

CHILTERNS CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

FIFTY SECOND ANNUAL REPORT 1st APRIL 2006 – 31st MARCH 2007

CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES AND REPRESENTATIVES

Aylesbury Vale District Council

Councillor J Cartwright
Councillor David Thompson

Chiltern District Council

Councillor A. Campbell
Councillor J Warder (Vice-Chairman)

Wycombe District Council

Councillor P J Cartwright (Chairman)
Councillor David Carroll

Superintendent and Registrar

Charles Howlett DMS, F.InstCCM(Dip)
Chilterns Crematorium
Whielden Lane
Amersham
Buckinghamshire

Clerk

Alan Goodrum

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

Treasurer

Malcolm Crawford IPFA

Chief Financial Officer
Chiltern District Council
Council Offices
King George V Road
Amersham
Buckinghamshire

**CHILTERNS CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE
FIFTY SECOND 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	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Aylesbury Vale	615	690	626	647	619
Chiltern	690	624	576	650	622
Wycombe	915	862	848	847	835
Other	884	889	960	845	874
Total	3,104	3,065	3,010	2989	2950

Comparative figures for the previous years are:

1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
3,051	3,054	2,862	3,161	3,169	2,967	3,021

The total number of cremations since opening until the end of March 2007 = 102,858.

In 2006 Chilterns ranked at 16 in a league table in order of the number of cremations carried out at each of the 248 crematoria in the UK.

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 (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 the 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% and in 2005 to 33%. In 2006 approximately 32% of ashes were scattered in the garden of remembrance.

The number of cremation ashes being taken away for disposal elsewhere is being offset to a degree by a small but increasing number being received from other crematoria for scattering at the Chilterns; an average of 51 persons ashes have been received annually over the last five years, and 64 persons ashes were received in 2006/07 generating income of £1,519 from the scattering fee.

Although the reduction in ashes being scattered is reflected in memorial sales, nevertheless the Garden of Remembrance is still a most 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 122 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 2,952. Together with the income from renewals, the total income from rose bed commemorative plaques amounted to £40,938.

An additional 39 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 631 since the scheme was introduced in 1994. Together with the income from renewals the income for the year amounted to £23,555.

An additional 25 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 247 since the scheme was introduced in January 2001, with income for the year of £6,656.

A total sum of £1,562 was donated for the purchase of trees, shrubs and flowering plants and bulbs.

A further 556 inscriptions were entered in the Book of Remembrance and the income, including the sale of miniature replica books and memorial cards, amounted to £38,095.

4) FEES

The scales of fees were reviewed by the Joint Committee in December 2006. Increases of around 2% in line with the projected rate of inflation were approved, effective from 1st April 2007. The cremation fee was only increased from £360 to £370, reverting from the pattern in the last few years of substantially above inflation increases to help recuperate the costs of the second funeral chapel project and also build up reserves for the future capital programme to provide cremator abatement plant by 2012 in compliance with new legislation.

The national average cremation fee in 2006 was £363, and in a league table of the 248 crematoria in the UK Chilterns cremation fee ranked at 151.

5) STAFF

There were two staff changes during the year.

The General Assistant (50% grounds maintenance and 50% relief cremator operator), Andy Tutt, who was appointed in January 2001, had resigned his full-time post at the end of March 2006 to stay at home and bring up his new-born son (this was reported last year). His post was successfully filled by the recruitment of Harry Sunderland, who started work in May.

A recruitment exercise in April to fill the vacant post of assistant superintendent, who had retired the previous November, was not successful. The full time clerical assistant, Jane Thornhill, accepted an “acting-up” role and a temporary part time clerical assistant, Melanie Reid, was recruited in July to provide cover for an interim period. It was decided to review the situation again after a period of time with a view to either re-advertising or reorganising the staff structure.

Crematorium Attendant, Jean Thorne, left in August after over eleven years in post as she and her husband moved away from the area. Her post was successfully filled by the recruitment of Stuart Casbeard, who started work in September.

6) **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Cremation within 24 hours of receipt of the coffin

Cremators use a lot of gas and electricity and if all the cremations are carried out on the same day as the funeral service this uses excessive energy, and the more energy used the more carbon dioxide (“greenhouse gas”) is produced. As reported in the 51st Annual Report, in the light of increasing environmental awareness, coupled with the spiralling costs of energy, in 2005 Chilterns Crematorium started holding coffins overnight for cremation the next day. This maximises the use of the cremators by reducing the number of machines needed to be heated up each day.

As well as enabling one of the four cremators to be mothballed, making savings on maintenance and repair costs, in the first full year of operation since the new procedure was introduced a reduction in energy use in the region of 30% has been achieved (and correspondingly a 30% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions). To date there have been no adverse comments to the Crematorium about the fact that not all the coffins are cremated on the same day as the service.

8) **BUILDINGS**

External Redecoration

The exterior of the original buildings at the Crematorium and the two on site staff bungalows were re-decorated during the summer, and the opportunity was taken at the same time to replace any rotten woodwork encountered during cleaning down operations. Although it was eleven years since the previous redecoration, the paintwork was still in reasonable condition, vindicating the use of an initially more costly but in the long term more cost effective specialised exterior paint system.
