

**CHILTERNNS CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE**

**SIXTY FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT 1<sup>st</sup> APRIL 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2019**

**CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES AND REPRESENTATIVES**

**Aylesbury Vale District Council**

Councillor Howard Mordue (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Julie Ward

**Chiltern District Council**

Councillor Peter Martin  
Councillor Michael R. Smith (Chairman)

**Wycombe District Council**

Councillor Dominic Barnes  
Councillor Graham Peart

**Superintendent and Registrar**

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

**Clerk**

Bob Smith  
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

**CHILTERN CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE  
SIXTY FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT**

**1) CREMATIONS**

The following tables show the number of cremations from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March for the past five years and their originating districts:

<b>District</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
Aylesbury Vale	760	721	756	823	698
Chiltern	593	593	579	645	623
Wycombe	956	904	910	1029	972
Other	1,196	1,155	1,437	1,315	1,321
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,505</b>	<b>3,373</b>	<b>3,682</b>	<b>3,812</b>	<b>3,614</b>

Comparative figures for the previous years are:

<b>2006/ 07</b>	<b>2007/ 08</b>	<b>2008/ 09</b>	<b>2009/ 10</b>	<b>2010/ 11</b>	<b>2011/ 12</b>	<b>2012/ 13</b>	<b>2013/ 14</b>
2,950	2,930	3,167	2,936	3,045	3,118	3,106	3,140

The total number of cremations since opening until the end of March 2019 = 142,287

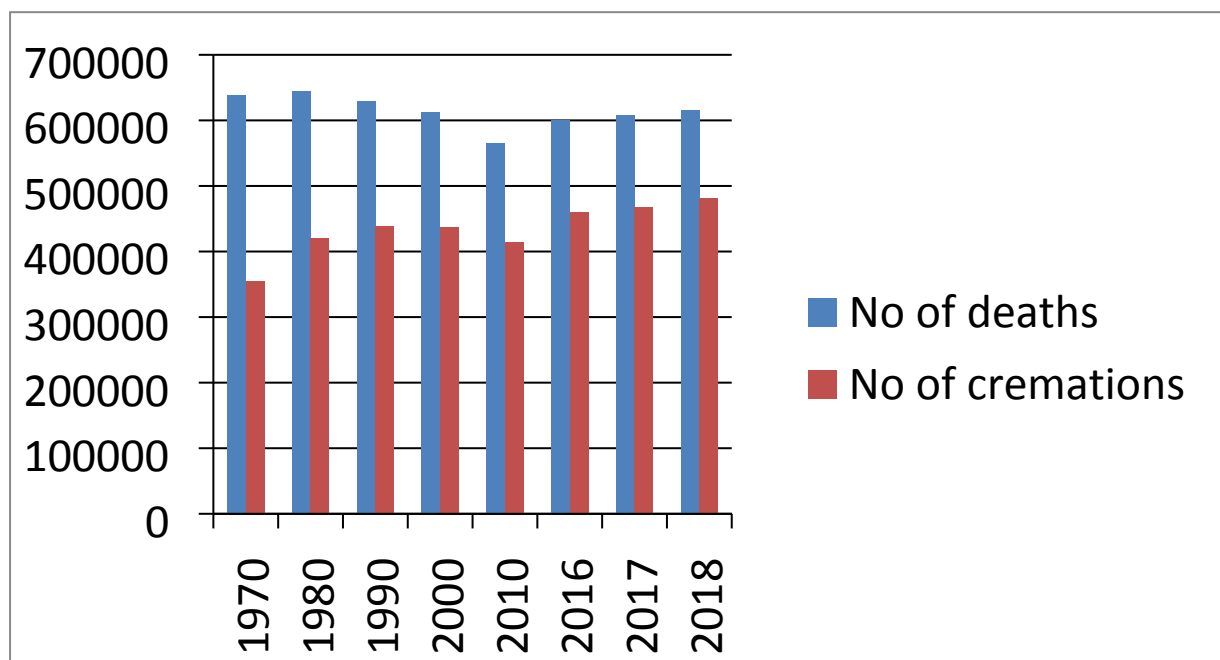
Income from cremations in 2018/19 was £2,105,582. In the previous year cremations generated £2,144,571.

With 7 more new crematoria opening in 2018, by the end of the year there were 299 in the UK, and in 2018 Chilterns Crematorium was again the busiest in terms of the number of cremations carried out during the year. As well as a rising death rate, the delays in the opening of a new crematorium in Aylesbury continued to put pressure on the facilities. However, towards the end of 2018 the death rate started to dip (which has continued into 2019) and in February, eighteen months after completion, the planning issues over the private crematorium at Watermead (Aylesbury Vale) were finally resolved and it opened for funerals. These two factors are the main reason for less funerals being carried by the end of the financial year.

Although, as already stated, the death rate had reduced by the end of the financial year, this is likely to be a temporary variation to the overall gradual increase which has been recorded since 2011 in line with national predictions.

The proportion of cremations to burials reached 70% in 1992 and in 2012 it was 74%, an increase of only 4% over twenty years. 616,053 deaths were recorded in 2018 (compared to 607,172 the previous year) of which 78.19% were cremated, a further 4% increase over just six years. This reflects the comparatively higher number of new crematoria being built in recent years, largely in response to an actual and predicted rising death rate. However the costs of installing and operating modern cremating equipment to meet environmental

requirements has caused above inflation increases in cremation fees making lower volume crematoria more financially viable in the longer term.



#### Cremation-only up to end of March 2018 (introduced Jan 2018)

	Number	Income
<b>2017/18</b>	19	£7,049
<b>2018/19</b>	156	£57,876

## 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, but since then there has been a gradual decline and it is currently 21%.

When Chilterns Crematorium opened in 1966 initially around 80% of ashes were disposed of in the garden of remembrance but in line with national statistics this has gradually reduced to 20%. A small number of ashes are also received from other crematoria, including from outside the UK, for scattering in the garden of remembrance but these have also been reducing in recent years.

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

<b>Cremation Ashes</b>	% of ashes scattered in the garden of remembrance.	Number of ashes received from other crematoria.
2010/11	28	56
2011/12	30	62
2012/13	27	67
2013/14	30	83
2014/15	30	64
2015/16	21	73
2016/17	20.4	59
2017/18	19.4	66
2018/19	19.7	55

The reduction in ashes being scattered is reflected in decreasing memorial sales, but 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 for their mourning.

### 3) **COMMEMORATION**

Scheme	Yr	No. of new leases sold	No. not renewed	Total no. of plaques in place	Gross income (inc. lease renewals)	Cost of Supplies	Net income
Rosebeds – converted to Shrubberies from 2014/15	2012-13	87		2,599	£45716	£1340	£44376
	2013-14	81		2,560	£45191	£1080	£44111
	2014-15	60		2,306	£40122	£1866	£38256
	2015-16	65	87	2,284	£41518	£1050	£40468
	2016-17	103	98	2,289	£44321	£1360	£42961
	2017-18	79	90	2,253	£58467	£1563	£56904
	2018-19	111	101	2,263	£55898	£1444	£54454
Stones	2012-13	25		726	£21186	£4661	£16525
	2013-14	25		738	£26692	£4903	£21789
	2014-15	23		726	£26725	£6219	£20506
	2015-16	33	9	780	£32975	£16846*	£16129
	2016-17	28	15	825	£35797	£7018	£29066
	2017-18	24	24	825	£36590	£9646	£26944
	2018-19	49	17	857	£40718	£9968	£30750
Leather	2012-13	8		265	£5671	£368	£5303
	2013-14	49		272	£3875	£458	£3417
	2014-15	6		278	£4722	£265	£4457
	2015-16	9	10	277	£6152	£203	£5949

	2016-17	13	17	257	£4959	£435	£4524
	2017-18	9	10	256	£6409	£320	£6089
	2018-19	8	10	254	£5119	£524	£4595
Book of Remembrance (inc. memorial cards and miniature books)	2012-13	342			£31285	£13356	£17929
	2013-14	342			£35789	£12170	£23619
	2014-15	308			£35789	£15191	£19475
	2015-16	271			£29161	£15370	£13791
	2016-17	344			£30305	£13422	£16883
	2017-18	324			£37513	£13087	£24426
	2018-19	236			£32384	£14077	£18307
Sanctum Vaults	2017-18	6	0	6	£14152	£1662	£12490
	2018-19	13	0	19	£21820	£2,704	£19,116

\*this includes the cost of the new sanctums which were purchased in Dec 2015 although none were sold until May 2016

A total sum of £1,706.26 was donated for the purchase of trees, shrubs and flowering plants and bulbs.

#### 4) **FEES**

The scales of fees were reviewed by the Joint Committee in March 2018. Increases of around 2-3.5% were approved in relation to the majority of the fees, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

The cremation fee was increased from £595 to £630 to reflect higher running costs and the financial impact of building the new crematorium at Berton.

Over the last decade or so funerals and funeral traditions have been changing more significantly and rapidly than in previous years. It has always been possible to bring a coffin to the crematorium for cremation without a preceding funeral service or any attendance by family or friends but recently some crematoria have started offering this at a reduced fee as a less expensive option. 175 have been carried out since Jan 2018 which is more than was anticipated but shows that there is demand for this service.

The national average cremation fee in 2018 was £783.18, and in a league table of the 299 crematoria in the UK, starting with the most expensive, Chilterns cremation fee ranked at 290.

**Table of fees for local crematoria 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 (£)**

<b>Crematorium</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Chilterns	*546.00	*575.00	*595.00	*630.00
Aylesbury Vale				*645.00
Slough	760.00	^760.00	^770.00	^770.00
Milton Keynes	*910.00	*914.50	*914.50	*930.50
Reading	725.00	745.00	745.00	785.00
West Herts	540.00	^560.00	^560.00	^600.00
Oxford	943.00	999.00	*1070.00	*1,070.00
National Ave	709.70	735.70	772.93	797.64

\*Does not include organist fee (Chilterns £55.00, only used for 12% of funerals in 2018/19)

^Extra charge for out of area cremations

## **5) STAFF**

During the year there were a number of staff changes as follows:-

1. A crematorium attendant resigned creating a vacancy.
2. A crematorium supervisor was appointed through an internal recruitment in preparation for the opening of Berton Crematorium. This created a vacancy for a crematorium attendant.
3. The two vacancies were successfully filled through recruitment and an additional crematorium attendant was also appointed for Berton Crematorium.

In view of the increasing amount of work in recent years and the imminent opening of the new crematorium at Berton the Crematoria Joint Committee agreed to the creation of a new post of full time clerical assistant to be appointed after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

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

## **6) 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. Regular external redecoration is especially important to ensure not only that the asset is protected but also that it remains aesthetically pleasing to users and potential users.

## **7) BIERTON CREMATORIUM**

Given the special knowledge and shared working the Chilterns Crematorium Joint Committee (CCJC) had developed, back in 2006 it was approached by one of its partners, Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC), to assist as an advisor to the planning authority on choosing a site for a proposed crematorium in Aylesbury.

Regional Policy at the time had identified Aylesbury as a major growth town within the approved Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Growth Strategy, requiring over 21,000 homes to be built by 2026, and a new crematorium was included as part of the infrastructure needed to support this.

By 2009 the CCJC had decided it would be advantageous to build the new crematorium itself to complement its well established business at Amersham. At the time no one envisaged how difficult it would be or how long it would take, firstly in finding a suitable site which was available and then, having done so, overcoming significant planning issues including a

successful legal challenge by a private crematorium company, Westerleigh plc (which has since opened a new crematorium at nearby Watermead).

In November 2016 the Court of Appeal refused Westerleigh permission to judicially review the current planning consent which finally brought the legal challenge to an end and opened the way for the project to restart. Jarvis Construction Ltd was the successful contractor at tender and work eventually started on site in November 2017. In the event, perhaps unsurprisingly, the construction process also had its challenges, including a very wet winter in 2017/18 and further unforeseen planning issues, all conspiring to cause yet more delays and inevitable additional costs. But perseverance prevailed and the completed building was finally handed over on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April and the first two funerals took place on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May.

The officers believe that the new crematorium is a first class facility which will serve the local community for many years to come. Already it is being well received by users making positive and complimentary comments. Being a new crematorium and having a direct competitor in Aylesbury the number of funerals is expected to be fairly low to begin with, but with the amount of house building and planned future house building in the area, including at nearby Linslade and Leighton Buzzard, the officers are confident that despite the slow start the funeral numbers will increase in coming years making this final project commissioned by the Crematoria Joint Committee a success.

## **8) 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's inception £7.4 million have now been distributed to nearly 500 different charities. Participating cremation authorities are invited after each collection to nominate an appropriate national or local charity to receive a donation. In the last few years the Chilterns Crematorium has made the following nominations:

2016, Second Hope (for sufferers of secondary breast cancer) £4,444  
2016, The Trevor Collins Foundation (bowel cancer research) £4,336  
2017, Helen and Douglas House (children's hospice) £5,000  
2017, Florence Nightingale Hospice (palliative care), £5,000  
2018, Butterfly House south Bucks Community Hospice, £7,000

## **The Royal British Legion**

Collections for the national poppy appeal in 2018 was £168.11.

## **Christmas tree stars**

A Christmas tree is placed in the chapel of remembrance in the run up to Christmas. Small tagged gold and silver stars are provided on which people can write a personal message to hang on the tree, and those doing so are invited to support a local charity by placing a donation in collection boxes placed in the chapel. Charities supported in this way over the last few years have been as follows:

2016, Cruse Bereavement Care £431.68 and Carers Bucks £446.11

2017, South Bucks Hospice £441.33 and the Hospice of St Francis in Berkhamsted £368.51

2018, from our first ever carol service £369 was raised for the Florence Nightingale Hospice, Aylesbury, and from the Christmas tree stars £893 was again shared between the South Bucks Hospice and Hospice of St Francis at Berkhamsted.

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