tell us what you think

If you are interested in bereavement or wish to comment on any aspect of the Charter, we would like to hear from you:

On the Charter:

- Where you feel the information misleads or needs expanding;
- If you think you are being or are likely to be denied one of your rights;
- Where you feel the targets are poorly defined, or ignored.

On any other bereavement issue:

- We want to know your views so that we can take them into account. We know, from experience, that many people worry about disclosing their feelings on such a personal subject. Also, some people may worry that their complaint or comment may seem too trivial. Others ignore failures that are not of major significance, yet they may be left with a feeling of disquiet. This may relate to a variety of small issues that, when combined, may spoil the experience. If you feel this way, please let your Charter member or the National Secretary (address in Appendix C) know.