

## Welcome to your newsletter

Welcome to the twentieth edition of Eric F. Box News, the newsletter compiled by some of the country's leading experts from the UK funeral industry.

In this edition we look at how concerns for the environment continue to impact our sector, and examine the problem of disposing of floral tributes after cremations and burials. We ask, what are the alternatives?

In our 'Industry Focus' the concerning subject of unclaimed ashes and what happens to them after cremation, falls under the spotlight, and there is also our 'Burials Through Time' slot. In this edition we feature an Iron Age Yorkshire Special!

Our regular 'Royal Burials' feature explores the life and death of Robert the Bruce, and we also feature the concluding part of our look back over the History of Cremation.

We hope you enjoy reading this Autumn newsletter and if we can assist you in any way, please get in touch. Remember, if you have any questions or subjects you would like us to include in future editions, please let us know.

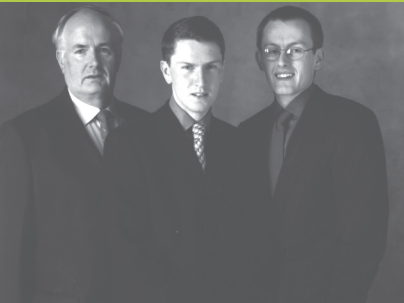
In the event of a death at any time of the day or night, contact us at:

Eric F. Box Funeral Directors Ltd,

Bradford Road, 3 Station Road,  
Dewsbury, WF13 2EW Ossett, WF5 8AB

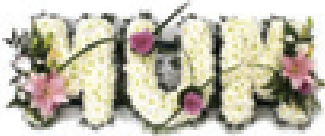
Tel: (01924) 465402 Tel: (01924) 271612

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## Floral Tributes Lead To Eco Concerns

The current trend in everything eco is now having even more impact on the funeral industry, with floral tributes being the current target.



Taking flowers to funerals plays a big part in the grieving process in Western and Christian culture, and few people would want to curtail the tradition.

However, the growing cost to industry professionals of disposing of bouquets, floral tributes and bunches of flowers is now causing concern.

Edward Box said: "It is estimated that the man-hours involved in separating the materials, including ribbons, oasis and wrappings, combined with removal fees and taxes, costs between £4.3m - £7.4m each year.

"If the wrappings and containers used in floral tributes were biodegradable, there would be no need for separating them, producing an annual saving of more than 40%".

### BREAKTHROUGH

Smithers-Oasis, the leading manufacturer of foam products for the floral and horticulture industries, has developed a foam base that breaks down one month after coming into contact with

water. Rarely used in the UK at the moment, they are growing in popularity in Europe.

Edward added: "If this sort of eco product were used more widely in Britain, it would not only save millions, but would go a long way to protecting the environment. Here at Box's we fully support eco-friendly funerals, and will continue to promote them increasingly".



## The History of Cremation - Conclusion

With cremation legally clarified in England during the late 19th century, the final challenge for pro cremation campaigners was the issue of suitable coffins, transportation and disposal of cremated remains.

The earliest recorded cremations used solid elm or oak coffins with cashmere linings, but in 1891, six years after Woking's first cremation, Sir Henry Thompson, founder of the Cremation Society of England, recommended that "a light pine shell" would be the best receptacle for the purpose of cremation.

He felt this was better than a large, ornate coffin because, sometimes, it was proving difficult to separate the ashes of the coffin from those of the deceased.

### TRANSPORTATION

Transportation was also another concern. At approximately 24 miles outside London, Woking was not the most convenient location for the growing number

of cremations and, in the early days, the journey by horse hearse was both expensive and time-consuming.



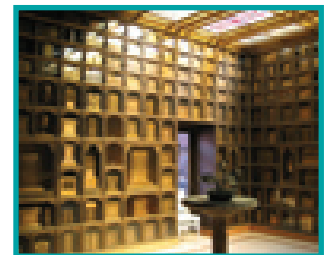
However, things began to improve as the popularity of cremation increased. A funeral train was established by the London Necropolis Company in 1887, linking Waterloo station directly with the cemetery at Woking. A train leaving at 9:30am was sufficient for an 11:00am cremation.

Finally, in terms of disposing of a deceased's ashes, there were two alternatives - retention in a columbarium, or burial in the earth. A columbarium is a place for the respectful and, usually, public storage of urns holding a deceased's cremated remains. If such remains were buried in

a cemetery in the 19th century, miniature gravestones were usually erected.

### FULL CAPACITY

As time passed, crematoria opened in Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow, and funeral directors were soon offering urns alongside caskets. However, by 1924, the burial of ashes had become unpopular and columbaria were nearing full capacity.



Today's preference to scatter ashes of loved ones stemmed from this point in the history of cremation, which is where our feature concludes. We hope you have found our series both interesting and informative.

## Royal Burials: Robert The Bruce (1274 – 1329)

When Mel Gibson burst onto our screens in the 1995 film *Braveheart*, there were riots in some Scottish cinemas as the names Robert the Bruce and William Wallace tripped off the tongue of every proud nationalist north of Hadrian's Wall!

But who was Robert the Bruce and why did the film raise such passions between the Scots and the English?



A distant relation of the Scottish royal family, Robert I was the heroic King of Scots who secured Scotland's independence from England. He was born on 11 July 1274 at Turnberry Castle in Carrick, Ayrshire, into an aristocratic Scottish family.

In 1296 King John Balliol was forced to abdicate by Edward I and there followed a period when there was no King in Scotland for 10 years.

Robert supported William Wallace's eventual uprising against the English, but after Wallace was defeated, Bruce became a joint Guardian of Scotland alongside John Comyn, Balliol's nephew.

But a few weeks before his coronation, Robert killed his greatest rival for the crown - his joint Guardian - in a Dumfries church. After that he was forced to flee by Edward I, but he eventually called a Parliament on 17th March 1309, clearly exhibiting to the English by that action that he was now, effectively, King of Scotland.

Returning to his country, Robert waged a highly successful guerrilla war against the English and at the Battle of Bannockburn

in June 1314 defeated a much larger English army under Edward II, confirming the re-establishment of an independent Scottish monarchy.

In his fifties Robert grew increasingly ill and realised on his deathbed, that he would never fulfill his solemn vow to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Robert died on 7th June 1329 at the manor of Cardross, Dunbartonshire and was buried at Dunfermline Abbey.

In the year following Robert's death, his faithful friend, James Douglas, set out for the Holy Land carrying the monarch's heart with him in a silver casket.

### "GO FIRST AS THOU HAST ALWAYS DONE"

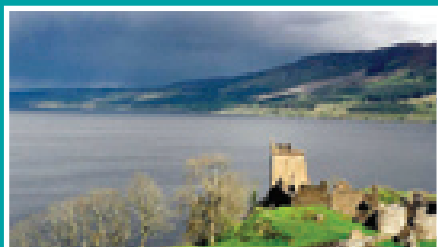
Unfortunately, the heart only reached Spain, where Douglas threw it deep into the melee proclaiming "Go first as thou hast always done" during fighting with the Spanish allies.

Douglas was killed in the ensuing fighting and his body was returned to his native Scotland. Sir William Keith of Galston carried the heart of Robert the Bruce back to Scotland, where it was finally laid to rest at the Abbey of Melrose.



## Anonymity For The Forgotten

Amazingly surviving relatives often fail to collect the cremated ashes of their loved ones. Some would argue that this is unforgivable, however, earlier this year, the unclaimed ashes of 17 people, which had been stored for up to 40 years, were scattered on Loch Ness in Scotland.



They were the remains of people who were cremated between 1968 and 1993 and believed to have hailed from the Inverness area. This is not an isolated case. It is estimated that in the UK alone, around 80,000 urns of ashes go uncollected each year.

Andrew Box, who is responsible for the collection of the cremated remains at Box's, said: "It is hard to believe that so many urns go unclaimed. Having witnessed the care and coordination a family puts into planning a funeral for their loved one, it seems very odd not to collect the remains afterwards. I can only assume that, sadly, most are the ashes of people without living relatives, such as elderly residents of nursing homes."

## BURIALS THROUGH TIME: THE IRON AGE

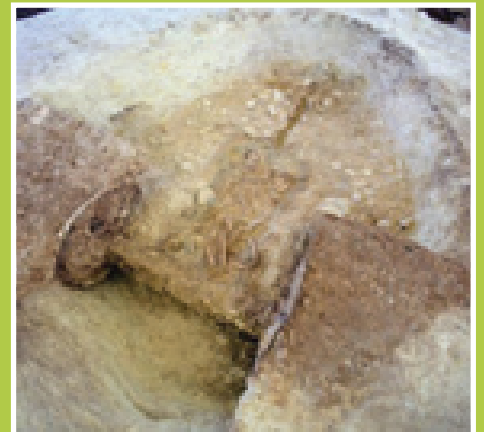
Channel 4's Time Team would have been proud of a find in West Yorkshire that brought the Iron Age to life in the sleepy village of Ferry Fryston near Castleford just five years ago.

That's when a rare and nationally significant Iron Age chariot burial was discovered as work was taking place on the A1(M) link road.

### UNEARTHED

It was only the twentieth such burial to be discovered in the UK - all of them unearthed in East Yorkshire.

The chariot at Ferry Fryston had been placed in a large oval pit in the centre of a square ditched-enclosure. The remains comprised of two iron wheels and an axle, alongside a number of well-preserved bronze and iron objects, including a horse harness.



Remains of an Iron Age Chariot Burial

The skeleton of an adult male was found with the chariot box. An upper ditch contained the bones of around 250 cattle, initially thought to be the remains of a huge feast that took place soon after the burial, demonstrating the deceased man's importance.

However, subsequent tests showed the bones dated from the time of the initial Iron Age burial through to the second century AD, indicating repeated visits to this one site over five centuries.

A unique group of people centre on the Yorkshire Wolds and known by modern archaeologists as the Arras culture, are thought to have performed chariot burials to represent the final rites of elite individuals of the middle Iron Age. They remain one of the rarest and most intriguing forms of burial rites known in Britain.

The Iron Age in Britain covers the period circa 700 BC to 43 AD, between the Bronze Age and the Roman period. The working of iron gradually spread throughout the country and was used to produce weapons and tools, as well as larger objects such as chariots.