

# life

 Funeral Partners

in the community  
with Funeral Partners  
Issue 17 – Summer 2024



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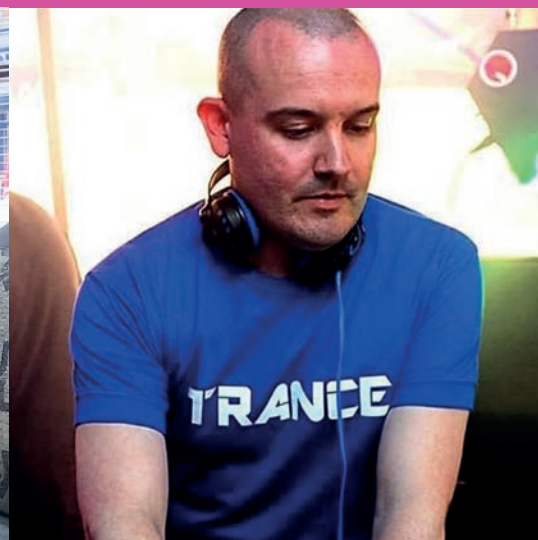
## In this issue...

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# Sam Kershaw

## Chief Executive Officer



The UK's third largest funeral service provider  
A Brand You Can Trust  
[www.funeralpartners.co.uk](http://www.funeralpartners.co.uk)



It has been a busy period over the last six months at Funeral Partners, as we continue to expand our network with a series of exciting acquisitions.

You can read more about the latest family businesses who have chosen to join us on pages four and five. I am absolutely delighted that each and every one of these businesses has chosen us as their acquisition partner. It is a testament to what we offer for people, as well as our reputation in the industry.

We now have more than 270 funeral homes and 140 business across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and continue to explore opportunities to grow.

Each of these businesses has its own history and heritage, which we will respect and honour. It is a privilege to be a part of their future.

I'm proud they see Funeral Partners as a name synonymous with respect, trust and exemplary service. From our homes in Devon to the heart of Scotland, Northern Ireland and everywhere in between, the Funeral Partners tulip should be taken as a sign of quality.

Recently, we have also launched a new funeral plan product – the Unattended Cremation Plan.

More details about this and what it means for people can be found on page six.

There is no doubt that the funeral industry is changing, and while traditional funerals are still the most popular choice for our clients, it is important we continue to evolve our offering and ensure we are meeting the needs of people across the country.

Speaking about evolution, we continue to invest in improving and, where necessary, moving into new premises to allow our teams to grow and continue to serve their communities in the best way possible.

For example, the new funeral home of Miles & Daughters Funeral Directors in Whitley Wood has been a boost to the community in south Reading. Read more on page 13.

We are also constantly investing and developing the range of cars in our fleet, which are crucial to giving people a dignified funeral.

It was an honour to be the first funeral company in the UK to order a state-of-the-art electric hearse and limousine based on a Ford Mustang Mach E from our partners at Coleman Milne.

These vehicles are now available for families using G W Turner Funeral Directors and Elizabeth Way & Company Funeral Directors

and strengthen our electric options for clients across the group.

It is also always heartening to read about our people up and down the country who are committed not just to providing top quality funeral care, but going above and beyond for their communities.

From sleepouts to support homelessness charities, to bereavement support events and friendship groups to combat loneliness and bring people together, I feel proud whenever I read about a new and innovative way our teams go the extra mile.

Our Community Funds and Community Assistance Programmes continue to go from strength to strength. Supporting good causes which are hyper-local and making a real difference to where they are based, it has been brilliant to see these schemes develop and to be able to launch these initiatives across the country.

This edition of Life also features people joining our industry as an apprentice, celebrating 40 years in funerals and someone who combines their work with clients in the day with being a DJ at night.

Our teams across our network are fantastic and I hope you enjoy reading their stories and finding out a little bit more about them and how we live our Funeral Partners values.



Rebecca Blenkiron is enjoying her new role as Funeral Partners' Call Service Lead

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CALL SUPPORT LEAD

**As well as our dedicated team of Funeral Directors, Funeral Arrangers and Funeral Service Operatives who help to plan goodbyes for families across the country, Funeral Partners offers a variety of other career options which you may not be familiar with.**

Here, Rebecca Blenkiron, our Call Support Lead for Scotland and the North East, discusses how she got into the role and what she enjoys about it.

Rebecca was a Funeral Director for five years but was intrigued when she saw the exciting new role advertised and was appointed in June 2023.

The Call Support Lead is the first point of contact for families enquiring about Funeral Partners services.

Some calls are transferred to the appropriate branch, and if the enquiry is price related, the Call Support Lead provides the person with the necessary information on services and pricing they need to make an informed decision.

Rebecca loved her previous role but was drawn to the flexibility the new role allows. Being able to work from branch and remotely, gives her a better work/life balance, but also enables her to still feel part of the Funeral Partners family. As well as keeping contact with her old team, she is also getting to know new people across the business from around the country, gaining a wider understanding of each of the funeral homes across the network.

"One of the most satisfying parts of the role is when I can use my existing knowledge to help the caller, without the need to

patch them through to the funeral home," Rebecca said.

"Being a Funeral Director myself, I know how precious time is and in most instances the teams are out on the road, answering calls and meeting families in the local branch.

**"KNOWING I CAN GIVE SOMEONE 100% OF MY UNDIVIDED ATTENTION IN THEIR TIME OF NEED GIVES ME COMPLETE JOB SATISFACTION."**

Having a funeral industry background means Rebecca can pass over messages and call with the right details, and ensure clients resolve their query as soon as possible.

She said: "This role has given me much more experience in the wider elements of funerals. Because of the areas we cover, you come across a variety of requests.

"Just the other day, a client was asking me about ashes pillows - for sea scattering. I have also taken a lot of calls for repatriations, for example to Ghana, Barbados and Poland to name a few. I hadn't ever dealt with an enquiry of this nature as a Funeral Director for one brand in North Yorkshire so I am learning everyday."

For more information about a rewarding career with Funeral Partners, visit our careers page, and join a company you'll be proud to be a part of at:  
[www.corporate.funeralpartners.co.uk/careers](http://www.corporate.funeralpartners.co.uk/careers)

# HISTORIC BUSINESSES HELP TO STRENGTHEN FUNERAL PARTNERS FAMILY

The Acquisitions Team at Funeral Partners have been working hard to welcome a number of new businesses into our high-quality network. These are the latest brands to join our ever growing family.



Head of Acquisition Integration David McCarthy, Business Principal Alison Cambrey and Area Development Manager Sandra Murphy at Arthur Cambrey Funeral Directors, Llanelli

## Arthur Cambrey Funeral Directors

[www.arthurbreycoburial.co.uk](http://www.arthurbreycoburial.co.uk)

Arthur Cambrey Funeral Directors in Llanelli was established by Mr Cambrey in the 1950s and his daughter Alison has decided now is the time for her to spend more time with her family after 40 years in the business.

She said: "From my very first meeting, everyone at Funeral Partners made me comfortable and I feel like they are here to support me."

"They appreciate and value the great business we have here because of the work that has gone in to building it up."

"This business was everything to my father, and I'm proud and happy that his name is still above the door."

## Andrew Grey Funeral Directors

[www.greysfunerals.co.uk](http://www.greysfunerals.co.uk)

After a varied career, Andrew trained as a Funeral Director in 1998 and set up his own business - **Andrew Grey Funeral Directors** - in 2011.

With no succession plan from within his family, he decided now was the best time to join Funeral Partners, with a fresh new local team already recruited to help him provide his trademark level of quality and care to families.

"With the full support of Funeral Partners, I continue to do what I love by running the client and community side of the business exactly as I have done before, and I am confident they will take away the back office stress that comes with being an independent business," he said.

"Funeral Partners are the perfect partner for me."

Andrew Grey with his partner and Office Manager Gillian Mason and Funeral Partners Head of Acquisition Integration David McCarthy at their funeral home in Sunderland



David and Susan Barke of Murray's Funeral Directors with Funeral Partners CEO Sam Kershaw

## Murray's Funeral Directors

[www.murraysfunerals.co.uk](http://www.murraysfunerals.co.uk)

Murray's Funeral Directors was established more than 20 years ago by Sue Barke in Burton-upon-Trent and now operates from four busy funeral homes across Staffordshire and Derbyshire.

Sue and her husband David will continue to support the business which they now operate with Funeral Partners.

## G E Hartley & Sons Funeral Directors

[www.gehartley.co.uk](http://www.gehartley.co.uk)

GE Hartley & Sons Funeral Directors can trace its history back to 1808 and was originally named A & B Harrison.

The Hartley family had worked for the business prior to taking it over, and it now operates two funeral homes located in Wetherby and Garforth in West Yorkshire.

Stewart Hartley - the fourth generation of his family to be in the industry - will continue to run the business with support from his team.

## Toby Hunt Funeral Service & Crowsons Funeral Directors

[www.tobyhuntfuneralservice.co.uk](http://www.tobyhuntfuneralservice.co.uk)  
[www.crowsonsfuneraldirectors.co.uk](http://www.crowsonsfuneraldirectors.co.uk)

Toby Hunt Funeral Service was founded in 1997 by Toby, who had been introduced to the funeral profession through work experience.

Crowsons Funeral Directors has provided excellent service over the past 100 years and was sold by the previous owner to Toby.

He and his wife Jane remain with Funeral Partners as Business Principals and their daughter Milly as Manager, to continue to work with clients in Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.



David and Simon Gill from E Gill and Sons Funeral Directors with Funeral Partners CEO Sam Kershaw at their funeral home in Newark

## E. Gill and Sons Funeral Directors

[www.egillandsons.co.uk](http://www.egillandsons.co.uk)

An integral part of the community in Newark, Nottinghamshire, **E. Gill and Sons Funeral Directors** has had five generations of the same family caring for their community.

Steeped in a rich history, the Gill family first took ownership of the business when it was transferred to Edwin Gill in 1915.

It is now run by his great-grandchildren David, Simon and Emma-Jane - with David's son Ian and Simon's son Nick adding to the family involvement.

"We're proud of our reputation and the history we have, and of the family business which has been built up over a long, long time," David said.

"Looking to the future, we feel it is the right time to do this to protect our business and the next generation of Gills."

"After conversations with Funeral Partners it became clear they were supportive of a light touch approach, allowing us to protect the way in which we had run the business."

## Malone & Fox Funeral Directors

[www.malonefox.com](http://www.malonefox.com)

Glasgow-based **Malone & Fox Funeral Directors** was started by Alex Malone and his business partner Stephen Fox a decade ago and has gone from strength to strength since then.

Alex remains with the business, while day to day operations are being run by the dedicated and experienced team they have in Shawland.

To read more acquisition partner stories or to find your nearest Funeral Partners Funeral Director visit [www.funeralpartners.co.uk](http://www.funeralpartners.co.uk)

A warm welcome

# NEW UNATTENDED CREMATION FUNERAL PLAN FROM CHOICE LAUNCHES

Choice Funeral Plans, the Funeral Plan arm of Funeral Partners, has launched a new funeral plan product to ensure people who want an Unattended Cremation, sometimes known as a Direct to Cremation service, will receive the highest quality of care from our network of Funeral Directors.

We have chosen to offer the new Unattended Cremation Plan in order to fulfil the individual needs of those who do not want a traditional funeral service but want to make some provision for the future.

Funeral Partners Chief Executive Sam Kershaw said it was important to meet every customer's needs.

He said: "The number of people wanting an Unattended Direct to Cremation service is increasing and although we know that traditional funerals continue to be the most popular choice for our families, it is important that we are able to offer this option to everyone.

"For customers purchasing an Unattended Cremation Plan from us, it will mean they will have the benefit of our exceptional level of service and will be safe in the knowledge their funeral will be conducted by a Funeral Director local to them or their loved one, by people they know and trust.

"They will also have the option to visit and say goodbye prior to the cremation at one of our funeral homes.



Choice Pre-Need Executives Rachel Stone and Jess Cowley

**"IF A CUSTOMER CHANGES THEIR MIND ABOUT THE TYPE OF FUNERAL THEY WANT DURING THE LIFECYCLE OF THEIR PLAN, THEY CAN SWITCH TO ONE OF OUR MORE TRADITIONAL PLANS."**

The new Choice Unattended Cremation Plan, priced at £1,795, includes professional services, a simple coffin, crematorium fees and doctors' fees (if required), is now available in all Funeral Partners branches and online.

Enhancements have also been made to our other Choice Funeral Plan products - Essential and Plus - and a national price for the products has

been brought in across all the funeral homes in the network.

The plans are designed to be fully portable, so they can be bought at one Funeral Partners funeral home and then redeemed at another, if you move to another part of the country or for another reason, subject to terms and conditions.

Choice Funeral Plans have featured on both regional and digital television channels in the past year with an advertising campaign starring beloved characters Maureen and Brenda, who make wry comments about the choices made by their friends for their funerals demonstrating the benefits of pre purchasing a funeral plan and expressing your personal funeral wishes.

*A life well remembered lives on*

# FUNERAL DIRECTORS TAKES ON FIRST APPRENTICE IN MORE THAN A CENTURY... AFTER SHE WAS INSPIRED BY TIKTOK

A Funeral Directors which has been serving the community for 120 years has taken on its first apprentice in its long and celebrated history

Chloe Coleman, 22, joined James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors last summer, and is thriving in her role as Apprentice Receptionist Administrator.

She combines her role with studies provided by apprenticeship provider Inspiro Learning.

Chloe was inspired to apply for the position after seeing a Funeral Arranger talking about her role on Tik Tok.

"It might sound silly, but I had not expected the work to be so interesting and rewarding," she said.

"So, when I saw the role advertised online, I applied, and from the very first conversation I

had about it, it felt right, and I have enjoyed each day since.

"I love being able to help families when they're obviously having a very difficult time.



Chloe Coleman at James Brown and Sons Funeral Directors

"People are just so grateful for what we do for them. It's really fulfilling."

Chloe said she would recommend apprenticeships to people who are leaving school and are unsure about what they wanted to do in the future.

"In my opinion, apprenticeships are amazing - they're a brilliant opportunity for people," she said.

"Being here every day means I can learn and earn money at the same time."

## HEALING HARMONY: AN OCCASION TO REMEMBER AT ST ANNE'S CATHEDRAL

St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast provided a poignant setting for an emotional and uplifting candle-lit ceremony, 'Light Up the Night - An Occasion to Remember,' organised by Funeral Partners NI and Cruse Bereavement Support NI.

The ceremony was designed to honour and remember those who passed away in recent years, providing a source of comfort and support for families.

Hosted by the Very Rev Stephen Forde, the service unfolded with families having the opportunity to place messages on remembrance trees in honour of their departed loved ones.

Featuring moving music from the Cathedral Choir and a solo harpist, readings and poetry, a moment of silence was also included and representatives from various traditions led prayers, emphasising compassion.

Speaking at the event, the Very Rev Stephen Forde expressed, "We trust you will find some comfort in the words and music you will hear today and in coming together with others who find themselves in similar circumstances to yours."

James Brown of James Brown & Sons said: "We stand alongside our communities with compassion, having witnessed the profound impact of loss over the years. This event offers unique moments of solace, bringing a collective embrace to those travelling on the difficult journey of grief.

"Through Funeral Partners support, we have been able to create an environment which we hope will bring some healing to those who are experiencing loss. We are pleased that Cruse Bereavement Support were key partners at the event."

Several attendees expressed their thanks for being invited to the ceremony which they commented had lifted their spirits and allowed some time out of their busy lives to reflect and remember those that they had lost. If you need bereavement support visit [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk).



Choice Funeral Plans are provided by Alternative Planning Company Limited (APCL). APCL is part of the Funeral Partners Group, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority with firm reference number 965282. The price of a Choice Essentials Plan is £2,650 and the equivalent price for this funeral purchased today is £3,225. The price of a Choice Plus Plan is £2,925 and the equivalent price for this funeral purchased today is £3,546 (based on our lowest priced coffin). The price of an Unattended Cremation Plan is £1,795 and the equivalent price for an unattended funeral purchased today is £1,785 (exc. doctor's fees). These are a national average based on 277 branches in the Funeral Partners Network. Funeral prices vary, and local prices differ, please check your local Funeral Partners branch for specific funeral prices or go online at [funeralpartners.co.uk](http://funeralpartners.co.uk). These prices are correct as of 19 July 2024. APCL incurs costs in order to provide this Funeral Plan to you. APCL typically retains around £475 of the price you pay for each Funeral Plan to cover our costs.

**choice**  
from Funeral Partners

# FUNERAL DIRECTOR MARKS FOUR DECADES HELPING LOCAL FAMILIES IN THE NORTH EAST

A Funeral Director has said his 40 years helping bereaved families in County Durham has been an honour and a privilege

Darren Johnstone, 57, is celebrating four decades at **E Peart Funeral Director**.

The Peart family set up the funeral home in the 1930s and were friends of Darren's family. He then began helping out when he was 17.

Darren continued to work at the funeral home when the owners Bob and Joe Peart retired in 1985, and it was sold to local businessman Graeme Ward.

The business was left to Darren when Graeme died in 1994. He has been at the helm ever since, selling the business to Funeral Partners in 2021 but remaining as the face of E Peart for local families in his role as Business Principal.

Darren said he knew he wanted to be in funerals from an early age, having sung in the choir and played the organ at



Darren Johnstone is celebrating 40 years at E Peart Funeral Director

St John's Parish Church in Greenside where he would see funerals being conducted and said he had seen a host of changes in the industry, although the level of care had remained constant.

"The personal side of things has stayed the same – the way we look after people hasn't changed – and that's why I have stayed so long," he said.

"You go into clients homes and often find people who are understandably distressed and hopefully leave with them feeling a little bit better that we will be there for them, to support and guide them throughout the funeral arrangements.

"You only get one chance at a funeral, and I think over the last 40 years we've done well at getting it right for our families."

## FUNERAL HOME MANAGER RAISED £1,900 FOR LOCAL CHARITY BY SLEEPING ROUGH OVERNIGHT

A Funeral Home manager took part in a sleep out to raise vital charity funds and awareness around the issue of homelessness.

Carl Tate, Funeral Manager at **Daren Persson Funeral Services** in Tyne & Wear, slept rough on the streets of nearby Richmond, North Yorkshire, where he serves as a town councillor.

Carl, who was supported by the brothers of the Masonic Lennox Lodge, raised £1,920 to help support the crucial work of Foundation Richmond – a local charity.

One of the organisation's priorities is to help people who are homeless, or who are at risk of becoming so.

Carl took to the streets with just his clothes, blankets and a cardboard mat to try to relate to those who have no other option than to sleep rough each night.

"Homelessness is a growing problem, not just locally, but across the country," Carl said.

"I appreciate I was able to go home when the night had finished, but a lot of people do not have that luxury.

"I am really pleased with the amount we were able to raise on the night, and I hope it has played a part in

supporting the work of Foundation Richmond, who do such important things for our community.

"I had great support on the night and am grateful to everyone who donated."



Funeral Home Manager Carl Tate (second left) with his Lennox Lodge brothers



Pauline Lawrence from Elizabeth Way & Company Funeral Directors with the new electric vehicles

## FUNERAL BUSINESS AMONG THE FIRST IN THE COUNTRY TO OFFER THE USE OF ELECTRIC MUSTANG HEARSE AND LIMOUSINE

Two Funeral Directors at the heart of their local communities are now offering bereaved families the option to use a state-of-the-art electric hearse and limousine based on a Ford Mustang Mach E for their loved ones' funerals.

Clients of **G W Turner Funeral Directors** in Edgeley and **Elizabeth Way & Company Funeral Directors**, in Mossley, can now request the use of the carbon neutral, luxury vehicles which boast a smooth, comfortable ride while offering all the benefits and innovations found in modern electric cars.

Funeral Partners investment in electric vehicles is part of our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Strategy which sets objectives to understand the full extent of their carbon emissions, minimise the environmental and human impact of business operations and enable people to make funeral choices based on their own values and environmental concerns.

We were the first funeral company in the country to place an order for the vehicles from Coleman Milne.

As well as being carbon neutral, the vehicles also offer a smooth comfortable ride, have all the modern benefits and innovations found in modern electric cars and are quiet, which is crucial for use in funerals.

G W Turner Funeral Director Nicolle Smith said: "We are proud to lead the way as the first funeral service in the UK to introduce the Ford Mustang Mach-E electric fleet.

"By offering this environmentally conscious option, we are not only meeting the evolving needs of our clients but also contributing to a greener, more sustainable future.

"It's a testament to our ongoing commitment to serving our communities in Stockport."

Elizabeth Way and Company, Funeral Director Pauline Lawrence said: "It is a privilege to be able to offer these cars to the families who choose to arrange funerals with us.

"These cars really are remarkable. They look exceptional and have the quiet dignity we value so highly."

Funeral Partners Chief Executive Sam Kershaw added: "We've made a commitment to cut our carbon footprint, and this is another step in our planning.

"These vehicles will help give families choice, 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. They are an impressive and unique transportation for a loved one's final journey."

The hearse includes noiseless operation, a flat, full-length deck with ample space for personal flower tributes, three full-size seats with lap and diagonal seatbelts, and a glass roof, while the limousine is luxuriously appointed and can carry seven passengers in addition to the driver.

Graham Clow, National Sales Director at Coleman Milne said: "We're so pleased to hand over the first of these vehicles to Funeral Partners.

"The Mach-E is the perfect base for a comfortable, quiet and respectful hearse and limousine.

"This will provide the teams with all the benefits and innovations found in today's electric vehicles."

## NEW COMMUNITY GROUP AIMS TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER IN BANBURY

A Funeral Directors which has proudly served their community for close to 150 years has launched a new group to help bring people together and build bonds.

The Humphris Community Group has been launched by the team at **Humphris Funerals**.

Held in their on-site service chapel, the group is open to anyone living locally and runs on the first Wednesday of every month.

Funeral Manager Emma Hollis said: "We want to promote friendship, wellbeing and bringing people together and were interested to see whether there was a need for it in the community."

**"WE'VE BEEN PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE ATTENDED AND HAVE HAD REALLY GOOD RESPONSES."**

"There have been good chats about how Banbury has changed – both the pros and the cons – and it has been



John Marshall, an expert knitter, passes on his skills to Amanda Bain, receptionist at Humphris

lovely to listen to people talk.

"It's open to absolutely everyone to come down and get involved.

"We are really keen for it to be community-led and want to tailor the sessions to the interests of people who attend. Ideally, we want to get some guest speakers to talk about relevant topics."

Emma said it was crucial that Humphris Funerals played an active role in their community whenever possible.

"We wanted to be able to offer more to bereaved people after the funeral

service has taken place in addition to pre-need plans and memorial masonry. Our doors have always been open for people to stop by and have a cup of tea regardless, but we hope to encourage more of this with the group," she said.

"Supporting our local community has always been a big part of what we do here. For example, we did a big Easter egg appeal last year for Let's Play – a project which supports children with additional needs and managed to donate 300 chocolate eggs.

"We're proud that people want to come here, ask us for support and advice and find us approachable.

"People say that our aftercare is unmatched, which is just the most incredible feedback."

For more information about their community work visit [www.humphrisfunerals.co.uk](http://www.humphrisfunerals.co.uk) or be the first to know about upcoming community projects on Facebook via [www.facebook.com/HumphrisFunerals32AlbertStreet](https://www.facebook.com/HumphrisFunerals32AlbertStreet)



The Humphris Community Group, including former owner Maurice Humphris, descendant of founder Joseph, at their latest meeting

## HISTORIC FUNERAL BUSINESS OPENS NEW FUNERAL HOME AT PICTURESQUE LOCATION

A business steeped in more than 180 years of rich history has opened a new funeral home to help them continue to offer their outstanding care

**Farthing Funeral Service** has opened a premises in the riverside Suffolk town of Woodbridge, converting a building which has previously been an office and a dental surgery into a high-quality funeral home.

The business has operated in nearby Ipswich since 1840 and also has funeral homes in Felixstowe and Debenham which remain open, with dedicated teams ready to provide quality care for the bereaved.

The new Woodbridge home will be staffed by Funeral Director Francesca Souter and Funeral Arranger Ammie Nichols, both of whom live locally, and understand the needs of the local community.

Area Development Manager Jamie Waters said he was delighted to see the new home opening and said it was very important for the team to find the right location for the community.



Funeral Arranger Ammie Nichols and Funeral Director Francesca Souter at the new Farthing Funeral Service funeral home in Woodbridge

"We have looked at several properties over the last 18 months, but this was by far the outstanding choice for our new Funeral Home," he said.

"It is in an ideal location for clients on a main road with ample parking, close to the train station with beautiful views of the River Deben.

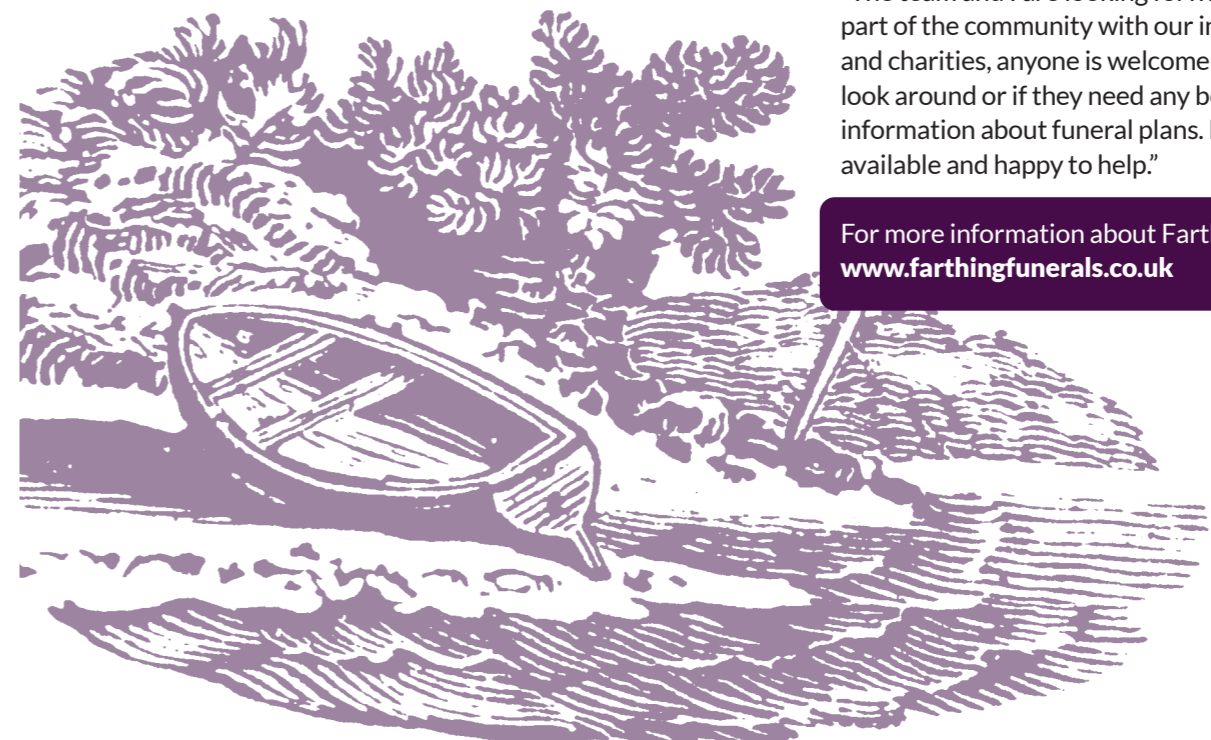
"The refurbishment and the new facilities for funeral arrangements to care for the deceased are both welcoming and of a high standard – it is somewhere you can be sure your loved ones are being looked after and there is also a lovely chapel of rest for our clients and families to have a private goodbye.

"We have always looked after families in the

Woodbridge area, and we hope having a new funeral home in the town will make it easier for them to access us when they need our services.

"The team and I are looking forward to becoming a bigger part of the community with our involvement in local events and charities, anyone is welcome to pop in for a chat, take a look around or if they need any bereavement support and information about funeral plans. Francesca and Ammie are available and happy to help."

For more information about Farthing Funeral Service visit [www.farthingfunerals.co.uk](http://www.farthingfunerals.co.uk)





## FUNERAL DIRECTOR BY DAY... SUPERSTAR DJ AT NIGHT

**Nathan Martin's exciting double life shows exactly how you can be a consummate professional without compromising on your outside interests**

By day, Nathan Martin is one of Kent's foremost Funeral Directors; respectfully conducting the final arrangements for families coping with the loss of a loved one.

But come the weekend, the 44-year-old takes charge of a very different ceremony; the release of energy to pounding beats and throbbing bass at some of the biggest clubs both at home and abroad.

As a moonlighting DJ, music producer and club night promoter, he swaps the top hat and black suit often required in his role as Funeral Manager for Funeral Partners in South East London for the record decks and headphones.

He's performed around the world, holding crowds in the palm of his hand at the likes of London's legendary Ministry of Sound, The Cross and Fabric clubs, Pacha in Egypt and New

York's famous Twilo. His biggest show was to 45,000 people at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.

"I'm just a normal person and at the weekends I enjoy going out to play some music. If I've been looking after families during the week, which can be emotionally draining, going out and playing music is the best therapy."

The two sides of Nathan's life are hard to reconcile. And he goes to great lengths to ensure there is a very clear dividing line between his two interests; especially given the deep emotional connection he has with his day job – what he describes as "his calling".

"My mum passed away when I was very young; when I was 10," he explains. "Then I suffered various bereavements throughout my teenage years.

"To see the caring, compassionate way Funeral Directors treated my dad through this horrendous time was hugely comforting. Just to know that there was somebody there was important."

His love of music pre-dates his career choice – initially stumbling into the joys of playing music when trying out the DJ decks of a friend's brother before his debut club night in Maidstone.

"From Monday to Friday I am completely dedicated to my job. But on Friday and Saturday that's my time to play music," he says.

"I still remember the first time I did my first ever mix from one record into another; when you've blended music into each other seamlessly. That's it. You're hooked."

"When you get that reaction from the crowd it's the best thing. I'm quite a shy person really. I hide behind my music a little bit. But every now and again, when you get that feedback from the crowd, it brings you out and then you start to really enjoy it with them.

"I've helped many families during my career and often see them when I'm a DJ in a club. They are surprised. But I think it helps bring them round to thinking that funeral directors can have fun outside of work."

In addition to that, with his funeral director's hat on, he's helped promote campaigns calling for death, dying and bereavement to be added to the national curriculum to break the taboo.

He's also launched a LGBTQ+ group within the National Association of Funeral Directors to help tackle prejudice in the sector and is the President of the National Association of Funeral Directors Kent Area Federation.

"You know, I'd love to be touring the world and playing music but looking after people at funerals is much more important to me. It will always come first – it's my greatest passion in life."

## FUNERAL TEAM FLY FROM THE SKY TO RAISE THOUSANDS FOR LOCAL CHARITY

**A team of fundraising funeral professionals faced their fears and fell from 15,000ft to raise money for a local hospice**

The skydive was made by members of staff from **Torbay and District Funeral Directors, Maunders Funeral Service** in Paignton, **JH Way** in Teignmouth, and **Exeter & District Funeral Directors**, in aid of Rowcroft Hospice.

Their brave efforts raised more than £7,500 for the charity, which provides a wide range of specialist palliative care services for people and their families with progressive life-limiting illnesses in the Southwest.

Daredevil Sandra Murphy, who has previously completed both a sky dive and wing walk, is the Area Development Manager for Funeral Partners, and organised for her team to take part.

"It was absolutely amazing, and for the rest of the team it was their first ever skydive," Sandra explained.

"In fact, it was the first time one of the team, Jade Cross, had even been in an aeroplane, and she was jumping out of it.

"We've done a lot of work with Rowcroft Hospice.

They're a charity we are delighted to support and they need people to fundraise for them.

"They do such wonderful work – if there aren't enough beds in the hospice, they offer their Rowcroft at Home service where people can get the same level of care in their own homes.

"But what they do is costly and they need funding."

The team had planned to do the skydive four weeks earlier, but it was delayed due to high winds, which Sandra said did not help her team's nerves.

"The delay meant I had to restart my daily countdown and certainly didn't help the tension.

"It's fair to say there was a high level of apprehension before it happened, but you could see everyone was delighted when they landed safely," she said.

"On the way up, I kept telling them they would like me again once it was over!"



Jade Cross, Bonnie Giannandrea, Dave Salisbury, Emma Bastow, Steph Womersley and Sandra Murphy before take off

## BOOST FOR COMMUNITY WHO NOW HAVE BRANCH OF RESPECTED FUNERAL DIRECTOR ON THEIR DOORSTEP

**Miles & Daughters Funeral Directors**, a business proudly at the heart of the local community has opened a new Funeral Home in Whitley Wood, Reading.

Their new location means their services are more accessible for people living in the south of the town.

Area Development Manager Sarah White said: "It has taken a good amount of time and investment, but we are really pleased with how the home is looking.

"We've always served the families of Whitley Wood from our home in Winnersh, but having somewhere more local can only be a positive thing."

This branch is the eighth Miles & Daughters funeral home and Sarah said the reputation built by the late Adam Miles, who founded the business in 1999, was a key reason for their excellent standing in Berkshire.

"Adam built the business up brilliantly, and it has been

servicing communities across Berkshire for more than 20 years now," she said.

"On top of that legacy, we have got great teams in all of our branches who look after people and who families want to see again when they are experiencing a difficult moment.

"The Whitley Wood branch will be looked after by Funeral Arranger Catherine Shaw who is fantastic, brilliant with clients and will be perfect for this new role."



Funeral Arranger Catherine Shaw outside the new Miles & Daughters branch in Whitley Wood



## Thank you messages



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

### Frank Dooley & Sons Funeral Directors, Widnes

Our family were more than happy with the service Dooley's provided in arranging our mum's funeral from start to finish. The care and compassion shown to us was faultless. Gill, Alex and all the staff were always in touch throughout it all, and are a credit to the company. Dooley's arranged my dad's funeral many years ago which is why I came back to them again.

CM

### Hammerton's Funeral Directors, Barnsley

I was really impressed with the whole service from first contact to cremation, but I felt real comfort in how mum was presented in the funeral home, she looked most peaceful and beautiful.

As a family we would like to thank Hannah and the team who treated us with respect and empathy. I would like my funeral to be handled by Hammerton's but hopefully not for a long while yet.

Thanks again Hammerton's for guiding us through a very difficult time in our lives.

JG

### Walker & Morrell Funeral Directors

Nicola, Sarah and the team at Walker & Morrell, Gateshead provided an excellent service to me and my family in arranging my mum's funeral. I felt very supported and was taken through each part of the process in a caring and compassionate way. Nicola always got back to me very quickly if I had any questions and was always happy to help. The attention to detail was outstanding, which really helped to put my mind at rest at such a difficult time.

AP

### Dawe Brothers Funeral Directors, Hereford

At a very distressing time after losing my mother, we were looked after by Daniel who made the whole process smooth and trouble free, he is an absolute credit to your company.

On the day of the funeral all the staff we came into contact with from Dawe Brothers were excellent.

Again though, top service from Daniel.

JG

### John G Hogg Funeral Directors, Farringdon

Cannot rate this company highly enough for their compassion, empathy and professionalism when looking after my late father.

I'd like to particularly thank Stephen and the team for keeping my family and I on the right track, at a time when perhaps you're not thinking straight. They made the arrangements seamless and painless for us, which was a load off our minds.

Thanks also for the recommendation of the celebrant for the service. He delivered exactly what the family wanted, just as he said he would.

Absolutely first class from start to finish.

NW

### Adair & Neely Funeral Directors, Londonderry

I have not long buried my beloved father. My family has used Adair & Neely on this sad occasion for the second generation. They excelled themselves from start to finish.

John met me on the day of my father's passing and everything was meticulously managed by him. From the taking of remains, to the coordination and execution of the funeral, he and his team were excellent. The presentation of the remains and coffin was absolutely outstanding and the exceptionally high standard was noted by more than a few.

Many, many thanks to John and the team.

DW

### Arthur Cambrey Funeral Directors, Llaneli

Stephen dealt with all the arrangements in an excellent manner. Everyone we encountered was helpful, respectful, and conducted themselves to a high standard. Everything was flawlessly carried out.

All staff were excellent, and my family were looked after impeccably. Arthur Cambrey Funeral Directors should be proud of the caring, high quality service that they provide. A heartfelt thank you to everyone.

SH

### Sterry Funeral Service, Hythe

The staff at Sterry were so helpful, considerate and generous with their time. The arrangements went exactly according to our wishes and they organised everything from start to finish. As it was a direct to crematorium funeral we were able to sit with the coffin in private beforehand and say our goodbyes. We would have no hesitation in highly recommending Sterry Funeral Service.

JA

### Doves Funeral Directors, Maidstone

Very professional service where Kayleigh went above and beyond.

She was very helpful with helping myself and my son in planning my wife's funeral, nothing was too much for her. I can't thank her and the whole team at Doves enough, would highly recommend.

AQ

### Turners Funeral Service, Bramley

I would like to thank the whole team for looking after me and my daughters after we suddenly lost my husband. They were so professional and took us through the whole process with so much empathy and support. With their help the funeral was perfectly fitting for him, we honestly can't thank you enough.

KT

### Thorne-Leggett Funeral Directors, Bordon

They did our wonderful mum so proud. The team have a very personable way with families and made a difficult time a blessing. Friendly service and the whole process was flawless.

DM

### Roy Quinton Funeral Directors, Walsall

The most difficult day of our lives had come and we thank the staff who care so, so much. The service was beautiful and traditional. It was all you can hope for on a sad day, was just perfect- they think of everything!

In what has been a very hard time, all of the team have really gone above and beyond. Nothing was too much. We will only ever use Roy Quinton. You're wonderful angels.

GL

### E Peart Funeral Director, Ryton

I would like to compliment the team at E Peart for their advice support and guidance with my mum's funeral. At such a difficult time, support and understanding are most important. The funeral went smoothly due to excellent planning and communication. Courtney professionally helped me from commencement to completion.

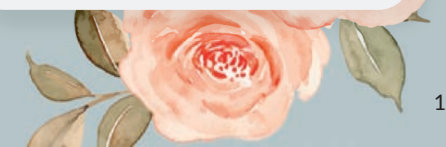
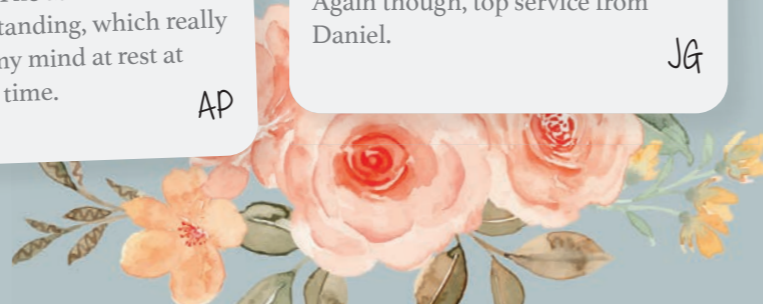
KT

### T W Boorman Funeral Services, Tonbridge

From the moment I made contact with TW Boorman, it was a weight off my shoulders. I will be forever grateful for all the team have done at this really difficult time. They showed professionalism, kindness and compassion, and I would like to thank them for treating my partner with great care and respect.

Arranging a funeral for my young partner was something I never envisaged happening, but they were able to go through the whole process, answer queries etc, and arranged a wonderful celebrant to officiate the funeral. Thank you TW Boorman.

NG







Funeral Director Pauline Lawrence outside Elizabeth Way & Company Funeral Directors in Stamford Street, Mossley



Jackie Donaldson from John Blenkiron & Sons presents a grant to Richmond Bowls Club



Funeral Manager Barbara Wilson, Anna Gray, Annika Rapp from Camphill Community Holywood and Senior Funeral Arranger Sandra Williamson-min

# GOOD CAUSES ACROSS THE COUNTRY BENEFITING FROM SUPPORT FROM FUNERAL PARTNERS

**Grassroots charities across the England and Northern Ireland have been supported with grants thanks to funding initiatives launched by big-hearted funeral teams.**

Causes dedicated to helping people based close to participating funeral homes have been able to apply for support for specific projects and to help continue their great work.

Since it launched in 2022, dozens of charities in the Greater Belfast area have benefited from the James Brown & Sons Community Fund – the first initiative of its kind launched by Funeral Partners – which has seen more than £45,000 granted to local organisations.

Beverley Brown, Marketing Manager said: “We are so proud of the work we have been able to do with the fund. Supporting so many charities and building relationships has been incredibly rewarding.”

The John Gray & Co Community Assistance Programme supports projects based within one mile of their funeral homes in Bangor, Holywood and Newtownards, with the team passionate about supporting local causes because of their deep-rooted connections to the area.

Barbara Wilson, Funeral Manager NI, said: “Not only are we working in the community and serving families in the area but a lots of the team live locally as well.

“When we see the good work that these groups are doing within our own areas in which we both work and live, it is just heart-warming to do something to support and help them

The John Blenkiron & Sons Community Fund supported more than a dozen charities across Richmond and Catterick in North Yorkshire and Barnard Castle in County Durham with a share of £20,000.

Causes including a youth football team and cheerleading troop to a Dementia charity were among those to benefit.

Senior Funeral Director Rebekah Elliott, said: “I have really enjoyed learning about the incredible things that are happening in the communities we serve, and am so impressed by the tireless work and dedication the people behind these causes put in.”

## THE MILES & DAUGHTERS COMMUNITY FUND HAS HELPED LOCAL PEOPLE ACROSS BERKSHIRE WITH THE FIRST WINDOW OF APPLICATIONS PROVIDING £6,000 WORTH OF SUPPORT.

Area Development Manager Sarah White said: “I am so proud we have been able to offer this opportunity for the community we support day in day out.”

The latest business to launch a funding initiative is Elizabeth Way & Company Funeral Directors in Greater Manchester.

Their Community Assistance Programme began in March with the aim of addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged people in the local area.

Funeral Director Pauline Lawrence said: “We are keen to use this programme as a first step in building long-term relationships with the organisations who contact us, so we can continue to support such great causes and initiatives in the community through other activity.”

For more information about all the funeral homes in the Funeral Partners family visit [www.funeralpartners.co.uk](http://www.funeralpartners.co.uk) or contact Kelly Hailou, Marketing Director: [Kelly.Hailou@funeralpartners.co.uk](mailto:Kelly.Hailou@funeralpartners.co.uk)

We welcome your feedback and comments about this issue of Life magazine, or if you would like to contribute, please contact Gemma Taylor, Community & Communications Manager: [community@funeralpartners.co.uk](mailto:community@funeralpartners.co.uk)