

Life

 Funeral Partners

in the community
with Funeral Partners
Issue 15 | Spring 2023



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Sam Kershaw

Chief Executive Officer

Sam has more than 40 years' experience in the funeral profession, having worked his way up from Trainee Funeral Director to senior management. He joined Funeral Partners in 2016 as Chief Operations Officer and two years later took over as CEO.

“

After the restrictions we have all faced over the past few years, 2022 brought new challenges and momentous events. The impact of the tragic conflict in Ukraine continues to be felt across Europe and beyond, our health services are again facing critical levels of demand and the cost-of-living crisis is affecting most of us in the UK, both professionally and personally.

The death of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II put a strong focus on the importance of coming together as a nation, and as individuals, to share in our sadness and to celebrate her remarkable life. Her state funeral was so different to that of her late husband Prince Philip that was so sadly impacted by covid restrictions but it is a reminder to everyone that traditional funerals serve a real purpose in allowing people to grieve.

During 2022, we have focused on our policies around equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure we provide the best possible environment for each individual within our Funeral Partners family and that we serve families from all backgrounds sensitively and professionally. You can read more about the support we provide on pages 16 and 17.

As we look ahead into 2023, we are moving forward positively after responding to some of the challenges our own industry has been facing. We secured Financial Conduct Authority

regulatory approval to sell our Choice Funeral Plans in July: we are now a leader in a market of just 26 regulated companies.

In exciting news, 2023 will see us launch our first TV campaign promoting Choice Funeral plans across 6 trial brands, using light-hearted humour, focusing on the benefits of buying a funeral plan from a locally respected and trusted funeral home. You can read about the adverts and why it might be helpful to consider a pre-paid funeral plan on pages 9-12. To watch the adverts visit our website.

We have also successfully grown our business over the past 12 months, welcoming ten highly respected family funeral businesses across England and Scotland into our network.

We have opened new funeral homes in Godalming and Woking in Surrey; in Newtownabbey, near Belfast and in Leeds and Merseyside. We are planning several more new premises to extend the respected services of some of our family brands to new communities.

At this uncertain time economically, I am particularly proud of the work of our teams to support their local communities. There are some great examples of our branches becoming drop-off points for items for the homeless and hard-up families, and supporting local and national charities, on pages 6 and 7.



In Northern Ireland, James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors have allocated some of their local marketing budget to launch a £20,000 community fund last year, which has been divided between nearly 20 local grassroots projects around Belfast.

Our goal is to be the best local Funeral Director in every area and community we serve, through continually seeking improvements in the quality and standards of our service and the choice we give to families.

This includes investing in technology, such as livestreaming facilities in some of our service rooms to allow mourners to join funeral services remotely. We have also introduced electric hearses in three areas, for families who wish to make more eco-friendly choices. Read more about our new electric hearses on page 3 and 8.

“ Thank you to our teams and to all those across the UK who support and work with us. As we continue to face challenging times, we remain committed to providing the highest quality service we can to families and communities. ”

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HAT-TRICK OF ELECTRIC HEARSEES HIT THE ROAD

Electric vehicles have launched across the UK to provide an alternative option for families

A trio of electric hearses is now giving families alternative options for the funerals of their loved ones.

The elegant Nissan Leaf vehicles, are now on the road across Belfast, Torbay and the Midlands with **Torbay & District Funeral Services, WH Painter Funeral Directors** and a number of Funeral Partners brands in Northern Ireland.

The move is part of the aim to reduce Funeral Partners' carbon footprint, while giving families more choice for their loved one's last goodbye.

David Salsbury, Funeral Service Operative at **Torbay & District Funeral Services** has been driving the Leaf for several weeks now, and said the quieter vehicle was a real plus.



He said: "It's nice to drive – very mobile and nimble which helps with the sharp corners and tight bends which are quite common around here.

"It's very quiet. When you pull up to a crematorium it feels very dignified and there is a genuine sense of serenity because of the lack of noise.

"We're seeing more and more interest in funeral choices that may have a reduced impact on the planet and I am sure the Leaf will be very popular here.

"People like to feel they are making a difference in small ways with the choices they make every day that may be more environmentally sustainable."



ELECTRIC HEARSEES AND THE START OF OUR PLAN TO CUT CARBON EMISSIONS

Funeral Partners has teamed up with leading carbon accounting provider Normative to assess our environmental impact.

This work will allow carbon emissions to be tracked and help evaluate where Funeral Partners can cut carbon emissions in order to help tackle climate change.

Change & Compliance Director George Meudell said: "A key part of our Environmental, Social and Governance strategy (ESG) is environmental.

"We are committed to understanding the true impact of our business activities from a carbon emissions perspective.

"Because of this, we have commenced a carbon reduction programme with Normative, a leading carbon accounting provider.

"Their carbon accounting software system will help us to accurately measure our carbon emissions.

"Over time, as we commit to more and more activity such as investment in electric vehicles as opposed to diesel/petrol, we can plot our progress.

"Working with their climate experts, we will use these insights to manage and reduce our emissions

"The process is underpinned by a science-backed methodology aligned to the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and a software-based system which enables us to track our emissions year-by-year.

"We are excited to work with Normative to create these commitments, which will form part of our ongoing ESG strategy."

WELCOMING BUSINESSES OLD AND NEW TO THE FUNERAL PARTNERS FAMILY

A well respected family funeral business has joined the Funeral Partners family, while another brand new business has also been launched.

Eaves Funeral Service in Whitehaven, Cumbria, has strengthened our network in the north of England, while **Godalming Funeral Service** has been launched in Surrey with the help of a universally respected Funeral Director.

There's also good news for **John Gray & Co** in Holywood, Northern Ireland, who have doubled the size of their funeral home to better serve the community.

Godalming Funeral Service

New business opening with well known local Funeral Director

A Funeral Director who has helped thousands of families during a near 40-year career is delighted to be carrying on serving his community in the newly formed **Godalming Funeral Service** in a building which will be lovingly restored to its former glory.

Paul Weightman is managing the new funeral home which has merged with neighbouring funeral brand James & Thomas Funeral Directors, based in Woodbridge Hill, Guildford, to create two branches under the Godalming brand name, in the Surrey area, supporting the growing needs of local families.

The second brand new branch will be based in Meadow Croft, Bridge Road, Godalming, which was a funeral home Paul had previously worked in before it closed in 1990. Since then, it has been used as a chiropractor's before being vacated.

The same team and quality service in Woodbridge Hill will be available for the people of Meadow Croft, Surrey, led by the well-known and respected local Funeral Director.

Paul, 55, knew he wanted to be a Funeral Director before he left school, with the seed of his plans being planted when he attended his grandfather's funeral aged 15. He has enjoyed a lengthy



Paul Weightman outside Godalming Funeral Service

career in the local area, arranging and conducting hundreds of funerals each year, serving his clients and their loved ones with empathy, respect and exemplary standards of care.

He is now looking forward to his new role as Senior Funeral Director at Godalming Funeral Service, working across both the Guildford and Godalming branches, continuing to support his local community and surrounding areas

"I have been privileged to meet and help thousands of families and have met some truly wonderful people during my 39 years in the industry," he said.

"I enjoy the job and always have – you get immense satisfaction from it when you can bring some light and positivity to people's difficult times.

"After the refurbishment has completed it will be a fitting nod to the past to be back working in that building serving bereaved families.

"I look forward to getting back out into our communities and supporting our local places of worship, businesses and families."

To find out more about the branch opening and community activity visit godalmingfuneralservices.co.uk



Paul Weightman in Godalming

Eaves Funeral Service

Respected business helping people at the heart of Cumbria

Set up more than six decades ago, **Eaves Funeral Service** is the latest funeral business to join Funeral Partners and are delighted to be able to keep their own unique identity.

William Eaves – better known as Billy – and his business partner Derek Crosby launched the venture in November 1961 which has been serving the community in Whitehaven, Cumbria, ever since.

The firm has always been a family affair with the team now including Billy's son Philip Eaves and son-in-law Michael Jolly who are staying on as Business Principals. Billy himself is now taking a well-deserved retirement at the age of 81.

Michael said: "The name Eaves has become synonymous in the area with funerals.

"People will still call for Billy Eaves, even though he hasn't conducted a funeral since 2015."

The family connections run even deeper at Eaves Funeral Service with Billy's father, Billy Snr, helping out in the early years, his brother Richard working for 20 years as a Funeral Director and his wife Margaret running the administration



Philip Eaves, Michael Jolly and Julia Jolly

for a long time. His daughter Julia – Michael's wife – then took over from her mother as Office Manager.

"For us, working with Funeral Partners will help safeguard the future of the business," Michael added.

Sam Kershaw, Funeral Partners CEO, said: "It has been a true family affair at Eaves with two generations working in the business over the years establishing its impeccable reputation for value and high standards, deep rooted at the heart of the Whitehaven community.

"We welcome the team to our family of funeral homes and will work together to respect their good name and grow the business to ensure their family legacy lives on."

John Gray & Co Funeral Directors

Busy branch expands and refurbishes to offer improved funeral home for families

John Gray & Co Funeral Directors have extended their funeral home into a previously empty shop next door to offer grieving families a more comfortable and private space when attending the branch.

The official reopening of the newly extended home in Hollywood High Street was marked with a celebration attended by Stephen Dunne – the local Member of the Legislative Assembly.

The move will allow their dedicated team to take on more funerals and allow visitors extra space when they come into the home to arrange a service or to visit a loved one.

In order to complement the overhaul in the new part of the building, their original premises has also been refurbished to match, creating a comfortable and calming environment.

Senior Funeral Arranger Barbara Wilson said: "The expansion has been a major talking point in the town, and it has been very well received.

"We now have more space, with increased privacy for families, and we will continue to offer the same high-quality standard of care to all our clients."



James Brown of James Brown and Son Funeral Directors, Funeral Arranger Barbara Wilson, Regional Development Manager Julian Hodgkinson, Branch Development Manager Emma Moore and Stephen Dunne MLA

Julian Hodgkinson, Regional Development Manager for Northern Ireland, added: "This is something which has been in the pipeline for a long time, and it is great to see it come to fruition.

"We now have four rest rooms, a private arrangement room rather than one which was open plan and a private space for families to gather outside the rest rooms.

"Families now have the opportunity to spend more time with their loved ones in a welcoming and comforting environment."



Funeral Partners *in the community*

To find your local branch visit
funeralpartners.co.uk

Raising awareness around baby loss and bereavement

The teams at **John Blenkiron and Sons** and **W. Storey Funeral Service** showed their support for Baby Loss Awareness Week with a pink and blue tribute and kind donations to hospitals.

People in Richmond saw John Blenkiron and Sons Funeral Directors lit up in pink and blue to show its support during the national awareness campaign.

Rebekah Taylor, Funeral Director, said: "We hoped turning our beautiful funeral home pink and blue would spark conversations about baby loss and give local bereaved parents and families an opportunity to talk about their precious babies.

"After my own daughter died in 2018 from complications following her birth, this cause has become very dear to my heart. We have cared for many bereaved parents who have lost their child or baby. This is a way for us to show them support and let them know we think of them often."

Baby Loss Awareness Week explored the theme of Stepping Stones and how someone whose baby has died finds themselves on a new path they never expected to be on.

The team at **W. Storey Funeral Service** in Guisborough have donated dozens of knitted cribs for babies who have sadly died prematurely to help grieving families.

The tiny beds are used when parents spend precious moments with their babies who have died. They can ensure they look comfortable and are treated with the dignity they deserve.

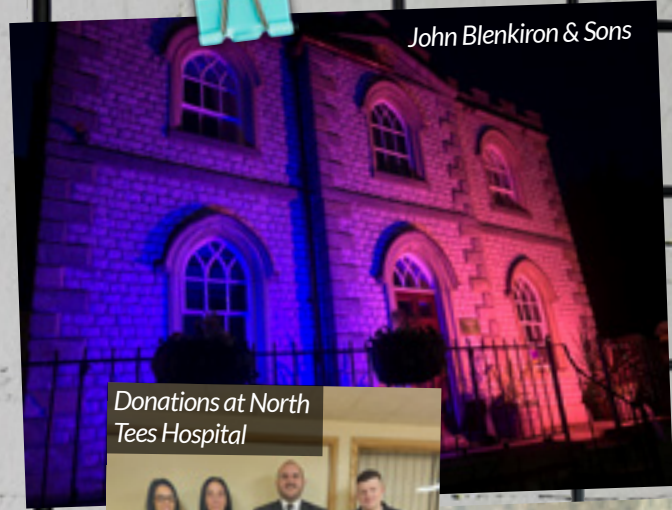
Now 100 of the cribs have been shared between North Tees and The James Cook University Hospital with W. Storey also holding several more which will be used when arranging babies' funerals.

The team at W.Storey started with one person making a crib, before launching social media appeals for wool, crib bases and people willing and able to knit cribs.

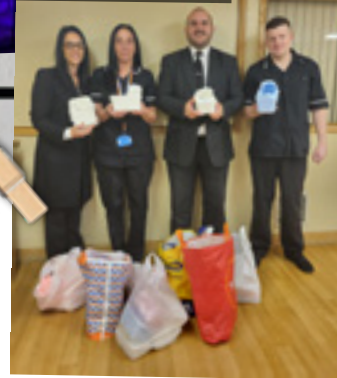
Several yards of wool have been donated, and one kind visitor to the funeral home spent £50 on containers to ensure the project could go ahead.

Funeral Arranger Francesca Capaldi said: "These little cribs do make such a difference to the parents – I've seen it first-hand. We are grateful that we are able to help families when coping with the loss of a baby."

For more information or support visit <https://babyloss-awareness.org//>



Donations at North Tees Hospital



Rebekah Taylor with Baby Loss Memory Board



National
Bereavement
Service

Proud to be working in association
with Funeral Partners

0808 164 2239

Helping people through difficult times

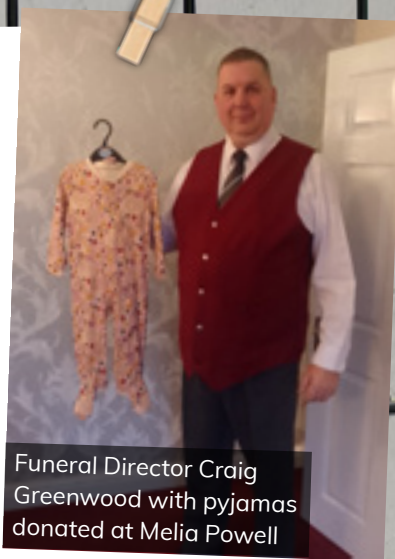
The kind-hearted team at **Melia Powell Funeral Service** supported two local charities by collecting useful items for people who needed help during the winter months.

Their branch in Sandbeds, Keighley, was a drop-off point for Parents of Pre-Loved Items (POPI) – a baby bank which provides items for youngsters aged up to five-years-old – and Homeless not Hopeless – a charity dedicated to assisting those who don't have a place they can call home.

POPI were asking for new children's nightwear as part of their Winter Pyjama Appeal.

And for Homeless not Hopeless, donations of warm gloves and hats, toiletries, drink cartons, snacks or supermarket vouchers were needed to support homeless people.

Funeral Director Craig Greenwood said: "They're two completely different causes but both fantastic in their own way – we were pleased to be able to help support people who might find the winter months difficult."



Funeral Director Craig Greenwood with pyjamas donated at Melia Powell

Getting people talking about mental health

Funeral Partners Operations Manager Carl Tate spent an entire week with a 5kg weight strapped to his wrist to raise vital charity funds and awareness around mental health.

The Medicine Ball Challenge sees participants cuff a 3kg medicine ball – and 2kg chain – to themselves for seven days.

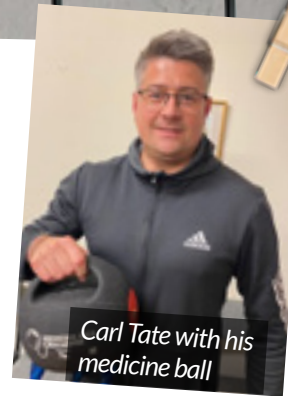
The idea of the nationwide initiative is that the ball is a physical, visual, and tangible representation of the invisible burden of mental health.

Carl, 38, was only allowed to remove the chain for driving, sleeping, showering and when he was conducting funeral services for **Daren Persson Funeral Services** and **John Blenkiron and Sons**.

He raised more than £350 from the challenge which will be split between two charities, Combat Street and ABF – The Soldiers' Charity.

"It was really difficult – harder than I thought it was going to be – simple things you take for granted like writing emails and other small tasks are really difficult with the medicine ball on.

"It helped strike up a few conversations, which is exactly the point."



Carl Tate with his medicine ball

Walking over hot coals for charity

John Roach, Business Principal at **John Roach Funeral Directors**, put his mind over matter for a toe-tingling challenge organised by Revive MS Support – a charity which supports people living with Multiple Sclerosis – by walking over fire and broken glass.

The Glasgow-based organisation has offered support to John's wife Audrey following her own MS diagnosis in 2009.

John took on not one, but two walks across the hot coals after being convinced to take part by his other half.

"I'll admit there was a little bit of trepidation, but fortunately everything went well and there was no harm done," he said.

"Several days after, I could still feel it on my feet, but fortunately it didn't hurt."

Individually, John raised £655 for the cause, Revive MS, with the team bringing in a total of more than £16,000. A great effort all round.

Iain McWhirter, CEO, Revive MS Support said: "I'm so grateful to John for taking part in this incredible challenge for Revive and raising such a fantastic amount in sponsorship. As a charity we rely on our amazing fundraisers to ensure we can continue delivering our lifeline services to people affected by MS."



John Roach Fire Walk

Picture credit - Revive MS Support, photography by Craig Young

THE FIRST OF A NEW STATE OF THE ART ELECTRIC HEARSE WILL BE HEADING TO FUNERAL PARTNERS

Funeral Partners has become the first funeral services company to invest in a new state-of-the-art electric vehicle based on the Ford Mustang Mach-E.

Coleman Milne will be supplying the first Mustang hearse and limousine from their new Etive range.

Funeral Partners Chief Executive Sam Kershaw got his first look at the brand-new Ford Mustang Mach-E electric hearse during a special showcase at the British Motor Museum.

Sam said: "We've made a commitment to cut our carbon footprint, and this is another step in our planning, this vehicle and our other electric vehicles will help give families other options and is also an impressive and unique transportation for a loved one's final journey."

"The electric hearses we have already introduced to our fleet have proved popular, and I am sure these luxury options will be just as well-liked."

"I'd like to thank everyone at Coleman Milne for their fantastic work, and I can't wait to receive the first model and see these in action at one of our funerals."

Graham Clow, National Sales Director at Coleman Milne said: "We're so pleased Funeral Partners have ordered these fantastic vehicles."

"The excellent, longstanding relationship that we have with Ford enabled us to model the range on its Mach-E platform."

"The Mach-E is the perfect base for a comfortable, quiet and respectful hearse and limousine, while also providing Funeral Directors at Funeral Partners with all the benefits and innovations found in today's electric vehicles."



Graham Clow and Sam Kershaw

Much Loved's 15th anniversary sees them fly past £125million raised – with more than £2.6m from Funeral Partners clients

MuchLoved – the charity which allows families to set up beautiful tribute pages, funeral notice information and collect charity donations online in memory of their loved ones – are celebrating a double milestone.

They have recently marked their 15th anniversary and have smashed through the £125million raised barrier.

Funeral Partners are proud to have supported them over the years, with their clients, friends and families raising more than £2.6million in 2022 and £8.8million overall since beginning their partnership in 2015.

This includes a mammoth £622,844 for Cancer Research UK, nearly £350,000 for Woking & Sam Beare Hospices and £342,000 for the British Heart Foundation.

The top branches for client fundraising are **Woking Funeral Service** (£657,427), **Miles & Daughters Funeral Directors** (£537,111) and **James & Thomas Funeral Directors** (£380,993).

Kelly Hailou, Marketing Director at Funeral Partners said: "We really value the work we do with MuchLoved and it is incredible to see how much has been raised by our clients, friends and families."

"The money will have made a huge difference and I hope we can continue this partnership for many years to come."

Jonathan Davies founded MuchLoved in honour of his brother Phillip, who died in 1995, and mother Pamela who lost her battle with cancer just three years later. It became a registered charity in



muchloved

2007 with a mission to help people battle with grief.

He said: "I am still as passionate as ever. It's been a lot of work, a lot of strain, but also a lot of joy and fun. I'm so lucky to have such a fantastic team that put their heart and soul into it."

For more information visit muchloved.com

NOW COULD BE A GREAT TIME TO PLAN AHEAD

As we head into Spring, now could be a great time to plan ahead

A new season inspires many of us to start making new plans. But most of these plans don't look much further than the year ahead.

This year may be the time for some longer-term financial planning, including considering a pre-paid funeral plan. According to the Sun Life Cost of Dying report 2023, only 18% of people in the UK have prepaid for their funeral. This has increased by 3% since 2021. The total average cost of a basic funeral, professional fees and send-off in 2022 increased by 3.8% since the previous year. And there has been an increase in personal borrowing to cover the cost of a loved-one's funeral.

Arranging a funeral for a loved one can be a stressful time, especially if the deceased had never discussed their plans or wishes, it can be difficult as all you want to do is make their final send off a special and memorable day to celebrate their life.

A pre-paid funeral plan allows you to record your personal wishes, so you can plan all the details of your funeral and the service ahead of time including; location, hymns, readings, music, types of flowers, charity to collect donations in your name, vehicles or personalised special touches and may also reduce the financial burden.

Does your next-of-kin know whether you'd prefer to be buried or cremated? Should the occasion be formal and traditional, an upbeat celebration of life or something quirky which reflects your personality and interests? You can nominate a Representative who would be informed about your funeral plan and have a record for them to keep in a safe place, for when the time comes.

The good news for anyone considering buying a funeral plan is that, in July 2022, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) started regulating the pre-paid funeral plan industry, which makes your money safer than ever and sets out clear rules about what information you must be given – so you know exactly what you are paying for. All plan providers are now authorised and regulated by the FCA.

With a Choice pre-paid funeral plan, you can prepay for certain elements of your funeral in advance and fix the cost of the Funeral Directors Services, protecting you from the risk of these rising. Voluntary contributions can be made towards third party fees, such as the crematorium fee, or additional products and services, such as floral tributes or even the wake.

Funeral Partners' pre-paid funeral plan is called Choice, provided by Alternative Planning Company Ltd. More than 500 team members across our network of over 230 funeral homes in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, have been trained to offer the plan, ensuring you understand exactly what is and isn't included.

Why buy a Choice funeral plan?

All Choice pre-paid funeral plans include:

- Funeral Director services including assistance with legal and administrative arrangements
- Collecting the deceased from a location within 25 miles of the nominated funeral home
- Care and preparation of the deceased in professional facilities
- Use of the Funeral Director's Chapel of Rest, or private Rest Room, to spend time with the deceased during opening hours

- An oak-effect foil veneered coffin
- A hearse to take the deceased to the service, crematorium or cemetery (within 25 miles)
- Funeral Director and up to four pall bearers to accompany and attend service
- Online memorial tribute web page, including option of charitable donations

Additional services such as embalming and use of a limousine for family members can also be added to the plan.

What a funeral plan doesn't include are the costs beyond the Funeral Director's control, these are the third party fees paid on your behalf, as well as additional products and services:

- Cremation or burial fees, plot etc
- Fees for doctors, if coroner not involved
- Ministers, officiants, or celebrants
- Flowers, Order of service, ashes caskets, funeral stationery
- Venue hire, decorations or catering for a wake

You can make additional voluntary contributions at the time of purchasing your plan to help your family towards these costs.

Depending on the amount of voluntary contributions you make, this amount may or may not be sufficient to pay for Third Party Fees and Additional Products and Services. Additional costs may need to be paid for when the Funeral Plan is Redeemed. Prices will be charged at the prevailing rate at the time of Redemption. T&Cs apply, these can be found online at choiceplan.co.uk/about-choice/plan-terms/ alternatively you can request a copy by calling 0808 2586 160.

Choice Funeral Plans are provided by Alternative Planning Company Ltd which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Funeral Partners Ltd is an appointed representative of APCL. Both APCL and Funeral Partners are part of the Funeral Partners Group, registered office at Cumberland Court, 80 Mount Street, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG1 6HH. These details can be found on the Financial Services Register at register.fca.org.uk/s/

To find out more about how you can plan and buy your funeral plan in advance, call 0800 860 6110 during office hours, see choiceplan.co.uk or find your local Funeral Partners' funeral home via funeralpartners.co.uk.

Choice Funeral Plans launch their new TV advert with loveable characters Maureen & Brenda



20 renditions of She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain, a long day in church, and family members as extras – behind the scenes of a new TV advert for Choice Funeral Plans

In the next few weeks, Sky TV and Virgin Media audiences will be seeing a lot of Maureen and Brenda – two lifelong best pals attending various funerals of their friends.

The adorable duo are the lead characters of the new television adverts for Choice Funeral Plans, provided by Alternative Planning Company – part of the Funeral Partners Group.

The premise of the adverts which will promote funeral plans sees the witty pair making wry comments from the back of a church about the choices and details of their friends' funerals, and how they might have benefitted from having a funeral plan.



Advert stars Maureen and Brenda

Humour is, without doubt, a difficult thing to pull off in advertising within the funeral industry. But it was a route the team at Funeral Partners decided to take to stand out in a competitive market, with support from top agency How Now Creative, after market research suggested the target audience were tired of funeral adverts which can be so often unnecessarily sombre, dull or irrelevant.

The cheekiness, honesty, and naivety from the two-lead characters aims to get the audience to identify with them, see parts of themselves or family members and position the brand as trustworthy and likeable.

How Now's credentials include videos for the launch of the Elizabeth Line - London Underground Network, McDonald's, Heart Radio, LBC, and Women's Six Nations Rebrand.

Phil Bolger, Founder and Executive Creative Director at How Now said: "It's been an exciting journey working with the Funeral Partners team.

"From the first briefing we quickly realised that humour could set us apart, as our unique position on humour put us there – in the pews, at the funerals with our creation – Maureen and Brenda.

"Maureen and Brenda's friendship, and its nuances, is the vehicle for positioning the brand within the audience's heart."

Funeral Partners Chief Executive Sam Kershaw, said there was a variety of reasons for deciding to run a television campaign, and this is one part of a broader marketing strategy to bring growth.

"The key aim is to raise awareness of our Choice Funeral Plans in the local communities we serve, highlighting, with light humour, what could happen if you don't plan your funeral in advance.

"In addition, we wanted to let people know that they can buy a funeral plan locally from us, their funeral can be conducted by a brand they may know and trust, and that if they plan in advance their funeral will be carried out in accordance with their personal wishes, when the time comes."

"One of the important aspects to note with a Choice Funeral Plan is that the Funeral Partners Group is both a funeral plan provider and a Funeral Director. Most of our funeral plans are purchased in our network of funeral homes across the UK, which helps to keep customers within the Funeral Partners family of businesses."

Steve Coyle, Director of PreNeed at Funeral Partners, said: "Funeral Plans are a growing market and becoming more and more popular as part of later life planning.

"Since the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulation, consumers are more aware than ever, and we wanted to create an advert which highlighted the potential importance of capturing your funeral wishes in advance."

Marketing Director Kelly Hailou added: "We're really thrilled to be launching our first ever TV campaign and it will be supported through the line in local press adverts, social media, corporate public relations, in the trade press, on our websites and in branch.

“Television is a new channel for us, but I am confident it will be successful and help us reach new audiences and build our brand awareness.”



Kelly Hailou and Phil Bolger on set

Having launched in early March, the adverts will be shown for three months using Sky Adsmart appearing on over 80 channels with the target audience seeing the adverts approximately 20 times.

Households where there is one or more people over 55 in the direct areas surrounding six carefully selected funeral homes in the Funeral Partners network will be targeted as part of a trial.

The chosen funeral homes are **Arthur Gresty Funeral Homes** in Greater Manchester, **Chris White Funeral Directors** in Salisbury, **Wm. Dodgson & Son Funeral Service** in Leeds, **Miles & Daughters Funeral Directors** in Berkshire, **Harpin's Funeral Service** in Wakefield and **Frank Dooley & Son Funeral Directors** in Saint Helens.

"This has been a very exciting project to get off the ground," said **Del Randhawa, Managing Director of FIVEfoot8**, Funeral Partner's long-standing media agency. "It is a shift from our previous press activities and has

involved months of meticulous planning. We look forward to seeing the benefits the campaign will bring."

Although the advert was months in the planning, including pitch meetings with agencies and developing several script ideas into three distinct adverts, shooting was done in one - very long - day.

The stories see Maureen and Brenda attend the funerals of Lenka Wozniak, Stan Hope and Alan Mitchell, set in a beautiful church with pews filled by extras.

Kelly praised everyone involved in the shoot for their time and dedication.

"We were so impressed with the How Now talent, professionalism and set up on the day, working with them has been an absolute pleasure, they really understood our brief and worked with us to deliver high quality scripts and precision production," she said.

"It certainly could not have been produced with one man and a camera as some people may think.

"There were floodlights outside the church for consistent lighting as we were filming from 7.30am until 9pm.

"The production team had blacked out some windows in the top of the church roof climbing up on big ladders with ropes, the volume of

kit was impressive. There was a full lighting crew and sound teams to ensure everything was spot on, loads of monitors, even a smoke machine for ambience.

"Maureen and Brenda were true professionals and really got into character – their warmth and charm was evident; it was a pleasure to work with them.

"One version involved musician **Jake Rodrigues** - who has been on TV shows fronted by comedians Al Murray and Russell Howard - performing as a one-man-band and he must have played She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain at least 20 times to ensure we got the perfect shots. He was wonderful to work with.

"I look forward to seeing how these adverts are received and perform so that we can do more TV advertising and extend the campaign across our other brands and nationally."

Sam added: "I'm delighted to say the adverts have turned out better than I could have hoped for, the quality, gentle humour combined with clear messages work brilliantly across the three versions.

"Kelly, her marketing team and How Now have brought the campaign to life whilst being respectful and sensitive to our industry."



Maureen and Brenda with one-man-band Jake Rodrigues

To watch the adverts or learn more about Choice Funeral Plans go to choiceplan.co.uk or follow Funeral Partners on Facebook and LinkedIn.

AS SEEN
ON TV

One man band?

The son chose it...



To have a say in what you want at your funeral, including the music, record your personal wishes with a Choice Funeral Plan

To plan your funeral your way, visit us, call us or go to choiceplan.co.uk

Community spirit shines through at James Brown & Sons thanks to Lisa's efforts



At James Brown & Sons, care and compassion is not reserved for bereaved families, it extends into the community, too.

Funeral Arranger Lisa Hutchinson is spearheading a series of initiatives at the firm's Dunmurry branch to help people all year round.

Since 2016, James Brown and Sons have hosted their own crochet club where people have learned new skills and formed friendships. The branch also hosts Death Café Belfast – part of the global movement.

"Hosting events at a Funeral Directors is unusual and I have no doubt many people might find it rather strange," Lisa said.

"Death is something we tend to avoid thinking and talking about.

"I hope that, by inviting people to attend events in the funeral home, it will help ease fears about death, encourage meaningful and helpful conversations, mend misconceptions and change attitudes towards death, dying and bereavement.

"I pull back the blinds every day, hoping the office is seen as a welcoming place to visit."

Other charitable work has included organising a mindfulness event to help people boost their mental wellbeing, donating artificial flowers to church flower arranging classes and hosting the Big Coffee Break fundraising event for Northern Ireland Hospice which raised £250.

Recently, the James Brown and Sons Community Fund has helped five good



causes in the Dunmurry area.

But Lisa doesn't want the relationship to end there. She has already taken the time to visit each of the local beneficiaries to develop these relationships.

So, what drives Lisa to go above and beyond with her community work?

"One of my guiding principles in life is to treat everyone with loving kindness, irrespective of background, beliefs, or circumstances," she explained.

"It is a deep sense of compassion for others that drives me in my work as a Funeral Arranger, as well as supporting the wider community through our diverse initiatives.

"It is my hope that giving comfort and contentment to others, especially during these challenging times, will make a difference that is far reaching and long-lasting.

"I feel honoured and privileged to look after bereaved families when they need us, but equally fortunate to reach out and support our community throughout each year.

"This work would not be possible without the kind support of James Brown and Sons.

"Their approach to helping others captures the spirit of what meaningful community engagement looks like and I'm proud to be part of the team."

To find out more about the James Brown Community fund visit

www.jamesbrownfuneraldirectors.com



Samantha Wright Cert FAA/Dip FAA
Trainee Funeral Director and Arranger

I have the best job in the world and wouldn't want to do anything else now

A career in funerals can be interesting, rewarding and fun.

Samantha Wright came into the funeral industry in her mid-40s after circumstances in her life made her want to look for a new career.

Now she's recently passed her National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) diploma in Funeral Arranging and Administration and believes she has the best job in the world.

Her message to anyone looking for a change is to think about funerals, as age and gender are no barriers.

Samantha spent many years as a hairdresser and beautician, and her first foray into the funeral profession was keeping promises to her clients to make them look their best when they passed away.

A life-changing event in her personal life led to her changing her career and after being advised to complete some night school sessions, she got an IT qualification under her belt and began volunteering and eventually working across several Funeral Directors' homes.

She has since worked across many Funeral Partners funeral homes as her career has progressed, including Haven in Hayes, W H Putnam in Kenton, John Nodes in Cricklewood and is now off to her next challenge to manage MM Broad and Sons in Barnet.

"Getting into the funeral industry just kind of happened," she said.

"I have always liked organising things – I'm the one who will sort out the parties or the events – so perhaps there is something in my personality which was drawn to it.

"Learning from people who have worked in the trade and have a lot more experience has been so important for me.

"For example, one of the most influential people I have worked with is my diary manager, Mick Silles. He will discuss the details of each funeral with me from the point



of arranging until after the day, highlighting what what well and what could have been done differently. Mick always has time to listen, discuss and pass on his experiences.

“One of the things I have learned is that when you sit with a family, everyone is an individual and by listening you will arrange the funeral according to the family wishes.

“Sometimes people will want a massive celebration of life, other people will want something very traditional - the hearse, the coffin and the church. It is important that a family gets to say goodbye how they want to.

“Even though I ran my own business for many years, I’m not the most confident person but I love learning things and no day is ever the same.

“From the minute you take the first call from a family there are so many twists and turns which can happen or scenarios which can be played out.

“Ultimately, I have the best job in the world.

“I have helped so many families and it is always a privilege to do so.

“People come to us at their lowest and to speak to them initially, and then build a relationship where some time later you are giving their loved one their final goodbye, is an honour.

“I am grateful to serve the families.

“We are all going to suffer grief, and everyone’s grief journey and experience is different.”

Samantha has helped to arrange some unique funerals and personalised services with moments which are now etched into her memory.

“The other month we had a funeral for someone who loved to go to the bingo so during the procession we drove them past the bingo hall, phoned ahead and everyone came out and applauded,” she explained.

“Another one we’ve organised recently was for a man who liked to pour himself a whiskey when he said goodbye, so we had a glass poured and placed beside his coffin as a toast and a last drink to see him on his way.



Samantha Wraight and NAFD President John Adams

“We’ve also had a funeral for a bus driver, where we got a bus he used to drive to follow the hearse to the service, a really special moment for his friends and family.”

Samantha is well known in the local community and is always keen for herself and the team to get involved in charity events to help raise funding for local good causes.

A firm believer in community spirit and brand awareness, Samantha has also been helping to ensure the rich history of John Nodes Funeral Service, which has been serving families in London since 1828, is preserved and put on show in the Cricklewood branch.

Part of the rich history of John Nodes includes how Kirtley Nodes – the fourth generation of the family to work in funerals – accompanied the casket carrying the Unknown Warrior from the First World War battlefields in France before his burial in Westminster Abbey.

Mr Nodes was National President of the British Undertakers Association at the time, and proposed the casket should be gifted to the nation as a symbol of all men who were killed on the battlefields during the Great War, providing a focus for grieving families.

“John Nodes is a nearly 200-year-old brand – there are not many Funeral Directors you can say that about – and I do not want that history to be lost,” Samantha said.

“At the moment it is a case of narrowing down the exact details and

piecing bits and pieces together.

“I’ve recently visited the National Association of Funeral Directors’ archives in Solihull to do more research and I’m in touch with expert funeral industry researcher Brian Parsons - what he doesn’t know about the history of funerals isn’t worth knowing.

“At the Cricklewood branch there is a long corridor outside our chapels with nothing on the walls and my vision is to have a bit about the history of John Nodes complemented with some information about the history of funerals which may be of interest to our families to know how the business has evolved.”

And it’s not just Samantha in her family who has found herself in the funeral industry, as her brother is a qualified embalmer.

“My mother always says she couldn’t imagine two people who she would have predicted were less likely to go into the funeral business, but she is so proud of our careers,” she added.

“Ultimately, I have the best job in the world. I have helped so many families and it is always a privilege to do so”



Celebrating diversity and inclusivity

Funeral Partners welcomes and supports families from all cultures, religions, nationalities and backgrounds.

This is reflected in the diverse range of funerals arranged through its funeral homes across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, in the individuals and organisations it supports within local communities and within Funeral Partners' own teams.

Supporting employees in the workplace: Glynis Long's story

Glynis Long has been a Funeral Arranger at James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors, Whiteabbey, near Belfast, since May 2018.

Glynis and her brother have both been diagnosed with a rare hereditary condition, Stargardt's disease, which affects their vision.

Glynis explains: "My right eye has no central vision and, in my left eye, I have an arch of missing vision.

"My main challenge is that I can't see very small writing. My colleague, Jean, is very supportive and has helped me to enlarge information and put it onto yellow paper, which makes it easier to read."

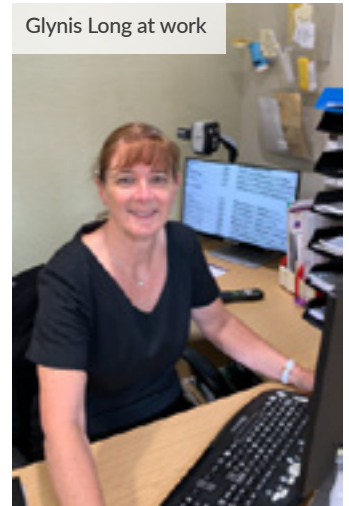
Glynis is positive about Funeral Partners' support: "When I started, a full assessment was completed in conjunction with the Department of Communities' disability at work team and identified equipment that would assist in my role.

"I have a large font keyboard with bigger buttons and can have text to speak. I also have an enhanced reader with a large screen, so paperwork is reflected onto this and I have a magnifying glass for reading small print."

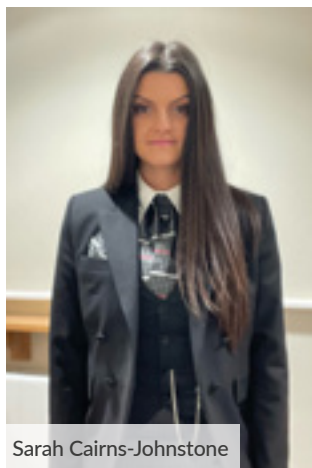
Glynis also experiences difficulties with poor lighting and cannot drive in the dark. She says: "The white lighting in the branch is great. I am still able to drive during daylight hours but, throughout the winter, I am taxied to and from work. The Department of Communities pays most of the cost.

"Anything I have needed from Funeral Partners has been provided without delay; the support I have received has been fabulous."

Glynis Long at work



Part-time role helps mum continue as Funeral Director: Sarah Cairns-Johnstone's story



Sarah Cairns-Johnstone

Sarah Cairns-Johnstone started with James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors in Belfast in April 2017 as a Mobile Funeral Arranger, then worked as a Funeral Services Operative (FSO) before, within a year, being promoted to the role of Funeral Director.

Sarah says: "When I found out I was pregnant in 2020, I told my manager and measures were put in place for mine and my baby's protection.

"I always wanted to come back to work after maternity leave, but I had no idea if my role would have to change. There has never been a part-time Funeral Director in our team.

"I've had continuous support from Funeral Partners, even from my first chat discussing coming back to work.

"We agreed to trial it for six months to see if the arrangement would work on both sides, and I can happily say that I am now permanently working as a Funeral Director on a part-time basis.

"I feel extremely grateful and appreciative of the support I've received. This has allowed me to have a really good work life balance and quality time with Harry at home."



Sarah at work as a Funeral Director

HAVEN Funeral Services support African communities



HAVEN Funeral Services in Hillingdon has become the go-to Funeral Directors for members of the Ethiopian and Eritrean communities across the country.

With strong Christian Orthodox traditions, many members of these communities seek repatriation after the funeral service. Hillingdon's proximity to Heathrow Airport and to the London-based embassies where all necessary paperwork takes place, has ensured HAVEN has developed expertise



and cultural understanding in handling the communities' funeral requirements over 20 years.

Funeral Director and Repatriation specialist Brian Hartland explains that HAVEN aims to arrange funerals within five to seven working days, understanding the period of mourning between death and the funeral.

Thanks to strong links with community elders and priests, HAVEN's reputation has spread and it also supports the local Polish community.

For more information about repatriation visit www.havenfunerals.co.uk

Gillman Funeral Service supports Ghanaian Funerals

Gillman Funeral Service in South London understands the cultural traditions of the Ghanaian community, offering a washing and dressing facility supported by members of the community. With a tradition of gathering and viewing the deceased, Gillman's large Chapel of Rest is ideal and is made available for all-night viewings when required. Gillman's can also accommodate open coffins and caskets.

The Gillman team's understanding of the community's needs has seen them arranging a number of Ghanaian funerals. Funeral services take place in several stages over the course of at least a week.

Across Funeral Partners' 230 funeral homes, many others have built up expertise in handling funeral arrangements for different communities.

These include WH Painter Funeral Directors which supports many Jewish funerals in the West Midlands; James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors in Lisburn Road, Belfast, which supports the Chinese community; Michael Kennedy Funeral Services in Manchester which conducts funerals for the Traveller community and John Blenkiron & Sons Funeral Directors in Richmond which, thanks to its proximity to Catterick Garrison, has experience in supporting members of the Army's Gurkha Company to organise Nepalese and Indian funerals which follow Hindu or Buddhist traditions.

Our experienced teams are here to support anyone at their time of need, to read more about Funeral Partners or find your nearest branch visit www.funeralpartners.co.uk



Thank you messages

Payne and Sons, Eastbourne

My dad died suddenly last month and his wife, my brother and I found ourselves faced with organising his funeral at an extremely difficult time. From the minute they answered the phone at Payne and Sons I knew we had found the right funeral directors. Mark and the teams were amazing; their knowledge, attention to detail, and caring attitude really helped us make the decisions needed to give my dad the best send off. Mark so supportive and understanding - he has the perfect balance of sympathy, practicality and humour.

EL

William H Painter, Solihull

Emma dealt with the Funeral of my father in March 2019 and I had no doubts to return on the death of my mother in 2022. She is excellent, guided us through the process and we felt a weight had been lifted on our return home. The communication and attention to fine detail meant the funeral ran perfectly and gave a dear mother a good send off. On the day of the funeral Victoria took control and handled the procedure and family very well.

SAS

Our teams regularly receive messages of thanks and five-star reviews for their services via MuchLoved, Google and Yell. Here is a recent selection.

W Storey, Guisborough, North Yorkshire

When my mum passed away, I wouldn't have wanted anyone else to look after her, all the staff are lovely and very professional. I work in care and have witnessed W Storey on many occasions coming to the home I worked in and attending funerals of residents who have passed, and I always knew that when the time came for my mum's passing I would choose them for her last journey.

FA

John G Hogg, Sunderland

The professionalism, warmth and compassion we experienced from this family business, took the pressure and stress from such a sad occasion. We cannot thank John G Hogg and team enough for the final journey of our dear Dad. We have used John and team on a few occasions in the past and have always been pleased with the professional service and would definitely not hesitate to recommend or use their services again.

EB

WH Putnam, Harrow

The staff who assisted on the day of the funeral were exemplary and Lee and Cassie in particular were very supportive throughout the whole process, talking through various options for the funeral. They were empathetic and compassionate.

FQ

Doves Funeral Directors, Maidstone

The whole team at Doves in Maidstone are absolutely amazing. They are caring, considerate and looked after us extremely well - nothing was too much trouble. Viv was outstanding and very attentive. She explained everything to us in a very compassionate way and helped make the funeral arrangements for mum as painless as possible for us. She was always available to offer advice and answer any questions. Chris our funeral director was so caring on the day of the funeral, making sure that we were ok every step of the way and looked after mum extremely well on her final journey..

AM



Sterry Funeral Service, Folkestone

Sterry Funeral Service sorted my late mum's funeral and I can only say good things about them. From Nikki on reception to all the guys who collected mum from her house and the guys who did the funeral, everyone was sensitive and kind. Thanks to all of you..

VH

John Gray and Co, Bangor

I would have no one else take care of the funeral of a loved one. The team at Bangor did my Mum proud, particularly Mike with whom we had the most contact. He was professional and efficient while also showing empathy, dignity, respect and warmth. His recommendation for the celebrant, Rachel Smith, was perfect. My family, cried, smiled and laughed together with Mike. On the day, we really were able to celebrate our Mum's life as we made our final farewells. Thank you so much!

AK

A H Rogers & Son Funeral Directors

Outstanding and considerate service. From the moment I called and met Lee to all the help we had from Helen which made things so much easier for us at very difficult time.

Thank you to all who helped us send mother with dignity and love.

MS

Roy Quinton Funeral Directors, Wolverhampton

From the beginning Pip and Jill were extremely sympathetic, understanding and professional. Nothing was too much trouble for them to fulfil the wishes for my mother's funeral. Everyone was very respectful and compassionate on the day of the funeral. A first-class service all round.

CEL

James Brown and Sons, Belfast

When I first went in I was greeted by Riana who was amazing and took me through everything I needed to do to organise the funeral of my mum. She was very amenable to my needs and I immediately knew I had made the best choice. The lady who was in charge of the funeral was amazing and guided me through every aspect of what was happening. I can't thank Browns enough for their guidance and help.

SG

B Matthews Funeral Directors, Southampton

As a family, we would fully recommend B Matthews without hesitation. Warm, friendly and very professional. From the first visit to their Woolston office, to the day of the funeral itself, followed by their aftercare, their service was impeccable.

AC

Eaves Funeral Service, Whitehaven

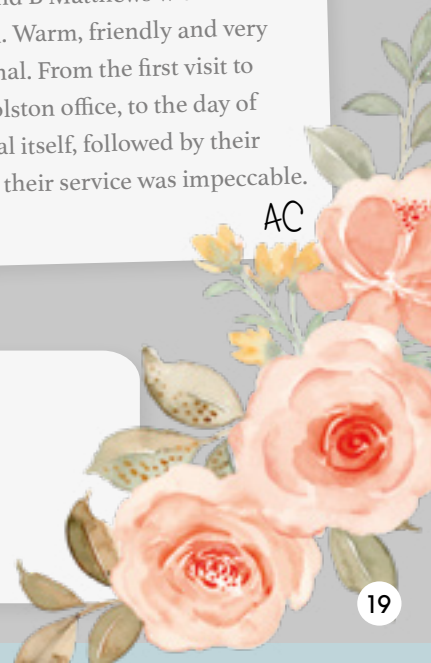
We couldn't have asked for anything more. They were kind, compassionate and were able to make the day really special, considering the sad circumstances. I would 100% recommend them.

RH

Thorne-Leggett Funeral Directors, Wrecclesham, Surrey

Excellent, efficient and very professional. Very approachable and supportive when you have lost a loved one and don't know what to do.

Thank you Anghus and the two undertakers.



Revving up for a final send off in unusual hearses



Alternative transport at funerals is becoming more and more popular with vehicles inspired by the work or passion of the person who has died.

The team at **Daren Persson Funeral Services** were able to give a motorbike fanatic a fitting final ride thanks to a Harley Davidson hearse.

Kenneth Grimes, known to everyone as Paul, loved travelling on two wheels during his younger years, and his family asked for the special tribute as part of their funeral arrangements.

And despite the snowy conditions, the experienced hearse driver and team at Daren Persson were able to take Mr Grimes to Tynemouth Crematorium for his final farewell.

Senior Funeral Director Bill Bremner said he was delighted to honour the request from the family.

“We were told Paul and his wife used to go away for trips on the back of his bikes, and he had always loved them,” Bill said.

“It was a pleasure to help. When we arrived and they saw the hearse for the first time it was exactly what they asked for so it was fantastic.

“I think they had an idea in their mind of what it would be like, and this even

surpassed that.

“I’ve arranged a few with unusual vehicles now including a flat bed lorry and if there is a way to have a flat surface to put a coffin on then it can usually be done.

“There are a few unusual hearses around the country which we can get hold of when we need them.”

A lifelong car enthusiast’s final send off was made extra special thanks to the appearance of a 4x4 hearse.

Peter Rice was so passionate about Land Rovers that not only did he drive them on the roads but raced them off-road too. He also enjoyed other classic cars.

Following his passing, his family decided to have a slightly different hearse which matched one of the loves of his life.

Waterside Funeral Home in Hythe, near Southampton, worked with One Life Lived It – a specialist Land Rover hearse hire company to provide a befitting vehicle for his final journey from the funeral home to Test Valley Crematorium.

They can provide Land Rover hearses in black or green anywhere from Scotland to Kent for families who wants something a little different.

Mobile Funeral Arranger at Waterside Lisa Trott said: “We are always happy to go the extra mile when it comes to arranging a funeral.

“When a family wants something a

little bit different or unusual, then we will always try to make it happen.

“This was a fitting tribute to Mr Rice, and we’re glad to have helped with it and sent him on his final journey.”

James and Thomas Funeral Directors in Horsley also recently arranged a funeral for a bus enthusiast who was fond of the Routemaster Express.

His family requested a red bus picture coffin, and his final journey was made on a red double decker which was also able to transport mourners to the funeral.

The teams at all our Funeral Partners branches are always happy to support with personalisation, using themes and ideas inspired by the person who has died. We’re incredibly proud each and every time they go the extra mile.



Funeral Director, Samantha Hougham