

CHILTERNS CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

FIFTY NINTH ANNUAL REPORT 1st APRIL 2013 – 31st MARCH 2014

CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES AND REPRESENTATIVES

Aylesbury Vale District Council

Councillor David Thompson (to September 2013)
Councillor Howard Mordue (from January 2014)
Councillor Brian Roberts (Vice Chairman)

Chiltern District Council

Councillor Michael R. Smith (Chairman)
Councillor Nick Rose

Wycombe District Council

Councillor David Carroll (to May 2013)
Councillor Ms Katrina Wood (to May 2013)
Councillor Tony Green (from May 2013)
Councillor Mrs Jean Teesdale (from May 2013 to October 2013)
Councillor Hugh McCarthy (from October 2013)

Superintendent and Registrar

Charles Howlett DMS, FICCM(Dip)
Chilterns Crematorium
Whielden Lane
Amersham
Buckinghamshire

Clerk

Alan Goodrum
Chief Executive
Chiltern District Council
Council Offices
King George V Road
Amersham
Buckinghamshire

Treasurer

Jim Burness
Director of Resources
Chiltern District Council
Council Offices
King George V Road
Amersham
Buckinghamshire

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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	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Aylesbury Vale	639	614	678	637	637
Chiltern	552	563	546	528	564
Wycombe	834	895	899	915	867
Other	911	973	995	1,026	1,072
Total	2,936	3,045	3,118	3,106	3,140

Comparative figures for the previous years are:

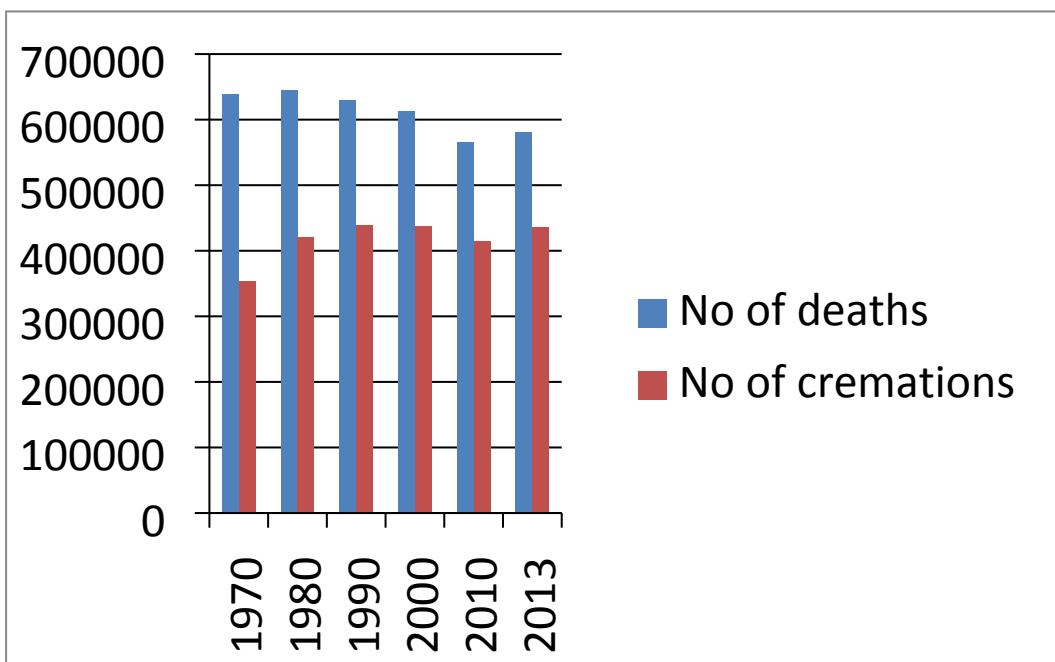
2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
3,021	3,104	3,065	3,010	2,989	2,950	2,930	3,167

The total number of cremations since opening until the end of March 2014 = 124,302.

The 3,140 cremations carried out in 2013/14 generated income of £1,619,045.00

In 2013 Chilterns Crematorium ranked at 6 in a league table in order of the number of cremations carried out at each of the 270 crematoria in the UK.

The proportion of cremations to burials first reached 70% in 1992 and has increased by approximately 2% each decade since then and is currently 74%. 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 2011 when only 556,434 were recorded, 9,000 less than in the previous year. 580,582 deaths were recorded in 2013 of which 75% were cremated – a 1% increase on last year. Mortality rates are expected to start rising again in the next few years.



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 were disposed of at crematoria nationally by being scattered or buried in the garden of remembrance. By 2004 this had reduced to 40% and this gradual decline has continued. In 2012 the national figure was 27%.

At Chilterns (where ashes have only ever been scattered), in the 1970's around 80% of ashes were being disposed of in the garden of remembrance. By 2004 this was reduced to 35% and in 2012 it was 35%. 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 and 83 were received in 2013-14 generating an income of £2,476.60.

The table below gives details of ashes being scattered in the garden of remembrance over the last seven years.

Cremation Ashes	% of ashes scattered in the garden of remembrance	Number of ashes received from other crematoria
2007/8	34	59
2008/9	32	61
2009/10	30	65
2010/11	28	56
2011/12	30	62
2012/13	27	67
2013/14	30	83

Although the reduction in ashes being scattered is reflected in memorial sales, nevertheless the Garden of Remembrance remains an important feature in providing an appropriate setting for the place of cremation and afterwards for mourners to visit when it helps to act as a focal point in the mourning process.

3) COMMEMORATION

An additional 81 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 2,560. Together with the income from renewals, the total income from rose bed commemorative plaques amounted to £45,191.

An additional 25 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 738 since the scheme was introduced in 1994. Together with the income from renewals the income for the year amounted to £26,692.

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 272 since the scheme was introduced in January 2001, with income for the

year of £3,875.

A total sum of £1,126 was donated for the purchase of trees, shrubs and flowering plants and bulbs.

A further 342 inscriptions were entered in the Book of Remembrance and the income, including the sale of miniature replica books and memorial cards, amounted to £35,789.

Scheme	Year	No. Sold	Gross Inc	Cost of supplies	Nett inc
Rosebed Plaques	2011-12	93	£41769	£ 1290	£40479
	2012-13	87	£45716	£ 1340	£44376
	2013-14	81	£45191	£ 1080	£44111
Stones	2011-12	34	£28182	£ 3490	£24692
	2012-13	25	£21186	£ 4661	£16525
	2013-14	25	£26692	£ 4903	£21789
Leather Plaques	2011-12	17	£ 6222	£ 591	£ 5631
	2012-13	8	£ 5671	£ 368	£ 5303
	2013-14	19	£ 3875	£ 458	£ 3417
Book of Remembrance	2011-12	357	£33495	£13328	£20167
	2012-13	325	£31285	£13356	£17929
	2013-14	342	£35789	£12170	£23619

4) FEES

The scales of fees were reviewed by the Joint Committee in March 2013. 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 2014.

The cremation fee was increased by a similar percentage from £505 to £520. However, it is relevant to note 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 2013 was £612.03, and in a league table of the 270 crematoria in the UK, starting with the most expensive, Chilterns' cremation fee ranked at 256.

Table of fees for local crematoria £

Crematorium	2011	2012	2013	2014 Fee
Chilterns	470.00	490.00	505.00	*520.00

Slough	575.00	610.00	680.00	720.00
Milton Keynes	610.00	651.00	670.00	*687.50
Reading	560.00	589.00	662.00	699.00
West Herts	484.00	500.00	500.00	510.00
National Ave	538.28	576.41	612.03	646.31

*Does not include organist fee (currently £40 at Chilterns)

5) STAFF

There were no staff changes during the year.

A diagram showing the current staffing establishment at the Crematorium at 31st March 2014 is included as *Appendix 1*.

6) PROPOSED CREMATORIUM – AYLESBURY

Despite over six years of setbacks and lack of success, at a meeting on 7th March 2013 the members of the Joint Committee had resolved to continue with the site search for a crematorium at Aylesbury. The members agreed with the officers long held view that the preferred location for the crematorium was on the northern side of Aylesbury and authorised the engagement of outside agencies that could assist in expediting the process of finding a site.

Chartered Surveyors, Kempton Carr Croft, specialists in land procurement, were appointed with a brief to revisit every key site already identified where, when previously approached, landowners had shown some interest but never committed (quite possibly because of ‘hope value’ for future housing development), to investigate any potential sites more recently identified but not pursued, and to search for any new sites arising from their own contacts with local land agents.

This new strategy resulted in a 9 acres site coming forward in the summer of 2013 on the north east side of Bierton off Cane End Lane, close to the junction with the A418 at the Hulcott Crossroads, for which an Option was finally agreed in January 2014.

A procurement process for an architect was instigated which resulted in the appointment of Haverstock Associates. Haverstocks were responsible for the design of the award winning second funeral chapel at Chilterns Crematorium, the Milton Chapel, which opened in 2005.

Following the appointment of the architect a project team was set up and the plans for the new crematorium were progressed as quickly as possible. A comprehensive programme of consultation was planned as this was seen as key to the success of the project. A letter was sent to all households in the Bierton area advertising an exhibition which took place in March 2014 in a local hall and where feedback forms were available. Local district and parish councillors were also briefed and a similar meeting was also held at Chilterns Crematorium with people who take funeral services and funeral directors. As well as being transparent about the proposals this

consultation gave the project team the opportunity to consider any comments made and make changes to the plans where considered appropriate and desirable.

The planning application was submitted to Aylesbury Vale District Council in April 2014.

7) ROSE BED COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES

When the Chilterns Crematorium was built in the 1960's, in keeping with many crematoria, especially those operated by local authorities, memorial options were limited. Quite a number only offered the Book of Remembrance but at Chilterns a memorial-rose scheme was also provided. At that time roses were synonymous with after-cremation commemoration and a point of interest is that at Chilterns the roses were planted immediately after the site had been cleared, before construction started, and the Joint Committee's first employee was a part-time gardener to look after them.

The relatively bare chalky soil and shade from the surrounding woodland have always been a handicap to really healthy plants. For a long time a low wire fence has been erected around each bed in summer to prevent rabbit damage, but in the last few years deer have also been eating the roses to devastating effect. The concrete kerbing on which the memorial plaques are fixed, installed in the early 1970's, has seen better days and increasingly plaques come loose because the method of fixing them is unsatisfactory.

In February 2014 the Joint Committee considered a report from the Superintendent about the poor condition of the rose beds and accepted the recommendation to discontinue the rose bed memorial scheme. Over the next three to five years the rose beds will be phased out and replaced with shrubberies, choosing plants which are known to be unattractive to deer. The kerbing will be removed and the memorial plaques fixed instead onto wooden posts erected throughout the shrubberies.

Accepting that not everyone who has a rose bed plaque will be content with the new scheme a few rose beds (chosen because they are least damaged by the deer) will be netted over and temporarily retained. Those who indicate they do not want their plaques transferred to one of the new shrubberies will have them fixed instead to one of the retained rose beds for the remainder of the five year lease period, but they will not have the option to renew it again after that. In this way all the rose beds will have been phased out within five years.

Immediately after the Joint Committee decision the first two rose beds were selected for conversion and a letter sent out to the plaque lease holders explaining what was going to happen and why and the option to keep the plaque on a rose bed if preferred. In the event the replies received were nearly all for transfer to the shrubbery scheme which was encouraging.

8) MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS

During the year internal redecoration of a substantial number of the work rooms was carried out including the crematory, ashes room, cremator control room and adjoining store, boot room, Milton chapel committal room and also the Milton chapel vestry. The cost was £8,950.00

The flat felt roofing, coincidentally largely over the redecorated work rooms, was renewed as part of the rolling preventative maintenance programme set up the previous year. The cost was £10,829.65

9) DONATIONS TO CHARITY

Recycling of metals after cremation

At some time in our lives we may need to have an operation to replace a joint or have a metal insert to assist the repair of a bone. Often we will die with these metal implants still in our body. Following cremation these metal implants, along with the remaining metals from the construction of the coffin, are removed from the ashes, collected and recycled through a national scheme co-ordinated by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management. Recycling prevents their build up in the Garden of Remembrance (where they used to be buried) and ensures that the use of non-renewable resources is minimised, thus helping protect our long term environment.

Any surplus monies raised from the recycling process is donated to ‘death related’ charities such as the Heart Foundation and Cancer Research, and since the scheme started about 7 years ago over £1.7 million have now been distributed. Participating cremation authorities are invited after each collection to nominate an appropriate national or local charity to receive a donation. In the last three years the Chilterns Crematorium has made the following nominations:

- 2012, Cruse Buckinghamshire, £4,000
- 2013, Ian Rennie Hospice at Home, £3,372
- 2013, Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS), £4,333
- 2014, Cruse Buckinghamshire, £4,412

Christmas Tree stars

In 2013, for the first time, a real Christmas Tree was placed in the chapel of remembrance in the run up to Christmas. Small tagged gold and silver stars were provided on which people could write a personal message to hang on the tree, and those doing so were invited to make a donation to charity. Collection boxes for two local hospices were placed in the chapel, being Florence Nightingale Hospice, Aylesbury, and South Bucks Hospice, High Wycombe, and over £400 were collected for each.
