

**CHILTERNS CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE
FIFTY SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT**

1) CREMATIONS

The following tables show the number of cremations from 1st April to 31st March for the past five years and their originating Districts:

District	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Aylesbury Vale	575	668	639	614	678
Chiltern	558	596	552	563	546
Wycombe	872	899	834	895	899
Other	925	1,004	911	973	995
Total	2,930	3,167	2,936	3,045	3,118

Comparative figures for the previous years are:

1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
3,169	2,967	3,021	3,104	3,065	3,010	2,989	2,950

The total number of cremations since opening until the end of March 2012 = 118,056.

The 3,118 cremations carried out in 2011/12 generated income of £1,437,626.00

In 2010 Chilterns Crematorium ranked at 7 in a league table in order of the number of cremations carried out at each of the 260 crematoria in the UK.

The proportion of cremations to burials first reached 70% in 1992 and has since levelled off at about 73%. By 1995 the actual number of deaths in the UK had risen to 650,000, but since then there has been a general downward trend, with the least number of deaths so far in 2009 when only 564,000 were recorded, 20,000 less than in the previous year. 566,000 deaths were recorded in 2010 of which 73% were cremated.

2) DISPOSITION OF CREMATION ASHES

Nationally there has been a steady reduction in the number of cremation ashes being placed in the grounds of the crematorium where the cremation has taken place, with a higher incidence of ashes being removed from the crematorium for disposal elsewhere.

In 1970 approximately 86% of ashes remained at crematoria nationally (including about 15% being buried as opposed to scattered), but since then there has been a gradual decline and in 2004 the national figure was 40% (including 10% being buried).

At Chilterns (where ashes have only ever been scattered), in the 1970's around 80% of ashes were remaining in the garden of remembrance. By 2004 this was reduced to 35%. In 2006 approximately 32% of ashes were scattered in the garden of remembrance, 34% in 2007, 32% in 2008, 30% in 2009, 28% in 2010 and 30% in 2011.

The number of cremation ashes being taken away for disposal elsewhere is being offset to a small degree by those being received for scattering from other crematoria, with an average of 61 being received each year over the past five years. 62 were received in 2011/12 generating an income of £1,735.00

Although the reduction in ashes being scattered is reflected in memorial sales, nevertheless the Garden of Remembrance remains an important feature helping provide an appropriate setting for the place of cremation and also acting as a focal point in the mourning process.

3) **COMMEMORATION**

An additional 94 commemorative plaques were added to the kerbing around the rose beds and the total number of plaques, after deducting those that were not renewed at the expiration of the lease period, is 2,684. Together with the income from renewals, the total income from rose bed commemorative plaques amounted to £41,769.

An additional 34 stone memorial plaques were sold, and the total number of plaques, after deducting those that were not renewed at the expiration of the lease period, is 730 since the scheme was introduced in 1994. Together with the income from renewals the income for the year amounted to £28,182.

An additional 19 leather memorial plaques were sold in the chapel of remembrance, and the total number of plaques, after deducting those that were not renewed at the expiration of the lease period, is 278 since the scheme was introduced in January 2001, with income for the year of £6,222.

A total sum of £1,442 was donated for the purchase of trees, shrubs and flowering plants and bulbs.

A further 357 inscriptions were entered in the Book of Remembrance and the income, including the sale of miniature replica books and memorial cards, amounted to £33,495.

4) **FEES**

The scales of fees were reviewed by the Joint Committee in January 2011. Increases of around 3% in line with the projected rate of inflation were approved in relation to the majority of the fees, effective from 1st April 2012.

The cremation fee was increased by 4.3%, from £470 to £490, an above inflation increase taking into account the rising cost of energy (gas and electricity) and the additional running and maintenance costs incurred operating the newly installed cremation filtration equipment required by 2013 in compliance with environmental legislation. However, it should be noted that measures taken in recent years to operate the cremators more efficiently, notably the move away from the previous policy of carrying out all cremations on the same day as the funeral service, has achieved significant energy savings without which larger increases in the cremation fee would be necessary.

The national average cremation fee in 2011 was £538.28, and in a league table of the 260 crematoria in the UK, starting with the most expensive, Chilterns' cremation fee ranked at 225.

5) **STAFF**

There were three staff changes during the year:-

1. Andrea Jaffe, who was a part-time clerical assistant for seven years, left in May 2011 after accepting a job as receptionist at her local doctors' surgery. Her post was not filled at the time as the other two part-time clerical assistants asked if they could work extra hours for a trial period.
2. Our Senior Administrator, Jane Bailey, was taken seriously ill in July 2011 and sadly died just before Christmas. She had worked at the Crematorium for twelve years and had become very experienced in her key role. Her death, keenly felt by all her work colleagues, is a significant loss to the organisation. Another member of staff, part-time clerical assistant Melanie Reed, agreed to act-up to some of Jane's duties from December 2011, but her post was still vacant on 31st March 2012.
3. Julie Wright was appointed as a temporary part-time clerical assistant in November 2011 to help cover Jane Bailey's continuing long term absence.

A diagram showing the current staffing establishment at the Crematorium as of 31st March 2012 is included as **Appendix 1**.

6) **CREMATIONS EMISSIONS ABATEMENT AND HEAT RECOVERY**

Last year's report stated that the new cremation filtration equipment, which had been installed during the year, was due to be commissioned and working by May 2011. In the event this did not happen as at a late stage it was discovered that the existing electricity supply was insufficient to run the new equipment. This caused considerable delay before it was resolved and the new equipment was not finally commissioned until the end of September.

The filter installation is a retro-fit to cremators installed in the mid 1990's and only about half way through their useful working life – hence the decision to retain them. However, this presented the cremator manufacturer with a number of 'challenges', not uncommon when marrying new equipment up with old, and annoying 'teething' problems persisted nearly to the end of the period covered by this report, with the long awaited break through finally coming in March. On a positive note, it is good to be able to report that the cremator manufacturer, Facultatieve Technologies, persisted tirelessly and without any dissension until the problem was resolved.

Before the flue gases coming from the cremator can be passed through the filter they have to be cooled down. Most of this captured heat has to then be dispersed to atmosphere through a piece of equipment which is perhaps best described as like a very large car radiator. The decision was also taken at the planning stage to install equipment which enables some of this recovered energy to be reused to heat the building with the double benefit of reducing costs and also the size of our carbon footprint. This piece of equipment was working by the middle of the winter and appears to have been very successful.

The total projected cost of the project, including associated works (building works etc), is £655,000.

7) **PROPOSED CREMATORIUM: AYLESBURY**

It is five years since the Joint Committee first got involved in the search for a site to build a crematorium to serve Aylesbury, the last two searching intensively since it was decided it wished to build the crematorium itself. Despite this, unfortunately a site has yet to be secured.

At the point where last year's report ended investigations were ongoing into a number of possible sites which had already been identified, and the decision to extend the search to the eastern side of Aylesbury along the A41 into the Aston Clinton area had resulted in some more potential sites to pursue.

Three of the sites being investigated at the end of March 2011 were eventually discounted for one or other of the reasons mentioned in previous reports which can affect the suitability of a site for a crematorium, including statutory distances from roads and buildings, footpaths, the presence of cables and pipelines, access from the highway, access through residential areas, proximity to industrial estates, etc. The landowners of three newly identified sites were approached, but decided they were not interested; in relation to at least two of these a factor possibly being that, as mentioned before, until AVDC agree a Local Development Framework many landowners have long term high value aspirations for housing or commercial development.

Another site was still being investigated at the end of March 2012 where the owner had been approached and indicated he was possibly interested in selling, but little progress had been made because of planning and political issues arising from the Arla Dairies development and a number of other planning applications around Aylesbury, including one for housing in the Aston Clinton area.

8) CREMATORIUM BUILDINGS – THEFT OF COPPER AND LEAD

During April 2011 the Crematorium was visited three times by thieves who removed lead flashing, copper roofing sheets and copper guttering. On the first occasion, mothering Sunday, the metal was hidden in a shrubbery (possibly before the Crematorium opened) and then taken away in a van under cover of intense site activity that day, with many more visitors than usual and contractors working on site installing the cremator abatement equipment. On the other two occasions the metal was removed at night and dragged through the grounds to a waiting van parked in a lay-by at the side of the A404.

Metal theft is an increasing national problem and the epidemic, fuelled by rising costs of metal generally, and copper and lead in particular, is only expected to get worse. Nationally the concern for Britain's infrastructure relates particularly to gas pipes, electricity and telecom cables and for the railways where train signalling, electricity and data cables are being targeted. British Transport Police say that cable theft is the next biggest priority after the terrorist threat.

Locally theft of lead from churches in particular has become an all too common occurrence. Although this is the first time Chilterns Crematorium had been targeted, neighbouring Slough Crematorium had been plagued by the problem for some time, coming to a head in 2010 when staff arrived for work one morning to find an entire side of the chapel roof had been stolen. All the remaining copper had since been removed and temporarily replaced with roofing felt, but this wasn't really a viable option at Chilterns which is a significantly larger building. Markeaton Crematorium at Derby is another example, where following theft of part of the roof the ingress of rainwater damaged internal fittings and the electrics.

This was the ultimate concern to members of the Joint Committee; not only the damage and the cost of repairs to the buildings, but that service provision could be disrupted and, at worst, funerals cancelled. Consequently they approved emergency expenditure on a number of measures to combat further thefts taking place including immediately engaging a security company to carry out random

mobile patrols, widespread marking the roof with traceable SmartWater (a deterrent product with a good track record), and in the longer term to install monitored CCTV. Fortunately the measures taken proved successful and no further thefts occurred.

The costs for the year of the additional security measures taken were in the region of £24,000, and quotations for the CCTV received towards the end of the year indicated that installing the CCTV will cost in the region of £25,000. Only temporary repairs were carried out on the buildings – it was decided not to make any permanent repairs until the CCTV was installed – but the estimate to repair the damage done by the three thefts which occurred is between £7,000 and £10,000. The fact that the security measures taken prevented any further damage, or a major incident leading to disruption or the cancellation of funerals, helps to put this extra expenditure into perspective.

9) **MAINTENANCE OF GROUNDS – WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

In 2010 the Joint Committee agreed to John Morris of Chiltern Woodlands Project being appointed to act as forestry consultant, having identified the need for a long term **woodland development plan**, the adoption of which would conserve the landscape and wildlife in the area (first reported in the fifty fifth annual report). This decision was reached after the officers had advised that since the Crematorium was built in 1965 the site had expanded to 22 acres, over half of which is woodland, and over this time the trees in the woodland had only been managed reactively by grounds maintenance staff (removing dead and dangerous branches, trees, etc), but no planning had been carried out to preserve the amenity in the long term. The Committee recognised that continuing with this arrangement was not satisfactory.

In 2011 the Consultant, with the assistance of the Superintendent, drew up a twenty year woodland management plan and then, together, successfully negotiated their way through the relatively complex and bureaucratic application process to get the plan approved and also claim the £1,000 grant available for the work involved in compiling it. Most significantly, as part of the approval of the plan the Forestry Commission have issued a ten year felling licence which enables the Joint Committee to proceed with phased thinning and replanting over that period, in accordance with the agreed plan, without having to go through the process of applying for a separate licence for each stage of the work.
