



PRESS INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF ALLIED AND INDEPENDENT FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Funerals: From Taboo To To-do

Time was when people avoided walking into a funeral home unless they have to. A combination of "Don't worry – it might never happen", and superstitions over tempting fate, have kept many from making themselves better informed about one of life's few remaining certainties. However, this taboo is now starting to become a little frayed at the edges, thanks in part to the recent National Bereavement Awareness Day initiative organised by the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) during November 2008.

For Philip Peppard of Langport & District Funeral Services, Somerset, being able to answer questions in a more relaxed atmosphere highlighted the way that people are now far more open to the idea of choice. "We had three forms of transport on display, a horse-drawn hearse, a Mercedes motor hearse and a trike with hearse trailer – and everyone was going 'Wow' at this trike, because it was different".

This increase in choice can be seen as the response to an increasing desire to celebrate a life rather than just mourn a passing. But it is also about the ability express individuality – whether in the form of choosing a pre-printed design to go onto a Colourful Coffin, or picking the most appropriate flowers to be woven into a Somerset Willow casket.

Yet, planning a funeral in advance – whether informally or through a funeral plan – has still some way to go before making it onto most peoples' to-do lists. "Like a will, it is something that you put off and put off – but as anyone knows who has been involved with pre-payment plans, it saves the family from an awful lot of distress later on", says James Tovey of Tovey Brothers in Newport, South Wales.

The fear of the unknown is of course still there. As Ray Palmer of M. Lucking and Sons in Chelmsford, Essex, notes "People do not know what to do. They are suddenly faced with a situation that they have never had to deal with before". However, by using events like the Awareness Day to build bridges with those whose job brings them into contact with the recently-bereaved, the role of funeral directors such as Lucking can be better understood and communicated to the next of kin.

As CEO of SAIF Alun Tucker explains, "Take away the top hat and frock coat, and underneath, the funeral director is a professional in his or her field just like any other. For taxation advice you go to an accountant, a solicitor for legal advice – so why should paying a visit to your local funeral director be thought of as any different?"

Ends

Image Caption: "SAIF: Working to make bereavement more bearable"

Images and further information at: <http://www.aardvarkpr.co.uk/downloads.htm>

Editors contact: Francis Samish Aardvark Associates tel. 01308 897 911
email: south@aardvarkpr.co.uk

Company contact: SAIF tel. 0845 230 6777

Please note that this document is for information only and is non-contractual;
both Aardvark Associates and SAIF decline all liability in the case of omissions or errors.