

## **Chapter Eight**

### **The Sheffield Funeral– Religion and Rite**

#### **1. Introduction**

Given that this study is concerned with the religious influences in funerary practices in Sheffield, this chapter establishes focal elements of ritual and religion in such influences. As Saunders, 1992, noted:

**‘The vast majority of Sheffield people accept the conventional religious funeral. To “opt-out” implies decision and also determination at a time when these attributes are in short supply. ... there is no official middle-of-the-road style of funeral available for the token Christian, or for those who want to add aspects of religion as insurance.’<sup>1</sup>**

Writing for publication in 1990, Walter comments on the problem of the Briton who wants a personal, life-centred funeral and is not particularly religious, yet who may well want the Lord’s Prayer or ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’, but is restricted to a possibly impersonal religious funeral and a personal but strictly secular alternative.<sup>2</sup> The Sheffield funeral of the twenty-first century has no such restrictions. The continual public interest in the topic of funerals, which is fed by the irregular but persistent offerings of the media, ensure that Walter’s comment on the lack of awareness about secular funerals is less appropriate today. 47% of the respondents in this present study, the sample taken from a broad range, were aware of some of the vast range of options available for funerals, from the well-informed who knew that a prepared body could be taken to a crematorium for later disposal, to those who knew that one did not have to have a religious, or ‘proper’ service, but that ‘friends could take it’. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents to this study wanted, needed, and expected religion to be an aspect of any funeral, even if one excludes those representatives of the larger minority religions practised in Sheffield. Given this exclusion, the religious customs and rituals noted ranged from those reported by a

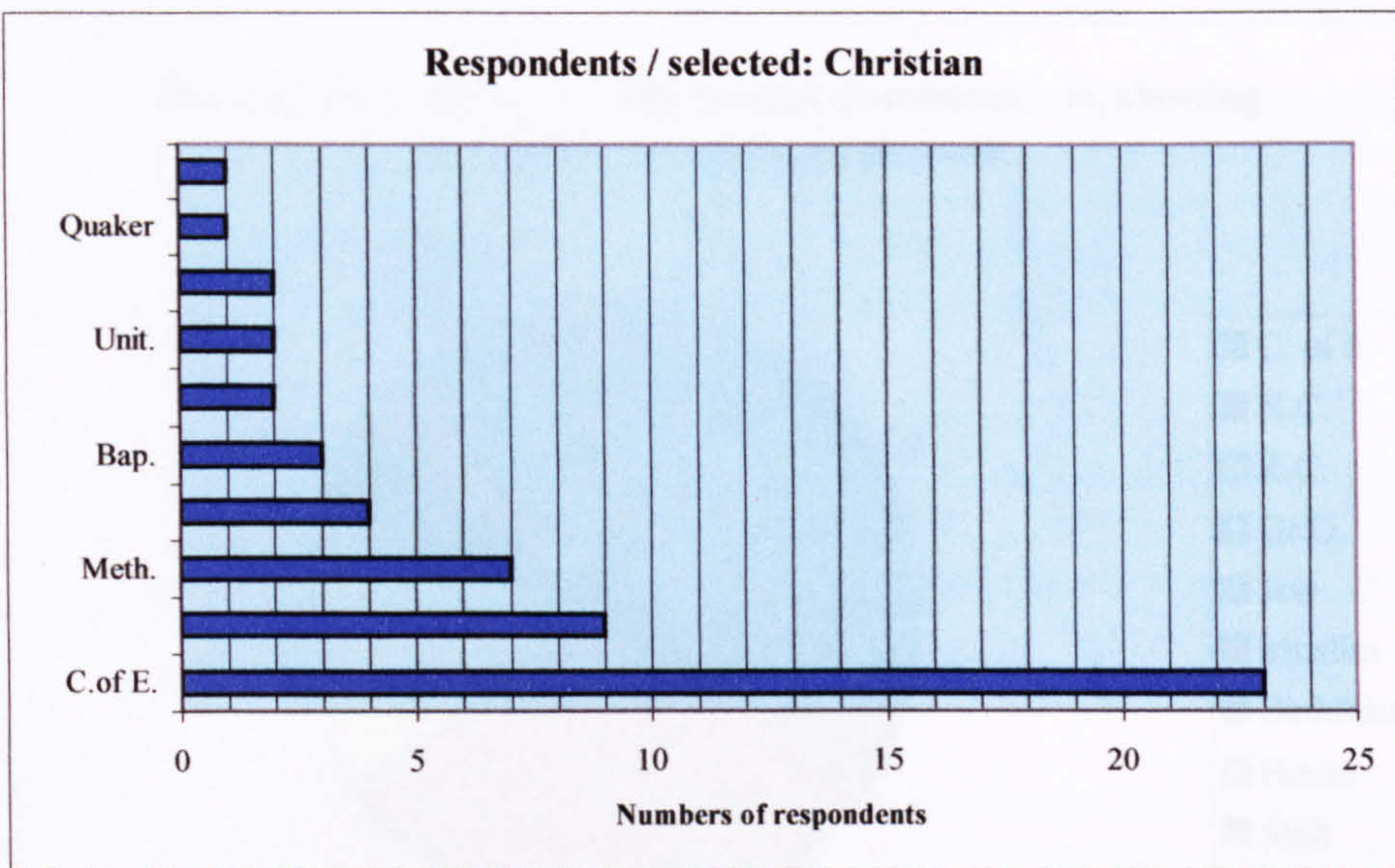
Quaker, who chose to simply deliver the body in her charge to the crematorium, because this was appropriate behaviour for her,<sup>3</sup> to those of the high Anglican, who expects 'the full Monty': 'bells, smells, and lots and lots of candles'.<sup>4</sup> If the range of options is wide, then that must be seen as a consequence of the range of requirements and requests. The predominant feature noted in the religious aspects of the Sheffield funeral has been one of accommodation, provided that any request for alterations and additions to a Church of England funeral service complies both with the requirements of Canon Law and the local rules that are considered necessary for the ordered life of the Diocese,<sup>5</sup> and also provided that any requests for adaptations and inclusions in the Roman Catholic *Order of Service* fit stated guidelines.

The 67 selected respondents, in the study acknowledged, or followed, these religious beliefs: Christian: 54, and non-Christian: 13. For the purposes of this study, the Unitarian faith has been set within this Christian database, although, as Revd Baker states, not all Unitarians in Sheffield would term themselves 'Christian'. The following three charts illustrate the categories and numbers of the respondents in the Respondents / selected database.

- Chart 8.i A chart to show the representation of Christian denominations in the database.
- Chart 8.ii A chart to show the representation of non-Christians in the database.
- Chart 8.iii A chart to show the grouped Nonconformist element in the database



**Chart 8.i**



Key: C.of E. ....Church of England      Cong. .... Congregationalist  
 R.C. ....Roman Catholic      Gr.O. .... Greek Orthodox  
 Meth. ....Methodist      Unit. .... Unitarian  
 Uni. Ref.....United Reformed      Pent. .... Pentecostal  
 Bap.....Baptist

**Chart 8.ii**

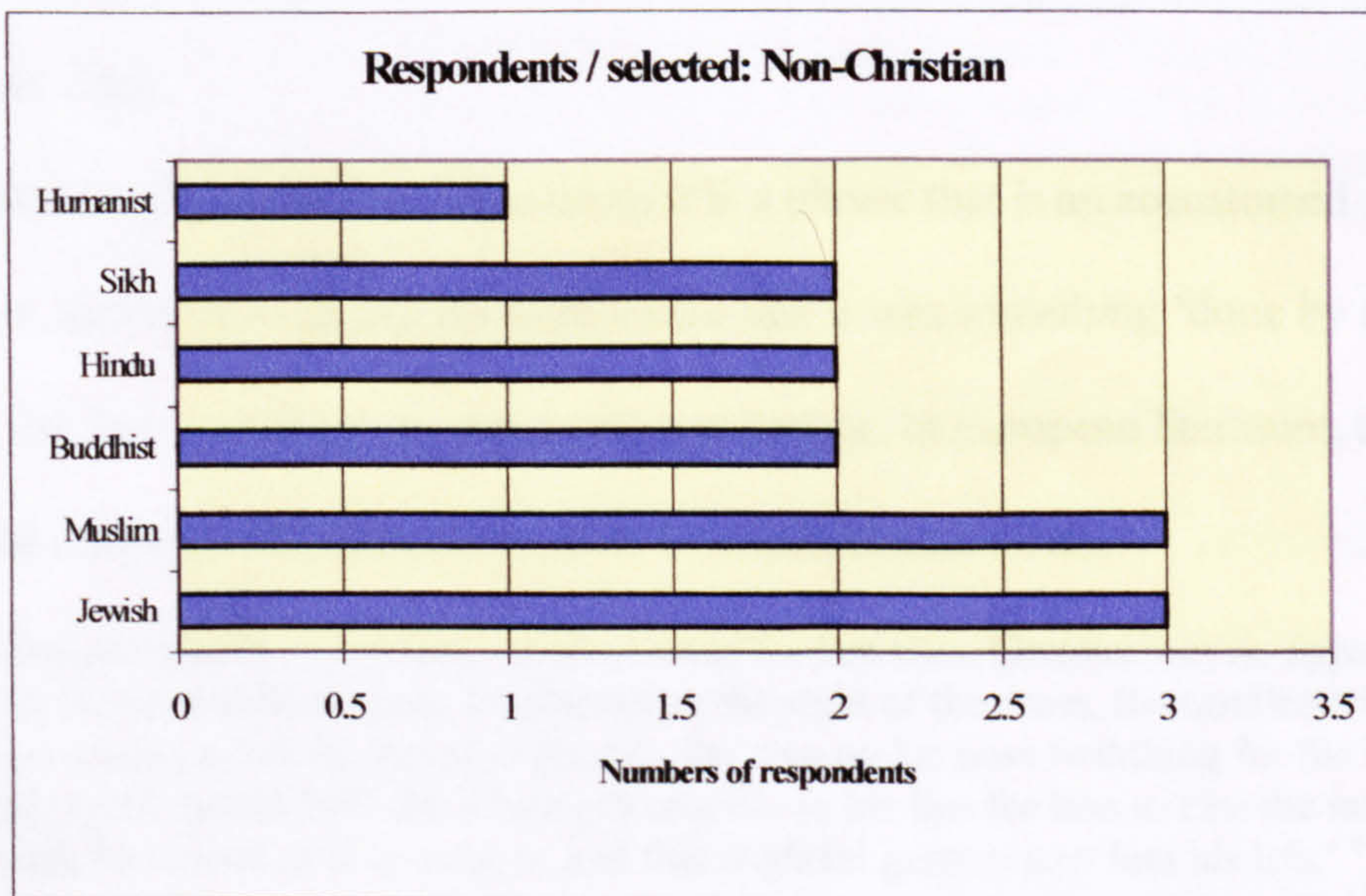
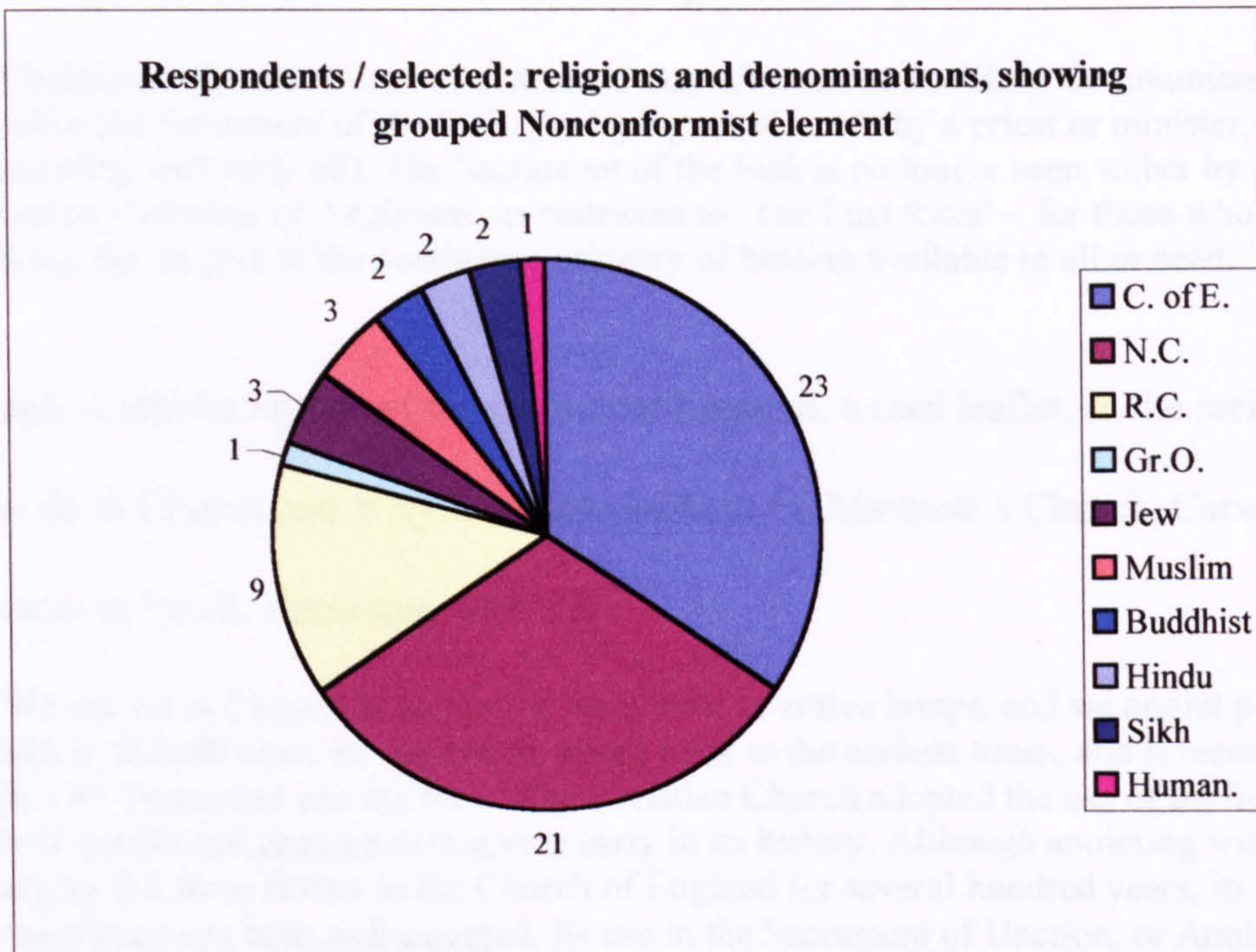




Chart 8.iii



Key: C.of E.....Church of England  
 N.C. ....Nonconformist  
 R.C. ....Roman Catholic  
 Gr.O ..... Greek Orthodox  
 Human.....Humanist

### 1.i Last rites

The ‘last rites’ refer to the final sacrament; it is a phrase that is an accustomed feature in literature, and most respondents were aware that it was something ‘done by a priest when you are dying or dead’, to quote one respondent. In European literature, on the death of the character Grandet, in *Eugénie Grandet*, Balzac writes:

‘When the parish priest came to administer the last rites, Grandet’s eyes, apparently dead for several hours past, brightened at the sight of the cross, the candlesticks, the silver stoup, which he stared at fixedly, the wen on his nose twitching for the last time. As the priest held the silver-gilt crucifix to his lips for him to kiss the image of Christ, he moved as if to seize it, and this frightful gesture cost him his life.’<sup>6</sup>

Again, of ancient rituals, Bernard Spencer (1909-1963) writes:

‘Excellent ritual of oils, of anointing,  
 office of priests;  
 everything was paid before these dead put on  
 the armless dress of their sarcophagi,  
 lying down in Phoenicia,’<sup>7</sup>



The guidelines issued at a Sheffield City Council Social Services workshop on major death in different cultures included the following text:

**‘Christians who are injured or distressed may wish to receive Holy Communion and/or the Sacrament of the Sick (the laying on of hands by a priest or minister, and anointing with holy oil). The Sacrament of the Sick is no longer seen, either by Roman Catholics or Anglicans, as restricted to ‘The Last Rites’ – for those who are dying, but as part of the continuing ministry of healing available to all in need.’<sup>8</sup>**

In the Anglo-Catholic branch of the Church of England, a card leaflet, in the series:

**‘What we do in Church and Why!’, and available at St. Matthew’s Church, Carver Street, reads, in ‘No.2, Anointing with Oil’:**

**‘We use oil in Church in two ways; we burn it in votive lamps, and we anoint people with it. In both cases its use can be traced back to the earliest times, and is recorded in the Old Testament and the New. The Christian Church adopted the use of oil from both Jewish and pagan practice very early in its history. Although anointing with oil largely fell from favour in the Church of England for several hundred years, its importance has been rediscovered. Its use in the Sacrament of Unction, or Anointing of the sick, ... is increasingly widespread. The oils used for anointing are specially blessed for this purpose by the Bishop at the Chrism Mass on Maundy Thursday, so called because one of the oils is called ‘Chrism’. There are three oils used in Church, all olive oil but named for the purpose for which they will be used. They are 1. the oil of the sick, 2. the oil of catechumens, and 3. the holy Chrism. ... The rite of anointing the very sick in mind or body, those about to undergo surgery, those nearing death, with the oil of the sick is now readily available in the Church. ... The oil is applied with a finger or thumb in the form of a cross. The sick are anointed on their foreheads and on the palms of their hands, and as the need arises the infected part of their bodies may also be anointed. In the Sacrament of Unction the anointing with prayer is at the heart of the rite.’<sup>9</sup>**

In the Roman church, the ‘Sacrament of the Sick’ can be repeated and changed

according to circumstances and the concept of the ‘Last Rites’ is now called the

‘Sacrament for the Dying’, an act of extreme unction; Green and Green include the following information in their text:

**‘At the point of death, and up to three hours after death, the anointing of the sick (extreme unction) may be carried out. If the patient is well enough, Holy Communion may also be taken. For a Catholic patient in Hospital, it is very important to have access to a priest and to receive Holy Communion. ... Usually, Catholic priests will ensure that one of their number is on-call round the clock for the emergency administration of the Sacraments.’<sup>10</sup>**

Indeed, the Roman Catholic Cathedral Church of St. Marie, Sheffield, has its presbytery alongside the Cathedral: the notice by the gateway into the small car park of the complex asks that it not be blocked, as the priests are on 24-hour call.

The administration of 'last rites' to a public figure can be newsworthy, warranting dominating headlines, as in the 'Daily Telegraph' reportage of the collapse of General Pinochet, in September 1999, immediately prior to his appearance in court at his extradition hearing. The front page cross-reference reads:

**'Pinochet rites A priest was called to administer the last rites ... p12'**

and, on page 12, in large headlines:

**'Priest was called to give last rites to sick Pinochet'**<sup>11</sup>

When questioned as to its usage, the 'Daily Telegraph' news-desk explained that the term 'last rites' was used as it was the one 'used in court'. It must be considered unlikely that the new term 'Sacrament for the Dying' will be used in any court in the foreseeable future with the expectation that it will be in common parlance. The long history of the rite, and its subsequent position in the culture of Christian Europe, ensured that most respondents reported some knowledge of the Sacrament. 36% of the respondents in this study knew of, or acknowledged, the act of extreme unction, the 'Last Rites'; 73% of the Christian respondents interviewed had primary or secondary knowledge of its use.

Most other religions have rituals or customs that concern the dying; the following brief overview is both general, detailing rituals practised in Britain, and specific, in that the stated details and minutiae of the rituals are those as described by the Sheffield-based respondents to this study.



**Judaism:** the dying must not be touched or moved if this should hasten death; the dying not to be left alone; the dying man to bless his children, and make a confession, the *Vidui*; the dying person may wish to recite or hear the Shema, a prayer declaring belief in God, and perhaps a psalm, such as Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my Shepherd.'

**Islam:** the dying person may want to face Mecca, to the South East, and the family may join the dying in prayer, and recite part of the Qur'an. The *Shada*, the declaration of faith, is said, and the dying person may, again, be able to join in. There is no 'confession'; during life, the Muslim is accompanied by two angels; the one by his left shoulder recording his sins, and the one by the left, his good deeds. The Muslim settles his problems during life by action: he cannot have his sins absolved by repentance at death. The life must be such that the Muslim is ready for the 'Day of Judgement'.

**Hinduism:** Hindus may wish to listen to readings from appropriate scriptures, and the dying frequently like to lie on the floor, symbolising the closeness of 'Mother Earth'. The dying person is expected to concentrate on the mantra given at initiation, or to have a family member chant the mantra in the right ear. There are holy rites, performed by a priest: the tying of a holy thread around the neck or wrist of the dying; the marking of the forehead with vermilion or sandalwood paste; and perhaps the placing of a sacred tulsi leaf in the mouth of the dying person, if that is what the family do. Clothes and money are sometimes blessed by the dying before distribution to the poor and needy. The rite of sprinkling the dying with holy water from the River Ganges is sometimes performed in Sheffield; such water needs to have been brought back from India and drops added to tap water, transferring the attribute of sanctity.

**Sikhism:** The dying person may wish to read, or hear, Gurbani, verses from the Sikh scriptures; and be given comfort from any practising Sikh.

**Buddhism:** Buddhists prefer quiet and peace when dying.

## 1.ii Last offices

The 'last offices' are the services that are given to a dead body: the laying out. In these, the body is prepared for committal; it is washed and tidied, and put into a

condition that can be seen or handled. As noted in Chapter Three, 1.ii, a local person, always a female, was once granted the privileges of attending to the dead. Now, these offices are commonly performed by the undertaker or by professionals: nurses, present or on call at the time of death. Green and Green comment that hospital nurses 'regard last offices as the final special service to the patient'.<sup>12</sup> Sheffield Bereavement Services leaflets that offer instructions on DIY funerals include information on performing these offices; there are no village goodwives in the suburbs or estates of Sheffield.

'If the death occurs in hospital, the deceased will be laid out by medical staff and moved to the mortuary. Some hospitals will allow the body to remain there until the funeral. If this is not possible, however, the body can be transferred to a mortuary at our Medico-Legal Centre where viewing can be arranged or if you prefer, the body can be taken to your home. If the death occurs at home, the family doctor or community nurse caring for the deceased, may be able to lay out the body or advise over completing this. The laying out must be done within a few hours of death. Rigor Mortis begins about six hours after death and continues for about 24 hours. Rigor mortis affects the face first, therefore, it is important to close the eyelids and jaw in the first three hours. You should position the arms and legs as you feel appropriate. One good idea is to raise the head upon the pillow and to place the hands on top of the body to help the blood drain. This improves the look of the face and hands which are the features most viewed and touched. It is no longer necessary to seal the orifices.'<sup>13</sup>

Christians have no special requirements of the offices; the routine established in this country is one that conforms to Christian expectations; the hands may be placed in prayer in the coffin.

There are very particular requirements of the last offices in the Jewish faith. Upon death, the body is straightened, including the fingers, and the arms placed at the side. The ritual washing, the *taharah*, is performed as near to the time of the funeral as is possible. These last rites are considered duties, and are a *mitzvot*, or commandment of the faith and are carried out by the appropriate Chevra Kadisha, as noted in Chapter Four, 1iii.b. The body is prepared for burial, if possible in the Jewish mortuary, upon a *taharah* board, which is a shaped metal tray with a drainage hole. The deceased is

first addressed by name, and forgiveness asked for the indignities unwillingly visited upon him, before being placed on the board, with the feet pointing towards the door.

The demeanour of the Chevra Kadisha is respectful at all times; articles are never passed across the body, and the conversation is restricted to that which is necessary.

Psalms and prayers for the departed are said as the body is cleansed, a procedure which is ritualised, and must follow a prescribed sequence. First, the Chevra Kadisha wash their own hands, using the same ritual that is performed every morning: each hand, beginning with the right, is washed, using a container. As Lehrman writes:

‘When water was not the plentiful commodity it is in the West today, the Codes prescribed a jug and basin of water to be near one’s bed, so as to be able to wash the hands and face before these touched any other object. ... Three times was the water to be poured on the hand as far as the wrist, commencing with the right, proceeding with the left, and concluding with the right again.’<sup>14</sup>

The body parts are washed in a set order: head; neck; right hand; right upper half of the body; right lower half of the body; right foot; then the matching left side of the body is washed in the same order. The body is never turned onto its face, rather it is inclined, first to the left and then to the right, so that the back can be washed. The nails are cleaned, and the hair is combed; the fingers and joints are never bent, or closed, and internal cleansing is not performed. A badly injured body is not washed: in this case the body, complete with soiled clothes, is wrapped in a sheet, and placed in the casket. Next, there is a ritual cleansing, the *taharah*, using a measured amount of water: 24 quarts, this again being poured in a prescribed way; the body is kept covered at all times, and is never left, and then the body is dressed in ritual clothes, the *tachrichim*. These white *tachrichim* must not be expensive; they must contain no seams, knots or pockets. The *tachrichim* consist of:

*mitznephet* a head dress: this covers the head, neck and nape of neck

*michnasayim* trousers: this covers from the abdomen to the ankles



- k'tonet* a chemise: this covers the entire body, and has sleeves, and an opening for the head
- kittel* an upper garment: this can be shirt-like, or closed, like the chemise; the *kittel* has sleeves, and these are carefully placed over the *k'tonet*.
- avnet* a belt: this is wound three times around the body, over the *kittel*
- tallit* a prayer shawl: it should be one that the deceased used in his lifetime; the body of a stranger is provided with a prayer shawl.
- sovev* a linen sheet: this is spread in the casket

Women are clothed in a cap: *michnasayim*; *k'tonet*; *kittel*; a face cloth: *avnet*; or a *sovev*. Soil from Israel is sprinkled on the body: the eyelids, navel and undergarments; it is believed that this earth imparts the same benefits as an actual burial in the Holy Land; the body will not then have the painful process of rolling underground, to Israel, at the sound of the Messianic trumpet, which will call the dead to rise from their graves.

At a Muslim death, the body should not be touched by a non-Muslim, for it is bathed according to custom by relatives of the same sex. The body is straightened and the face turned to Mecca. In areas, such as Bradford, where there are Muslim schools, the teenagers are taught the ritual of the washing of the body. The body is washed by a professional, or by any members of the same sex as the deceased. In Sheffield, Muslims expect to be able to perform the ritual washing in the mortuary of the hospital, if that has been the place of death, or in the mortuary of the funeral director. It is washed an uneven number of times, at least three, with warm water, to which camphor or rosewater has been added. Cotton wool and cottonwool buds are used for effective cleansing, and then the body is perfumed on the head, nose and hands: the parts of the body that touch the floor in prayer. After washing, the arms are placed across the chest, and the body is clothed in three pieces of unstitched white cloth; if



the deceased has completed a pilgrimage to Mecca, a *Hajj*, the pilgrimage clothes will have been washed and kept for the shroud.

At a Hindu death, the home is the focal point for death rituals: most worship takes place in the home. Indeed, Hindus prefer to die at home, and to have the body prepared by the family. If the body is taken to an undertaker's, the family go there to ritually wash it themselves, using water from the Ganges. The body is straightened, with the hands by the sides, and is oriented north-south. The face, with closed eyes and mouth, is pointed upwards. The relatives place a simple cloth on the body, and each applies sesame oil to the deceased's head, and the body is bathed, again with waters from the Ganges. The family hold lighted joss sticks and sing around the coffin.

The Sikh body is again straightened and the eyes and mouth closed; the body is washed and prepared by family members and friends. Each Khalsa Sikh (the name means 'the Pure Ones') is placed in his coffin accompanied by the five K's, signs or badges of his belonging, which are:

- *Kesh*; uncut hair/beard
- *Kangha*: the wooden comb
- *Kara*: a metal bracelet on the right wrist
- *Kirpan*: a symbolic sword
- *Kach*: short breeches, or undergarments

These signs are often seen as 'reflecting the military aspect of the Sikh faith,'<sup>15</sup> and are said to ensure that the Sikh would never be untrue to his beliefs. Ethical reasoning are often offered for the adoption of these signs, such as the circular bracelet being a symbol of the completeness of the faith, and the breeches indicating chastity.

However, apart from the uncut hair, a common religious symbol, the other four signs could be seen to reflect the warrior-like aspect of Sikhism. Thus, the bracelet is a wrist

protector, the comb keeps the hair out of the way in battle, and the breeches are those of the infantryman. The male turban protects the pure, uncut hair. Men are dressed in a white cotton shroud, and the turban is worn at all times, even at death. Older women are likely to be dressed in white, whilst young Sikh females are likely to be clothed in red.

Although in some communities, it is a practice amongst older Buddhists to purchase one's coffin in advance, and have it standing in the corner, ready to be used, the Sheffield Buddhist communities are unfamiliar with this practice. For instance, those of the New Kadampa Tradition in Nether Edge, Sheffield, state that the community has 'only been in Sheffield for eight years' and has not experienced any deaths. The teacher at this centre states that it is preferred that the body be left untouched for three days before disposal. However, this is not acceptable in hospitals and institutions; if death occurs outside the home the body is fairly speedily removed to the mortuary, without obvious and unseemly haste. Hospital procedure dictates that the considerations of other patients and visitors must be paramount; in England a dead body is deemed offensive. A hospice for Buddhists of the NKT is being established in Spain so that religious requirements can be met. The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, of Glossop Road in Sheffield, have not had a death within their community, but are likely to follow some Yorkshire traditions, and would use a funeral director.

The last offices, as is noted, are performed with respect. Rituals, such as the order of washing, and the positioning of arms, hands and head or face share common attributes. The Christian body is the one that differs, for here the hands are often placed on the lower body, or crossed on the chest; at a Roman Catholic death they are likely to hold the person's rosary.

### 1.iii Organ donation

Religion affects the availability of organs for transplants: a Muslim is unlikely to grant permission for the donation of organs, and to raise the issue is considered distressful to the family. As is noted in Green and Green:

‘Islam teaches that the body belongs to God. Strictly speaking [sic] no part of it should be cut out, harmed or donated to another. Post mortems are therefore forbidden and disliked.’<sup>16</sup>

Within the Christian community there are many variations; the Greek Orthodox person is very traditional, and likely to be reluctant to agree to donation, unless there were compelling circumstances. Similarly, the families of strongly religious Afro-Caribbeans are unlikely to grant requests. Yet there are regular televised ‘situations’, particularly during such programmes as hospital documentaries, when a family is seen stating the poor prognosis for their relative as there are few donors from their ethnic group; children’s hospital programmes are noted for such inclusions. The Orthodox Jew would not consider organ donation. Similarly, the donating of the body, or parts of the body, for medical research is affected by religious belief, as the following table demonstrates:

**Table 8.i**

**The influences of religion on organ and body donation**

	C.of E. N.C. R.C.	Gr.O.	Pent.	Quaker	Orth. Jew	Muslim	Hindu	Sikh	Buddhist NKT FWBO	Hum.
Organ donation	yes	possible	unlikely	yes	never	only in special circumstances	possible	never	no	yes
Body donation	yes	no	unlikely	yes	never	no	unlikely	never	no	yes

Key: C.of E. Church of England Gr.O. Greek Orthodox  
 Pent. Pentecostal Orth. Jew Orthodox Jew  
 Hum. Humanist N.C. Nonconformist  
 R.C. Roman Catholic

Sources: Green and Green, pp. 151 – 230; ‘Major incident death in different cultures’, workshop and handouts, Sheffield City Council Social Services, July 1999



## **2. From death to funeral: the liminal period**

The revised funeral rites of the Roman church, the 'Order of Christian Funerals',<sup>17</sup> are seen, by Steel,<sup>18</sup> as a dynamic whereby a person is accompanied through sickness to recovery, or through illness, to dying, and death. The 'Order' in the title indicates a sequence of separate but related rites; it sees the funeral as a journey through vigil, funeral, and committal, in its paradigm structure. In addition to these core rites are supplementary rites which go with the deceased from death to the vigil. Included here are 'Prayers after death': used when the initial contact with mourners is after a death, such as sudden or accidental death. Again, there is a ritual for a 'Gathering in the presence of the body': a family's first gathering in whatever setting; this may be in a mortuary, a care home, a chapel of rest or a hospital ward. Here there are symbolic silences, touching, and the sprinkling of holy water, all to indicate reverence for the body. Again, there is a ritual for a 'Gathering of the family and transfer of the body to the church or to the place of committal'; this is for use on the day of the funeral, the transfer of the body being seen as an emotional occasion when support is needed.

The Church of England has no such structure, although the funeral rites are presently subject to revision, as noted in Chapter Twelve. Currently, as Perham comments, the Anglican funeral often departs from the legal provisions, with the ministers perhaps making their decisions on the contents and style of a funeral service:

**'There is much pastorally-driven doing of "one's own thing" by clergy at funerals. It is easy to understand why. The provision in both the Book of Common Prayer and the Alternative Service Book (ASB) is light years away from where most mourners are. And Anglican mourners are a particularly diverse bunch because of the church of England's historical role, by virtue of being an established church, as the provider of funerals for men and women of little faith, nominal faith and even none.'**<sup>19</sup>

Perham further notes that the Church cannot come to one mind on praying for those who have died, although most Anglicans are happy to pray for the Christian departed,



whilst a significant minority believes this to be against the teaching of the Scriptures. In consequence, any prayers after death are officially restricted to the funeral service, and any preceding Reception into the church. In the Church of England, mourners can only be offered such consolation in prayer and ritual that their minister feels able to provide.

## 2.a. Viewing and ritual

There are religious customs in viewing the body; for Christians there is the option of choice. The factors contributing to such a choice are likely to be ones of family custom and continuity. Funeral Directors have Chapels of Rest for the mourners to sit with the body, the coffin being open or shut as is requested. Lunt's, who furnish a large percentage of the Catholic funerals in the city, comment that viewing 'just depends; the Polish Catholics view, but the young Sheffielders don't do it so much now.'<sup>20</sup> Mourners and other funeral directors comment that, at SCI funerals, the family are as discouraged from viewing the body as they are encouraged to accept 'hygienic treatment': embalming;<sup>21</sup> indeed, primary evidence gained during the course of this study would point to that situation. All other funeral directors covered in this study had open-coffin viewing in their chapels, if that was what was wanted. The Roman Catholic pre-funeral services provide opportunities for the minister and mourners to make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the deceased, should the mourners so choose. The *Greek Orthodox* community also have an open coffin during both the funeral service, and during the preparations at the home on the preceding night, when the body is placed in the middle of the room while the mourners sit around it and talk about the deceased. The *Pentecostal* denominations and those faith communities where there is a black majority are also accustomed to an open coffin at funerals.

Those of other faiths differ in their approach to viewing. The orthodox *Jew* has a closed coffin, which goes straight from the ritual preparation to the cemetery for burial; there is no delay. In other faiths, the open coffin is seen as essential to the funeral rituals and service, and included in any introductory rites. In the *Muslim* faith, the coffin of a male is left open for viewing in the house and at the mosque; at the mosque all are expected to gather around the open coffin; all have a right to pray over it, in the hope of gaining future rewards. At a female funeral, only close family can view the body. At a *Hindu* funeral, the coffin is open at the home, where most of the funeral rituals take place. The *Sikh* coffin is also open for the pre-funeral rituals, being displayed several times.

## 2.b. Reception

The body of a Christian, Church of England or Roman Catholic, can be received into the church the night before a funeral. If a body is brought into the Anglo-Catholic St. Matthew's Church, Carver Street, the night before the funeral: 'received' into church, candles are lit, holy water and incense are used, and there is a service of procession, prayer and readings. However, when everyone has left the building, the candles are extinguished, and the church locked. The *Alternative Service Book, 1980*, of the Church of England, contains a 'Service which may be used before a funeral', and states, at paragraph 46, 'If the body is brought to church the day before the funeral, the following service may be used.'<sup>22</sup> This service consists of an opening sentence; a reading; verses from Psalm 27: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation ..', and verses from Psalm 139: 'O Lord you have searched me out and know me.' The service includes the Lord's Prayer, a choice of additional prayers, and the Grace. A note after



the form of service states that it can also be used in the home before the body is taken to church. There are few Anglican Receptions in Sheffield.

The same conditions apply in the Roman churches in Sheffield. Of the Reception, Dean writes:

‘This rite is very familiar and normally takes place on the evening before the Funeral Mass. The minister receives the body at the church door and after words of consolation from the scriptures, he sprinkles the body with holy water which recalls the waters of baptism by which we are made Christians. During the procession to the sanctuary a psalm may be sung or said.’<sup>23</sup>

The reception can take place as part of the funeral liturgy itself, or the body be brought into church in advance of the vigil. In Sheffield, a reception the night before the funeral service is still common. It not only provides an opportunity for the community to pray with the family before the funeral, but also is an opportunity for those who cannot be present at the funeral to pay their respects.

## 2.c. Vigils

A ‘vigil’ is a watching or a wake; as noted earlier, the Jewish ritual concerning vigils is for the body never to be left. To keep such a complete vigil is an old custom, as noted in Chapter Three, 3.ii, and one that is now generally uncommon within Christianity. In Sheffield, the body is likely to rest in the chill cabinets of the funeral director’s mortuary, being brought into a Chapel of Rest when mourners are expected. When the body was kept at home, as recently as thirty years ago, before central heating and the Funeral Director’s ‘Chapels of Rest’, the vigil generally ceased during the hours of sleep. Of the vigil in the Roman church, Steel, in Jupp, notes that:

**‘This liturgy of the word and of common prayer is envisaged as the principal rite celebrated between the death and the funeral itself. As the first stage of the farewell journey, the mood of the vigil is gentle and supportive. Its focus is the life and lived faith of the one who has died, and its atmosphere is one of keeping watch in prayer.’<sup>24</sup>**

The vigil prepares mourners for the final goodbye, and it can take place in any suitable place, such as the home, a service chapel of the funeral director, a hospice or nursing home, as well as in church, possibly following the reception of the body, and again possibly at the start of the funeral service. It is a flexible service, as it can even be repeated if there is a delay before the funeral service. The vigil does not need a priest to lead the service. It can even be held when the body is not present, particularly when the family do not wish to attend a parish vigil. Of the vigil within the Roman

*Order of Christian Funerals*, Dean notes:

**‘In some places it is still customary to keep a ‘Wake’. Wake is simply an old word for Vigil. This service will do much to ensure that the Wake will be a Christian one. If it seems a new element in the Funeral Rites, we need to remember that for centuries the Church had an Office for the Dead and this service is an adapted form of it.’<sup>25</sup>**

### **3. The funeral: place, service and committal**

The funeral service itself can be taken in a number of recognised places: church; chapel; mosque; temple; prayer hall; service chapel of a funeral director; crematorium chapel; or, cemetery chapel. It may also be taken totally or partially in the home; additionally, there need be no service at all. Wherever it is taken, there may be prescribed services, as well as particular rituals and customs that are practised. Again, the committal is likely to be either a burial or a cremation, with occasionally a donation to medical science. Whatever the choice, funeral customs are influenced by religion in innumerable ways.



## Church of England

Once, the English funeral was predictable; the body would lie at home; neighbours would call to pay their last respects, and after a few days the body would be taken to the church for burial. It was not even considered necessary for the body to be brought into church, although the Book of Common Prayer made provision for both circumstances. The burial party would be met at the gates, and then led to the grave, intoning the opening sentences, and a psalm. In the days of the parish coffin, the body would be slid from this into the grave, while the priest intoned the four-verse chant: 'Man that is born ..'. In 1999, the Anglican funeral service has a multitude of legal and 'illegal' options. There can be the 1662 service in church, followed by committal in a churchyard or cemetery, an increasingly unlikely occurrence in the Diocese of Sheffield, where the 1662 service is not encouraged, although the leaflet

'Funerals Introducing the Church of England' notes:

'Whether in a parish church or a crematorium chapel, it can be the plain funeral service from the Prayer Book or the Alternative Service Book. It can very appropriately be set into the context of a Communion service.'<sup>26</sup>

The committal can be preceded by the 1928 service: Sheffield ministers are unlikely to agree to this; the order of service is normally that of the 1980 rite, with adaptations. Again, there can be an Anglican service in a cemetery chapel, followed by burial. If the committal is a cremation, the service could be in a church first, or in a chapel at the crematorium. Some now choose to have a service of committal at a crematorium, followed by a service of thanksgiving in a church. Increasingly, nominal Anglicans are turning to cremation, and a service that combines both funeral and committal. However, practising Anglican Christians are still likely to choose a church service before proceeding to the committal elsewhere, unless the committal is a burial in one of the few active churchyards in the city. There are few Communion services noted

amongst the Anglican respondents to this study; there is commonly held belief that such a service is 'Roman' or 'high'.

If the service is taken in the crematorium, preceding the committal, then the choice of place is narrowed down to the three crematoria: City Road; Hutcliffe Wood; and Grenoside. It is unusual for a crematorium in another town to be used, unless there are special circumstances. Again, if the committal is to be a burial in a Local Authority cemetery, there may be a chapel on site that can be used, such as City Road; Abbey Lane; Crookes; and Shiregreen. A third option, that of using a funeral director's service chapel, is frowned upon by the Diocese of Sheffield. However, ministers are available who will take such services, using an Anglican Order of Service, or one that is adapted from such an Order. There is, at present, no licensing of other premises for funerals, such as now exists for marriages. Walter notes:

'It is the ecclesiastical law of the Church of England that prohibits the saying of the Anglican funeral service in an unauthorised place. I cannot see why the Church should authorise a thoroughly secular crematorium but not the hotel in which the deceased had his wedding reception twenty years ago. ... Other possible venues could be a hospice, or the old people's home in which the deceased spent the last years of their life, or similar institution.'<sup>27</sup>

In a church or chapel service the coffined body is set before any chancel steps, on coffin stools or small tables, or perhaps on the wheeled bier that is used by some funeral directors. There is scope for a great variety in the services offered under the wide umbrella of the Church of England. The theme of the service is likely to be one of thanksgiving for the life of the deceased, and will be resurrection-based, concentrating on the life hereafter.





### ***8.i A celebration and thanksgiving***

The funeral procession of Marti Caine.

In perhaps the most memorable Sheffield funeral of the decade, The Provost of Sheffield, the Very Revd Michael Sadgrove, took the funeral service for Marti Caine, on November 13, 1995. In his funeral address, he said:

‘We are here to celebrate the life of ... we bring to this act of worship our thanksgiving ... Marti thought so hard about this service, and wanted it to be a great celebration’.

Included in the Provost’s address were sections devoted to the faith of Marti Caine, and her beliefs, which were said to be ‘simple and strong’, and the Christian message of resurrection:

‘... today’s reading from the Book of Revelation .. pictures the new heaven and the new earth where all tears are wiped away and crying and pain are gone for ever. “I will be their God and they will be my children” says the New Testament. With our memories of Marti, those words sustain us as we say farewell ... They help us to say “Thanks be to God”.’ <sup>28</sup>

The Revd Dr. Peter Williams, vicar of All Saints’, Ecclesall, believes that there must be a Christian message in a funeral service. His funeral services are concerned with faith, hope and the resurrection; participation by mourners in the services that he takes is through the readings. He is critical of the Dean of Westminster Abbey, Dr. Wesley Carr, not because of the recent problems about the organist at the Abbey, but because the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales ‘contained no Christian message. It was



lovely, lovely music and ceremony, but where was the Christian message?' <sup>29</sup> He appreciates the contribution from Earl Spencer, but questions the lack of address on the faith of the church. Of note, the service included contributions from Dr George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, who gave thanks for the life of the Princess and prayed for her family, and Dr Wesley Carr who spoke of Diana's influence around the world.

Fr. Marcus Wakely, Parish Priest of St. Matthew's, Carver Street, designs an individual funeral service. His 'funeral service book' is a wide collection of suitable material: prayers, statements, readings, that have been found worthy of inclusion. Each funeral is planned according to its needs, and is based on doctrine. The services at St. Matthew's include a Reception, as noted earlier, and ritual elements of candles, including the Paschal candle; holy water; incense; and bells. Mass cards are available at the back of the church; they are usually purchased in relation to a funeral at some distant parish, and are sent when mourners cannot be present. Again, Revd Pedr Beckley, vicar of St. Gabriel's, Greystones, and a respondent in Saunders, 1992, plans each funeral to provide an appropriate service, but each with a Christian base. He encourages the participation of family and mourners, as do most of the Christian ministers. The Revd Brian Cranwell, one time vicar of St. James', Woodhouse, and a respondent in both this study and Saunders, 1992, has firm views on the content of an Anglican funeral service:

'Ministers in the future will be called upon less for the robes we wear and our enhancement of a rite of passage than for the pastoral and spiritual value we bring to bereaved people.' <sup>30</sup>

The Anglican funeral service receives its share of national media criticism; because of the nature of the established church the comments expressed are as applicable to



Sheffield as they are to London, or any ‘Tunbridge Wells’.<sup>31</sup> Of the *Alternative*

*Service Book, 1980*, one correspondent to the ‘Daily Telegraph’, in July 1999, wrote:

‘Unknown to my vicar, smitten with the *Alternative Service Book*, I conducted a number of *Prayer Book* burials during my short but surreal career as a Church of England curate ...’<sup>32</sup>

One must note here the choice of the word ‘smitten’. On death, a funeral and the Anglican church, Anthea Hall wrote, in 1995:

‘Everyone agreed on a traditional service, even to the final detail of restoring “Hobgoblin nor foul fiend” in the last verse of Bunyan’s *To Be A Pilgrim* – instead of the watered-down “Since Lord thou doest [sic] defend”. ... The wreath of white flowers was carefully removed and the bare wood of the coffin was covered with a richly coloured funeral pall. The paschal candle burned, symbolising life after death. ... Water was sprinkled on the coffin, an echo of baptismal water to emphasise further that life is a rounded whole and that the inevitable consequence of birth is death. ... How can it be that such a comforting, historic, beautiful ritual, so great a part of our spiritual and cultural inheritance, has been dropped in favour of vernacular mumblings, guitars and happy clappings? ... Today, instead of calling for a priest if death is imminent, we ring for an ambulance and expect to come back alive. ... The traditional funeral service evolved over centuries of coping with continual grief and mourning as every family lost babies at birth ... The rituals of music, candles, holy water, prayer and flowers have always been able to promise eternal life where rational argument fails. Today, when death before old age has become so rare, we fear it more than ever. Yet we have almost destroyed the liturgy to cope with it.’<sup>33</sup>

Of the Sheffield funeral, a Hackenthorpe resident wrote to the ‘Star’:

‘At a recent funeral service I was pleased to see you had the choice of saying the proper Lord’s Prayer. Changes there may be but never should anyone have the right to change the Lord’s Prayer.’<sup>34</sup>

The Anglican committal is not influenced by religion. Whilst burial has been the norm for Christians for nearly two thousand years, members of the Church of England accept cremation, which accounts for over 71% of all committals.<sup>35</sup>

### Nonconformist

Again, the same availability and alternatives of place apply here as were noted in the Church of England funerals, with the exception that there is no ecclesiastical law that prescribes the place of service. However, respondents noted that practising members

of their churches were likely to have a funeral service in their chapel, before proceeding to the crematorium or cemetery for the committal. The range of Nonconformist respondents in this study is set out in the Respondents / selected database. The Quaker, Pentecostal and Unitarian are denominations that Parsons terms 'significant elements ...having to some extent distinctive or unorthodox beliefs or forms of organization'.<sup>36</sup> To these established Nonconformist denominations must be added the representatives of identified religious organisations and groups in Sheffield who were interviewed to extend the overall knowledge base, but who were not selected for the Respondents database for numerical reasons. These included those active in the Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, missionaries in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as well as those evangelising under the banner of the Jesus Army, and the evangelical group termed the Halleluia Church, working at Duke Street, central Sheffield. The Pagan Society at the University of Sheffield ceased to exist in 1999, though ex-members still are known to meet socially. There is a known, fluctuating, but generally elusive pagan presence within the city boundaries; some of those involved wish to become volunteer rangers at a major ancient woodland, Ecclesall Woods.

The Methodist Church has very similar services to the Anglican church; here the funeral is likely to be resurrection-based, and a thanksgiving for the life of the deceased. Until Easter, 1999, the Service Book used for Methodist funerals was that published in 1975, itself superseding the 1936 Book of Offices, and the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The New Methodist Worship Book was brought into use for the first time on Easter Day, April 4, 1999. Not only does this Worship Book include nine services of Holy Communion, an 'Order of Blessing for a Home', calendar, collects,



**‘The Funeral and Related Services (pages 433 to 501) recognise the different places and needs of today. For example there are now services for both a child and a stillborn child, two general funeral services and a service for the burial of ashes. There is also an Office of Commendation for use on first hearing of a death or when it is impossible to attend the funeral.’<sup>37</sup>**

**Of the *New Worship Book*, and its funeral services, the Revd Edward Curliss, minister of Bents Green Methodist Church says:**

**‘It is more compassionate than before; one can put a lot of one’s self into the service without taking away anything of the structure.’<sup>38</sup>**

**Again, the Revd Jonathan Kerry, minister at the Carver Street Methodist Church, finds the new services useful in church, but not in the crematorium, where the service book is based on the *Alternative Service Book, 1980*.<sup>39</sup> Methodists make a personal choice between burial and cremation.**

**The Congregational Church and the United Reformed Church have similar styles to each other; the Revd Frank Beattie, of Central United Reformed Church, states that he has complete freedom in the form and structure of the service. He does not venerate the person, dwelling on their attributes; rather, he offers a tribute to the person, and their life in faith. His service is one of faith, based on the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. He does not open the service with any set sentences, as he notes that the people are still outside. After the entry into the church, he says opening verses, followed by a hymn, then the tribute to the person, including their life in faith. Next there follows a Scripture reading, then a five minute sermon and prayers. The whole service usually lasts about 30 minutes, before proceeding to the crematorium, if the committal is a cremation, where he finds the atmosphere unsympathetic to hymn singing, which is therefore discouraged. Burial and cremation are equally acceptable.**



The Revd Chris Ellis, of the Central Baptist Church has a significant proportion of Afro-Caribbean worshippers in his congregation. At an Afro-Caribbean funeral there are likely to be upwards of 200 mourners, and for a really big one, the road outside the church can become blocked. A service order is likely to include a photograph of the deceased on the front cover, and a detailed Order of Service, which includes several hymns and songs, a eulogy, and various tributes.

**8.ii An Order of Service  
Cemetery Road Baptist Church**



For these funerals, a lidded casket is preferred, of the type illustrated in Chapter Seven of this study. The family will help compose the tribute, which someone else will read on their behalf. For one fifth of the funerals the coffin will remain closed during the whole of the service, but for the majority it will be opened for the last hymn, when the congregation come forward to pay their respects, and give a last kiss. The service will include opening sentences and readings from the scriptures, as well as prayers, and is included in the service book: *Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship: A Guidebook for Worship Leaders*, which includes 'thanksgiving material and resurrection imagery'.<sup>40</sup> For Afro-Caribbean Baptists, who always choose burial, the committal is active. All mourners go in fleets of cars and coaches to the cemetery, where there is extended hymn singing as the mourners fill the grave with earth. For other Baptists, the decision about committal depends upon personal choice.



An information leaflet describes Unitarianism as:

‘ .. a religious movement which has evolved in the Christian tradition and originated in the Reformation of the 16th Century. ... Unitarianism offers freedom of conscience and does not require its members to subscribe to set creeds, dogmas or articles of belief.’<sup>41</sup>

The Revd Ernest Baker, minister at the Unitarian Underbank Chapel, Stannington, notes that a Unitarian funeral is likely to celebrate the life of the deceased, and will have religious overtones. The service follows his pattern of dynamics: prayers, which recognise why the congregation are there; a hymn as appropriate, from ‘Hymns for Living’, or ‘Hymns of Faith and Freedom’; a reading, probably something biblical; an address, containing personal elements and the human response to death; prayer including the prayer of Jesus, the ‘Family Prayer’. The conclusion will be silence. Underbank has its own burial ground, but cremation as a method of committal is acceptable.

In the ‘New Age’ movements studied in the research for this study, most adopted an informal style of service, with readings, songs or choruses and prayers. The Halleluia Church included dance, a particular feature of their worship. The choice of committal was not prescribed, although burial was preferred.

### Quaker

The funeral of a Quaker is likely to be simple and celebratory; as Stock comments, in Cox, ‘Simplicity is a Quaker characteristic’.<sup>42</sup> Of Quaker funerals, a respondent comments that a number of Quakers prefer to give the body of the deceased person to the University, because of a belief in the memories of a person rather than the importance of a body. Should there be a cremation, there is no set service. Two Friends sit at the front, there being no ‘circle’ of chairs available, and Friends stand up



to speak if led by God to do so. Poems may be read, and music may be provided by the family, if that is their wish. An introductory format for a Quaker funeral might be:

We are gathered here today to give thanks for the life of our dear Friend .....

.....was a Quaker and as there may be some here not familiar with Quaker ways on these occasions, may I offer a few words of explanation.

We do not have a formal ceremony for a funeral, this is a Meeting for Worship after the manner of Friends in which we gather in silence - waiting- opening ourselves to the love of God and to that of God in each other.

During this period of worship some of you may wish to give vocal ministry – a prayer or bible passage or share with us some memory of .....

The Meeting for Worship will last about ... minutes and will be closed as is our custom by my Friend and I shaking hands.

Although there is no set service, the Quaker 'Faith and Practice',<sup>43</sup> revised about every five years, contains many passages to aid funerals. Helpful guidance includes:

- Friends should come to a funeral with both heart and mind prepared ...
- The funerals of friends should be held in a spirit of quiet peace and trust ...
- Friends should not adopt any rigid pattern for the conduct of funerals ...
- A feeling of hesitation as to speaking at funerals is most natural ...
- The value of vocal prayer at a funeral can hardly be overemphasised ...

Additionally, a memorial meeting for worship, to give thanks for the grace of God, revealed in the life of a Friend, may be held.

### Roman Catholic

The Roman Catholic Church has, as noted earlier, introduced a new *Order of Christian Funerals*. Just as in the pre-funeral services, here there are choices. Two forms of service are included in the new Order, a funeral Mass or a funeral liturgy outside Mass. However, in Sheffield it is usual for there to be a funeral Mass: no



longer to be called a *Requiem* Mass. It is not necessary for there to be a Mass: the priest may not be available, or the family or the deceased may not have been active in the church. The Mass takes about 45 minutes, and music is a particular feature of the new rite, as are candles, holy water and incense. It is regarded as a priority that a congregation be present; funerals at St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Church are often supported by a congregation from the school on the same site; many families put in a particular request for the children in the Junior section to sing the Mass. A white pall is placed on the coffin and a crucifix or bible, or missal is often placed on top of the pall. Mass cards, saying that a Mass is to be said in the name of the deceased, are placed near, not on, the coffin. Flowers are not to be placed on the coffin during the service, indeed, any flowers, and they are usually white, are left outside in the hearse. Again, family and friends are encouraged to participate in the service, and also to carry the coffin, if at all possible. A wheeled bier is not considered appropriate. If the whole of the rite takes place at a crematorium, the church hopes that the symbols used in the funeral service will be permitted. The use of candles and incense could, of course, affect a following committal. Burial in an allotted area of a cemetery is a preferred form of committal, although Roman Catholics have been able to request cremation since 1963, and priests able to conduct services in crematoria since 1966.

### Greek Orthodox

The funeral liturgy of the Greek Orthodox Community of the Entry of the Mother of God, who worship at St Matthew's, Carver Street, is lengthy, as is noted in Chapter Four of this study. The Greek liturgy is concerned with entrances and exits; after death the soul seeks familiar faces, so, if the death was in a hospital, it is important for the body to be taken back home. When it is time for the funeral, the body is taken



from the house to the church where a symbolic candle is lit. All mourners then take a candle and light it, and kiss the icon that is present. It is common in some Greek communities for there to be a glass-topped coffin, to maintain contact with the dead, though these are not noted in Sheffield. The custom of the last kiss can be disturbing for some mourners; it is acceptable for the Holy Gospel to be placed on the corpse and for the mourner to kiss that instead. The exit from the church for the committal is seen as the entry to the new home for the deceased. The dead of the Greek Orthodox Church are always buried; as a spokesman said:

‘ Why take the body and blood of Christ into one’s own body for all those years, only to set a match to it at the end?’ <sup>44</sup>

The funerals noted at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Carterknowle Road, were Bible-based. Just as at a Baptist funeral for someone of an Afro-Caribbean family, here the service order is likely to have a photograph of the deceased on the front cover. The service starts with the opening of the coffin, and includes extempore prayer, readings, psalms, and songs. A eulogy is usually delivered by the minister and members of the congregation, and an obituary written and read by a family member. The committal is always a burial, and that well attended, with the singing of many hymns as the grave is filled and then covered with flowers.

### Orthodox Jew

The Orthodox Jewish funeral is a highly ritualised, yet simple service. The Jew is never cremated, but is buried in the Jewish cemetery, called the House of Life, in a wooden casket which is taken to the cemetery in a hearse with drawn, black blinds. The hearse always goes past the synagogue. The service honours the dead, rather than comforts the living. Most services take place at the cemetery, where there is a Prayer



Hall; only rarely is one held at the synagogue, and then usually because the deceased was well known and many would wish to attend to pay respects. The casket is placed on a wheeled bier, which stands waiting in the Hall. A noticeable action at a Jewish funeral, and one that is familiar to practising Christians, is the tearing of garments: the *keriah*. When Jacob saw Joseph's coat drenched with blood, he tore his garments. Again, David tore his clothes when he heard of the death of Saul. The tear is now performed on selected garments, or portions of garments, and is usually performed in the Prayer Hall at the cemetery, whilst the mourner is standing. The service itself consists of Psalms, particularly the 23rd Psalm: The Lord is my Shepherd; readings from Proverbs, and the Memorial Prayer: O God, full of compassion ... There is a eulogy, then the casket is wheeled to the prepared grave. There are stops on the way: seven are customary. At the graveside a prayer, the *Tzidduk Ha'din*, is recited as the casket is lowered. the grave is filled in by the mourners; in Sheffield each places three shovels of earth on the grave. Next, the burial *Kaddish* is recited. This is in the form of a prayer, unlike the mourner's *Kaddish*. It is important for the Jew to wash hands after the burial as a symbol of purification. There are several notable aspects of the Jewish funeral; women do not attend; there are no flowers; married couples are often buried side by side; when the first dies, the spouse buys two adjacent plots, and there are often matching marker stones. The Cohens, hereditary priests, are buried in a separate area, or on the pathways, so that they are not contaminated by the deaths of others. Old, torn, holy books are placed in sacks and interred with a body, for they are holy and cannot be disposed of as an ordinary book. Pebbles are placed on the grave, one for every time it is visited. Rabbi Plancey, on the JewishNet internet site, explains:



‘We lay pebbles or stones on a grave for two reasons. The first is to remind the dead that the living still remember them and the other is to ensure that the living will remember those who have passed away.’<sup>45</sup>



**8.iii Matching markers**



**8.iv The solitary wreath**

Flowers are not usually placed on Jewish graves

The funeral of a Reform, or Liberal Jew, does not use the Jewish cemetery in Ecclesfield. The Sheffield Community is small, and meets infrequently in Ranmoor, at St. John’s Parish Centre. Reform committals are in Abbey Lane cemetery, where the few markers are level slabs.

### Muslim

The Muslim is always ready for death; ‘If God wills it’ is the common phrase, and death is the will of Allah. The Muslims in Sheffield follow several traditions, and there are various large and expanding communities; Primary schools are predominantly Muslim in population, and there is pressure for religious schools.

Whilst the most prevalent tradition is Sunni, there are a distinctive number of Tablighi Jammaat in the Darnell and Nether Edge areas. A representative of the Deobandis movement of the Sunni tradition in Sheffield stated that a Muslim funeral starts in the home and then proceeds to the mosque, where the open coffin, if the deceased is male,



is surrounded by all who wish to pray over it: women do not attend Muslim funerals. The Qur'an is read, both in sections and, if possible, in its entirety, for it is divided into, perhaps, 30 parts and these are distributed to 30 groups of mourners. The groups read their separate sections at the same time. The funeral has a busy sound, but there is no crying, for the rules are that one must not cry over a dead body. Although Muslims require a speedy burial, Friday is a popular day for funerals, for it is the Holy Day. However, Wolffe, in Parsons, notes that 'the authors of *The Muslim Guide* denied that there was any requirement for burial within twenty-four hours'.<sup>46</sup> A Muslim family, respondents to this study, stated that two or three days between death and the funeral was acceptable. Muslims are always buried, and the mourners play a significant role in the burial. All have a right to attend the burial and so gain future rewards, and so all go with the burial party to the cemetery to help with the burial. Each takes it in turn to help carry the coffin, and everyone joins in the filling of the grave. Malcolm Bratton, of B&C, reports 'that the shovels and spades come out from the boots and backs of cars when it is time to fill in the grave'. At the end of the burial, few flowers are placed on top of the mound, as this is not a Muslim tradition, rather, the chanting that can be heard from the crowd around the filled grave, is the sound of the mourners advising the dead person how to do well in the interview with the two angels who decide his fate: how to escape punishments and how to collect rewards. This interview is called 'The Trial of the Tomb', and it determines where the soul will go: to Hell, the ultimate punishment, or to Paradise: Heaven, the ultimate perfection. Muslims are concerned that there is an old belief that they are buried vertical; there is a legend amongst the Muslims in Tinsley, Sheffield, that when they asked for their own section in a cemetery, doubt was expressed by the relevant Authorities, in that the ritual of vertical burial would be contrary to cemetery



operation; the Authorities needed convincing that Muslims are buried horizontally, just like Christians. Many Muslims in Sheffield would prefer repatriation of a body, but many find this too expensive.

### Hindu

The Hindu is always cremated. For the funeral, in Britain, the Hindu is likely to call in a Brahmin, if one is available. If the body has been at a funeral director's, it is brought back to the family home about one hour before the start of the funeral, and the lid of the coffin opened. Many of the community fill the house; often all the ground floor furniture has to be removed. The mourners circle the open coffin singing loud hymns and sprinkling petals, sandalwood and rice on the body. Coconuts are placed in each of the corners, symbolising the four corners of the earth, from where the mourners hope good fortune will come. The eldest son or the next of kin performs the main parting rites; ghee is placed in the corpse's mouth, as is a coin and yoghurt. The vermilion paste is placed on the forehead, and all the while the other mourners touch his shoulders, always circling, always singing. Grief must not be shown, otherwise the soul is held back on his journey: tears bring him backwards; the soul is set free with faith. A widow will perhaps break her bangles and put them in the coffin. The funeral party then proceeds to the crematorium. There are prayers in the chapel before the oldest son operates the mechanism that closes the curtains. A small group is led to the other side of the curtains, from where they escort the coffin to the cremator, and, chanting, press the key that starts the process, watching the cremation through the furnace door. One of the final ceremonies is the breaking of a clay pot of water, the imagery being that the soul is released with the water.



## Sikh

The funeral of a Sikh starts from the death: it is an ongoing process. The body is taken home and there are prayers and chanting while it is prepared for its cremation. At the time of the funeral it is taken to the gurdwara for prayers and readings from Guru Granth Sahib before being taken to the crematorium chapel for the final part of the service. Sikhs prefer to have the senior members of the family commit the body to the furnace themselves. After the committal the funeral party return to the temple for food: communal eating is a strong element in Sikh life. The ashes are disposed of in a ritual manner, for they must be cast upon running water. For many families, the ashes are taken back to the Punjab for such rituals. In 1993, the 'Daily Telegraph' reported that Leeds council planned to build a 20 ft. facility to help the Sikh community:

'The platforms can be used by any denomination, but the Sikh community have a special interest because they believe human ashes can only be disposed of in moving water, but not from bridges. Until now, Sikhs have had to either hire a boat to dispose of human ashes or wait until a relative visited India. Residents near the chosen site – close to Kirkstall Abbey – claim the platform could be an eyesore and a danger to children.'<sup>47</sup>

## Buddhist

There are several traditions of Buddhism in Sheffield. There are a few Chinese Buddhists of Hong Kong origin, and they follow old, established traditions. At such a Buddhist funeral, the loud wailing is the singing of a mournful heart: the louder it is the more respectful is the mourning. The funeral will take place between three and seven days after death; Buddhists in Sheffield use a funeral director. At the time of the funeral the body is brought home and placed in the hallway, where there is a statue of the Buddha, and flowers and fruit are placed around the open coffin. Incense sticks are burned, and scriptures are chanted. The body is cremated, the funeral party again preferring to be present during the cremation. The disposal of the ashes is very



important. Many prefer to keep ashes in family vases, decorated with storks, a symbol of immortality, in the home. If they are interred, it must not be on top of another set: this would disturb any hierarchy. The site is very important; there must be a comfortable environment for the journey to the next life. This journey is made easier by the grave goods that accompany the soul. All the things that might be needed in the next life are burnt, so that they might accompany the soul. However, the actual goods are not burnt, rather representations in paper. Everything that might be needed can be bought for this ceremony, not only paper money, but anything from the material world: video recorders; television sets; cameras; and even small luxurious houses, fully furnished. Those of the Tibetan New Kadampa Tradition state that peace is preferred whilst dying, and that the body must not be disturbed for three days. A phrase: 'Living meaningfully, dying joyfully' is said to express the meaning behind the funeral service, which consists of prayer for the transfer of consciousness. The committal is very simple. A Buddhist teacher stated:

'It doesn't matter. The body is of no importance. We would like to do as the Tibetans do and just leave the body for the vultures. But we can't do that. I don't think it would be approved of in Sheffield. We haven't had any deaths though; we have only been here for eight years. But I know what happens in other places. That's why we are setting up a hospice in Spain. But I still don't think we can just leave the body to rot.'<sup>48</sup>

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, Glossop Road, again have had no experience of a death in Sheffield, although one spokesman had attended a funeral in Southend where white bows were pulled apart as a symbolic gesture, to let the deceased go.<sup>49</sup> However, it was expected that a Sheffield service would be held that would include readings, chanting and speaking. 'It would be nice to tailor your own ceremony, do it yourself.' A funeral was seen to be an 'elastic situation' with relatives helping to choose the music. Food would be served afterwards, following the 'Yorkshire custom', and a funeral director would be employed.



## Humanist

The Sheffield Humanist funeral is marketed as a non-religious funeral ceremony, and is often thought of in the same terms as a secular ceremony. However, a Humanist ceremony comes under the umbrella of the Humanist movement. At these funerals a trained officiant from the British Humanist Association can be employed to act as an officiant. The Humanist funeral is divided into separate parts:

- entry music
- thoughts on life and death
- tribute
- committal of the body to 'its natural end'
- Solemn music during committal
- closing words
- exit music

The Parish of Sheffield has become a plural society, where the world's religions are represented and where different faith communities require differing funerary rituals. As has been noted, most requirements are catered for within the city, although the Sikh community does not have special facilities for the scattering of ashes in running water. The Jewish congregation manage their own affairs, employing a cemetery keeper who can quickly prepare a grave, and the Muslim community, who also prefer speedy committals, are accommodated as well as Sheffield Bereavement Services are able. Yet, even given these conditions, myths and legends regarding the funerary customs of religions other than those of one's own history continue:

- Jewish people are buried standing up
- Roman Catholics cannot be cremated
- Muslims are buried standing up
- One must have a religious service
- Some religions receive preferential treatment from Sheffield Bereavement Services



Whilst the ongoing interest in the funeral serves to increase awareness of the laws of burial and cremation, the developing rites of the Christian religions, and the changing customs of the British people, knowledge of the funerary religious requirements and customs of a multi-ethnic Britain is still limited.



## Notes

1. Saunders, 1992, pp.125, 126
2. Walter, 1990, p.223
3. Respondent, Faith Roger, Quaker, May 1999
4. Respondent, Patrick Linskill, Anglo-Catholic, February 1999
5. *Diocese of Sheffield Handbook*, current, 1999, Preface
6. Enright, D. J., *The Oxford Book of Death*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983, p.62
7. Ibid., p.129
8. Sheffield City Council, Social Services: Handouts, Half-day Workshop ; Major Incident Death in Different Cultures, July 12, 1999, p.35
9. Card leaflet, No.2, Anointing with Oil, St. Denys' Bookshop, Manchester, current
10. Green and Green, pp.156, 157
11. 'Daily Telegraph', September 30, 1999, pp. 1, 12
12. Green and Green, p.114
13. Sheffield City Council Bereavement services, Independent Funeral Arrangements, A4 sheets, current
14. Lehrman, p.36
15. Parsons, p.23
16. Green and Green, p.209
17. *Order of Christian Funerals*, 1990
18. Steel, in Jupp, P. C., and Rogers, T., (eds) *Interpreting Death, Christian Theology and Pastoral Practice*, London, Cassell, 1997, p.173
19. Perham, in Jupp and Rogers, p.157
20. Interview: Richard Knowles, G. and M. Lunt Ltd., funeral directors, May 1999
21. Interviews and respondents: H. Keeton, Funeral Directors; B&C Funeral Services; John Fairest Funeral Home; three respondents; primary evidence gained during interviews at C. Pritchard and Son, 1992, 1997, 1999



22. Alternative Service Book, 1980, p.325
23. Dean, p.37
24. Steel, in Jupp and Rogers, p.175
25. Dean, p.36
26. A4 leaflet, 'Funerals', Communications Unit, General Synod of the Church of England, London
27. Walter, in Jupp and Rogers, p.212
28. Interview: Very Revd Michael Sadgrove, Provost of Sheffield, December 1995, copy of the funeral address given to add to SAFEC
29. Interview: Revd Dr Peter Williams, Vicar, All Saints Church, Ecclesall, June 1999
30. Cranwell, in Hockey, 1992, pp.vii, viii
31. 'Tunbridge Wells': a term in common usage when referring to any suburban conurbation
32. 'Daily Telegraph', July 9, 1999, p.29
33. 'Sunday Telegraph', March 19, 1995, p.16  
 Note: The author's use of the word 'hobgoblin' in her remembrance of the hymn: *To be a pilgrim*, is considered an inaccuracy. The opening lines remembered thus:  
     '*Hobgoblin nor foul fiend  
         Can daunt his spirit;*'  
 do not make sense. Prefacing 'hobgoblin' with the essential 'No' does not fit the measure of the hymn: 65656665. Bunyan's words, as used in both the Standard Edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 1916 and the Revised Edition, 1950, and still familiar to many, are:  
     '*No goblin nor foul fiend  
         Can daunt his spirit;*'
34. 'Star', December 16, 1993, p.9
35. Figures: the Cremation Society of Great Britain, September 1999
36. Parsons, pp. 25, 26
37. [www.methodist.org.uk/press.office/shts/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/press.office/shts/)
38. Interview: Revd Edward Curliss, Bents Green Methodist Church, September 1999
39. Telephoned interview: Revd Jonathan Kerry, Carver Street Methodist Church, September 1999



40. Interview: Revd Chris Ellis, Cemetery Road Baptist Church, information concerning prayer book given, May 1995
41. A4 leaflet, 'Underbank Chapel 250th Anniversary' 1993
42. Stock, in Cox, p.129
43. *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 1995
44. Interview: Andreas Moran, Greek Orthodox Community of the Entry of the Mother of God, Sheffield, September 1999
45. [www.rabbiplancey.com](http://www.rabbiplancey.com)
46. Wolffe, in Parsons, p.163
47. 'Daily Telegraph', November 10, 1993, p.5
48. Kelsang Shenyen, Gyaltsabje Buddhist Centre, Nether Edge, NKT
49. 'Rosie', Sheffield Buddhist Centre, Glossop Road, FWBO

### **Illustrations**

- 8.i **A celebration and thanksgiving:** 'Sheffield Telegraph', November 17, 1999, p.15
- 8.ii **An Order of Service Cemetery Road Baptist Church:** May 11, 1998
- 8.iii **Matching markers:** researcher's own photograph, Jewish Cemetery, Ecclesfield
- 8.iv **The solitary wreath:** researcher's own photograph, Jewish Cemetery, Ecclesfield, June 1999



## **Chapter Nine**

### **The Sheffield Funeral - People**

#### **1. Introduction**

Any study of current religious influences in the Sheffield funeral must primarily concern itself with the people involved; this chapter studies the common funeral of the people of Sheffield, and how it is affected by any religious practice noted earlier. The material for the chapter is incorporated in the database of Respondents, built from 1993, that was initially categorised according to the acknowledgements of religious affiliation. The minority denominations and religions represented in the overall database are not included here, that is, Greek Orthodox and non-Christian, principally because variations in practices are uncommon. Thus, this chapter looks at Church of England, Nonconformist, and Roman Catholic funerals. As noted in Chapter One, the database incorporated several categories of funeral for which information was required; the variables included age; sex; accidental or sudden death; 'a long illness patiently borne'; and old age. The number of respondents within each category was subject both to natural limitations, such as the difficulty in identifying and interviewing those who had lost a young, close family member, and a subjective limitation that was based on an awareness of sufficient information from within any religion. The selection criteria for respondents included the category, 'practising'; an acknowledgement of a token membership was acceptable. However, the database records whether the respondent currently practised their religion or not; it was noted that most respondents volunteered reasonings for the latter situation. Phrases included:

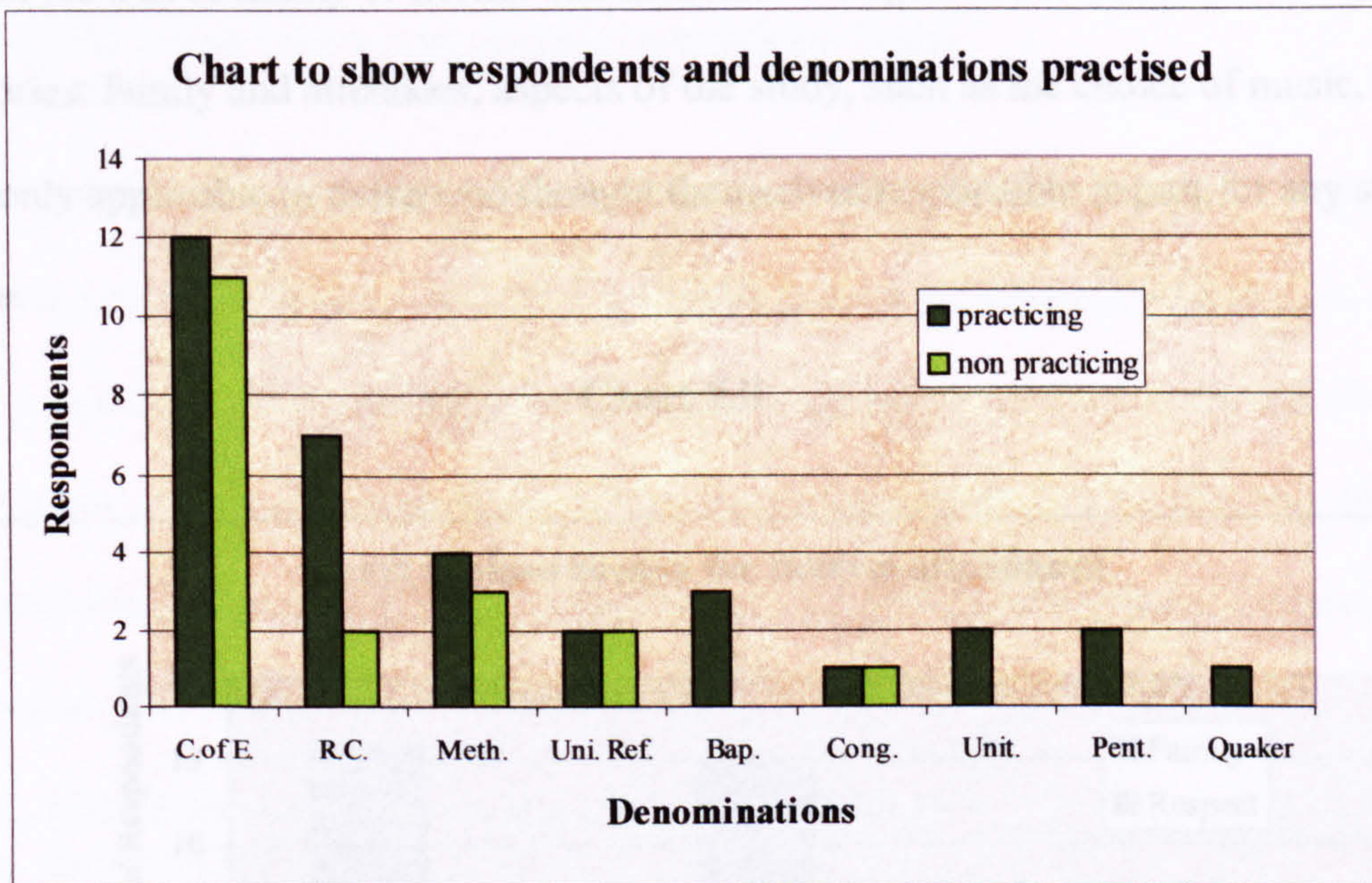
- I don't go much
- I don't really belong now
- My parents go, but I really don't
- I am what they call 'lapsed'
- We have always been ...



- My family all are ... but I don't bother
- I am supposed to be ...

However, any antagonism towards a religion was noted and the respondent not included in the Respondents database: comments expressed were valid, but evident antagonism was seen to colour remembrances in a subjective way.

**Chart 9.1**



Key: Cof E. Church of England      Bap. Baptist  
 R.C. Roman Catholic      Cong. Congregational  
 Meth. Methodist      Unit. Unitarian  
 Uni. Ref. United Reformed      Pent. Pentacostal

This chapter concerns itself, firstly, with the 53 respondents who satisfied the above criteria of affiliation to one of the established major denominations, and who remembered Sheffield funerals that they attended within the last five years that were within their own faith. Details offered about funerals that were before the five-year period were also noted, and incorporated into other, more general, databases.

Mourners who noted changes between the funeral in question, and previous funerals attended, were able to add significant information to the study. Secondly, respondents were asked about other memorable funerals that they had attended, but outside their

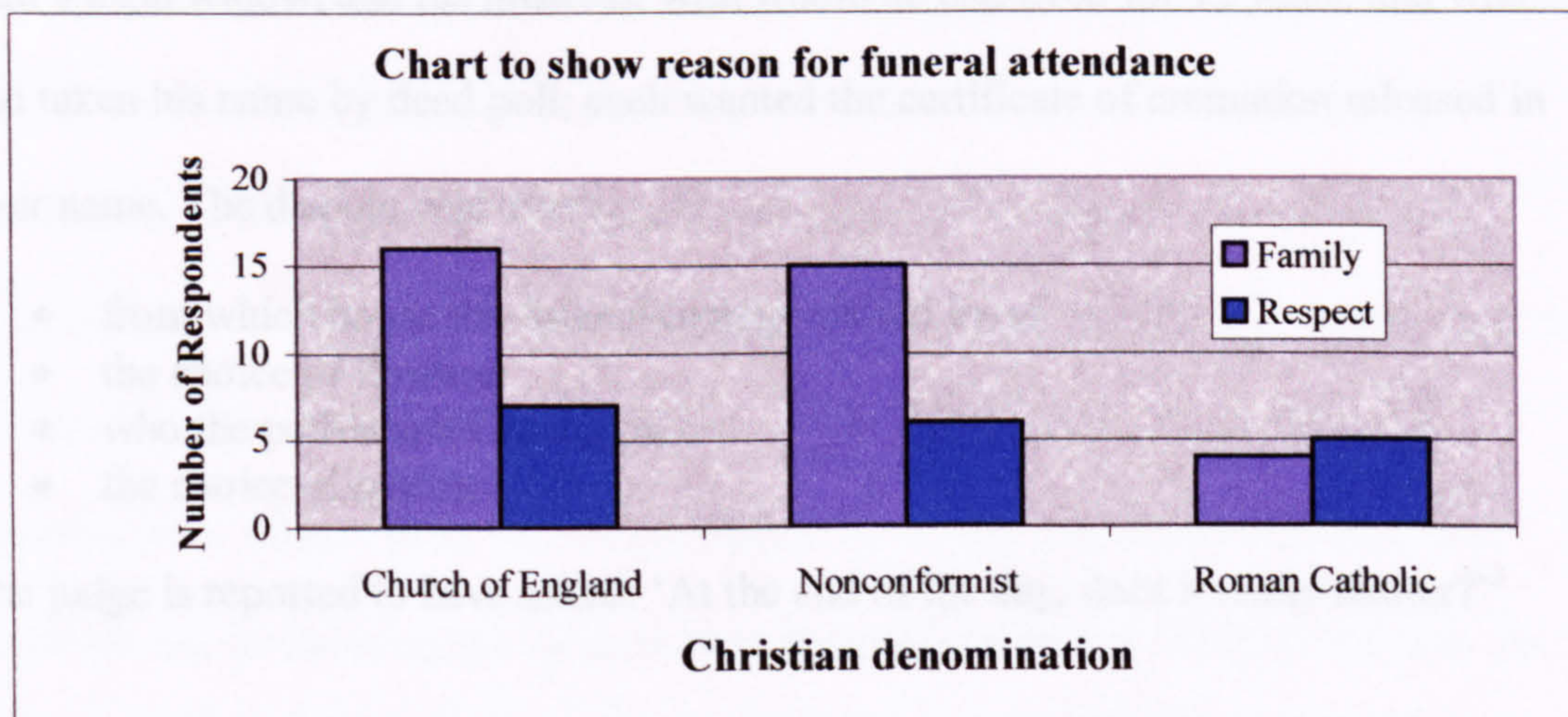


own faith, and again within the time/space criteria of Sheffield within the last five years.

### 1.i Mourners

All who responded to this part of the study thought of themselves as 'mourners'. For some, attendance at the particular funeral was a form of respect, or duty; others grieved the loss of family or friend. The database was again subdivided into two categories: family and attendees; aspects of the study, such as the choice of music, were only applicable to those who thought themselves responsible in part for any such choice.

Chart 9.ii



#### 1.i.a Family

Of decisions about a funeral, Harris notes:

‘When someone dies, a number of decisions about the funeral have to be made fairly quickly. If the deceased left no specific instructions, the decision about burial or cremation is normally made by the next of kin, or the executor. Although it is usual to carry out the wishes previously expressed by the deceased, there is no legal obligation to do so.’<sup>1</sup>



As noted earlier this study, life partners may be excluded from funeral decisions unless they are the named executors, or there are named executors who are sympathetic to any given lifestyle. There are acrimonious disputes in the ownership of bodies, such as that reported in 1995, when a Texan family were in dispute over the committal of an oil magnate. This dispute was settled in court, the body being cremated and the ashes divided between the widow and the rest of the family, although the young widow had wanted a mausoleum burial.<sup>2</sup>

Again, £10,000 in legal aid was authorised to pay for the High Court case of disputed ownership of a body which was kept for months in King's College Hospital, London, until an agreement was reached out of court. In this case, the parties concerned were a man's legal widow, and his mistress, with whom he had lived for 12 years, and who had taken his name by deed poll; each wanted the certificate of cremation released in their name. The dispute was over:

- from which house the funeral cortège should issue
- the choice of flowers
- who the pall-bearers should be
- the choice of hymns

The judge is reported to have asked: 'At the end of the day, does it really matter?'<sup>3</sup>

Respondents in the 'family' category were asked about the reasonings behind decisions, and if any funeral arrangements had been made before death, or if there had been a pre-need, or prepaid funeral plan. There was no incidence of pre-need or prepaid funeral plan reported, but many cases of informal planning. In these circumstances, all those family members who reported informal planning stated that the wishes had been met, as far as was possible. The pre-death wishes included:



- *choice of hymns*
- *no hymns*
- *parish priest to officiate*
- *not the vicar*
- *not in a church*
- *lots of flowers*
- *just a few really nice flowers*
- *no flowers*
- *donations to ...*
- *don't wear black*
- *do it properly*
- *it must be burial*
- *it must be cremation*
- *I want the old service*
- *I want lots of celebration*
- *no happy clappy*
- *not the children there*
- *I want everyone there*
- *I want the Philharmonic to sing Brahms' Requiem*

The last wish was the only one where failure to comply was reported. However, as the funeral was in a crematorium, a recording of Sheffield Oratorio Chorus singing movements of the requiem: 'Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen', played as the funeral party entered the chapel, and 'Selig sind die Toten' as they left, was thought to perhaps be not a compromise, but a better option.<sup>4</sup> The choice of recording was apparently the subject of an interesting discussion during the funeral refreshments. However, the incidence of pre-planned and pre-paid funerals is likely to increase. As noted in Chapters Three and Seven of this study, the pre-paid industry is heavily advertised; one must then assume that the funeral insurance industry believes it has an interested and susceptible market. A strong selling point in such schemes is that of being able to ensure that one has the funeral one wishes:

- **Don't leave your family and friends uncertain of your wishes - *Golden Charter***
- **A practical answer for the many people who want to make certain that arrangements are made according to their wishes'- *Chosen Heritage***
- **Peace of mind in the knowledge that difficult and often painful decisions have been made calmly and not clouded with emotion- *Co-operative Funeral Pre-Payment Bond***



Yet, given the legal ownership of the body being vested in the executor, or next of kin, the pre-paid plans do not have to be adhered to; not all mourners find the concept of pre-need arrangements to their liking. A feature in a woman's magazine in February 1998,<sup>5</sup> entitled, 'Should you choose your own funeral – and what if your loved ones don't like your choice?' makes several valid points:

- You want to be cremated /he wants to visit your grave
- Is it thoughtful or the ultimate selfish act?
- Pre-planning avoids arguments
- Organising can help mourners
- Most people cannot think about it because of grief
- It is morbid to think about your own death
- The organising is part of the grieving process
- The mourners have to live with any decision
- Funerals are about people who are left behind

One of the main choices facing a family arranging a funeral, a decision that is perhaps one of the first to be made, is that concerning committal: burial, cremation, or perhaps one of the less common possibilities: burial at sea, or the body given to medical science. A further choice, given that decision, is where the service is to be, or indeed, is there to be a service? Over 90% of the respondents to this study reported that such decisions were not really difficult, similar ones having had to be made in the recent past. However, a sudden death, with no recent history of funerals, was more problematical. In such circumstances, help from professionals, such as clergy and funeral directors, was reported to be useful in reaching decisions. Again, there were no circumstances in this study where a family did not receive immediate help when death occurred, even expected death. Hospital almoners, neighbours and friends were examples of a source of support, particularly in regard to steering the bereaved towards the need to make immediate decisions. Phrases respondents recall included:



- Now, who shall we get in touch with?
- Who can come and sit with you?
- You go to church, shall I call a minister?
- Have you anyone I can call?
- Shall I call N? Where's your daughter's phone number?
- Do you want me to call Heath's? They're very helpful.

That the majority of respondents in this study had some connection with organised religion did not prevent the gross disturbance in logical thought that sudden bereavement brings. Most told of the help and support that their family were able to provide for each other. It is considered important for family members to attend funerals, even if there has been discord in the past. If a close family member does not attend, there is consternation amongst the mourners. This expectation was particularly noticeable at the Hunters Bar funeral of a local male teacher, which was very well attended, apart from his son, who appeared to simply stay away. Amongst the mourners, audible comments included:<sup>6</sup>

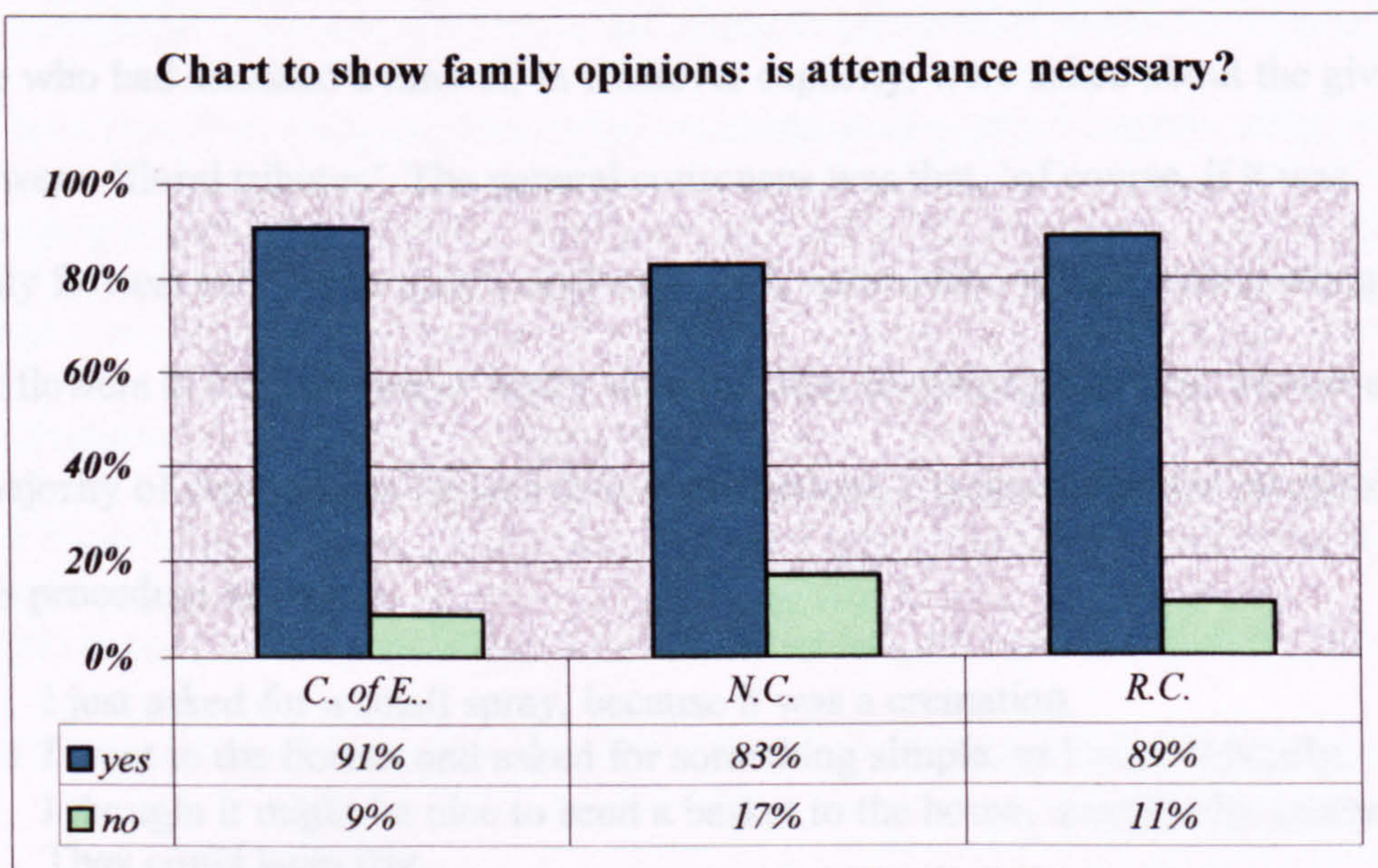
- He won't be able to change his mind next week.
- He'll come at the last minute, people do.
- They say they'll stay away, but something makes them come.
- He'll never forgive himself.
- It's alright being upset, but what about his mother, his sister?
- I always knew he was ....(unpleasant remark)
- Most peculiar!

Efforts are made to trace family members, even when they appear to have lost touch with the deceased. When a son, who was organising his mother's funeral, could not find the telephone number for her very elderly but estranged sister, who lived just a mile away, he assumed a prior death. That the telephone number was in her maiden name, and an easy visit could have proved the case otherwise, merely proved to the family that he did not understand enough to care. The rest of the family were distressed: it was not right. However, they were delighted to later find out that the sister was very much alive, albeit annoyed.<sup>7</sup>



Again, in one family, when a favoured uncle unexpectedly died, his older sister continued with her plans for a short holiday with a female acquaintance, so missing the funeral. The rest of the family could not understand this, as the sister was supposed to have loved her brother; the wasted money was not an adequate reason for not cancelling the holiday plans, for she had also, unexpectedly, inherited a considerable sum. In addition, as both she and her friend were retired, and with no other plans, the family felt that the holiday could have been rescheduled.<sup>8</sup> However, Malcolm Bratton, manager of B&C Funeral Services, reported that funerals are regularly delayed until a time when the family found it to be less inconvenient.

**Chart 9.iii**



### 1.i.b Attendees

An apparently simple question asked of those who attended a funeral was: ‘Why did you go?’ The answers fell into two distinct categories: affection coupled with respect, and duty coupled with respect. There were no reported situations of attendance being an unwelcome obligation, although one comment was: ‘I felt it was expected’. There



were three reported situations where the attendee felt uncomfortable; in all three there were few people present, and the relationship with the deceased had been casual. The majority of respondents felt they had made the right decision about attendance.

However, attendance at funerals is an arbitrary affair, largely concerned with subjective opinions of correctness. All respondents were asked about funerals that they could have attended, but did not. The two sets of answers include these reasonings:

#### **Attendance**

*I was very fond of her/him*  
*We had gone to school together*  
*Our mothers were friends*  
*It was so sad, I wanted to support*  
*He deserved a good turn-out*  
*I represented the Lodge/group/choir*

#### **Non-attendance**

I wasn't close enough  
I only met him a couple of years ago  
He was just someone I worked with  
It was really for the family  
Nobody else was going  
I had no real reason to go

Those who had attended a funeral, in whatever capacity, were asked about the giving of flowers: 'floral tributes'. The general consensus was that, 'of course, if it was "family flowers only", one didn't send any', and, conversely, if there was nothing about flowers in any newspaper notice column, then something was sent. However, the majority of respondents limited their contributions. Comments on the mechanisms of this procedure included:

- I just asked for a small spray, because it was a cremation.
- I went to the florists and asked for something simple, as I wasn't family.
- I thought it might be nice to send a basket to the house, a sympathy gesture. They could keep that.
- I wasn't close enough to send flowers.
- We sent a wreath from work.

Two commented that they had had a good look at all the flowers laid out, to see how theirs compared. All commented on the complexity of some of the tributes.

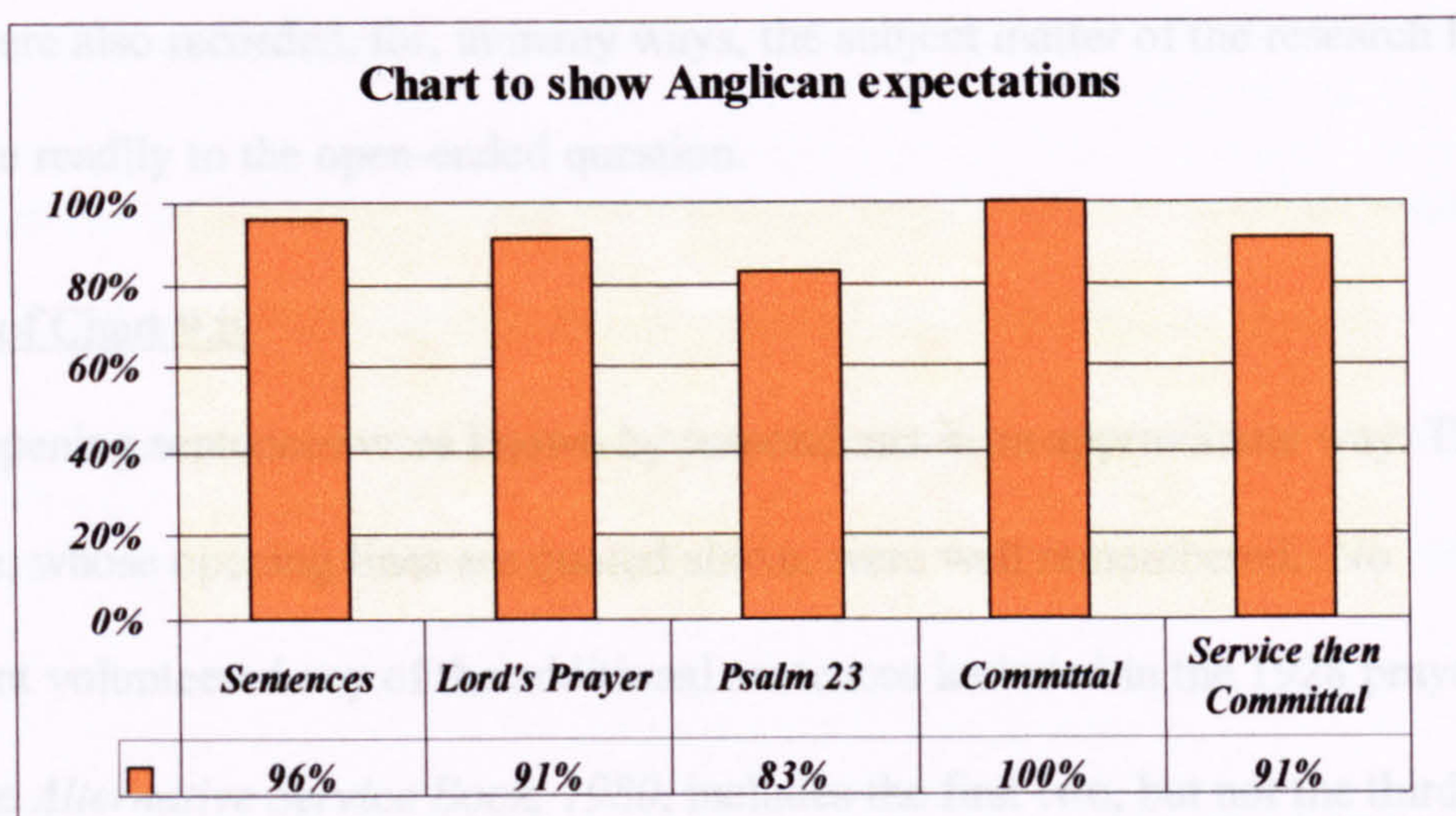


### 1.i.c Community and Religion

This database of respondents represents most areas of the old Parish of Sheffield: Sheffield; Ecclesall; Upper Hallam; Nether Hallam; Attercliffe cum Darnall, and Brightside. However, only two respondents to this part of the study came from Brightside *bierlow*, which now has a large Muslim population, some of whom were either respondents or very helpful during this study; the Sikh temple, which co-operated in this study, is also in that township. However, Sheffield has grown since the days of incorporation, the city boundaries being extended in 1967, and 1974. This study investigates the city of 1999 as a total entity. One of the most striking features of Sheffield is the village attitude and atmosphere, noted in Chapter Five of this study. Saunders, 1992, looked at the 'village' communities of Woodhouse and Grenoside, as well as the larger Ecclesall *bierlow*, in her research into funeral practices. This present study here identifies features of the religious communities which operate within the above geographical communities, and function in much the same way. The Church of England is noted for the variations in its styles of worship, and, of pertinence here, the improvisations now current in its funeral services. Yet the established church has certain identifiable patterns of behaviour and traditional practices that the mourners of Sheffield expect and require during a funeral. Respondents were asked about their expectations of a funeral service. The following chart summarises their responses:



**Chart 9.iv**



**Table 9.i**  
Expectations of an Anglican Service

Label	Anglican expectations	Sentences / phrases remembered	%
A	Opening sentences	I am the resurrection ... I know that my redeemer liveth ... We brought nothing into this world ...	96%
B	Traditional Lord's Prayer	Our Father, which (who) art in heaven ...	91%
C	Psalm 23	The Lord is my shepherd ...	83%
D	Committal	Man that is born ... In the midst of life ... We therefore commit his body ... Ashes to ashes ...	100%
E	Service then committal		91%

All respondents were asked the following two questions, as set out in the

Respondent's questionnaire:

- What do you expect from an Anglican service?
- Can you tell me your opinions of this service: what you liked, disliked, or would have liked?

If answers were not readily forthcoming, a prompt was appropriate, such as, for the first question: 'Do you remember any of the words (or 'bits' ) of the Church of England funeral service?' The second question was simply phrased, but respondents were prompted to consider such themes as participation, music, readings, and any



eulogy, for tabulation, and for reference at any time in the future. Additional elements offered were also recorded, for, in many ways, the subject matter of the research lent itself more readily to the open-ended question.

#### Analysis of Chart 9.iv

A. The opening sentences were known by respondents in an approximate way. The first three, whose opening lines are quoted above, were well remembered. No respondent volunteered any of the additional sentences included in the 1928 prayer book. The *Alternative Service Book, 1980*, includes the first two, but not the third. However, it also includes a further seven sentences. When prompted, two of these were recognised: ‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted’, and, ‘God so loved the world’. However, their recognition may not be because of familiarity with the Anglican funeral service; the latter is a familiar movement in John Stainer’s *Crucifixion*, well known to both Nonconformists and Anglicans, and the former is a *Beatitude*, Mark.5. 4, with the words slightly twisted, apparently so that they might be more easily comprehended. These words are used in the 1928 prayer book: ‘Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted’. They form no part of the old *Book of Common Prayer* funeral service.

B. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer uses the words *which* and *them*, now said as *who* and *those*. The ‘modern’ version of the traditional prayer is the one said at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, and the one expected in a Sheffield funeral service.

C. The respondents knew the Psalm number, and were able to quote an approximation of the first verse. It was the only psalm expected.



D. These words were quoted by the majority of respondents, and instantly recognised by the remainder of the sample; they were felt to be an important part of the service.

It should further be noted that a small percentage of regular church attendees were able to quote all parts of the service, in any version, with consummate accuracy.

Again, the respondents were asked to speak on additional elements of any of the Anglican services they had attended; responses were tabled under three simplified headings.

**Table 9.ii**  
**Opinions: Anglican funeral services**

	Liked	Disliked	Would have liked
Family participation: readings	65%		
Participation: items/poems			30%
Choice of music: church	43%	17%	
Choice of music: crem.	87%		
Eulogy			13%

The Nonconformist communities were also asked of their expectations of a funeral service. It should be noted that much of the research for this study had been completed before the introduction of the *New Methodist Worship Book*, introduced into churches on Easter Day, 1999, and respondents commented on services experienced before that time. Ministers have been questioned about their opinions and impressions of the new funeral services; their comments are included in Chapter Eight. A short summary of the noted expectations and opinions volunteered by nonconformist respondents is tabled thus:



Methodist	expect:	expected and had family participation expect and had modern readings and prayers
	opinion:	chose traditional form (Methodist Service Book) family cremation before service of thanksgiving
Congregational	expect:	Nonconformist service; built for us
	opinion:	predictable, no problems, plenty of choices
United Reformed	expect:	no set form
	opinion:	special for us, very relevant
Baptist	expect:	open coffin, lots of songs expect a service for the people
	opinion:	wonderful, praise and thanksgiving
Unitarian	expect:	no set service
	opinion:	to our liking

The Roman Catholic community also have expectations of their services. The relatively new *Order of Christian Funerals*, 1990, makes special reference to the Christian 'community': the parish. In the *Parish Musicians' Guide to the New Rites*, one notes many references to the community:

'Music is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey. ...  
Music can enliven the faith of the community ...  
To draw the community together ...  
*Funerals: a parish concern* None of the rites of the Liturgy can be properly celebrated unless they are rooted in the community. There should not be a gap between liturgy and life ... Nor are funerals private celebrations of the family: at every liturgy the whole church is there. A death is one of the most momentous events in the life of the community, leaving no one unaffected. The way it touches people will vary. For those closest to the dead person, grief and bereavement will be the strongest feelings. For friends and acquaintances the sense of loss will be less intense, and these people can help the bereaved, if they need it, to cope with the present and prepare to look to the future. For parish ministers the concern should be to put their ministry at the service of the family and the community. ... It is the mark of a healthy community to share the responsibility for giving 'ritual shape' to this event.'<sup>9</sup>

In Saunders, 1992, Minutes 24, a parish priest is quoted as saying:

'We have that end bit, the incense and the Holy Water, it's tradition. They wouldn't feel they had been done right if I didn't. That's why I say, "In keeping with the traditions of our Holy Church ..."'<sup>10</sup>



The Roman Catholic funeral does not take place in isolation; it forms part of the ritual life of the parish, and is frequently celebrated at the time of a regular weekday Mass. The community is then present, to be part of the funeral.

#### 1.i.d Custom, belief, and practice

There are a multitude of smaller communities within the larger ones identified in the Parish of Sheffield. Just as earlier studies, Saunders, 1975, and Saunders, 1992, identified differing beliefs and practices in funerary rituals by the people of Sheffield in their disparate communities, so this present study recognises differing religious practices within the religious communities of Sheffield. Just as the funeral directors each have their own methods and customs, such as shouldering or wheeling the coffin, so the people attending the churches and chapels have their own particular and identifiable funeral practices. The Anglican services at a crematorium may feature few identifiable differences, the variables here being dependent upon the funeral director and the mourners, but the services in the churches can be distinctive, particularly in the musical contributions, such as an anthem from a choir or an organ middle voluntary, where a favourite work can add to the service. Again, the Roman rite allows for local custom, although the raised crucifix on the coffins of Catholics in Sheffield is not encouraged. The new Rite expects a cross, a crucifix or a bible to be placed on top of the white pall, and a smooth surface would appear to be indicated. On the subject of the sprinkling of earth at a graveside, the 'Guidelines for Roman Catholic Funerals', a leaflet issued at the same time as the new rite was published in 1990, notes:

'At the graveside service the priest will invite the mourners at the end of the service to make a suitable gesture of farewell. This may take the form of sprinkling the coffin with holy water, but there will be those from other traditions who will feel happier if the opportunity is given to sprinkle earth. .. Obviously in this, as in many areas, we



are dealing with customs, which may vary considerably from one part of the country to another. .. All are legitimate and options should be provided.'

On this matter, the Revd Brian Bullick, Methodist minister, notes that in Woodhouse, Sheffield, mourners expect to sprinkle sand, whereas in Halifax earth is sprinkled. In 1992, St. William of York Roman Catholic Church did not use a white pall. Of this, Fr. Brian Davies, St. Theresa's, commented:

'They are not doing it properly. They are not following the rite. We do it properly here.' <sup>11</sup>

Within these religious communities, the mourners of Sheffield like to do things properly, and exhibit a variety of customs and practices in their separate funerary rituals and beliefs that appear to have no connection with organised religion. For example, while there are few beekeepers in the city, whose bees need telling of their keeper's death, it is common for plants and animals to be told of the death of their 'owner'. Following the death of a keen gardener in Greystones, Sheffield, his wife went down to the greenhouse to tell the plants, and the greenhouse, that they had had enough time, and they wouldn't be receiving any attention from her. Again, The son-in-law of a chrysanthemum grower visited the plot the day after the death, to tell them he had gone. Stories are told of the unusual behaviour of the family dog on the death of its owner: howls, pacing, and a refusal to leave the owner's chair or slippers. The 'apocryphal' rose is perhaps a Sheffield urban legend, yet it was believed by its raconteur, and told as if it was personally observed:

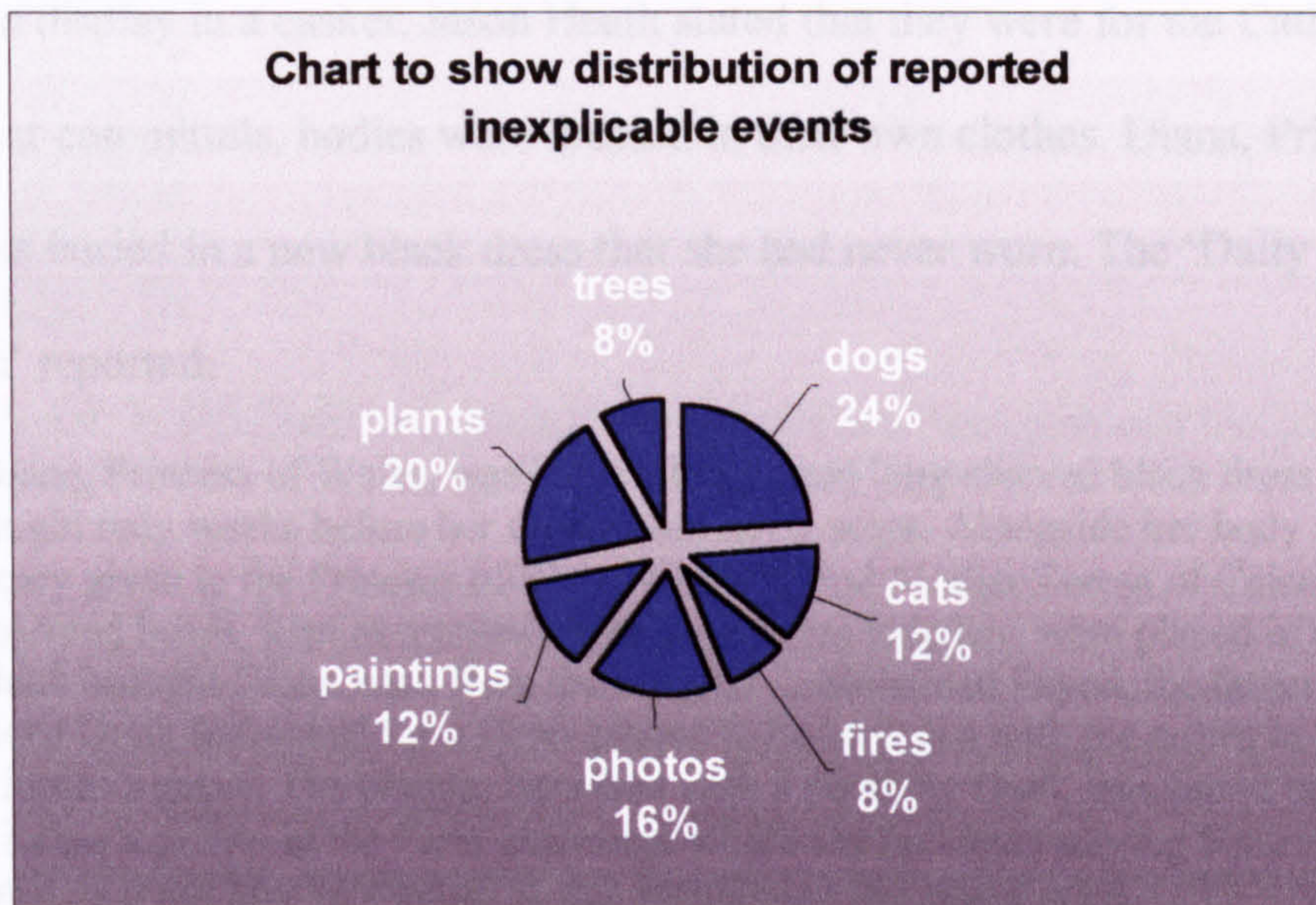
'She had a white rose bush outside the front door, but it had never flowered. She never gave up on it, but pruned it and cared for it, but still it never flowered. On the day of her funeral, as the coffin left the front door, there was the rose bush, bearing its first bloom.' <sup>12</sup>

Indeed, the apparent response of inanimate objects when a death occurs is one of the most common stories told about funerary beliefs in the city. Respondents reported:



- photographs toppling over or falling of the wall
- apple trees not bearing any fruit
- never getting a good fire: having to have an electric/gas fire instead

**Chart 9.v**



Mourners in Sheffield also follow the common custom of placing objects in the coffin; the custom of grave goods has a long history, as noted in Chapter Four and, later, in Chapter Ten of this study. When asked if any special object was placed in a coffin, respondents gave many examples:

- rose
- bible
- prayer book
- rosary
- teddy bear
- football
- pipe and matches
- newspaper
- betting slip
- jewellery: only at a burial
- photographs

Such tributes are frequently reported in the media:

‘Star’, June 1994: birthday cards, following a suicide on a birthday<sup>13</sup>

‘Star’, October 1995: female teenager, blue and white Owls teddy<sup>14</sup>

‘Star’, March 1966: child, Walt Disney videos<sup>15</sup>



Again, dressing the body in particular and personal clothes is now almost a convention; mourners taking part in this study were asked by the funeral directors if the deceased should be dressed in any particular or special clothing. Of the silken shrouds on display in a casket, Jason Heath stated that they were for the Catholics, but that in most committals, bodies were dressed in their own clothes. Diana, Princess of Wales, was buried in a new black dress that she had never worn. The 'Daily Telegraph' reported:

'Diana, Princess of Wales, was buried in a formal long-sleeved black dress that she bought only weeks before her death – but never wore. Alongside her body was a rosary given to the Princess of Wales by her friend Mother Teresa of Calcutta ... The treasured beads, kept as a memento of their times together, were placed in the coffin which brought Diana back from the hospital ... Mohamed Fayed, the father of her friend Dodi, had asked for a silver plaque to be included with the coffin in the Princess's grave. The plaque, inscribed with a poem by Dodi, was found under the Princess's pillow in the Paris apartment where she had been staying before the fatal crash. It is not known whether it was included in the island grave ...'<sup>16</sup>

In Sheffield, football kit was mentioned by several respondents; the following of a team is seen as of great importance in someone's life, and particularly in a child's or a young person's funeral: in the funeral noted above, the young girl 'was laid in her coffin wearing her Sheffield Wednesday shirt and clutching her blue and white Owls teddy'.<sup>17</sup> At the family home, mirrors and pictures were turned in three reported incidents, following the old beliefs noted in Chapter Three. It is a fairly common occurrence for the funeral cortège to pass by a place or building that had a particular place in the life of the deceased. Thus, if there is a procession from other than the family house, the procession will go past the house, slowing down as it does so.<sup>18</sup> In a similar tribute, the Orthodox Jewish funeral passes the synagogue on its way to Ecclesfield Cemetery.



## 1.i.e Costume



### 9.i *Scottish Widow*

Most mourners in Sheffield and throughout the country wear subdued clothes at a funeral. As Fr. Marcus Wakely, of St Matthew's, Carver Street said: 'You notice the ones in black, but you don't get any *Scottish Widows*', referring to the sequence of advertisements for an investment firm, dating from 1986, that feature a glamorous female attired in a long, black, sweeping, hooded cloak. Where once the whole congregation or community would be wearing dark greys or blacks, now it is only likely to be the family who dress in such a traditional way. For some, new clothes are considered necessary, there being nothing suitable in a wardrobe, yet the young may find wearing subdued colours a relatively easy task, as black and dark grey continue to be fashionable. Of this category of mourners, the Revd Brian Cranwell said:

'... it's quite funny: I sometimes have to laugh inwardly at seeing these lasses ... desperately anxious to look glamorous and up-to-date and fashionable, standing around a graveside in the most appalling weather ... with the thin black silk dress on ... trying desperately to keep a hat on, freezing to the bone, and trying to look smart and fashionable.'<sup>19</sup>

However, few in a congregation wear bright red, or green, although it is now more common for someone to attend in whatever costume they have and consider appropriate, than to stay away. Some do not think clothing important, beyond that of wearing garments appropriate to the occasion; none thought that beach dress was a conceivable option. Respondents related experiences concerning the requirements of



correct clothing; in one case a woman, planning to wear a lightweight dark grey cardigan jacket and skirt at a funeral at the Cathedral, in March, had to change her plans, following a change in the weather. On the morning of the funeral, the previous bright spring weather had turned to sleet, and the only adequate clothing in her wardrobe was bright red or blue. She left the house earlier than planned and went straight to Cole Bros. Ladies department, asking for a black coat, as quickly as possible, please. A suitable garment was found, and bought, within two and a half minutes, the assistant commenting that she had never sold a coat so quickly, and the woman had not even asked the price. However, there are documented examples of funerals both in Sheffield, and nationally, where the mourners are asked not to wear black. Concerning one Sheffield funeral, the 'Star' reported:

'Daughter Mary said the ceremony, which he organised himself, was to be a celebration. "He did not want any of his daughters to dress in black," said Mary.'<sup>20</sup>

If the funeral is of someone who was in uniformed employment, or who belonged to a uniformed organisation, then this uniform is likely to be a feature of the Sheffield funeral as it is anywhere in the country. A 'Star' report of a fireman's funeral, in January 1996, notes:

'Five hundred fireman from as far away as Devon and Newcastle stood shoulder to shoulder in a dark blue guard of honour ...'<sup>21</sup>

Later in that year, the paper again reported on a fireman's tragic death:

' his Union Flag-covered coffin was carried on top of a fire engine. Six colleagues formed a guard of honour beside the coffin and wreaths almost filled the cabin. Affixed to the front of the engine was a large floral arrangement spelling out "Jacko". Hundreds attended the service, including 120 uniformed colleagues.'<sup>22</sup>

When the retired chairman of the South Yorkshire Police Authority died, again in 1996, his coffin was carried by six South Yorkshire police officers, in uniform.<sup>23</sup>



The funeral of the tragically murdered Sheffield postman was the occasion for a guard of honour of postal workers from around the country.<sup>24</sup>



### **9.ii Royal Mail vans line the road**

Postal workers formed a guard of honour for murdered colleague David Hird, on the road outside Hutcliffe Wood Crematorium.

## **2.i Wakes and Gatherings**

Most funerals see a gathering of some description; family, friends or colleagues. One of these is the *wake*; the Roman Catholic church refers to the service of a Vigil as a ‘wake’, yet most respondents to this study understood the word *wake* to refer to a party held before the funeral, with the coffined body in the centre of the room, probably lasting all night, and again, probably Irish. The community of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Theresa had several families of Irish descent who reported that such happenings rarely took place in Sheffield. However, three such incidents were reported by respondents to this study, and each recounting told with glee: how much alcohol had been consumed; where people had come from; what was eaten; and, who was very ill afterwards. Of the wake, Walter writes:

‘One London funeral director reckons that Irish corpses are no longer left in the home the night before the funeral but brought to the church, because priests are fed up with close relatives turning up sozzled, or even missing the funeral altogether. The priests attempt to reduce the drinking in order to maintain the religious ritual.’<sup>25</sup>

The majority of respondents to this study experienced family gatherings before the funeral and a post-funeral buffet or tea of some description. During the previous evening families were likely to come together, either at the house, or in a local public



house or club, and talk about the deceased. These were reported as subdued occasions, with the family experiencing a feeling of solidarity. After the funeral, 96% reported some type of gathering where food was served. This function, according to Walter, 'marks the end of the death-to-funeral limbo.'<sup>26</sup> These ranged from the family welcoming mourners back to the house for a little sherry and some light snacks, to rather more robust affairs in a local club, with sandwiches, beer, and plenty of spirits. Some were reported to be mostly alcoholic gatherings, others where a little alcohol would have been appreciated. Again, several of the Sheffield funeral directors arranged food on their premises. Those who had attended these functions found that they were very civilised affairs, and the catering institutionalised. The tea was likened by one to that served in the old 'British Restaurants' of rationing days. Yet such facilities are known to be useful on the occasions when families members have travelled from outside the city, and hospitality at the family home is not possible; sometimes the deceased was the only member of the family left in the city, sometimes the family were too distressed or too elderly to contemplate hosting others. While not all such respondents wanted hotel or restaurant-styled catering, preferring something more casual, many reported on funerals where neighbours and friends provided everything, staying behind at the house to set out their contributions of food and hot drinks, crockery and cutlery, in the village way. In the study, compliments were paid concerning those funerals where local, amateur caterers had provided a wide range of freshly cooked and prepared dishes, from the obligatory quiches to artichoke and salami sandwiches on foccacia bread. Hotels, such as the Beauchief Hotel, at Abbeydale, and restaurants, such as the town-centre Tuckwoods, are also used for the funeral receptions of Sheffield. John Heath found such establishments much to their



clients' liking. As on any other occasion when the people of Sheffield eat outside the home, the wide variety of availability and choice is noticeable.

## **2.ii Transport**

The majority of Sheffield funerals are now furnished with one hearse and one limousine, the people solving any further transportation problems within their own families and communities. The long processions of funeral directors' cars are now very unusual, and are only likely at the funeral of someone well known. Within the period of the research for this study, Sheffield has not seen a funeral procession to equal that of the March, 1995, funeral of Ronnie Kray, the East London gangster, with its ornate hearse drawn by six Belgian Blacks, and over a dozen limousines. One still notices the occasional Sheffield funeral with four or more official cars, but the common cortège consists of two hired vehicles, including the hearse, completed by mourners' own transport. At the funeral of Marti Caine, it would seem that John Heath provided four limousines as well as the hearse. This can cause problems in a procession across a city, with family and friends from out of town being separated during the journey. The Wakefield firm of funeral directors, Harpins Funeral Services, provides plain black plastic triangular magnetic pennants for all mourners to place on the roof of their vehicles, thus enabling the cortège to stay together more easily. A similar product is advertised in Funeral Service Journals:

**'Processional Flags: These magnetic based flags identify your procession to police and other traffic, and help hold your group together. Strong, waterproof and with the options to custom-print the name of your funeral home.'** <sup>27</sup>

They are not in use in Sheffield, although many respondents spoke of the difficulties facing a cortège in a busy city, referring both to those they had seen, as well as those of which they had primary experience. Traffic may wish to allow a procession to stay



together, particularly at right-turning points, but cannot identify membership, particularly as the dress code of the occupants is less likely to be funereal.

### 2.iii Music

The music associated with funerals can be thought of as speaking the thoughts that words cannot. Walter, 1990, notes that:

‘ ... words to the music used are not necessary. ... “Make Me a Channel of Thy Peace” has been sung at more than a few funerals where the living have been inspired by the Christian love of the departed one. ... Communal singing can become both a cherished memory and an act of solidarity that unites living with living, living with dead.’<sup>28</sup>

This was one of the hymns selected for the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales. *Music at Funerals A Parish Musicians’ Guide to the New Rites* notes:

‘Since music can evoke strong feelings, the music for the celebration of funeral rites should be chosen with great care.’<sup>29</sup>

If, as the columnist Peregrine Worsthorne notes, music, as a medium for public mourning, is incomparably superior to words, then the choice of music at a funeral is of great importance. The established churches are very particular about the music chosen, and insist on an acceptable religious theme. A person’s favourite popular song would not be permitted. Yet the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, with its inclusion of an Elton John reworking of a dirge for Marilyn Monroe, was appreciated by many. If the choice of music in a Sheffield funeral is to include vocal music in such a style, then it would seem that a church or chapel funeral is not an appropriate choice of venue. However, classical music, usually played on an organ, is deemed acceptable. Thus, the funeral march from the oratorio *Saul*, by Handel, or the *Funeral Music for Queen Mary*, by Purcell, are seen as acceptable to the religious authorities, as is music from any of the *Requiems*: Mozart; Fauré; Howells; Verdi; Brahms; or Berlioz.



Occasionally an appeal is put out for a particular piece of music, so that it can be included in a funeral service, as happened in Sheffield in September, 1996, when a granddaughter appealed for a copy of ‘Sailor’, sung by Ann Shelton, for her grandmother’s funeral.<sup>30</sup> Such items of music are quite acceptable at crematoria; in a newspaper interview in 1993, John Batley, general manager of Sheffield Bereavement Services, stated that:

‘Mourners are as welcome to play a favourite tape of Max Bygraves or pop song by Abba as join the organist in Abide With Me.’

He added that he had selected Rod Stewart for his cremation.<sup>31</sup> Richard Heath, of John Heath, would leave the choice of hymns to his wife, but would like Bach’s *Tocatta and Fugue* [D min.] on entering, and *Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring* on leaving the church.<sup>32</sup>

Respondents to this study contributed their favourite hymns, and associated tunes, for a funeral or memorial service:

- |     |  |                         |
|-----|--|-------------------------|
| 1.  | The Lord’s my Shepherd                     | <i>Crimond</i>          |
| 2.  | The King of love my Shepherd is            | <i>Dominus Regit Me</i> |
| 3.  | O love that wilt not let me go             | <i>St. Margaret</i>     |
| 4.  | Abide with me, fast falls the eventide     | <i>Eventide</i>         |
| 5.  | Rock of ages, cleft for me                 | <i>Petra</i>            |
| 6.  | Saviour again, to thy dear name we raise   | <i>Ellers</i>           |
| 7.  | Love divine, all loves excelling           | <i>Blaenwern</i>        |
| 8.  | Guide me, O thou great Redeemer            | <i>Cwm Rhondda</i>      |
| 9.  | Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear          | <i>Abends</i>           |
| 10. | Lord of our life, and God of our salvation | <i>Cloisters</i>        |

However, this selection represents only the choices of the respondents to this study, who were themselves selected for their religious affiliations or associations.

However, ‘Crimond’, ‘Rock of Ages’ and ‘Abide with Me’ were noted in Saunders 1992, as being the most frequently heard choices by the people of Sheffield at both church and crematorium:



‘The most frequent items of music heard/played at Sheffield funerals are the expected items, *Crimond* and *Rock of Ages*. *Abide with Me* is a close contender in the popularity stakes; after that its anybody’s choice. *The King of Love*, *Praise My Soul* and *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind* compete with *My Way* and *Neighbours*.’<sup>33</sup> Yet the Revd Vic Filer, vicar of St John’s, Abbeydale, in a November 1999 sermon, recalled that the only song the organist at his previous parish refused to play was *My Way*, for very obvious reasons: the life of a Christian is lived with God’s help, not just by the will of the individual.

#### 2.iv Humour

While humour is never present at the funerals that follow appalling tragedies, it is often present at other, perhaps less traumatic, funerals, and the people of Sheffield are as appreciative of good graveyard humour as those in any other community. The Diocese of Sheffield’s Churchyards Advisor tells of being shouted down by a gaggle of geese at his churchyard,<sup>34</sup> and, at the graveside funeral attended by one Sheffield respondent, another mourner had a parrot on his shoulder that had been trained to say: ‘Goodbye Jim, goodbye.’<sup>35</sup> Reflective humour is included in broadcast programmes; the series, ‘Waiting for God’, which features a retirement home, two idiosyncratic residents, and the manager and his somewhat infatuated secretary, included an episode in which the four main characters were seen attending the wrong burial. The episode featured an intrusive bleeper, an equally intrusive mobile phone, and a community funeral with robed church choir, Brownies and a steel band, the latter explained as acceptable because the occasion was a ‘family outing’.<sup>36</sup> Gentle humour occurring at funerals is reported: note the following item in the ‘Star’:

‘Little Caleb Cookson’s comic capers brought a funeral to life as nearly 300 mourners waited for the coffin to arrive. ... Caleb, aged nine, was outside the church and pushed



his leg through iron railings. But then it got jammed fast and no amount of heaving or pulling would free him. ..the fire brigade was called as a last resort. The service went ahead at least 15 minutes late, with Caleb nursing a sore leg.’<sup>37</sup>

Wry humour and misprints are regularly featured in the closing column of *Peterborough* in the ‘Daily Telegraph’; the following are but a small number of the many examples of *Peterborough*’s grave humour held in SAFEC:

- *Job advertisement for the British Institute of Embalmers: “The ability to keep deadlines is essential.”*<sup>38</sup>
- *From a sign in Harare, Zimbabwe: “Funeral centre: the last ones to let you down.”*<sup>39</sup>
- *For sale in ‘Loot’: “Coffin, English elm, never been used. No time wasters, £175.”*<sup>40</sup>
- *A sign in a village shop window in Torcross, Devon: “Wanted. Grave digger – good opening for old man. Apply local cemetery.”*<sup>41</sup>
- *Advertisement in the ‘Larne Times’: “Grave for sale, unused.”*<sup>42</sup>
- *From the ‘Vintage Sports Car Magazine’: “1946 Daimler. Straight 8 hearse, complete with body in need of attention.”*<sup>43</sup>
- *From a ‘Harrogate Advertiser’ report on traffic bumps: “Funeral director Hubert Swainson said his drivers were now taking alternative routes to avoid humps. ‘They’re very uncomfortable for passengers,’ he added.”*<sup>44</sup>
- *From ‘General Practitioner’ magazine: “A fundholding GP is planning to install an undertaker’s office as part of a new, one-stop health centre.”*<sup>45</sup>
- *Report in Super Marketing: “The Co-operative Wholesale Society is to implement a smoking ban across all its stores ... The only exception will be funeral parlours.”*<sup>46</sup>
- *From notices of Death in the personal column: “Corbett – Molly, peacefully last Friday and cheered by the prospect of missing both the Eclipse and the Millennium ...”*<sup>47</sup>

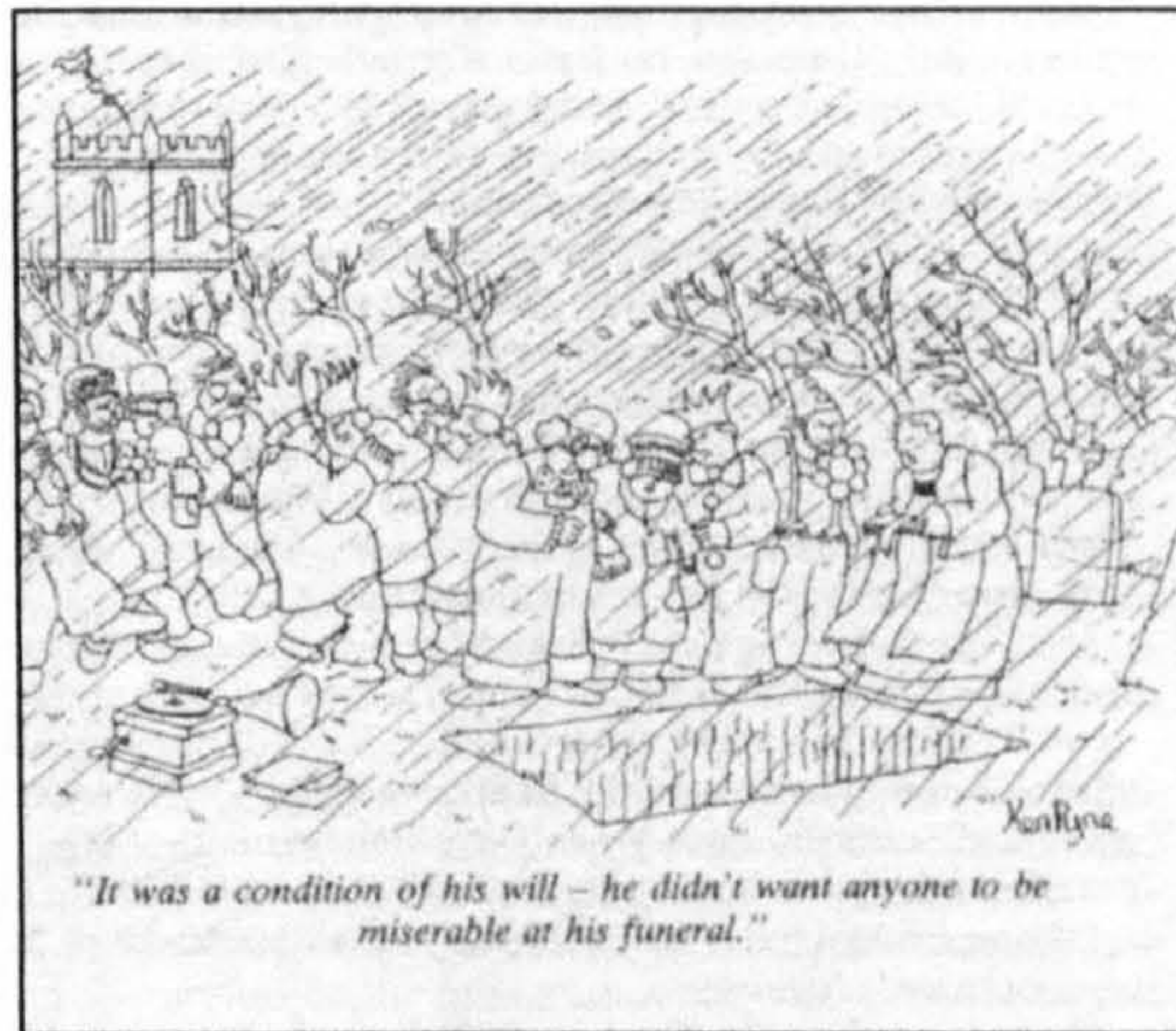


Finally, as heard on Classic FM:

- *Did you hear about the music chosen for a butcher's funeral? - Sheep may safely graze.*<sup>48</sup>

### 9.iii *Grave humour*

"It was a condition of his will – he didn't want anyone to be miserable at his funeral."



### 2.v **Memorials: the grave marker**

Those wishing to erect a grave marker or memorial in Sheffield may find themselves in dispute with either the church or the Local Authority, for both, as has been noted, operate restrictions on size, shape, stone, and, in the case of the Diocese, wording.

The summer of 1994 saw extensive publicity given to problematical epitaphs and the colours of gravestones in Lancashire.<sup>49</sup> One could surmise that it was the recognised time for the inclusion of such material in the media, the 'silly season', for all other news was dead, so to speak. A 'Star' editorial commented:

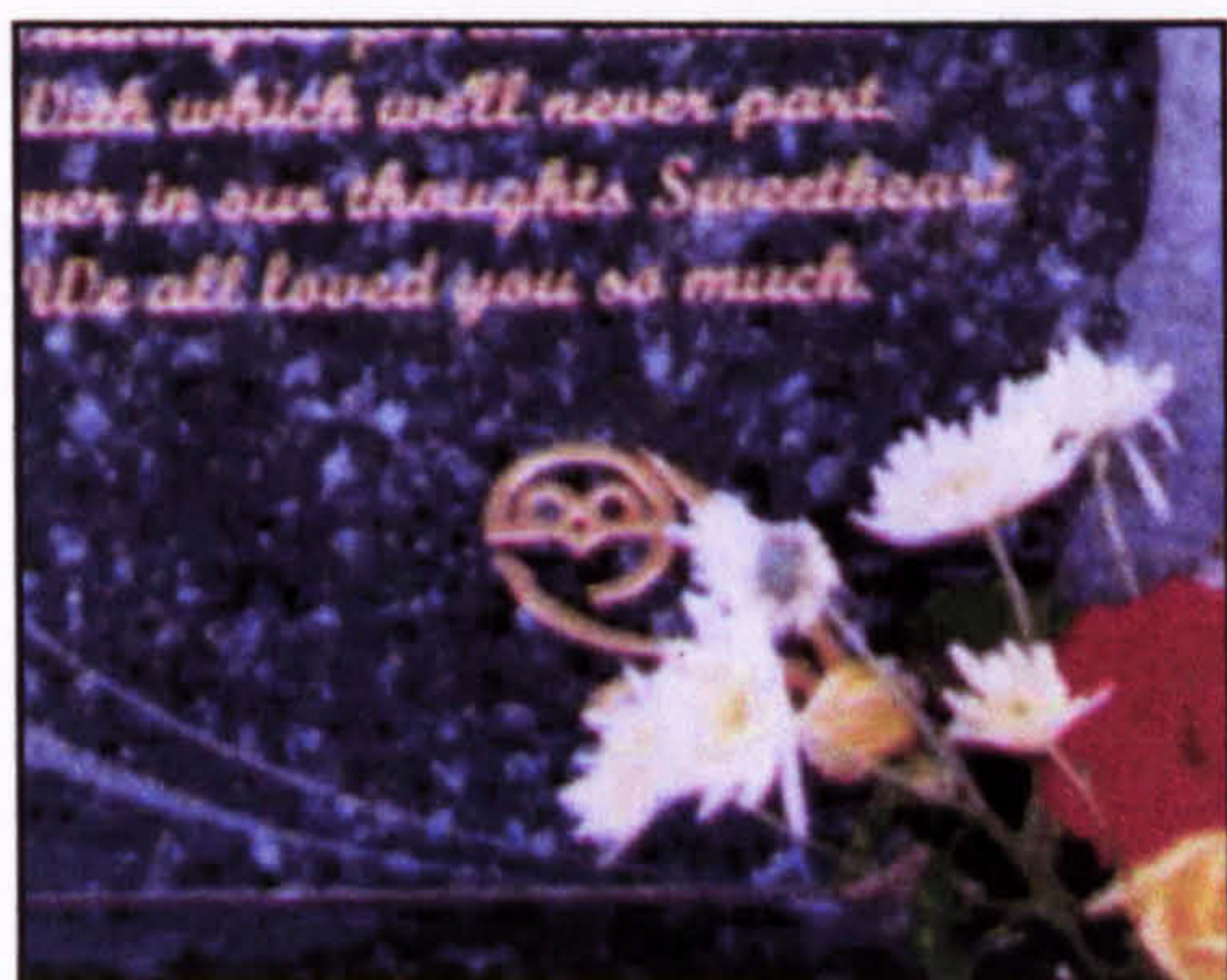
'Some vicars want to limit the nature of inscriptions on gravestones – not because they are indecent but because they are somehow considered irreligious. Is it any wonder people are deserting the established church in droves?'<sup>50</sup>

An article on the subject, in a 1994 edition of the 'Sheffield Telegraph' refers to a down-to earth approach of the people of Sheffield:

'The only thing you can't put on a gravestone in Sheffield is the name of one of the city's football teams. ... it tends to make it a target for vandalism. Relatives are warned of what may happen and usually accept the ruling without complaint. Recent additions to Ecclesall Church's Cemetery [sic] include all the words which have been banned in Blackburn, .. examples include, .. Boy, could he sing!'<sup>51</sup>



Chapter Ten, 1.ii, includes the comments of the current spokesperson for Ecclesall churchyard, on the last example cited above; additionally, it must be noted that it is now common to see the insignias of football clubs on gravestones.



**9.iv 'Owls' insignia: Abbey Lane**



**9.v Owls mascot for a child**

This headstone was paid for out of cash raised for a Disneyworld trip, which was never taken, as Russell died from a brain stem tumour days after his parents were presented with the money. The remainder of the money raised went to the Children's Hospital, Sheffield, where Russell died.

The memorials of Sheffield, like its wakes, services and ham teas, serve to illustrate the sensible practicality of the people of the city. Their funerals are extremely variable, yet it is within the variety that one experiences the commonality of the Sheffield funeral. The ritual is seen as a necessity, and one that must be endured, yet



accommodations are made such that the separateness of the people of the city is acknowledged and respected.



## Notes

1. Harris, p.51
2. 'Daily Telegraph', August 16, 1995, p.9
3. 'Daily Telegraph', July 18, 1995, p.7; 'Daily Telegraph', July 19, 1995, p.20
4. Brahms: 'Ein Deutsches Requiem'; movements Four and Seven, recorded in Sheffield Cathedral, 1996
5. 'Bella', February 12, 1998, p.37
6. Primary evidence, funeral, St. Augustine's, Hunters Bar, 1993
7. Primary evidence, personal experience
8. Ibid.
9. *Music at Funerals A Parish Musicians' Guide to the New Rites*, 1992
10. Saunders, 1992, p.197
11. Ibid.
12. Told at CECTAL: Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language: member of M.A. degree course in Local History, Literature and Cultural Tradition, 1992
13. 'Star', June 7, 1994, p.1
14. 'Star', October 20, 1995, p.11
15. 'Star', March 7, 1996, p.3
16. 'Daily Telegraph', September 7, 1997, p.3
17. 'Star', October 20, 1995, p.11
18. Primary evidence, personal experiences
19. Saunders, 1992, p. 171
20. 'Star', January 26, 1996, p.7
21. 'Star', January 3, 1996, p.2
22. 'Star', June 4, 1996, p.5
23. 'Star', June 7, 1996, p.5



24. 'Daily Telegraph', December 14, 1993, p.5
25. Walter, 1990, p.152
26. Ibid.
27. 'Funeral Service Journal', A. Rifkin Co. Ltd., July, 1999, p.43
28. Walter, 1990, p.157
29. *Music at Funerals A Parish Musicians' Guide to the New Rites*, 1992, p.2
30. 'Star', September 18, 1996, p.13
31. 'Star', October 7, 1993, p.3
32. 'Sheffield Telegraph', February 9, 1996, p.19
33. Saunders, 1992, p.96
34. 'The Parish Priest's Role', document issued by Revd. Martin Baldock, Diocesan Churchyards Advisor, section 5.4
35. Primary evidence, interview, St John (Park) Primary C.of E. School, 1997
36. 'Waiting for God', BBC2, February 1995
37. 'Star', August 8, 1995, p.7
38. 'Daily Telegraph', February 28, 1993, p.21
39. 'Daily Telegraph', July 30, 1996, p.17
40. 'Daily Telegraph', September 22, 1995, p.27
41. 'Daily Telegraph', October 4, 1995, p.19
42. 'Daily Telegraph', July 14, 1994, p.19
43. 'Daily Telegraph', August 6, 1996, p.17
44. 'Daily Telegraph', May 4, 1995, p.17
45. 'Daily Telegraph', August 16, 1995, p.17
46. 'Daily Telegraph', October 15, 1993, p.17
47. 'Daily Telegraph', July 5, 1999, p.20



48. Classic FM, May 14, 1997, 10.00a.m.
49. 'Daily Telegraph', July 12, 1994, p.1; 'Daily Telegraph', July 13, 1994, p.15; 'Daily Telegraph', August 10, 1994, p.3; 'Daily Telegraph', August 18, 1994, p.17; 'Daily Telegraph', December 28, 1994, p.6; 'Daily Telegraph', April 13, 1995, p.11
50. 'Star', July 6, 1994, p.6
51. 'Sheffield Telegraph', August 12, 1994, p.8

### **Illustrations**

- 9.i **Scottish Widow:** 'Daily Telegraph', September 27, 1999, p.6
- 9.ii **Royal Mail vans line the road:** 'Daily Telegraph', December 14, 1993, p.3
- 9.iii **Grave humour:** Walter, T., *Funerals and How to Improve Them*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1990, Punch cartoon, p.117
- 9.iv **'Owls' insignia: Abbey Lane:** plot for interred ashes, researcher's own photograph
- 9.v **Owls mascot for a child:** 'Star', August 10, 1995



## **Chapter Ten**

### **The Sheffield Committal – Places**

#### **1. Introduction**

A major decision in the Sheffield funeral is one of 'place'. Most mourners, having chosen a particular funeral director that best fits their needs, planned any committal service, and decided on burial or a cremation, also need to make a decision about where the body will be committed, and, after a cremation, what will happen to the ashes. These decisions are not made in any conscious order. Rather, they are set as such, in this study, as part of a logical sequence of events. The Sheffield committal, with its two separate and distinct methods: burial and cremation, now has another facet to add to the overall picture: public or private? After the closure of the General Cemetery in 1963, the alternatives for committal were either a dedicated religious burial ground or a Local Authority cemetery. With the closure of most of the city's churchyards, Sheffield Bereavement Services had a monopoly. This service now operates in competition to the private sector: the private crematorium at Grenoside, owned and operated by B&C Funeral Services, opened in August 14, 1998, and the woodland burial site at Ulley, which is owned and operated by the funeral directors, Peace Funerals. The private crematorium expected to be a strong competitor to the Authority's crematoria, attracting clients from the more densely populated northern area of the city.

The choice of burial site is an essential aspect of this study: an examination of the customs and rituals of the Sheffield funeral. As noted in Chapter One, specific primary research has covered a period of years: 1994 to the present. A total of 124 respondents / mourners were interviewed concerning committal choices. These were subdivided into committal categories: burial: 66, and cremation: 58. Those who had



selected burial as a method of committal were asked why a particular cemetery or graveyard was chosen. The answers given demonstrated that the choice of a burial site is rarely a complicated matter, six basic reasonings being put forward by the majority of respondents; the category of 'other' refers to the six respondents whose reasonings did not fit an existing category. For this section of the study, 71% of respondents were selected on a random basis: visitors to graves, particularly graves less than ten years old. Such sampling has no statistical significance. However, the sampling took place over a number of years, in different seasons, on different days and at different times. Each cemetery was also visited on a number of occasions. These changes in the time of sampling did not affect results: the categories remained the same.

### Categories of Choice

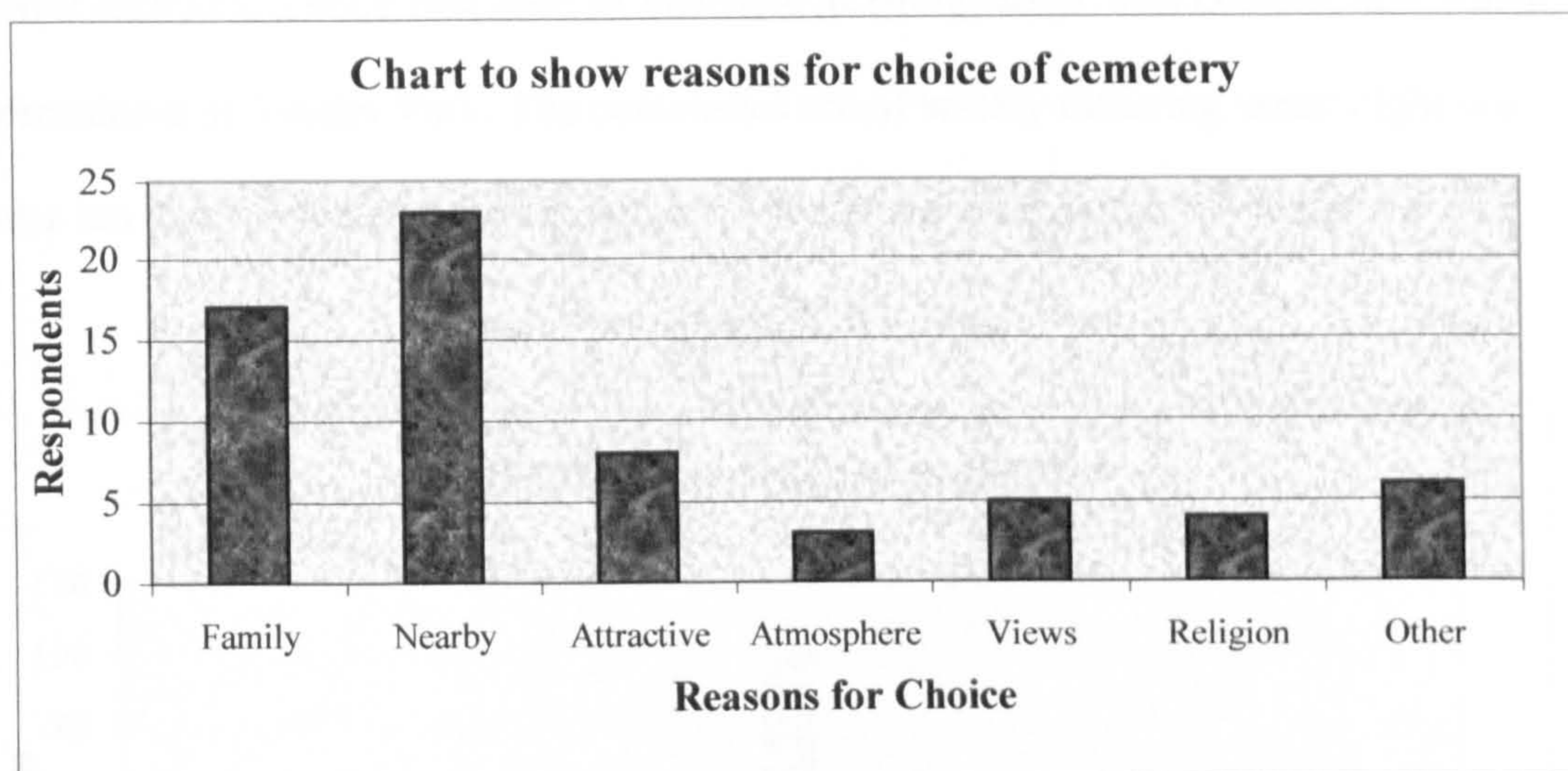
<i>reasons given</i>		<i>possible interpretations</i>
• Family associations:	(17)	this is our burial home
• Nearby:	(23)	this is our neighbourhood
• Attractive site:	(8)	it suits our lifestyle
• Right atmosphere:	(3)	traditional/religious /village
• Views:	(5)	he/she/we enjoy(ed) a good view
• Religious factors:	(4)	we must/we choose

The six 'other' reasons given were:

• You've got to go somewhere:	place does not matter
• People come here:	we know of this one
• It'll have to do:	we are religious
• It's a lovely babies' plot:	we like the appearance of the section
• It's easy to park:	we are disabled
• It's the only woodland:	it's the only Sheffield woodland burial ground



**Chart 10.i**



### 1.i Current Burial Grounds

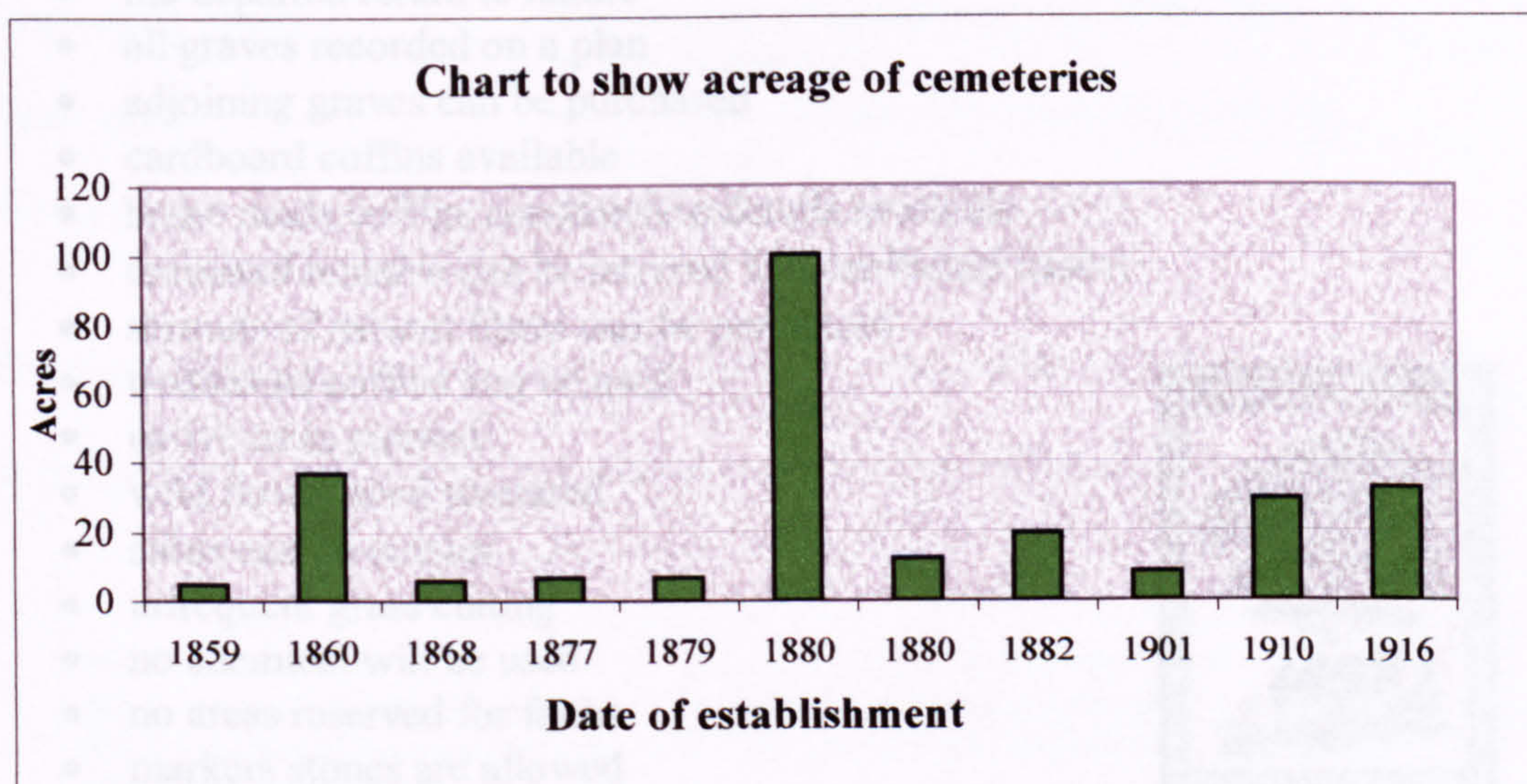
There are 13 cemeteries within the supervision of Sheffield Bereavement Services that can accommodate new graves, and a further three where family plots can be re-opened for further burials, if there is room. Additionally, there are another three 'old burial grounds' under their care. The population has a wide choice, from the newest, 1967, at Beighton, to the long-established City Road, Burncross to the north, and Woodhouse to the east. However, the older cemeteries are subdivided into sections, and it is in the newer sections that burials now take place, such as is noticeable at Handsworth. As part of this study, all cemeteries have been visited, and photographic records made.

Each cemetery is distinctive, by reasons of geography and population distribution: some are level, others have attractive views of countryside or a Sheffield vista, while still others are within a built-up area. Some are distinctive because of the style and arrangement of memorials; some are distinctive because of the landscaping of the site: are there trees, paths, seats? Most are distinctive because of the cemetery entrance and



buildings. Several have Nonconformist and Church of England chapels linked by a central archway, a style first used in Sheffield at Burngreave<sup>1</sup> and Darnall, and which is prominent at Tinsley Park. The cemeteries are of widely differing sizes: eight are under ten acres in area, whilst the largest, City Road, is tabled at 100 acres.

**Chart 10.ii**



Note: Dates for the *establishment* of Sheffield's cemeteries are provided by Rugg.<sup>2</sup> These differ from *opening* dates quoted in Harman and Harper, in Binfield.<sup>3</sup>

They are all cared for in the widest sense, for not only is the grass cut and the trees are attended to, but cemetery staff operate nightly patrols at vulnerable grounds when vandalism threatens, discretion is used in handling disputes over garden plots, and the service staff know all their cemeteries intimately. All cemeteries under the care of Sheffield Bereavement Services receive maintenance, such as regular grass cutting, even those that are termed 'disused'. Some cemeteries have functional chapels, but most chapels at cemeteries now have other uses, such as the storage of maintenance equipment. Cemeteries may have allocated sections: a babies section; a SANDS memorial: Still-Birth and Neonatal Death Society; allocated sections for specific faiths, and areas for the graves of cremated remains. There is one cemetery, Wisewood, with a 'Woodland Burial' area; this is new development for Sheffield. The



concept of woodland burials has received moderate publicity, some in its own right, and some as part of an environmental and ecological package.<sup>4</sup> Sheffield Bereavement services issue a leaflet 'Woodland Burial at Wisewood Cemetery'; this includes the following information:

- woodland burials help create a woodland habitat
- the departed return to nature
- all graves recorded on a plan
- adjoining graves can be purchased
- cardboard coffins available
- home made coffins construction details available
- cremated remains can be interred in a cardboard casket
- shrouds of natural fibres can be purchased
- traditional coffins can be used
- native trees planted
- wild flower seed scattered
- ashes can be strewn
- infrequent grass cutting
- no chemical will be used
- no areas reserved for faiths
- markers stones are allowed
- memorials are not permitted
- a woodland burial ground is different



#### *10.i Wisewood*

However, it does not state that there should be no hygienic treatment, otherwise the chemicals used will kill any trees. Bereavement Services staff also willingly assist those who wish to make their own arrangements for a funeral: information packs on independent funerals are available, and various coffins are sold, including the 'Brighton' cardboard coffin.

As noted in Chapter Two, 3.ii, of this study, the research report on old cemetery land defined six types of cemetery landscape within any cemetery, most being a mix of types.<sup>5</sup> A recommendation of the report was that cemetery managers zone their



grounds and manage each zone according to their differing requirements, the categories suggested being:

Modern lawn:	from 1960, small memorials, back to back, no kerbsets, regular mowing
Memorial lawn, first class:	active zone, from 1850, memorials and kerbsets intact, grass mown regularly
Memorial lawn, second class:	dense memorials, 1850 – 1900, low maintenance
Semi-open space:	some clearing, all kerbsets removed, 1850 –1950, variable maintenance
Open space:	no memorials: all memorials cleared; no burials yet; public graves
Wood/scrub:	dense undergrowth, graves inaccessible

These categories are applied to all the Authority cemeteries in this overview of the burial grounds of Sheffield, and include an indication of the condition of zones:

<b>Key:</b>	
<b>MLT</b> – modern lawn type	<b>G</b> – most memorials intact/maintained
<b>ML1</b> – memorial lawn first class	<b>M</b> –mixed condition of memorials
<b>ML2</b> – memorial lawn second class	<b>P</b> - many memorials dilapidated
<b>SO</b> – semi-open space	
<b>OS</b> – open space	
<b>W/S</b> – wood/scrub	
<b>Mix</b> – a mix of types	

#### Darnall, 1859: ML2, P; Coventry Road, Sheffield 9

Darnall Cemetery is in a multi-ethnic area to the east of the city. The two cemetery chapels are boarded up and the small site appears abandoned. The entrance to the ground is through the archway between these chapels; the roadways are disintegrating and the area has a litter problem. The cemetery has had vandalism problems as a public footpath runs through it.<sup>6</sup> It is closed to new burials, but existing family plots can be opened up for further burials, if there is room, and if permission from the grave owner or next-of kin has been obtained.



Burngreave, 1860: ML2, M; Melrose Road, Sheffield 3

This cemetery is one of the largest and oldest in the city, and has the linked chapels noted earlier. Again, the area is multi-ethnic. Burngreave has many splendid memorials on its hilly site, and an impressive war memorial sited upon the highest ground. There is little vandalism but plenty of litter, particularly near the entrances. Burngreave overlooks the Lower Don Valley, and is subject to aircraft noise. The cemetery can only be used for interment in existing graves.

Norton, 1868: ML2, G; Derbyshire Lane, Sheffield 8

Norton Cemetery is small, long, and thin, and is perched on the top of one of Sheffield's seven 'hills', overlooking Abbeydale, Tesco's and Sainsbury's. It is in a mixed area of largely private housing, some of which is exclusive. The cemetery has few large old monuments, but most are pattern-book examples. The site is well kept, but there was reported vandalism in March, 1997, when £0.5m worth of damage was caused to old memorials during a 'night of destruction':<sup>7</sup> the site is generally free of litter. The cemetery can only be used for interment in existing graves

Burncross, 1877: ML2, M; Burncross Road, Sheffield 30

This cemetery is on the northern boundary of the city, in a built up area near the old village of Ecclesfield, one of the study areas in Saunders, 1992. The site area is small, and, as it slopes upwards, the whole cemetery can be seen from the entrance. There are two cemetery chapels: one is used for storage, and the other as a columbarium. This is carefully maintained, and the two sides of the chapel are filled to waist height with wooden niches that look like small cupboards. The tops of these columbaria are always a mass of fresh flowers for the floor is now carpeted, and flowers must not be



placed on it. Mourners constantly rearrange these vases to bring their own to the fore.<sup>8</sup> The cemetery can accommodate new lawned graves.



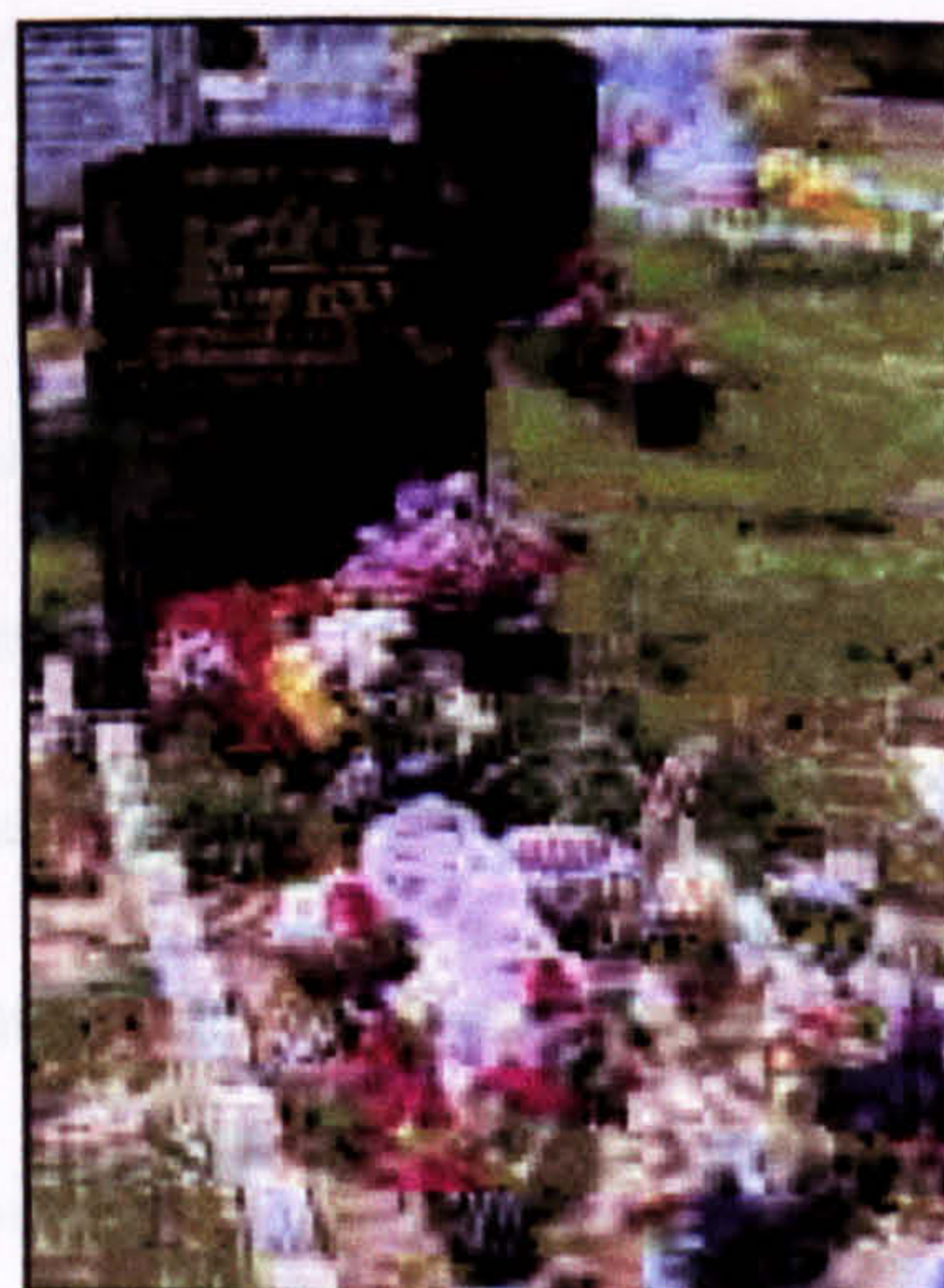
**10.ii Niches at Burncross .**

Woodhouse, 1879: ML2, M; MLT, G; Stradbroke Road, Sheffield 13

Woodhouse has two cemeteries, one disused. The current one is small and quite understated, with few large memorials. It has good views over the adjacent fields to the spire of St. Mary’s, Handsworth, and is on the edge of the old pit village of Woodhouse, again, one of the main areas of study in Saunders, 1992. The new cemetery is well used by villagers, as it can accommodate new lawned graves in a well-maintained section: there is no obvious litter.

City Road, 1880: Mix; G; City Road, Sheffield 2

This is the largest of Sheffield’s cemeteries, covering about 100 acres: there is room for many more burials. The site is both a cemetery and the site of the city’s first crematorium: it also accommodates the offices of Sheffield’s Bereavement Services. City Road attracts publicity, for it has a serious vandalism problem. The area is disadvantaged, and the cemetery is on the edge of the Manor Estate, which achieves equally bad publicity in the local press.



**10.iii Edged grave at City Road Cemetery**



Graves in the lawned area are often marked out with stones, or lawn edging material, so that the grave has the appearance of one with official kerbsets. The area, supposed to be lawned for ease of maintenance, is then filled with flowers, plants and memorabilia. This is a constant problem for cemetery staff, who use discretion in handling the matter.

Intake Cemetery, 1880: ML2, M; MLT, G; Mansfield Road, Sheffield 12

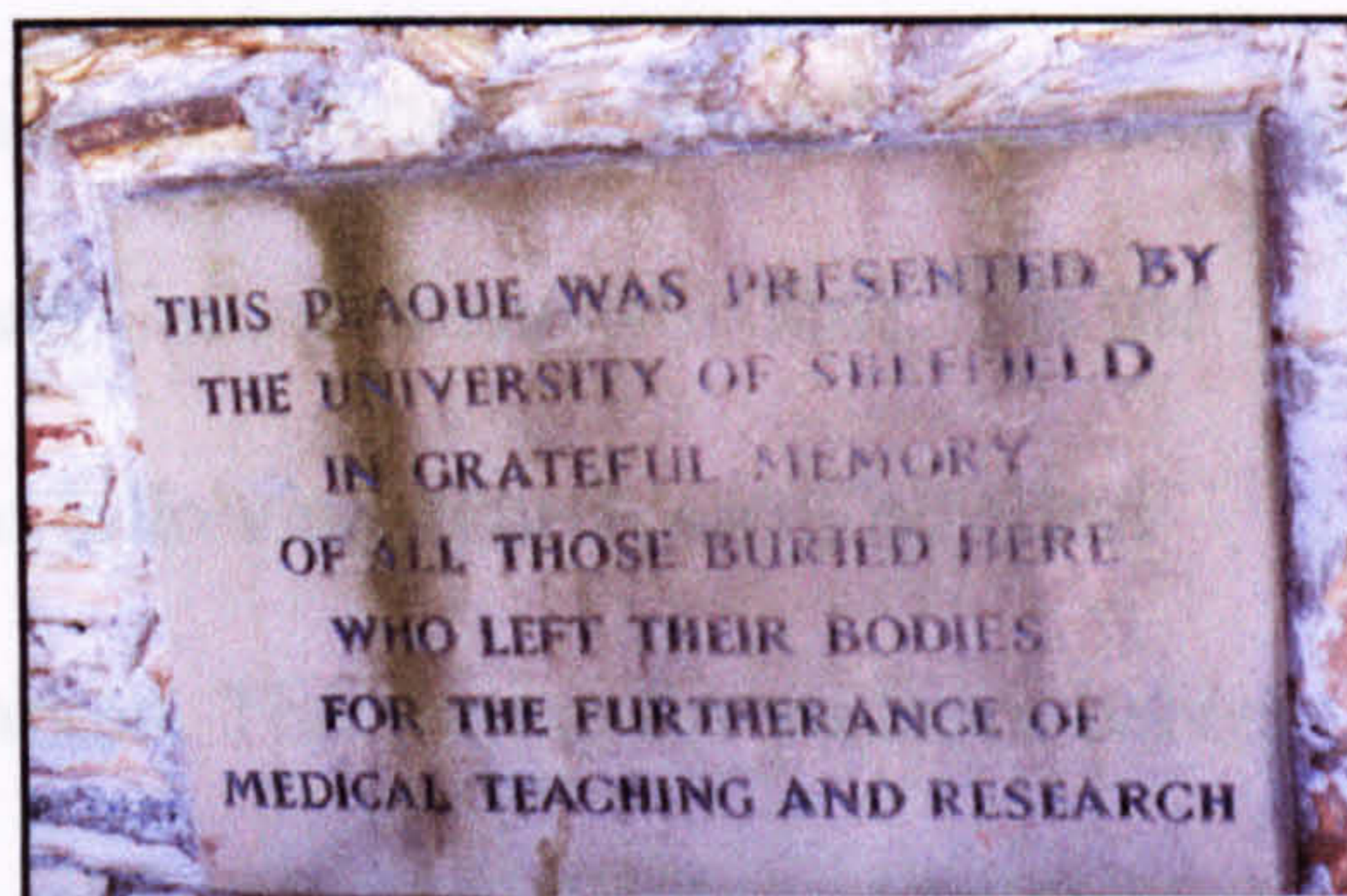
Intake is small and unremarkable. It is in a built-up area to the east of the city, and quite near to City Road Cemetery. The new graves section looks over the fields towards Handsworth. The most striking aspect of the cemetery is perhaps the adjacent Fidler Bros. Memorial Works, which has a large and eye-catching sign that rises over the cemetery. The cemetery is well-maintained, and vandalism kept in check.

Tinsley Park, 1882: Mix, G; Barleywood Road, Sheffield 9

Tinsley is situated on a rising site to the east of the city, and is set back off the Ring Road, a major dual carriageway: one of the main problems is that of access. The narrow side roadway that leads to the cemetery looks like the private entrance to one of the many industrial units that line the road. The entrance to the grounds is impressive, with a striking gateway between the linked chapels with their soaring spires. It is not a large site, but gives an impression of greater area when seen from the rear of the cemetery, from which one has an excellent view of industrial Sheffield over the spires of the chapels. The cemetery is a favoured burial ground for the city's Muslim community: their allocated section is to the rear of the grounds. The new Sheffield City Airport has its flight path over the cemetery, as depicted in Illustration 5.xiii. At a funeral in March, 1998, the burial party had been at the graveside for about ten minutes, when the 3.30pm flight took off, very noisily, and very low: straight over



the mourners. Local people knew what the noise was, but strangers ducked: a mishap at the graveside was narrowly avoided.<sup>9</sup> A wall plaque at the rear of the cemetery, adjacent to the section for Muslim burials, is dedicated to those who left their bodies for research.



#### ***10.iv Wall plaque at Tinsley Park Cemetery***

Handsworth, 1902: Mix, G; Orgreave Lane, Sheffield 13

To many, Orgreave is synonymous with the miners' strike of 1984-85 and the confrontation at the Orgreave coking plant.<sup>10</sup> The cemetery looks over both open countryside, and the Lower Don Valley, towards the motorway. Handsworth has an old section and a newer lawned area, where burials are now accommodated.

Crookes, 1910: Mix, G; Headland Road, Sheffield 10

Crookes is known as the Chinese cemetery. It is large, and abuts open land: both areas are used for canine exercise. Again, the views are attractive, extending over the open moorland to the northwest of the city.

Abbey Lane, 1916: ML2, M; MLT, G; S/O, G; Abbey Lane, Sheffield 8

This is one of the most well known of the active cemeteries of Sheffield. Although one third the size of City Road, it seems extensive. Visitors appreciate the car access that is available, for the graves are reached by a long drive that passes through the undeveloped part of the cemetery. A letter in the 'Sheffield Gazette', 1994 points to the need for seats on this drive.<sup>11</sup> The burial ground predates the Hutcliffe Wood



Crematorium and Garden of Remembrance, which effectively is on the same site. The grounds contain many interesting memorials, as well as many which have collapsed: it appears that the ground is not as stable as it might be.<sup>12</sup> It is tidy, and has minimal problems with vandalism. Abbey Lane has a large, allotted, Reform Jewish section, which has few graves, and sections for Roman Catholics and Muslims. It is the cemetery where re-interments are carried out following church and Cathedral graveyard clearances. These sites are not marked. The section for stillborn babies contains markers which are flush to the ground, although many have had little 'graves' built around the marker.

Ecclesfield, 1920: Mix, G; Priory Road, Sheffield 30

The Bereavement Services cemetery shares the same site as the churchyard extension. The grounds are carefully maintained: the lawned areas, with their roses, look just the same as any other cemetery in the city; however, the site is on the edge of open countryside and has a reputation for attractiveness.

Shiregreen, 1927, Mix, G; Shiregreen Lane, Sheffield 5

The most prominent memorial as one enters the cemetery is that of Leonard Hedley Burrows, first Bishop of Sheffield. Shiregreen also has a popular babies area, with windmills, tiny created graves and mementos. The section receives many visitors, and the graves are carefully maintained. The cemetery was the scene of an all night candle-lit vigil in October 1996, when families were campaigning for the right to place tributes and mementos on their graves. The situation was resolved, the families being told that a small section in front of the grave could be made into a garden, provided it was kept tidy.<sup>13</sup> Shiregreen receives its unfortunate share of vandalism. In June 1994 it was reported that a photograph of a coloured lady had been removed



from her grave. This was the only such photograph in the cemetery: a relative believes that it was a racist attack.<sup>14</sup>



**10.v Babies' graves at Shiregreen**

These are often tended on a daily basis.

Wisewood, 1934: Mix, G; Loxley Road, Sheffield 6.

This is a cemetery that enjoys some of the best views in the city, for it is centred in the lovely Loxley Valley. The site extends to the valley bottom and the sound of the river can be heard from the newly established Woodland Burial Ground. There are few trees in this field, as yet, but the burial ground is becoming better known: it looks like a hay field, with a few saplings scattered on it. However, the ground overlooks a Muslim section, which again contains few graves, but these have become overgrown with brambles. The sight is neither restful nor pleasing to visitors:<sup>15</sup> the grass around these overgrown sites is kept meticulously mown, adding to the contrast.

Stocksbridge, 1950: ML2, P; MLT, M; OS, G; Nanny Hill, Sheffield,

Stocksbridge is a dismal cemetery. There are many unkempt graves, and the building on the site appears to be used as a café for council workmen, as well as the site for a multitude of grass cutting equipment. The cemetery is not frequented by casual visitors, yet it is situated in open countryside, if one overlooks the steelworks, which the cemetery, in its turn, overlooks. A report, in 'The Star', March 1996, comments on:

- householders dumping rubbish near gravestones
- skips left unemptied so trash overflows
- 'kids' playing football around the headstones



- youths riding motorbikes around the graves
- drinkers dumping cans and bottles all over the site <sup>16</sup>

Beighton, 1967: ML2, M; MLT, M; School Lane, Sheffield 19

This is the most recent of Sheffield's cemeteries. It is small, but convenient for those who live on the edge of the city. Most plots are carefully tended, with fresh and colourful tributes. It is a tidy cemetery, with few overgrown plots. These have an established and dense coverage of brambles.

**Table 10.i**

**Sheffield - Attributes of Bereavement Services Cemeteries**

Cemetery	Date	Acres	New	Family Plot	Chapel	Relig.	Crem. Rem.	Colum.	Babies	Toilets
Darnall	1859	5		*						
Burngreave	1860	37		*						*
Norton	1868	6		*						*
Burncross	1877	7	*			C		*		*
Woodhouse	1879	7	*			C				*
City Road	1880	100	*		*	C	*	*	*	*
Intake	1880	12	*			C			*	*
Tinsley	1882	19	*		*	C, M			*	*
Handsworth	1901	8	*			C			*	*
Crookes	1910	29	*		*	C			*	*
Abbey Lane	1916	32	*		*	C, M, J	*		*	*
Ecclesfield	1920	5	*			C				*
Shiregreen	1927	33	*		*	C, M	*		*	*
Wisewood	1934	44	*			C, M			*	*
Stocksbridge	1950	18	*			C				
Beighton	1967	2	*			C				*

**Key:** New ..... lawn graves available  
 Family Plot ..... old family graves can be re-opened for interment if there is room  
 Chapel ..... the chapel is still used for services  
 Relig. .... sections allocated for specific faiths / denominations  
           C: Roman Catholic  
           M: Muslim  
           J: Jewish  
 Crem. Rem. .... graves available for cremated remains  
 Colum. .... columbarium available  
 Babies ..... dedicated section for babies graves and memorials

An addition cemetery is available to the north of the city: Bradfield's Birtin Cemetery.

The parish of Bradfield is within both the Diocese of Sheffield and the old Parish of Sheffield. Its specific burial facilities are provided by both the churchyard of St.

Nicholas, and by the Parish Council's Birtin Cemetery at Oughtibridge. The cemetery



is not just for the inhabitants of the civil parish: others may use it, but fees are then doubled. The rural cemetery overlooks Coumes Vale and Wharncliffe Craggs, and consists of three areas: the Old Cemetery, the Lawn Cemetery and the Garden of Remembrance; there are some rules on the dimensions of headstones and vases. Urns can be placed in niches in the walls of local stone; at the base of the walls, or beneath the lawn. The 'Shepley Blue' sandstone for the plaques of the niches is quarried locally, between the Flouch, Hazelhead, and Huddersfield: this source is nearly exhausted and the stonemason who provides the plaques is researching possible quarries for a replacement.<sup>17</sup> The Cemetery Keeper, who helps mourners choose a plot, is often asked 'if there's a good view from there'.<sup>18</sup>



*10.vi All facing the view*

#### 1.ii Religion: churchyard and cemetery

The burial facilities of Sheffield's Church of England churchyards have all but disappeared. As each churchyard is closed for burials, so the mourners turn elsewhere for burial facilities. There are several options open in Sheffield for those who want a churchyard burial:

- interment at All Saints, Ecclesall: if you are a parishioner, or can prove association
- St Nicholas, Bradfield, is still active for burials
- Ecclesfield churchyard extension is active for interment of cremated remains
- a family grave could be re-opened for ashes – unlikely in a closed churchyard
- the body could be cremated and the ashes interred or scattered in a designated area of a churchyard



The situation in the countryside is more favourable. A spokesman for the Diocese of Sheffield stated that:

‘There are lots of country churches where burial goes on, but not in Sheffield. Try Ecclesall or Fulwood.’<sup>19</sup>

All Saints, Ecclesall, has a churchyard of nine acres, which is open for burial. The legal ownership is vested in the Vicar, the Revd Dr. Peter Williams, who acts for the Bishop. Parishioners can be buried here, as can those who are on the electoral roll, or who have connections with the church and parish. The active area is lawned, and restrictions apply: kerbsets or glass containers are not allowed. A marker, or memorial, is subject to regulations: natural stone must be used, and the wording has to be dignified. Bob Chapman, with responsibility for the churchyard, stated that ‘questionable wording on a headstone crept in during the interregnum’, in August, 1988. The words: ‘Boy, could he sing’ are now considered inappropriate.<sup>20</sup> A family grave can be re-opened for interment of ashes or, if there is room, a coffin; ashes can be scattered. There is provision for brass kerb memorials in the scattering area. The lawned area is for headstones only, with perhaps provision for flowers on the memorial. Relatives are asked not to erect gardens in this area: lawn mowing arrangements are important for all, including the rights of others.<sup>21</sup> Ecclesall also has a scattering area, and burial plots for ashes. Christchurch, Fulwood, has space for the burial of ashes beneath a path, but here there can be no new graves, although graves can be re-opened for additional interments. On the northern boundary of Hallamshire, St. Nicholas, Bradfield, the site of the old chapel-of-ease within the parish of Ecclesfield, is still open for burials, although it is nearly full, and St Mary’s, Ecclesfield, is active for cremated remains. However, churchyard burial of a coffined body is now rare within the old parish of Sheffield. Given some green land, many



churches now set up a section as a scattering area, often specifically named, as is that at St. John's, Abbeydale: the 'Garden of Remembrance'.

Churches may have insufficient funds to maintain a disused churchyard, as it cannot generate an income. These churchyards become overgrown with weeds and brambles, causing distress to those with relatives buried there. They are also a concern to the local authority, which receives complaints about overgrown cemeteries, referring in fact to the overgrown burial grounds of St. Mary, Walkley, which is separate from the church, and Loxley United Reformed, where burials still take place in existing graves, and whose records are kept by John Fairest.<sup>22</sup>

The Roman Catholic cemetery of St Michael at Rivelin is active. The site is steep and funerals are difficult, as the terrain can be treacherous. The cemetery opened in 1863, and many religious are buried here. As the cemetery is private, funds for its upkeep must be raised by Catholics in Sheffield. The Catholic parish of St. Mary, High Green, has a small cemetery in which the little space left is kept for longstanding parishioners who have a particular attachment to the place.

The Jewish cemeteries are immaculate. The care and respect for the dead that is part of Jewish custom is reflected in the care that is taken over their cemeteries, even those that are disused. The early Jewish community opened a cemetery in Bowden Street in 1831. By 1870 this was full, and it was closed. The remains were reinterred at Ecclesfield Cemetery in 1975, and any Matzevahs, or gravestones, transferred as well. No trace remains of the Bowden Street ground, it being situated at the junction of Fitzwilliam Street and The Moor. There is a disused burial ground at Walkley, dating from 1884, near to the Roman Catholic Cemetery and the Church of England



Cemetery for St. Mary's Church, Walkley. The Catholic cemetery is a little overgrown, but the terrain excuses this; however, the Anglican cemetery is woodland and scrub, overgrown with tall Japanese knotweed, ivy and brambles. Most is quite impenetrable, but the section near the entrance is kept relatively clear; in the more accessible areas evergreen humps signify that there is a memorial stone under the foliage. In total contrast to these two burial grounds is that of the Jewish congregation. It is weed-free and all Matzevahs are upright. There is a delightful story of a local girl, who, after a traditionally flower-free Jewish funeral, would take a wreath from a Catholic grave and lay it, with a little prayer, on the grave of the Jew.<sup>23</sup> Again, the common belief that Jews are buried standing up is said to be reinforced in Sheffield by the geography of the Walkley cemetery: it is so steep that the memorials give the impression that they are packed closely together, only possible if the body is interred vertically. The old Jewish Cemetery at Ecclesfield was purchased in 1872; this is now closed, and a new cemetery opened opposite. Both Ecclesfield cemeteries are as immaculate as Walkley. The old cemetery is shielded from the road by a high concrete wall, but the gate in it is open for access. The new site includes a prayer hall, with a porch which has a small gap where it joins the main hall: this is so that the Cohens, hereditary priests, are not defiled by contact with a dead body. Again, a new section has been opened as a burial ground for the Cohens, so that they may remain separate. Grave markers are now flat: they cannot be pushed over, so deterring vandals.

The Unitarians have an active graveyard at Underbank, Stannington, where the church has a 250 year history. Here the ground is cheerfully maintained by the congregation,<sup>24</sup> and there are lawned burials and burials of cremated remains, with brass kerb plaques.



### 1.iii Disused burial grounds

There are two disused cemeteries within the area of the old Parish that are outside the scope of Sheffield Bereavement Services. Perhaps the most important historically is the General Cemetery.

#### General Cemetery, 1836-1963, Mix, ML2, P; OS, G; Cemetery Road, Sheffield 11

The founding company folded in 1963, and the cemetery came under the care of the city council in 1977. Large portions of it have been cleared for parkland, and it is now under the care of a charity, 'Friends of the General Cemetery'. Opened in 1836, it was one of the earliest of the burial grounds connected with the Cemeteries Movement. It was originally restricted to Nonconformist burials, with a chapel in the Egyptian style, but in 1850 it was expanded to include Church of England burials, and a chapel built in the high Gothic style: the two sections are divided by the 'Dissenters' Wall'. There are efforts to turn the Nonconformist chapel into a community resource: it is neglected and vandalised, but reclaimable. The Church of England chapel is ruined; there have been various plans for its potential use, one of which was student accommodation. The two sections are disparate in appearance. The Nonconformist is largely intact, though there is much damage, and there are fenced off areas. The Church of England section is mainly cleared, and is now parkland. The cemetery contains catacombs, which were never popular, only two ever being occupied. One contains the re-interred remains of a cleared churchyard, Brunswick Chapel, the other, the remains of hundreds of perinatal and neonatal deaths at Sheffield's maternity hospitals. The General Cemetery Company put a layer of gravestones over the roofing of the catacombs in the 1930's, adding to the collapse of the interior spaces. The cemetery



contains one incongruous note: a black 'granite' memorial, with gilt lettering, stands in front of a tree planted in a young man's memory.

The Friends of the cemetery cannot generate any income with which to conserve it, for it has been declared closed by the Sheffield General Cemetery Act, 1979: there can be no interment of ashes or urns, as was once hoped. However, lottery money may yet provide funds. The Friends now have a website:

[www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/](http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/)

The second disused ground is an old graveyard: Wardsend.

Wardsend, 1857-1950, graveyard to St. Philip's, W/S, P; Club Mill Road, Sheffield 6

This graveyard was established as an overflow site for St. Philip's church, one of the 'Million Act' churches, during the time of the vicarage of John Livesey. Odom notes:

'When S. Philip's was constituted a parish in 1848 it was in population and area one of the largest in Sheffield, covering a space of 840 acres. ... In June, 1857, Mr. Livesey, anticipating the closing of S. Philip's Churchyard, which took place the same month, conveyed five acres of ground at Wardsend to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for a new burial ground, which was enclosed and a lodge and Chapel erected.'<sup>25</sup>

The graveyard is set on steep slopes looking down on Owlerton and Hillsborough; the flat land in Sheffield was valuable for industry. It is woodland and scrub, most graves being inaccessible. The Hillsborough Trust is involved in a five-year project of conservation regarding the site, starting in 1995. Initial plans included new paths and disabled access. The burial ground is set high off the approach roadway, which is unpaved, and a route for construction vehicles. The drive that accessed the graveyard still has the original sandstone pillars guarding an entrance that is now blocked by massive stones. They are placed here to prevent vehicular access to this secluded and unlit site. The graveyard is of interest to local historians, and official 'walks' are



organised. All the graves have been catalogued; at one time up to 1000 bodies per year were interred here, some associated with the Sheffield flood.

There are three old burial grounds in the area of the old Parish of Sheffield that fall within the care of Sheffield. Here, the land is maintained, and grass cut: vandalised or collapsed memorials are left unless they are a danger.

Attercliffe Old Burial Ground, 1859: SO; Attercliffe Road, Sheffield 9

This is to the rear of the old Attercliffe churchyard, which has largely been cleared.

The site is between the industrialised Lower Don Valley, and the Don Valley Stadium; it leads to the Five Weirs Walk, sponsored by Darnall cum Attercliffe Parish. The burial ground has been cleared of most kerbsets, and the blackened sandstone monuments lean precariously. It is a quiet place.

Handsworth Old Burial Ground, 1875: Mix, M, Handsworth Road, Sheffield 13

Again, this burial ground is next to a churchyard: St. Mary's. However, this church is thriving, even though its churchyard is closed, except for the scattering of ashes.

Sections of the old burial ground are very overgrown; where the graves have been cleared of kerbsets, the grass appears to be cared for. There are few impressive monuments; most are pattern book material.

Woodhouse Old Burial Ground, 1875: OS, M; Beaver Hill Road, Sheffield 13

This is small, and largely cleared. There are few memorials left, and these are flush with the ground with a couple of solid, squat exceptions. The site is an open space and easily accessible; it is used as a short cut and is unpleasantly littered. It is a favoured nightly meeting place for teenagers.



## 2.i Crematoria

There are now three crematoria in Sheffield, the most recent is privately owned by B&C Funeral Services, as noted in Chapter Seven, 1.i. The remaining two are administered by Sheffield Bereavement Services; the attributes noted in Saunders, 1992,<sup>26</sup> are still relevant, although City Road Crematorium has new, environmentally friendly cremators that do not shudder when handling a large body, and Hutcliffe Wood had a £400,000 refit in 1993. The efficiency of the cremators is dependent upon the materials put into them: funeral directors are charged with complying with regulations. Following new emission regulations, in 1997 publicity was given to the objects that should not be put into a coffin for a cremation:<sup>27</sup>

- alcohol
- records
- tins of paint
- crash helmets
- leather jackets
- coconuts – Hindu cremations
- telephone directories – for the deceased to ring their loved ones
- football shirts
- teddy bears

Whilst the buildings and grounds have changed little since 1992, a change has been noticed in the practices of the Bereavement Services. Those who wish to arrange a cremation without using a funeral director are helped: as with burials, information packs are handed out containing the necessary facts that will enable such a cremation to proceed. Open days are held in many crematoria around the country, and Sheffield is no exception.<sup>28</sup> At an open day in 1994, feedback from a visitor echoed comments many have made:

‘The shape of the urns means that it is like being handed a vacuum flask and it loses its reverence.’<sup>29</sup>



## 2.ii Ashes, urns and plaques

There were a total of 58 respondents for the cremation section of this study: of these, only 19% were selected at random, as sites of scatterings seldom attract mourners: those approached were tending the plots for cremated remains. Tributes are often seen near the brass kerb plaques; however, none were seen being placed. Most of the respondents in the category of cremation practices were interviewed by arrangement.

After a cremation, the chief mourner, who usually owns the ashes, has the task of deciding what is to happen to them. Easily the most popular choice for the respondents in the Sheffield study was to leave them for scattering at the crematorium. With this method, no container need be purchased. If that decision has not been made, the ashes are kept until collection, although some are simply left at the crematorium. Sheffield's City Road and Hutcliffe Wood crematoria have store rooms for the ashes that no one seems to want. The shelves are tightly packed with the bronze plastic jars that so many decry. However, some may yet be claimed: the ashes of Michael Redgrave, actor, lay for eight years in a London crematorium until publicity prompted the family to claim them. They now rest at St Paul's, Covent Garden, the actors' church.<sup>30</sup> The ownership of ashes is sometimes disputed: the ashes of Michael Hutchence, singer, were split three ways after family arguments over their ownership: Paula Yates, his girlfriend, was to have the disposal of one third.<sup>31</sup>

Depending on the size of a body, the ashes might weigh about six pounds or be negligible: parents who suggest cremation when faced with the death of a premature or tiny baby are warned that there may be no residual ashes. For the average adult, it is perfectly feasible to divide ashes so that they be distributed in a number of ways. A Netherlands cremation company is marketing medallions in the form of hearts,



crosses and tiny urns; crystal paper weights and glass bell jar ornaments, all designed to hold a portion of ashes, so that they may be divided amongst family members.<sup>32</sup>

Containers for the ashes of babies and small children are the size of a small vase: about 250cc capacity. The standard size of plastic container is indeed shaped rather like a coffee jar, but is twice the size. More attractive containers can be purchased from the crematorium, and a variety of shapes and materials are offered:

- ceramic urns - for burials and keepsakes
- biodegradable urns - cardboard - for burial
- scattering urns
- pouring jars
- alabaster containers
- wooden caskets

Having selected an appropriate container for ashes, the mourner next has to decide what is to happen to them. The ultimate destination of ashes is a perennial storyline for the features section of any publication: one reads reports that tell of the bizarre, the vengeful and the sentimental, in the methods and practices in ashes disposal:

- the ashes of an MP for Cheltenham dropped over the town<sup>33</sup>
- a parachutist, killed in a fall, completed his final jump by being scattered from 14,000ft. during a free-fall jump<sup>34</sup>
- a portion of the ashes of a planetary geologist sent to the moon<sup>35</sup>
- ashes mixed with oil-based colours to be used in a painting, then sold back to family<sup>36</sup>
- scattering ashes of an adulterous partner in a hated town<sup>37</sup>
- ashes launched into sky during a firework party<sup>38</sup>
- ashes to be contested by the cricket teams of rival public houses<sup>39</sup>
- ashes placed in the driver's seat and buried with a beloved white Corvette<sup>40</sup>

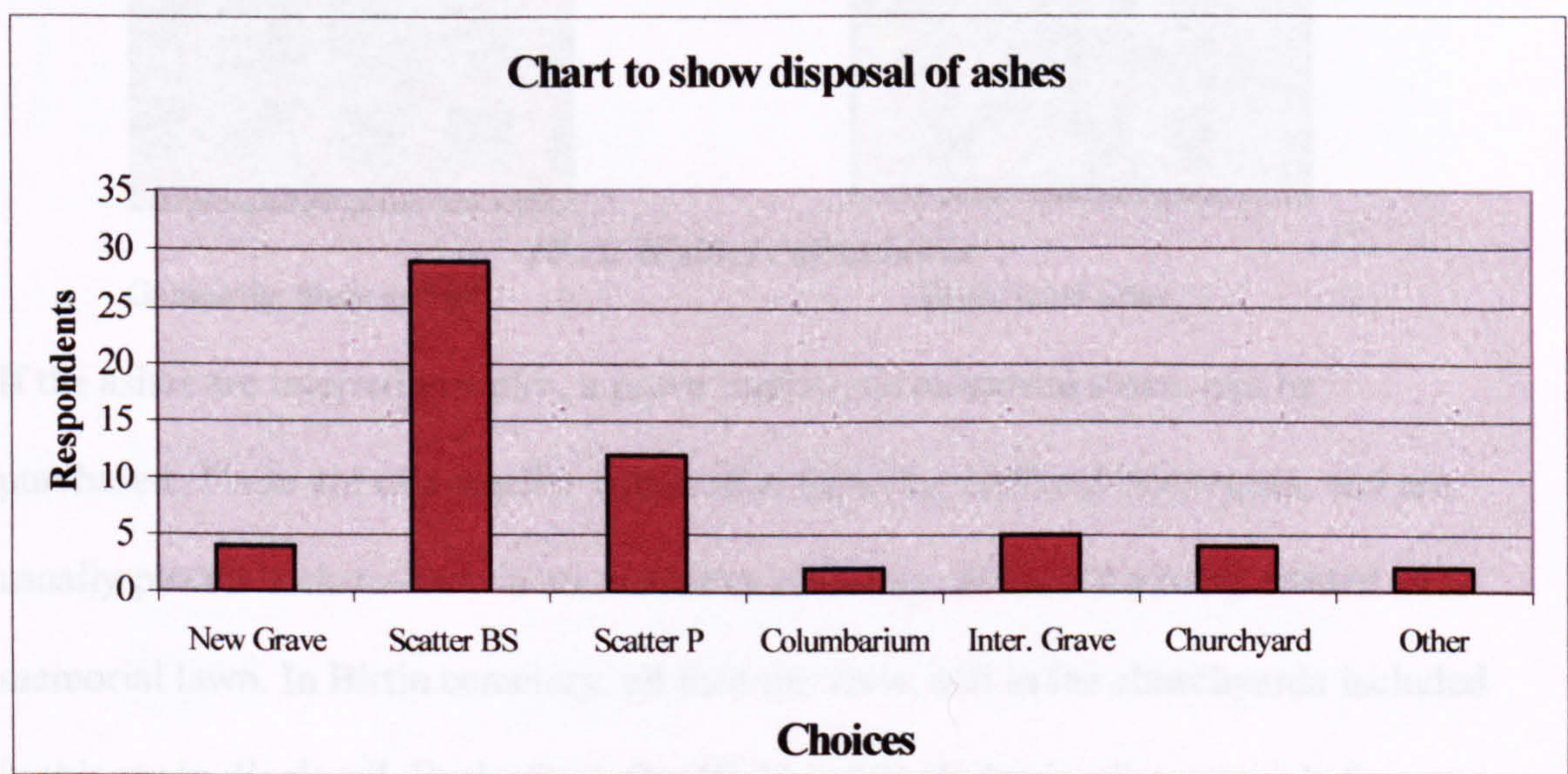
and, in Sheffield:

- a tiny portion of a competitive cyclist's ashes taped to his friend's bicycle so that he continues to compete in mountain bike events<sup>41</sup>
- at Hillsborough and Bramall Lane: the turf is first removed, then replaced<sup>42</sup>
- murdered postman David Hird's ashes scattered around an apple tree and a holly bush in his garden<sup>43</sup>



Given that most respondents chose to have ashes scattered by crematoria staff, the next most popular choice was for them to be scattered privately: garden; seaside; moors; somewhere that was pertinent. Other choices were: interment in a new grave; interment in a family plot; churchyard interment; placing in a columbarium or wall niche; and a category of other: 'They're on the mantelpiece', and 'I've got them somewhere.'

**Chart 10.iii**



**Key:** New Grave: a plot for cremated remains purchased  
 Scatter BS ashes scattered by Bereavement Services  
 Scatter P ashes scattered privately/ by mourner  
 Columbarium ashes placed in columbarium or walled niche  
 Inter. Grave ashes interred in existing grave  
 Churchyard ashes interred in churchyard grass or flower border  
 Other mantelpiece; 'somewhere'

After a cremation, and the decision regarding ash disposal, many mourners need to have some form of permanent memorial. Sheffield's Bereavement Services crematoria sell brass kerb memorial plaques that are placed around the edges of the paths of scattering grounds, such as those at Hutcliffe Wood 'Garden of Remembrance', and the scattering grounds at Ecclesall Church. They are also used in a section fronting the grassed area for the burial of cremated remains at Underbank, Stannington. Grenoside Crematorium sells plaques for placing by trees; in the rose



garden; by the fountain or on a wall: portraits can be engraved on these plaques. If the ashes are to be placed in a columbaria, these niches are sold, together with the plaque that covers the niche. The style of these columbaria niche plaques vary: those at Grenoside are slate, with gold or silver lettering, so that they can be clearly seen. Those at Birtin Cemetery, Bradfield Parish Council's immaculate burial ground, are barely noticeable, merely letters carved in the sandstone.



Grenoside: black and gilt



Birtin: local stone

#### *10.vii Walled columbaria*

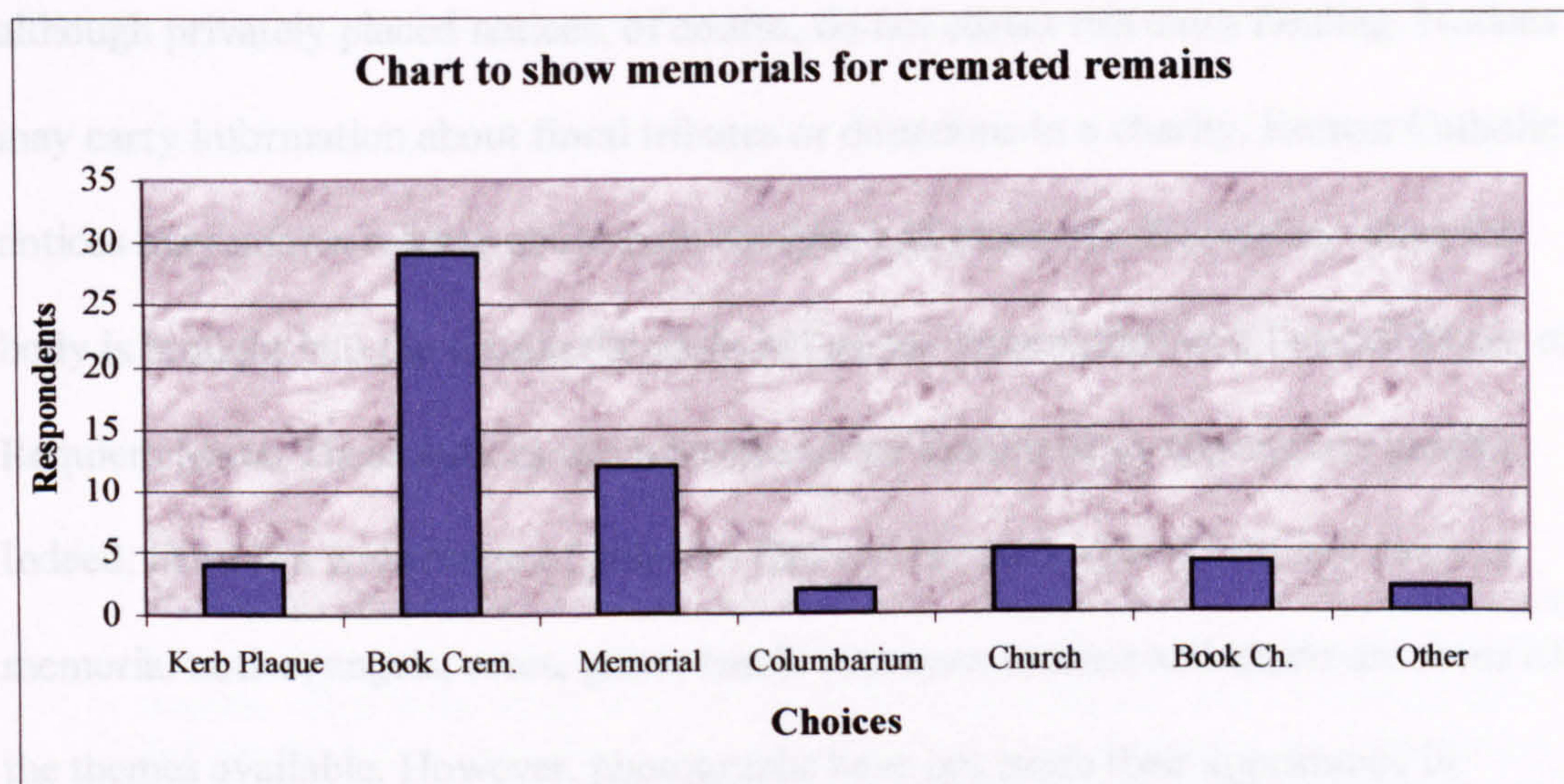
If the ashes are interred in a plot, a grave marker, or memorial stone, can be purchased. These are of a smaller height than those for coffined interments, and are usually placed back-to-back in an Authority cemetery, the section being treated as a memorial lawn. In Birtin cemetery, all face the view, and in the churchyards included in this study, Ecclesall, Ecclesfield, Bradfield and Underbank, all memorials face one way.

If ashes are scattered, an appropriate form of memorial is often wanted. In addition to the use of plaques, names can be entered in Books of Remembrance at crematoria and churches, and gifts made. Churches can be in receipt of both costly communion plate or simple handturned candlesticks. The choir lights at St. John's, Abbeydale, are there in memory of a past chorister: the choir can now see the music they are supposed to sing.



Of the 58 respondents in the cremation section of this study, 49 had chosen a specific memorial. The church gifts were noted at St John the Evangelist, Abbeydale, All Saint's, Ecclesall, St. Matthews, Carver Street, and Sheffield Cathedral.

**Chart 10.iv**



**Key:** Kerb plaque: a rectangular brass memorial plate  
 Book Crem. entry in the Book of Remembrance at a crematorium  
 Memorial a marker, or gravestone  
 Columbarium these have associated plaques  
 Church a gift or dedication: chasuble, lights, linen, plate, statue  
 Book Ch. entry in the Book of Remembrance at a church  
 Other bench, tree

### 3.i Obituary Notices

After a death, most mourners arranging a funeral are asked by their funeral director if they would like an obituary notice placed. It is a common practice, for it is the means whereby those outside the immediate family find out about the death, and about any funeral arrangements. The local newspaper, 'The Star', is a first choice, for a notice here informs the local community, and it has the mixed reputation of informal friendliness and traditional formality. If a national newspaper is purchased regularly, then a notice is likely to be placed here as well. Indeed some notices are placed in a minimum of four ways: locally, 'The Star'; in the county, 'The Yorkshire Post'; and nationally, 'The Daily Telegraph' and 'The Times'. Notices in 'The Star' still bear



little relation to those in 'The Daily Telegraph', as noted by Saunders, 1992.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, there has been no apparent change in the general style and presentation of notices in either paper. 'The Star' still publishes notices in a variety of styles: formal, multiple notices and verses; for each notice they place, funeral directors receive commission, although privately placed notices, of course, do not attract this extra funding. Notices may carry information about floral tributes or donations to a charity. Roman Catholic notices may inform readers about both the time and place of a Reception, when the body is brought into the church the night before the funeral, and of a Funeral Mass, or Requiem Mass. These notices can have the added feature of an appropriate graphic. Indeed, there is a wide range of graphics that can be incorporated into any death or memorial notice; angels, roses, gates, hands in prayer, crosses and hearts are some of the themes available. However, photographs have not made their appearance in Obituary Notices, as Saunders, 1992, suggested.<sup>45</sup>

Granda, I will always love you,  
Remember me please do.  
And I am so glad,  
Now remembering all the fun times we had,  
Don't ever forget me,  
And go to Heaven peacefully  
  
An acrostic poem called GRANDA

The above obituary poem, published in 'The Star', is the work of a 13 year old.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.ii Tributes

Flowers are used at a death as a way of expressing grief, sympathy and respect: acknowledging the passing of someone whose life had a particular relevance. The custom of placing flowers, noted in Chapter Three, 3.ii, of this study, is a recognised way of managing the emotions that are prompted by death. The scene at the main gates of the Sheffield Wednesday stadium, following the Hillsborough disaster in



April 1989, illustrated that a quite recent custom had developed an independent purpose and a relevance of its own. The stark tragedy prompted actions that were reflected and magnified at Anfield. During the following week, one million people are said to have visited Anfield to lay flowers on the pitch.<sup>47</sup> In Sheffield, the Hillsborough gates were a mass of red and white, and blue and white, as the football scarves and shirts and rosettes of Liverpool and Wednesday, the team who play at the stadium, were woven into a moving pattern with the flowers, cards and messages of those who had a need for action. Many such tragedies now attract these tributes. As Byron Rogers wrote in the 'Sunday Telegraph', in 1995:<sup>48</sup>

'I never did find out what the wreaths were on a roundabout near Northampton. There is a custom now that when the young die in road accidents their contemporaries put wreaths, often in the shape of motor-cycle helmets, at the site, and I wondered who had put these there and why. I also wondered *how* they had done it, for I circled the roundabout on many occasions before I acknowledged I would never be able to cross. For months after that I watched the wreaths fall apart in the rain on this no man's land.'

The number of tributes does not reflect the extent of grief; rather it reflects how many are affected. The tributes that lined the road at the entrance to Dunblane school were placed there because the extent of the horror affected so many. The custom was recognised by Princess Anne, who first laid her offering of snowdrops with the mass of tributes at the school gates, before being escorted into the school to meet with those affected by the tragedy. All public mourners are expected to behave in a publicly acceptable way, just as the family of Diana, Princess of Wales, laid their own tributes at the gates of Buckingham Palace.

The roadsides of Sheffield are as accustomed to the small collection of flowers that are placed by the roadside, following a traffic accident, as are those in any other town. The flowers are left until they fade, then one morning they are gone. Monger comments, in *Folklore*, in 1997, before the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, that



'these personal remembrances appear to be fairly recent, becoming more and more common in the last fifteen or so years.' However, he lists several early examples of crosses, of varying materials, being set up at the place of fatality, dating from as early as 1896. He states that the tributes one now sees at the site of a particularly high-profile tragedy are placed as a form of remembrance and respect: a cathartic act; there is a 'purging of horror, an act of remembrance and solidarity, and a stranger's support for the bereaved.'<sup>49</sup> A crash by the banks of the Ladybower reservoir, that killed four people in May 1995, was marked by tributes elaborately tied to the fences nearby.<sup>50</sup> Bunches of flowers were left on the kerbside on Fraser Crescent, at the scene of the murder of postman David Hird, on November 16, 1993.<sup>51</sup> Anniversaries are recognised in this way, but usually with just one or two tributes. Ringinglow Road has a few sprays of flowers fixed to a high wall near the Norfolk Arms public house every year. They are left alone. Again, a permanent memorial flower trough is sited outside a sports ground on the Hathersage Road, commemorating two young men. It is planted with bulbs and small perennials. Fresh flowers are also placed beside it. Monger also notes that some markers can become permanent.<sup>52</sup>



*10.viii A permanent memorial on a verge*



'Tributes' is the formal name given to the flowers at a funeral, often referred to as 'floral tributes'. As noted in Chapter Seven, 3.i, flowers can be organised by a funeral director, and indeed, many mourners find this a simple solution at a difficult time. Current trends have been for an increasing number of obituary notice to state 'family flowers only but donations to ...'. However, funeral directors usually put all tributes that arrive at their premises with a funeral; they usually have no intimate knowledge of 'family'. Flowers delivered to a crematorium are passed to the funeral director; most florists will provide funeral tributes. Immediately after a funeral the tributes are placed at the side of the pathway for mourners to see as they leave the chapel. They are then transferred, and displayed at each crematorium in a specific section of the designated area. Grenoside has portable, green, cast iron notice stands, which carry the name of any funeral. Tributes at Hutcliffe Wood and City Road are displayed in the section allotted for a particular day. It is a common practice for mourners to visit these displays during the week after the funeral, as part of a grieving pattern, little notice being taken at the time of the service. Tributes for burials are generally delivered to the funeral directors, although they can be sent to the house by those close to the family. It is noticeable that burials attract the more complex wreaths, particularly the specialist styles and themed tributes that are pertinent to a person. Tributes at cremations are still predominantly sheaves, although there is an increasing trend for the specialist designs to be ordered for these funerals as well. Styles of tributes may have specific labels: <sup>53</sup>

- named tributes: Grandma ... Mum ... Dad
- themed tribute: football, anchor, teddy, heart
- cushion tribute: looks just like a padded cushion
- coffin cover: cover the coffin totally – level design
- stem end spray: to be placed at the end of the coffin, stems are exposed
- open wreath: a large floral 'Polo'
- double end spray: similar to the coffin cover, but raised in the centre
- traditional crosses, posies and sprays.



An SCI feature is the 'Floral Sympathy Collection': flowers to take home to the bereaved, or perhaps to send to the house: baskets, posies, sheaves and simpler sprays. However, the sending of flowers to the home as a sympathy tribute is not a recent American import; the custom has been noted in Sheffield since before SCI arrived.<sup>54</sup> The aftermath of a funeral once saw the custom of flowers from a cremation being sent to hospitals, nursing homes and hospices. Mourners are now discouraged from doing this; a letter to 'The Star', in January 1994, commented:

'Why do people send flowers from a funeral to hospitals? The patients, knowing where they come from, don't want them and the staff have enough to do without tending dying flowers. ...'<sup>55</sup>

### 3.iii Monuments and memorials

Memorials of the dead can take many forms. They can be the marker, or headstone on a grave or burial plot; a brass plaque on the edge of a kerb; a tree, seat or fountain. A chair can be endowed, a bursary established, a bench placed in a park. A memorial service can be held, which may adopt a variety of styles, or a round of drinks be set up in a public house. The term used for the trade of memorial mason, in Sheffield's 'Yellow Pages', is Monumental Mason; the craftsman who makes the stone plaques for Birtin Cemetery is a stonemason. There are five firms in Sheffield which make/provide memorials: Fidler Bros., Intake; Paramore & Sons, Abbey Lane; James Linley & Son, Wadsley; K's Memorials, City Road, and Hopkinson Memorials, City Road. The latter advertise that they design memorials; their design work is principally that of graphic design, although they show an example of design shape in their Staveley showrooms. This is of a 'broken heart': a heart shaped granite memorial with a cut carved from the centre. They use different granites, marble and stone. However, the shapes offered are conventional; artistic memorials of an imaginative nature are



difficult to obtain. All funeral directors offer their own, profitable range, although John Heath will organise a special ‘artistic’ memorial if a suitable source is identified. The firm, ‘Memorials by Artists’, based at Saxmundham,<sup>56</sup> is one such source of aesthetic modern designs: Sheffield’s cemeteries are bare of such works. *The Churchyards Handbook*<sup>57</sup> contains a chapter devoted to commissioning a new memorial. One suggestion here is that mourners should investigate the Crafts Council.



#### **10.ix Headstones commissioned through Memorials by Artists**

As noted in Chapter Three, 3.i of this study, there are specific churchyard rules that apply to the Diocese of Sheffield: Rules in respect of Churchyards, made by the Chancellor of the Diocese of Sheffield, 12 January, 1994. The Diocesan Churchyards Advisor is Revd Martin Baldock, of Christ Church, Brampton. Such advice includes:

‘Faculties are normally required for any work undertaken in churches or churchyards. This includes alterations to their lay-out, the re-siting or levelling of gravestones, the making of new paths, changing boundaries, and, most frequently, the introduction of

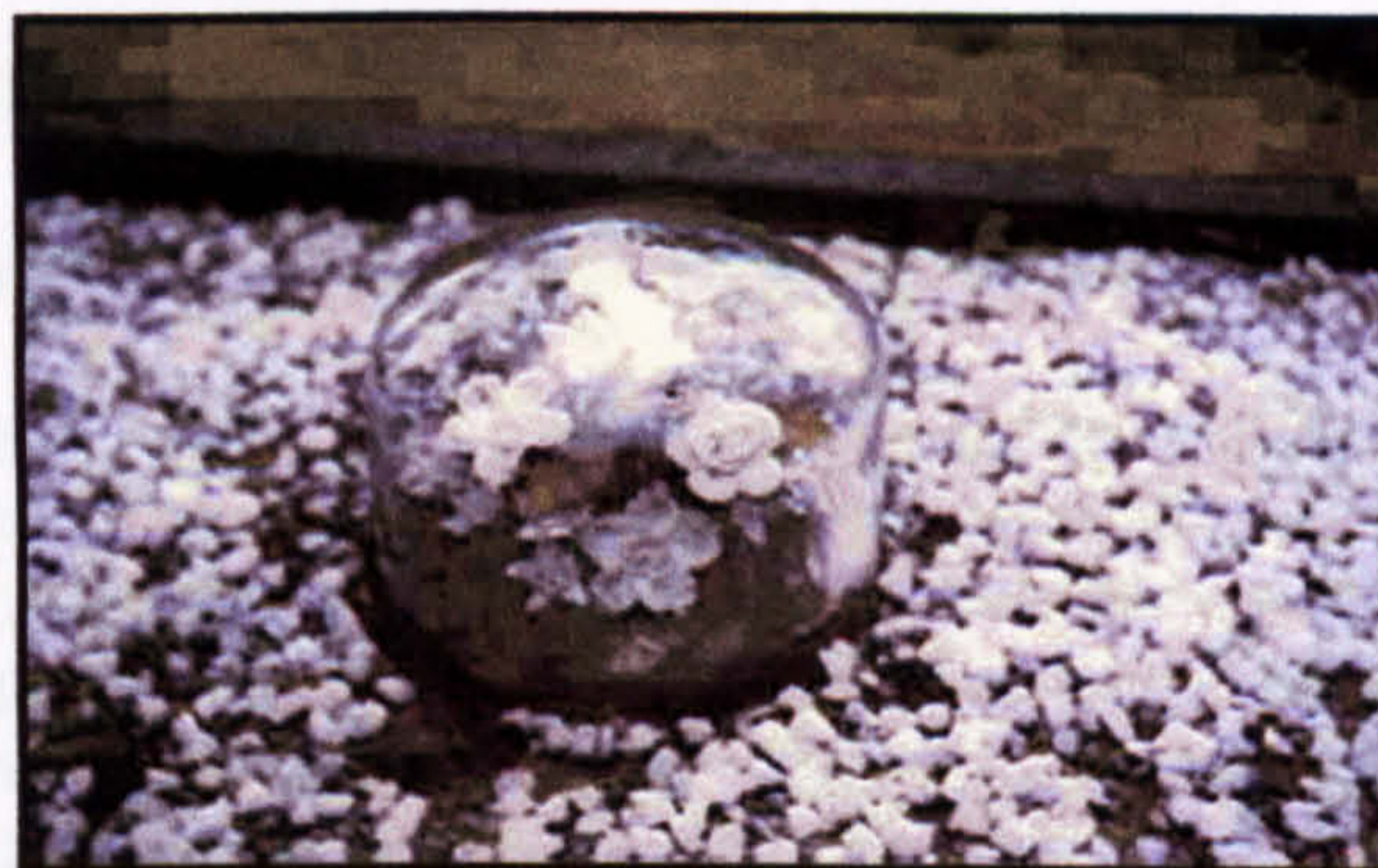


memorials to commemorate the departed. ... It is important and [sic] those requesting an interment be made aware that there are rules which have to be followed if and when it comes to introducing a memorial; and these are not the same as apply in public cemeteries. .. The Chancellor of the Diocese has given delegated authority to incumbents permitting them to allow simple headstones which fall within the churchyard Rules. .. If a proposed memorial falls outside the scope of the Rules, the applicant may still petition for a faculty. Where an applicant wishes to erect a memorial which differs from the normal standards indicated in the Rules, but which appears to be a good design, the incumbent should encourage the proposal to be sent forward.<sup>58</sup>

Rules govern dimensions: a memorial must fall within a given range. Memorials must be of natural stone and only partly polished, or of hardwood: those in the shape of a heart or book are not permitted, nor are chippings or the glass shades that cover a waxen arrangement, noted by Saunders, 1992, at Strata Florida Abbey, Cardiganshire.<sup>59</sup>

***10.x Glass shade and wax tribute, Strata Florida Abbey, Wales***

These are not permitted in the Diocese of Sheffield, except by faculty, nor are the stone chippings that cover the grave.



Stones should be similar to those used in local buildings. White marble, synthetic stone or plastic are not permitted. Black, dark grey, blue or red granites are discouraged, and not permitted where they are not already common in the churchyard. Photographs or porcelain portraits are not permitted. Kerbstones are not permitted without a faculty, unless they are already common in an area, or where they would have no adverse effect on maintenance. In *The Churchyards Handbook*, a section on the advice that mourners should be given reads:

‘ ... a chief mourner should be handed, at the time of the funeral, a clear and kindly memorandum setting out the considerations which apply: that the churchyard is public, not a private place, and all that is erected in it must show good manners in its



context and to its neighbourhood; that its maintenance is a common responsibility, and should not be made more difficult by e.g. curbstones [sic]; that it is the setting for a living place of worship, and beauty and harmony and grace are important attributes for a churchyard.’<sup>60</sup>

Polished black granite is permitted in Ecclesall churchyard, as the active section is too far from the church for the choice of stone to matter. However, there are still to be no hearts, photographs or portraits.

A memorial service is one that is held after a private or family funeral so that those who wish to pay their respects to the deceased can do so. The famous, great, loved or respected are honoured in this way. Of these, the Catholic journalist Peregrine Worsthorne wrote on the behaviour of the congregation at Anglican memorial services and the clergy involved, noting the behaviour of those in front of him who chose to sit, rather than kneel, giving him:-

‘no choice but to bury my nose in their hair, or at any rate breathe hard down their necks ... it is not a position ideally suited to induce prayerfulness or contemplation. ... I notice that they did not say the Lord’s Prayer or to sing even the best known hymns. ... may I put in a plea for the use of the pulpit. ... the clergymen taking the services stood at a lectern placed either at the centre of the altar rail or at one side of it – ie, on the same level as the congregation. As a result, neither prayers nor encomiums were audible. Presumably this reluctance to ascend the pulpit has something to do with the current Anglican pursuit of matiness – another variation on bishops wanting to be known as Bill or Ron.’<sup>61</sup>

The Bishop of Sheffield is known as Bishop Jack: ‘I’m happy to be called Jack and people who feel uncomfortable with Jack can call me Bishop Jack. .. I wouldn’t answer to “My Lord”.’<sup>62</sup> The Bishop’s surname is Nicholls, a fact that few practising Anglicans can remember. The Quaker ritual of a Memorial Meeting for worship, to give thanks for the Grace of God, is centred on worship and remembrance. After such a Meeting in 1997, a booklet was produced for all, which included transcriptions of some of the spoken contributions made by those present at this Meeting. The booklet includes a copy of the signatures of those present, which extends to two A4 sized pages.



**Memorial Meeting for Worship to give  
thanks for the Grace of God, revealed  
in the life of our Friend David Brayshaw.  
Saturday 7th June 1997**

Nick Dawson  
 Mavis Trevor Barnes  
 Jay D. Linn  
 Tony Norr  
 Tim Bagshaw  
 Mary Kenyon  
 Lisa Jason  
 Patrick Harrison  
 Elizabeth Draper  
 Jean McKay  
 Joe Woodhouse  
 Margaret Thompson  
 July A. Woodcock  
 Andrew  
 Green Balon  
 Kenneth D. Wood  
 Sir Hugh Nash  
 Gary Jones  
 Geoff & Kate King  
 Owen Constance  
 Margaret Lawson

Thames, Bradford,  
 Sheffield.  
 ---  
 Wombell Hall, Duxton  
 Sheffield  
 "  
 "  
 Sheffield Talking News  
 "  
 "  
 SVCF  
 Sheffield.  
 The Northern Post  
 38 Ryefield Gardens S11 9UD

7/6/97  
 4.6.97  
 2.6.97  
 Lyndie Sugarmen  
 Margaret Bayes  
 Phyllis Blanton  
 Sheila Starbuck  
 Keith James  
 Janet Wood  
 Liam James  
 Robin L. Hudson  
 Goodhue Hudson  
 Alfred Jowett  
 Margaret Jowett  
 Phil & Steve Chadderton  
 Diana Woodhead  
 David Woodhead  
 Douglas Smith  
 Jennifer Lee  
 Bill & Les Lee  
 Frances Claxton

Manchester meeting -  
 Sunday evening  
 at Broadley Keaton  
 Ludwick Park, Huddersfield, Rotham  
 53 Rotherham Rd, Doncaster.  
 12 Westgate, Southwell NG25 5ST  
 27 Stone Delf, Sheffield S10 3PX  
 Albion Crescent, Lincoln  
 1 Chorley St Sheffield.  
 31 High Cliff Ave. - -  
 4, Ramon Crescent S.10.  
 28 Larkbury Ave.  
 245. Weston Rd. S10

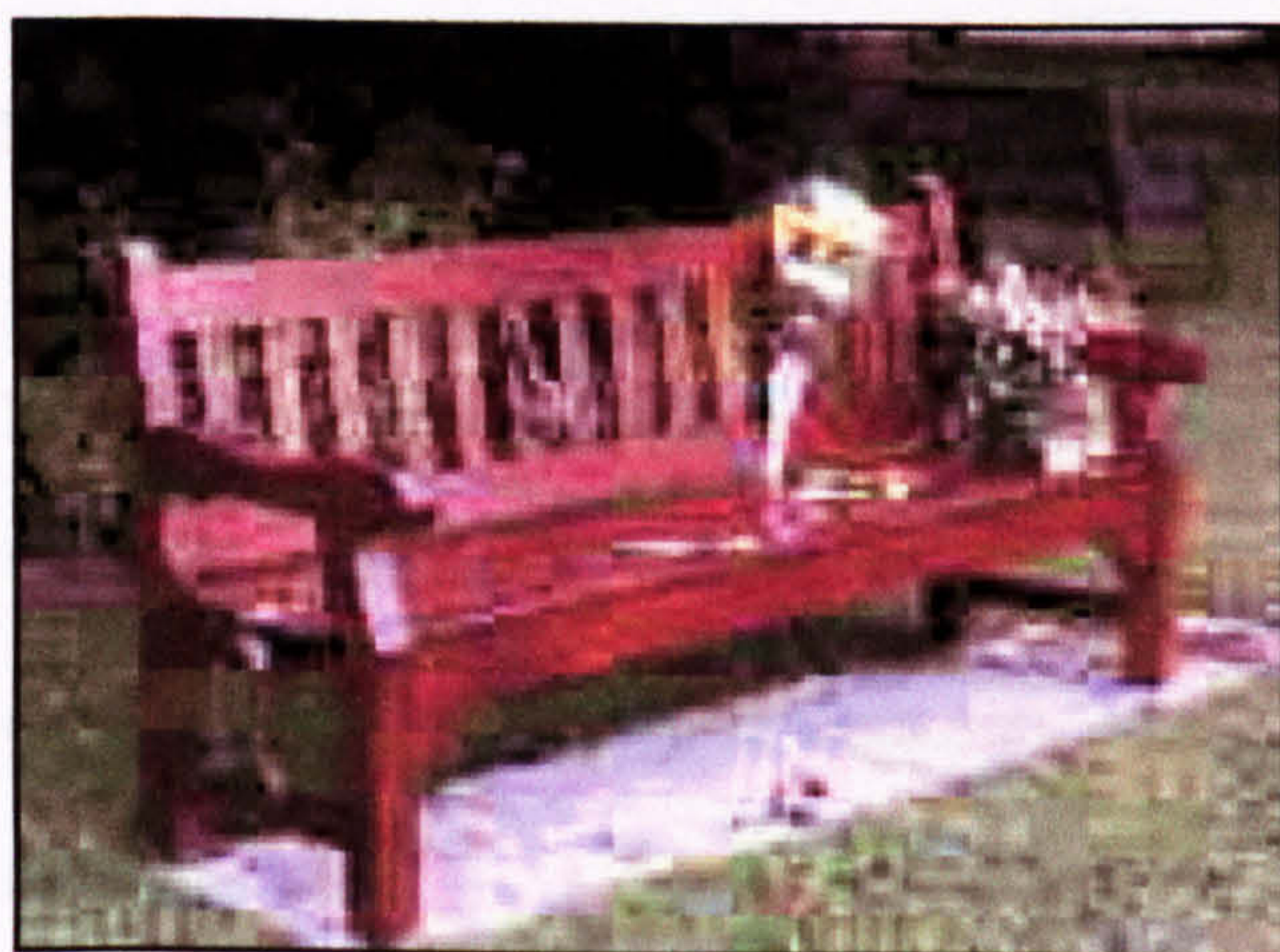
10.xi A copy of signed memorial pages: Friends Meeting House, Sheffield



As a provincial city, Sheffield does not attract the great occasions that take place in the capital; occasions that can be joyful, sad, humorous or celebratory. Of these, Veronica Lee writes, in the 'Sunday Telegraph',

'The stars will attend in droves. There will be nice tunes, fine words, an audience composed of show business's greats and a smattering of critics. ... as we have become more secular in our habits, so has the social, rather than religious, function of memorial services grown ... Funerals are increasingly family-only affairs and the growing popularity of memorial services reflects not just this, but also a very British social awkwardness about bereavement.'<sup>63</sup>

Sheffield's memorials are likely to take the form of an action: the public planting of a tree to remember the life of a teenager killed in a park;<sup>64</sup> a gathering around a pauper's grave one year after a tragic death;<sup>65</sup> the creation of a drama studio in a school to celebrate the memory of Marti Caine.<sup>66</sup> The patch of grass halfway down Carterknowle Road, by the Cherrytree Public House, a place where local youths gather, now has a sturdy bench which is the focal point for such gatherings. It carries a plaque in memory of a youth who died in a cliff fall in 1996.<sup>67</sup> There are many such memorials around the city. Another is in Ecclesall woods, near the entrance on Dobcroft Road. This regularly carries simple floral tributes: a Christmas wreath, a rose on an anniversary, flowers at Easter. They are never damaged; however, their presence deters visitors from using the bench.



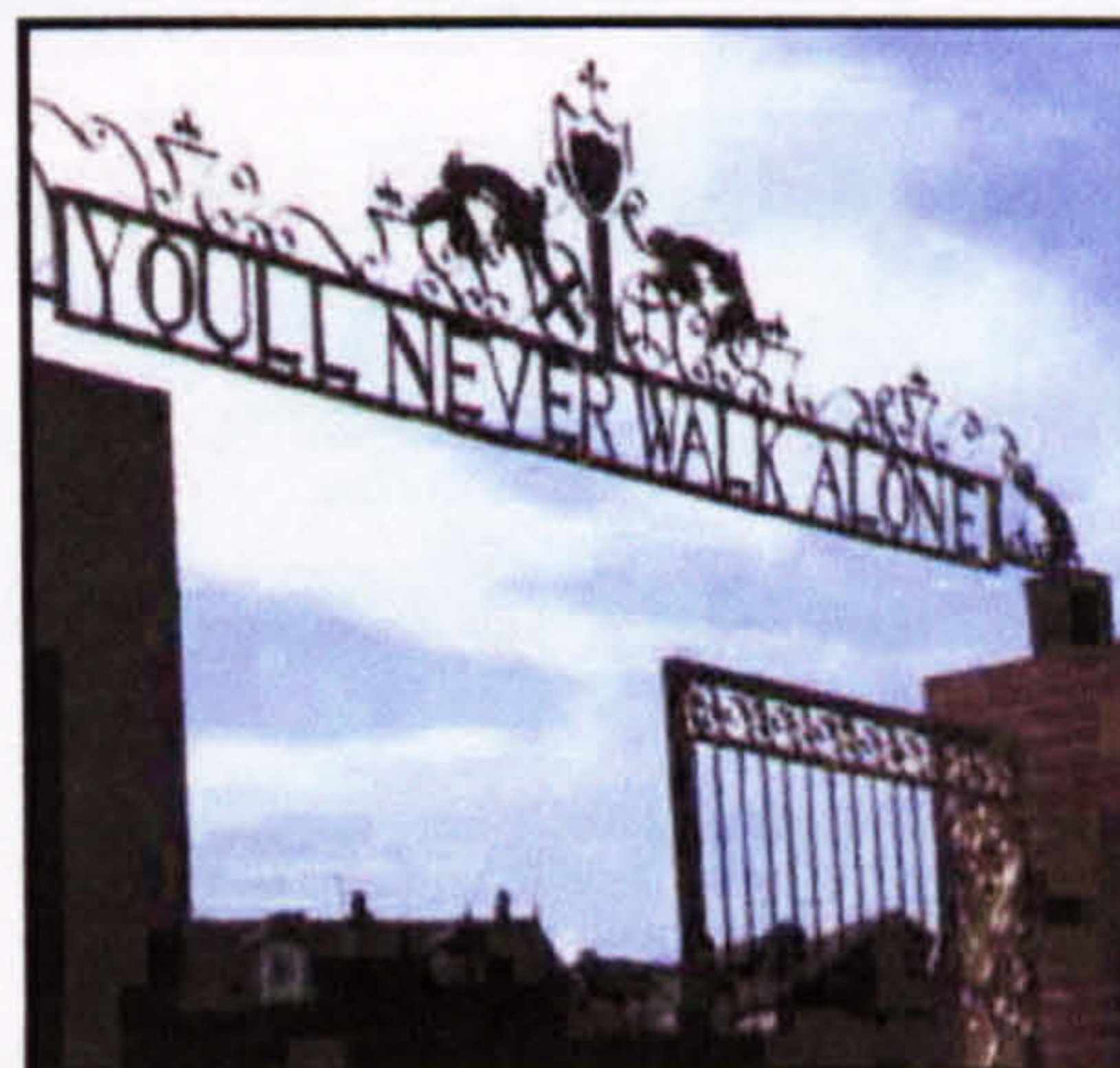
#### **10.xii A memorial bench**

Garden of Remembrance: Hutcliffe Wood  
The tributes prevent the memorial being used as a seat.



The Hillsborough tragedy in April 1989 is remembered in Sheffield by a pair of memorial gates leading to an enclosed memorial garden in a section of Hillsborough Park. The gates bear the legend: 'YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE' and the Liverpool shield.

#### *10.xiii Hillsborough memorial*



Other memorials take a lighter note. An 85 year old left instructions in her will for a tea party for her closest friends at the church where she worshipped. Plans were then made for a 'real party' at Whirlow Hall, which would be a celebration.<sup>68</sup>

Regular Memorial Services are growing in popularity in Church of England parishes. St. John, Abbeydale, now holds a quarterly service of commemoration for all who mourn. It is seen as a remembrance of those whose anniversaries fall at this time, as well as for those who mourn a recent death. It is a service of consolation and is resurrection-based. The services have been designed by the Revd Brian Cranwell, a trainer for Cruse-Bereavement Care in Sheffield and Rotherham, and a counsellor for children and their families affected by death.

Memorials are placed in 'The Star', in the form of 'In Memoriam' and 'Birthday Memories' notices. As with the Death notices, verse is often chosen. On a recent<sup>69</sup> evening, there were 16 prose memorials, and 12 in verse. The verses are simple yet moving:<sup>70</sup>



We think about you daily,  
We talk about you too,  
We have so many memories,  
But we wish we still had you.

The range of choices for those organising a funeral in the Sheffield area is seen as sufficient by most of the respondents who had arranged a committal. During the interviews for this study there was some nostalgia expressed for a past era when one could be buried in a village churchyard, but most respondents explained that their particular choice was a logical consequence of existing circumstances. Those respondents who talked about planning for a funeral were equally positive about their probable decisions; Sheffield's cemeteries and crematoria would be adequate for their needs. Those interviewed who had experience of Grenoside Crematorium expressed favourable opinions, although some clergy considered that it lacked the contemplative atmosphere of City Road Crematorium. Indeed, one minister likened it to a plush foyer of an office block, expecting to hear an automated voice announcing the status of the current committal and likely waiting times.<sup>71</sup> There were some respondents who expressed an interest in potential changes in funerary practices. Some were keen to discuss ecologically friendly committals, others were interested in a Victorian hearse and horses, aspects of dying, or 'green' funerals. 'Natural Death' and the personal involvement of mourners are studied in Chapter Eleven.

Most respondents sought approval of their choice of memorial, which, for them, was a lasting tribute offered in love and remembrance.

**10.xiv A Sheffield memorial**  
A loving memorial offered as a lasting tribute.





## Notes

1. Harman and Harper, in Binfield, et al., Vol. II, p.62
2. Primary evidence, given by Julie Rugg, University of York: Cemetery Research Group
3. Harman and Harper, in Binfield, et al., Vol. II, p.62
4. 'Star': July 22, 1994, p.2; October 20, 1994, p.22; September 9, 1995, p.16; August 3, 1995, p.38; March 20, 1996, p.2; 'Daily Telegraph': November 19, 1994, p.2; June 12, 1995, p.7; December 12, 1996, p.8; June 12, 1998, p.15 'Sunday Telegraph': August 8, 1993, p.8; April 17, 1994, p.30; July 23, 1995, p.14
5. Rugg, 1992, pp.27-31; summary: p.31
6. 'Star', January 25, 1996, p.24
7. 'Star', March 20, 1997, p.25
8. Primary evidence, Mrs. Matthewman, widow of Jack, interview, Burncross columbarium, July, 1999
9. Primary evidence, Andy Calow, interview, about incident: March 17, 1998, August 1999
10. Seyd, in Binfield, et al., Vol. I, p.151
11. 'Gazette', January 20, 1994, p.10
12. Primary evidence, interviews, see Saunders, 1992, p.110
13. 'Star', October 3, 1996, p.12; 'Gazette', October 16, 1996, p.1; 'Sheffield Journal', October 17, p.1
14. 'Star', June 15, 1996, p.1
15. Primary evidence, July 1999
16. 'Star', March 20, 1996, p.9
17. Primary evidence, telephone interview, Clifford Mate, stonemason for Birtin Cemetery, Bradfield Parish Council, September 1999
18. Primary evidence, interview, Dennis Knapton, Cemetery Keeper, Birtin Cemetery, July 1999



19. Primary evidence, telephone interview, Jack Hudson, Diocesan Church House, Rotherham
20. Primary evidence, interview, Bob Chapman, responsible for care of the churchyard, All Saints, Ecclesall, July 1999
21. Leaflet, 'Our Churchyard', All Saints Church, Ecclesall, 1999
22. Primary evidence, interview, Steven Willis, John Fairest Funeral Home, July 1999
23. 'Hallam Catholic Voice', November 1988, p.5
24. Primary evidence, visit and interviews during maintenance sessions, June 1999
25. Odom, 1922, p.107
26. Saunders, 1992, pp.87, 88
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69. 'Star', September 3, 1999, pp.39, 40
70. Ibid., p.40
71. Primary evidence: Revd Frank Beattie, Central United Reformed Church, July 1999

### **Illustrations**

- 10.i **Wisewood: leaflet, 'Woodland Burial at Wisewood Cemetery', Sheffield Bereavement Services, 1999**
- 10.ii **Niches at Burncross: Burncross columbarium, researcher's own photograph**
- 10.iii **Edged grave: City Road Cemetery, researcher's own photograph**
- 10.iv **Wall plaque at Tinsley Park Cemetery : researcher's own photograph**
- 10.v **Babies' graves at Shiregreen: Shiregreen Cemetery, researcher's own photograph**
- 10.vi **All facing the view: Birtin Cemetery, researcher's own photograph**
- 10.vii **Walled Columbaria: researcher's own photographs**
- 10.viii **A permanent memorial on a verge: researcher's own photograph**
- 10.ix **Headstones commissioned through Memorials by Artists: 'Telegraph Magazine', October 1998, p.30**
- 10.x **Glass shade and wax tribute: Strata Florida Abbey, Wales: researcher's own photograph**
- 10.xi **A copy of signed memorial pages: courtesy of Faith Roger, Friend**
- 10.xii **A memorial bench: Hutcliffe Wood Garden of Remembrance, researcher's own photograph**
- 10.xiii **Hillsborough memorial: Hillsborough Park, researcher's own photograph**
- 10.xiv **A Sheffield memorial: Wisewood Cemetery, researcher's own photograph**



## Chapter Eleven

### Natural Death and Personal Funerals

#### 1. Introduction

The expressions 'Natural Death' and 'Personal Funerals' are specific, in that they refer to distinctive approaches to death and funerary customs and rituals. In general terminology, one has either a natural death, or an unnatural death, the latter usually in suspicious circumstances, and each funeral is generally a separate, personal ritual that is concerned with one body, except for the rare circumstance of tragedy when families or partners may have a joint funeral.

'Natural Death' takes on this specific interpretation when used as the title of a particular style and approach to death. The publisher's information on the back cover of *The Natural Death Handbook* reads:

'The Natural Death Centre, the educational charity which edited this handbook, believes that all of us should, and can, prepare for our own deaths and those of our friends and loved ones, and that this intense personal experience should as far as possible be under our own control, not that of medical professionals or big institutions.'<sup>1</sup>

Topics covered include:

- Brave and 'conscious' deaths
- Near-death experiences
- Training for the dying
- Practical care for the dying
- Green, cheap and 'D-i-y' funerals
- The good funeral guide
- Improving grieving
- A manifesto for the dying

The opening chapter places the Natural Death Movement within the sphere of psychotherapy, and equates the concept of 'natural death' to 'natural childbirth', aiming for a redirection of healthcare for the dying from hospitals and institutions into



the home. It extended its scope of information to include funeral advice, following 'mail from families wanting "Green", inexpensive funerals':

'The Centre now acts as a sort of "Which?" type body, available by phone or letter, giving for the first time an indepth consumer's perspective on the whole funeral trade.'<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, Natural Death is concerned with dignity in death, with the preparation for death, and with the practical organisation surrounding death. It advocates the person, and usually their family, taking charge of the dying stage of life, rather than being processed by institutions. When *The Natural Death Handbook* was first published, in 1993, the notion of independent funeral arrangements was still a novel concept.

Saunders, 1992, commented:

'Sheffield is a conservative, traditional city. The population generally are reluctant to employ change let alone to introduce without prompting such a radical step as a DIY funeral ... Statistically, there is likely to be such a funeral in the future within the city boundaries. There is no evidence of one having been conducted. They cannot be seen as a positive trend for the future.'<sup>3</sup>

*The New Natural Death Handbook* was published in 1997, redefining its previous image and updating information. The extensive first chapter of the initial volume, which was concerned with the reporting of individual deaths, from Himalayan yogis to Socrates, was reduced in the new volume to two small sections, one devoted to those who stop eating when dying, and the second to 'dolphin therapy', now considered helpful to the dying. The latter is also a notion fashionable in the United States of America, and is promoted for the chronically and terminally ill. In Britain the therapy is a fashionable refuge for the families of dying children, who feel they can do so little when faced with their child's prognosis. Also removed from the new volume are most of the references to 'near-death experiences'; the emphasis of the 1997 volume is practical rather than philosophical, and includes a short section on woodland burial grounds. This work is particularly recommended by the Pagan



Hospice and Funeral Trust, on [www.demon.co.uk/charities/PHFT](http://www.demon.co.uk/charities/PHFT) . Again, wording is less emotive, increasing potential credibility; the chapter previously titled ‘Green, Cheap & “D-i-y” Funerals’ is now called ‘Inexpensive, Green, Family-Organised Funerals’.

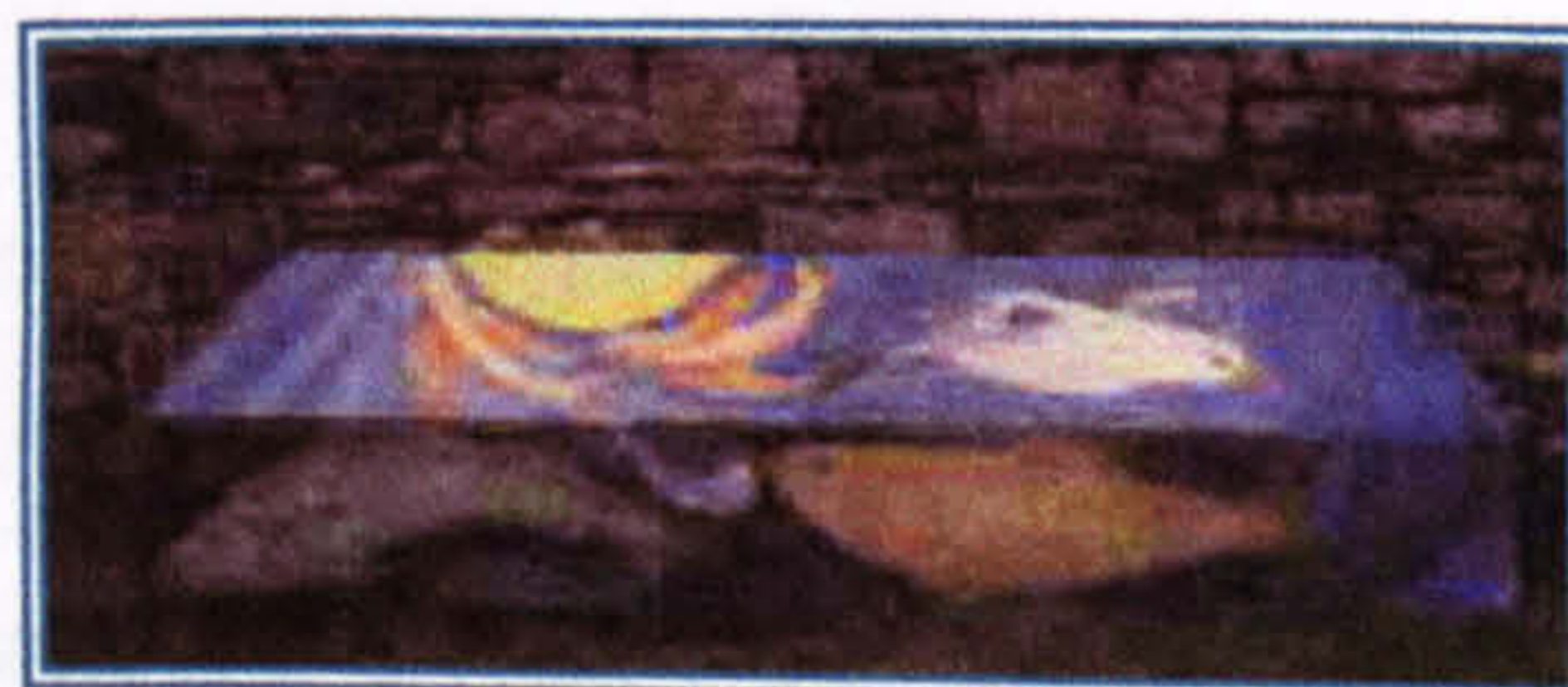
The concept of ‘Personal Funerals’ was the theme of a 1994 conference: ‘Funerals – and How to Make Them More Personal’, held at Barhaugh Hall in Cumbria by the arts group ‘Welfare State International’. This conference was promoted in The ‘Daily Telegraph’ in January 1994:

‘Driving a wedge through the notion that a weekend away ought to be a joyous escape, the curiously-named Welfare State International arts group is taking bookings for a funeral break. Guests who book in for the March weekend at Banough Hall, [sic] near Alston in Cumbria, will visit cemeteries, crematoriums [sic], graveyards, war graves, barrows, cairns and other “dead” centres in the vicinity. ... Discussions will include Victorian funerals, memorials and symbolism, and woodland and sea burials. “We’re taking the weekend to look at different ways of dying,” enthuses the spokeswoman. “Funerals are very neglected, and we’ve got wonderful things like hand-painted biodegradable Swiss coffins to look at.” ’<sup>4</sup>

The forthcoming conference attracted comment in Sheffield’s local newspapers, as the Sheffield-based artist Caroline Menis was contributing her painted coffins. The ‘Star’ noted, under the headline ‘No tears at graves art gallery’, itself a play on the Graves Art Gallery of Sheffield, :

‘No pine here. No brass (or even plastic) handles. No overdone solemnity. We are talking paint-your-own-coffin courses and funeral corteges going on pub crawls – and Caroline Menis’s custom-built coffin. It features painted birds and shells; moons, stars and starfish. Bright swirls of colour. And it’s made of biodegradable cardboard. Caroline, a Sheffield-based artist, created this “personalised” coffin for a sea enthusiast. It will be on show this weekend at a conference in the Lake District called “Funerals and How to Make Them More Personal”. The assumption is that, all too often, all too sadly, personal is just what funerals aren’t.’<sup>5</sup>

**11.i Caroline Menis’ painted coffin**  
Images of fish, shells and boats appropriate for a seaman.





Again, the 'Sheffield Telegraph' published a feature in its 'Living' section, 'The art of dying', about the artist Caroline Menis, and the funerals conference, noting:

'The aim is to look at the origins of today's funeral customs and also explore changes of attitude and codes of practice.'<sup>6</sup>

The concepts of 'Natural Death' and 'Personal Funerals' are presented here as explorations of such changes.

### 1.i Care of the dying

The care of the dying is one of the concerns of the Natural Death Movement, and can be subdivided into two quite separate disciplines of approach: psychological and practical, each having pertinence and validity, and yet interlinked, for the physical care of the dying cannot be separated from the psychological reasonings underpinning such care, nor from the mental healthcare of the patient.

#### 1.i.a Psychological aspects in the care of the dying

The seminal work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross: *On Death and Dying*, which analyses the coping mechanisms at the time of terminal illness and also advocates the achievement of inner peace by facing and accepting the reality of death, is a work that Walter, 1994, notes as the most cited and the most influential of such studies, referring to her findings as 'The Famous Five':<sup>7</sup>

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. <i>denial</i>     | it can't be true<br>it doesn't seem real<br>the tests are mixed up |
| 2. <i>anger</i>      | why me?<br>what did I do to deserve this?<br>why not him?          |
| 3. <i>bargaining</i> | just let me live until ...<br>I'll do this ..<br>I'll do that ..   |



- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 4. <i>depression</i> | a sense of loss<br>a tool to prepare for acceptance |
| 5. <i>acceptance</i> | peaceful<br>quiet<br>less need of others            |

In the terminally ill, all stages are not seen in the above order, nor do all patients pass through all stages, nor are all patients solely concerned with their own death.

However, the work is of note, again citing Walter, 1994: <sup>8</sup>

‘Kübler-Ross has written ... a persuasive political/religious tract... Death is portrayed not as a spiritual transition but as a return to the acceptance of infancy – a comforting message to a generation thirsting for self-help books on unconditional acceptance. ... When I ask the mature theological students I teach whether they have done anything before on death and dying, the ex-nurses and ex-social workers invariably say “Oh, we did Kübler-Ross’s five stages in college.” ’

On the matter of dying, one can note aspects of Natural Death Movement of the 1990’s in Kübler-Ross’s earlier work of 1970:

‘One of the most important facts is that dying nowadays is in many ways more gruesome, more lonely, mechanical, and dehumanised; at times it is even difficult to determine technically when the moment of death has occurred. Dying becomes lonely and impersonal because the patient is often taken out of his familiar environment .. slowly but surely he is treated like a thing. He is no longer a person.’<sup>9</sup>

White also cites Kübler-Ross’s work as contributing to changing attitudes in death matters:

‘No one has done more than Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross to change medical attitudes toward death. .. Her passion is to educate members of the healing arts and the lay public about her conviction that death provides the key to the meaning of human existence and life itself.’ <sup>10</sup>

Schneidman, in *Death: Current Perspectives*, refers to the healthcare associated with the dying as clinical thanatology, and also writing in his 1984 Introduction:

‘Certainly one of the most refreshing currents in the changing thanatological wind is the increasing emphasis on a “humanistic” approach to death – an approach that seems to parallel the humanistic trends in other sectors of society today. This new



approach is seen, for example, in an increasing concern that the dying individual live as fully and as richly as possible until death and that communication with the dying be tailored to specific human needs.’<sup>11</sup>

Much of the Natural Death Movement’s analyses of practical help for the dying is dependent upon the psychological preparation of patient and family for the inevitable event. This preparation involves courses; readings; meditation; counselling; therapy; and setting affairs in order, such as making a will, ‘Living Wills’, protecting assets, and death and funeral planning. Amongst the selections of readings offered by the Natural Death Centre, the base for the Natural Death movement, are those of Jung:

‘Willy-nilly, the ageing person prepares himself for death. Thoughts of death pile up to an astonishing degree as the years increase.’<sup>12</sup>

The Dalai Lama is also quoted:

‘for most of us ordinary people who lead busy lives, what is important is to develop a kind, generous heart to others. If we can do that and live accordingly, we will be able to die peacefully.’<sup>13</sup>

Poetic works are frequently offered as support to those who are dying or to their families:

‘Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.’  
*Dylan Thomas*<sup>14</sup>

Death be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not soe,  
*John Donne*<sup>15</sup>

I work all day, and get half-drunk at night.  
Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.  
In time the curtain-edges will grow light.  
Till then I see what’s really always there:  
Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,  
Making all thought impossible but how  
And where and when I shall myself die.  
*Philip Larkin*<sup>16</sup>



### 1.i.b Practical aspects in the care of the dying

The Natural Death Movement suggests that, whilst 50% of deaths are sudden, the remainder, those whose deaths are slow, should be able to exercise a variety of choices in their care and eventual place of death. An aim of the World Health Organisation's 'Global Strategy of Health for All by the Year 2000' is stated to be:

'Everyone should be afforded dignity and comfort at the time of death. By the year 2000, all those dying who are in contact with health and social services should be able to choose where they spend their last days, and, wherever that is, they should be able to expect optimal pain relief, physical comfort and psychological support from professionals.'<sup>17</sup>

Whilst those who choose to die at home might receive additional care from such as the Macmillan Nurses, funded by a charitable organisation who seek to help the ill and dying, the support structure available for families might depend on the time of year, and the availability of help. Many in Sheffield speak highly of the local hospice, St. Lukes, which is supported itself by many in the city. The hospice has a summer fair, which is sufficiently popular for the roads surrounding the building to be subject to a no parking ban, and for the traffic congestion to be solid. The hospice runs its own Lottery, with employed staff, and many citizens find this an acceptable alternative to the National Lottery.<sup>18</sup> Again, societies around the city find ways of supporting the hospice:

- *The 1999 Sheffield Oratorio Chorus Carol Service in Sheffield Cathedral was held in aid of St. Lukes*
- *The Highcliffe Club, a non-political organisation, hold an annual Harvest Auction in aid of St. Lukes*
- *Hallmark of Harmony, Sheffield's award-winning barbershop chorus, sing carols at St Lukes on Christmas Day morning*



Sheffield is fortunate in having such a hospice. However, the patient or the family may wish for care to be primarily in the home. In these circumstances the Natural Death Centre advocates exploring the following possible sources of assistance by those caring for the terminally ill:

- NHS provisions
- Social Services
- Macmillan Nurse
- Marie Curie Nurse
- Leonard Cheshire Foundation Care At Home
- District nurse
- Meals on Wheels

### **1.ii Living Wills**

For some who are terminally ill, the concept of an Advance Directive or 'Living Will' can give the assurance that they have done all that is possible to ensure that the last stages of their illness are managed according to their wishes, when they may not be able to communicate their wishes, or perhaps when they might be considered of unsound mind. A 'Living Will' format can be one put out by an organisation, such as the Voluntary Euthanasia Society; the Natural Death Centre; the Terrence Higgins Trust; or any purchased, such as those available as a 'Do-it-Yourself Legal Kit' from publishers,<sup>19</sup> or perhaps one drawn up by any solicitor. The 'Living Will' from the Natural Death Centre includes the following possible clauses to be implemented in a given schedule of terminal circumstances:

- that I am not to be subjected to any medical intervention or treatment aimed at prolonging or sustaining my life – such as life support systems; artificial ventilation; antibiotics; surgery; using a kidney machine; or blood transfusion.
- that any distressing symptoms (including any caused by lack of food) are to be fully controlled by appropriate analgesic or other treatment, even though that treatment may shorten my life.



- that I am not to be fed into the stomach or vein; nor artificially hydrated

The Terrence Higgins trust recommend that those wishing to make a 'Living Will' discuss their wishes with their doctor; a copy of the Will can be added to any hospital notes. The 'Living Will' needs to be respected by those responsible for the care of the patient: the Directive can be lodged with a General Practitioner; only legal procedures are considered acceptable: active euthanasia is illegal. In 1994 the House of Lords Report of the Select Committee on Medical Ethics confirmed that such Advance Directives are legally binding, and the British Medical Association has published a booklet entitled 'Advance Statements About Medical Treatment', which advises doctors that they are legally obliged to obey such advance directives. Terry & Co., Solicitors, note that:

'Although they are not "wills" as such, more and more clients do enquire about whether it is possible to make provision for a time when they may be physically or mentally incapable of taking medical decisions for themselves by making a "living will". Every person has the right to die in dignity free from efforts to prolong terminal illnesses just because the technology is available to do so. A living will can, for example, indicate whether in certain circumstances medical treatment should be directed to saving life at all costs or merely relieving suffering even if such relief could shorten life. Or it may express a wish that a certain person be involved in decisions about medical care or that a certain person be contacted if death is imminent. This latter point is extremely important in the case of co-habiting couples. It is quite bad enough to be terminally ill without having one's loved one pushed out of the picture by "family" who are technically next of kin. In these circumstances it can very well make a great deal of sense to name your partner as the proxy who can and should be involved in medical decisions.'

<sup>20</sup>

A person making a 'Living Will' cannot use it to insist on receiving any particular treatment, only refusing what is known. The wishes stated in it are not final, and can be changed at any time while the person concerned is still capable of making such decisions. An informed advance refusal is as valid as one that might be made at the time of the terminal illness.



The religious considerations in such advance refusal of treatment are relevant to this study. The Church of England accepts the wishes of the patient. The Roman Catholic Church issued a Declaration on Euthanasia, in June 1980, stating:

‘When inevitable death is imminent, it is permitted in conscience to take the decision to refuse forms of treatment that would only secure a precarious and burdensome prolongation of life.’<sup>21</sup>

The Methodist Church states:

‘We assert the right of every person to die in dignity without efforts to prolong terminal illness merely because the technology is available to do so.’<sup>22</sup>

Again, the Central Conference of American Rabbis notes:

‘The conclusion from the spirit of Jewish Law is that while you may not do anything to hasten death, you may, under special circumstances of suffering and helplessness, allow death to come.’<sup>23</sup>

The Natural Death Centre notes that the American decisions are valid in Britain, and advocates that those who have made such a Will carry an appropriate card, of similar size to that of a credit card:<sup>24</sup>

**LIVING WILL:** I have made a Living Will stating, inter alia, that, if terminally ill, I do not wish to have my life prolonged by medical interventions. This Living Will is lodged with Dr.....  
Tel..... and with my proxy .....  
Tel.....

*11.ii Living Will Summary: credit card sized*

**1.iii Advance Funeral Wishes**

Choosing the style of one’s funeral is seen as part of the concept of Natural Death and Personal Funerals. While such wishes are not legally binding, as noted in Chapter Nine of this study, Advance Funeral Wishes are made in the anticipation that they will be respected, in the same way that pre-paid funerals are purchased with hope in mind.



The form suggested by the Natural Death Centre has 55 clauses, ranging from clause 1, which contains information about whether or not any will contains information about funeral wishes, to clause 55:

- I shall find out for sure in due course, but as a matter of interest, I do/do not believe in an afterlife, which I visualise as .....,<sup>25</sup>

Further sample clauses include:

- If possible, I wish my body to be left undisturbed after my death for ..... hours / days.
- I would like to be cremated / buried / deposited in a vault / catacomb/ mausoleum.
- I would / would not like an open coffin
- I would like my body to be transported to the relevant place in our / a friend's large estate car .....
- I have / have not left a last message / audiotape / video or other text for my family or friends, and wish for this to be played at the funeral service.
- I would / would not like a party / gathering after the funeral.
- In general terms, I would like as much money spent on a gathering after the funeral as on the funeral itself / less money / more money / much more money.

Indeed, if there exists a notion about a funeral, this form includes it. The small volume written by Mary Illingworth *How to Direct Your Own Funeral*<sup>26</sup> contains much simpler, and perhaps more accessible advice. She notes:

'By using the information and ideas gathered together in this book, you should be able if you so wish to plan ahead for the kind of funeral you would wish for yourself. ... there is no doubt that accepting and discussing mortality and the fact of physical death openly ... will paradoxically provide a sense of security and supportedness that could otherwise be lacking.'<sup>27</sup>

The checklist for planning a funeral is contained in two well-spaced pages under seven brief headings: Services required; Burial; Cremation; Memorial; Coffin; Ceremonies; and Funeral Firm. Her short section on 'Funeral Wishes' is equally approachable and equally brief. It covers who is to be notified; information concerning body donation; burial/cremation wishes; religious/ secular ceremony; wishes concerning any service, including readings, music and hymns.



## 2.i Coffins and shrouds

The coffins and shrouds associated with the Natural Death Movement are those that are environmentally correct; perhaps they are homemade, perhaps biodegradable, and they are all likely to differ from those offered by SCI.



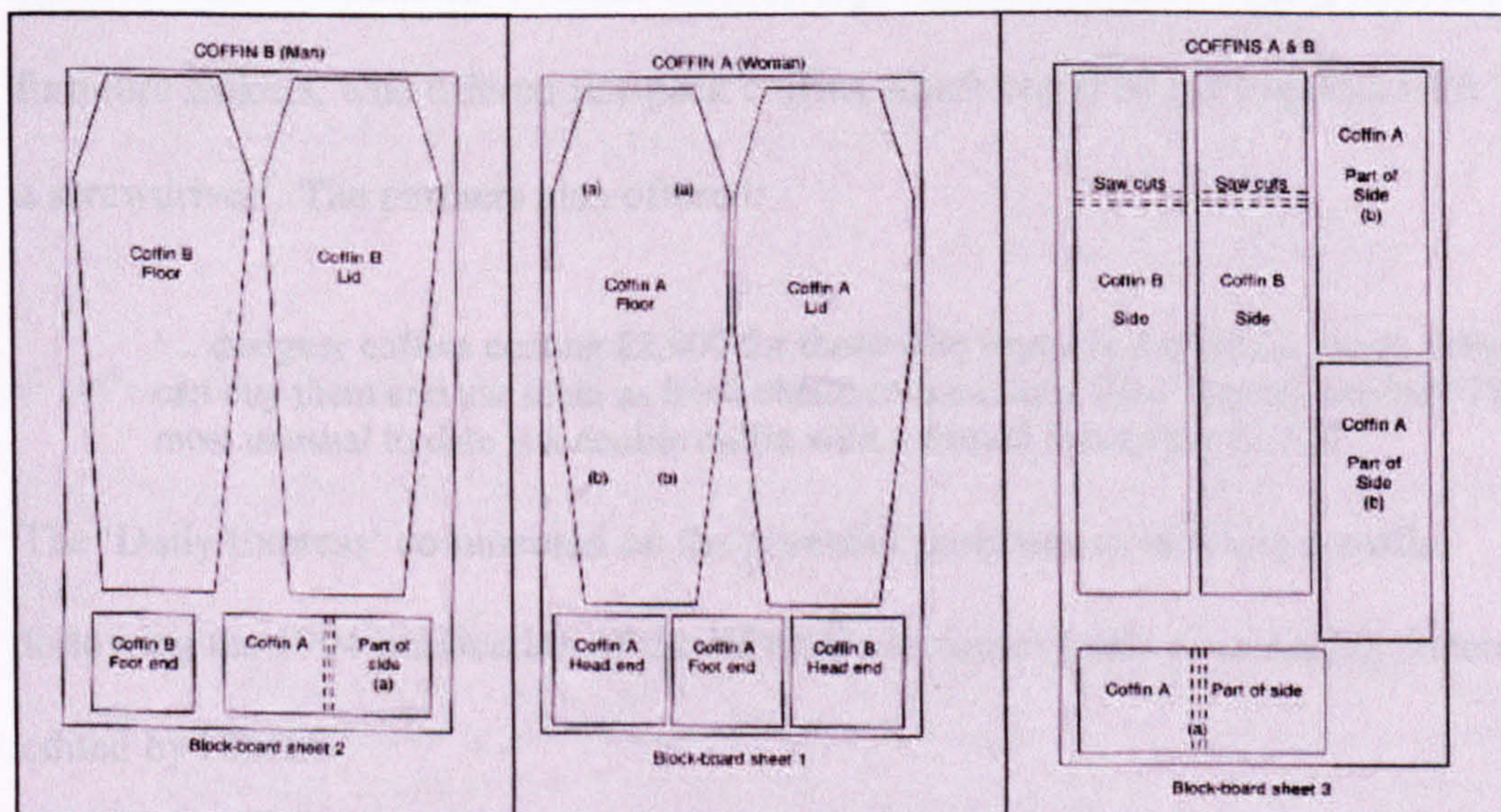
### 11.iii The 'New British Way of Death'

David and Barbara Huelin with their matching coffins, kept in a shed. Cedar wood shavings are kept ready to be used as packing.

The 'Times' reports on the Huelins' enterprise:

'Ten years ago, at a time when other couples were contemplating their rose bushes, Mr and Mrs Huelin began preparing for disposal of their mortal remains. "I am a neat person," Mrs Huelin says, "and I don't like to leave a mess for other people. I cycled around Oxford looking to buy a couple of coffins. Undertakers fell back with horror into their floral tributes at the very idea.'<sup>28</sup>

The Illingworth volume includes diagrams and instructions for making the Huelins' coffins, as does the *New Natural Death Handbook*.



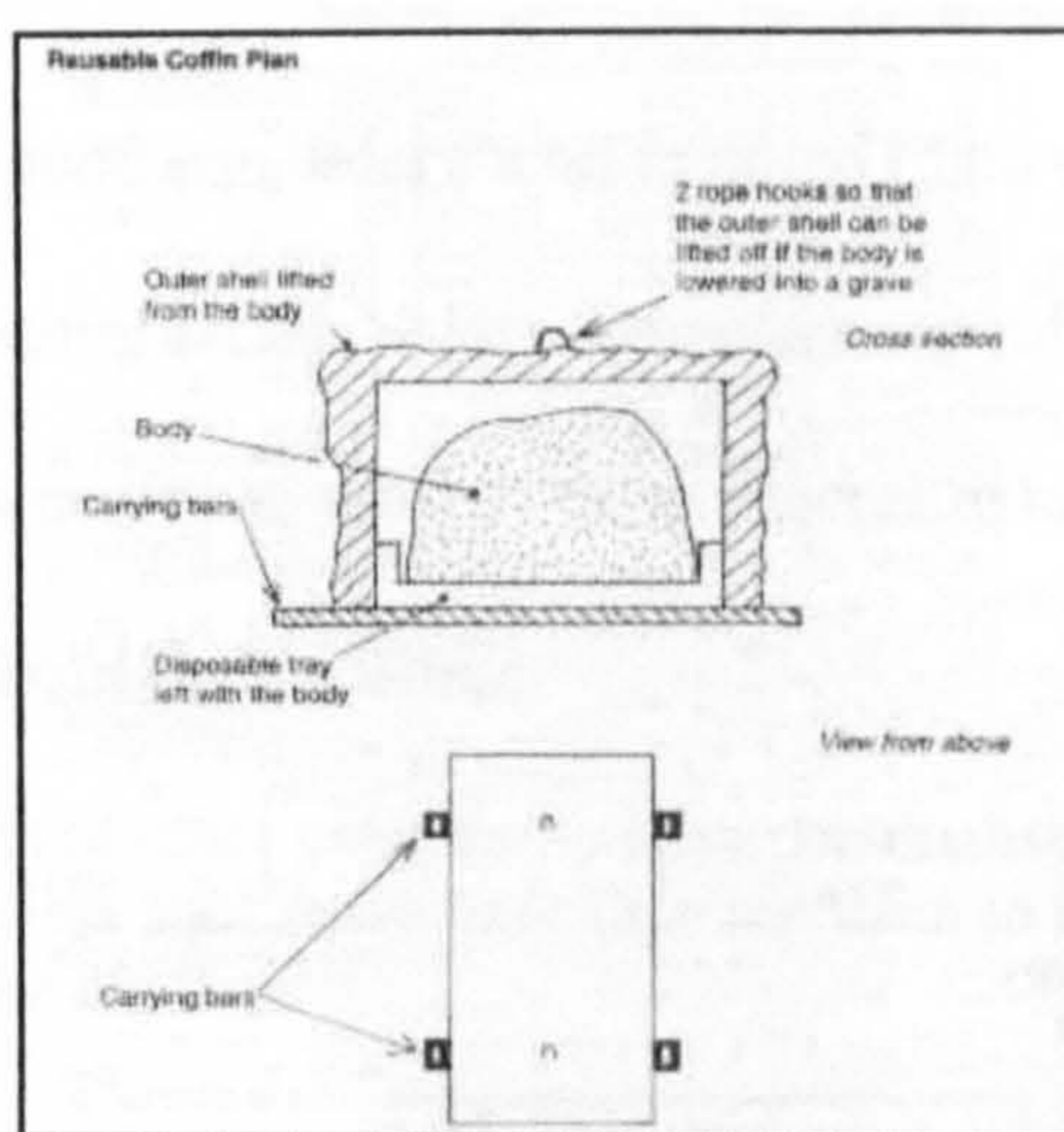
11.iv Basic coffin designs from David Huelin, Oxford



Again, Illingworth includes diagrams for simple burial boxes, obtained from American Quakers and considered 'suitable for a self-help group'. The quantities and instructions make four boxes: large, medium, small, and a child's. One must assume that the groups either hold coffin bees, not sewing bees, or perhaps the groups operate alongside sewing circles. Again, one must hope that such groups operate on a pre-need basis, rather than catering for frequent family tragedies. *The New Natural Death Handbook* includes plans for reusable coffins:

### 11.v Plan for a reusable coffin

'This could be a family project. Each family member could participate in designing and building a family coffin that could be used as the need dictated. When not being used as a coffin, it could have a functional use, perhaps as a coffee table or even as a plant trough. Why not a pyramid shape or even a dolphin shape?'



An article in the Sheffield 'Journal' in 1997 reported on a Hillsborough partnership of furniture makers, who offered flat-pack coffins which could be put together with 'just a screwdriver'. The partners also offered:

'.. designer coffins costing £2,000 for those who want the individual touch. People can buy them and use them as linen chests or bookcases until they are needed. Their most unusual to date is a double coffin with a domed lid costing £2,500.'<sup>29</sup>

The 'Daily Express' commented on the potential problems in building a coffin following the 1994 publication of the 'Which' consumer guide to arranging funerals, edited by Harris:



‘There are tips on making a coffin, using a Land Rover instead of a hearse and how to organise a burial in your garden. ... Last night funeral directors warned of the potential emotional nightmare of dealing with grisly details like the decomposition of the body. But the guide has thought of that too - it suggests hiring a portable air conditioner to keep the body fresh.’<sup>30</sup>

**11.vi ‘Dead easy guide to knocking up a coffin’**



Pre-purchase of a coffin and putting it to good use beforehand is noted in an edition of the ‘Big Issue’ in 1995, reporting on a Natural Death Salon, which was an afternoon of tea, biscuits and a workshop on how to make the most of your funeral, where David and Barbara Huelin were also speaking about their coffins:

‘The Natural Death Centre has reports of other people who have personalised their coffins with carving or painting. The less squeamish have then put them to use as blanket boxes or coffee tables until the big day.’<sup>31</sup>

**11.vii Sign for the future?**

Illustration to accompany article about Natural Death Salons.

‘After all, we’re a DIY nation now’:  
Nicholas Albery, the Natural Death Centre, speaking at a Natural Death Salon.



A Bristol firm, ‘Heaven on Earth’, advertises itself as the first ‘Design-your-life-and-death’ shop in the United Kingdom, marketing some of its products on the Internet thus:

‘The Embodiment Chests-cum-Coffins can be custom made and decorated to suit a particular interior colour scheme and because they are not the conventional coffin-shape they can be used in a variety of creative ways such as a bookcase, coffee table, window seat, blanket box, wine-rack – in fact storage of any kind. The chests are supplied in the most environmentally-friendly materials ... These can be handpainted, spray-painted or with a metallic finish., with or without rope handles and headrests to suit requirements.’<sup>32</sup>



Wicker coffins, noted in Chapter Seven of this study, are thought of as belonging to the Natural Death Movement. Gill and Fox comment:

‘In the last century in Britain “quickly perishing wicker coffins” were introduced. Contemporary craftspeople in Britain are now starting to experiment with wicker coffins. With careful weaving of willow, using the techniques of basket making, figurative coffins could be invented. ... They could be appropriate for woodland burial although, because of the open weave, the body would be best wrapped in cloth.’<sup>33</sup>

**11.viii A wicker ‘chrysalis’ for the final transformation**

These, the designer, Gemma Nesbitt states, were inspired by Buddhism and vegetable baskets.



**11.ix Mawdesley Willow Coffin:**

Peace Funerals, Sheffield  
Based on a Victorian design



**11.x Disintegrating wicker coffin: 1875**

Scene at an exhibition: wicker, with meshes filled only by mosses, willows, fragrant shrubs and evergreens, with a bundle of sweet herbs for a pillow.

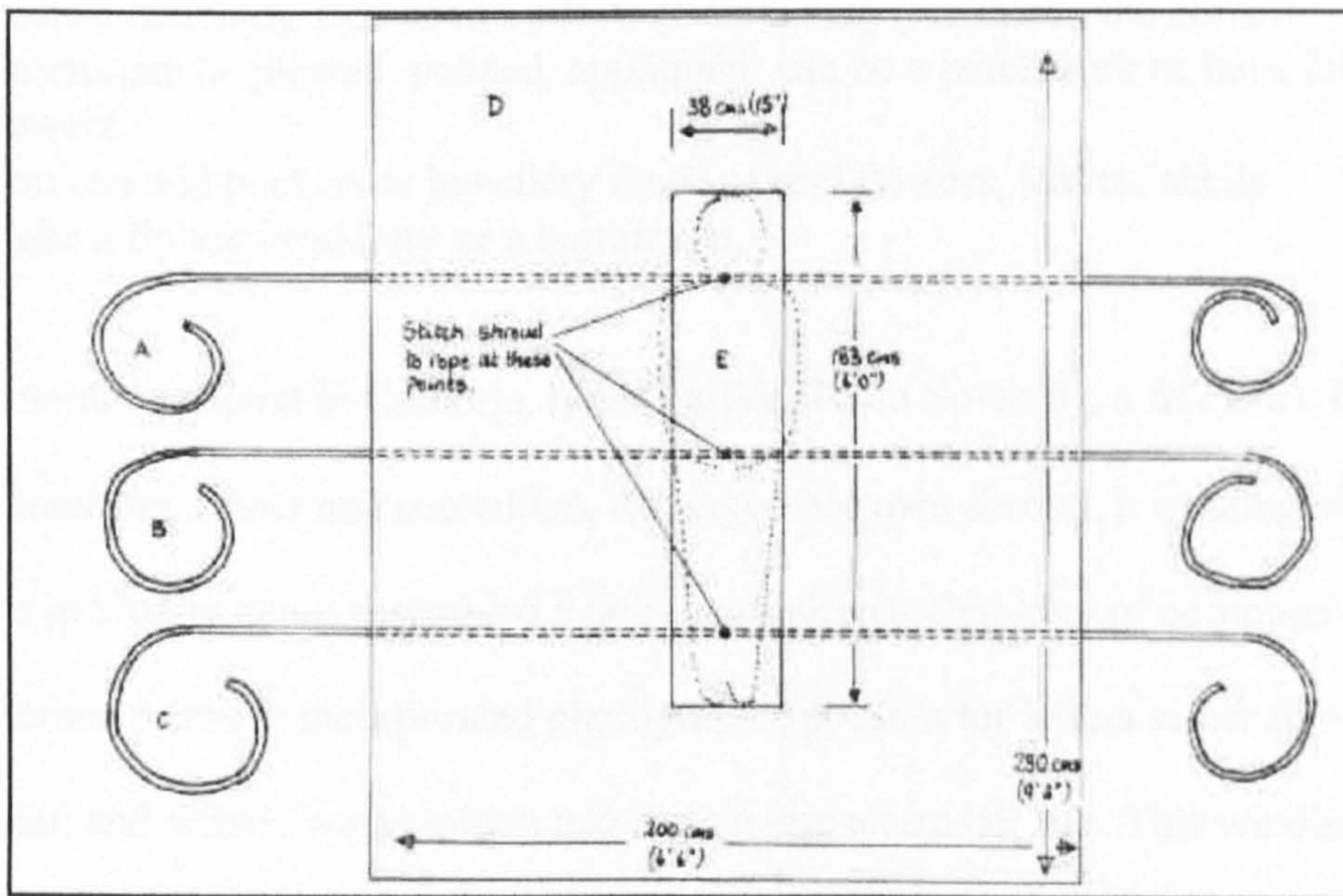
However, the German notion of eco-friendly coffins made of flax and shaped like a cocoon have yet to appear in Britain. The company marketing these also sell urns for the interment of ashes: a ‘sea’ urn which dissolves in water; one for the garden made of chicken excrement; and, slightly more conventional, urns made of cork.<sup>34</sup>



The modern burial shroud can replace a coffin. The one sold at Carlisle Cemetery comes complete with three long black ropes that are not removed from the grave.

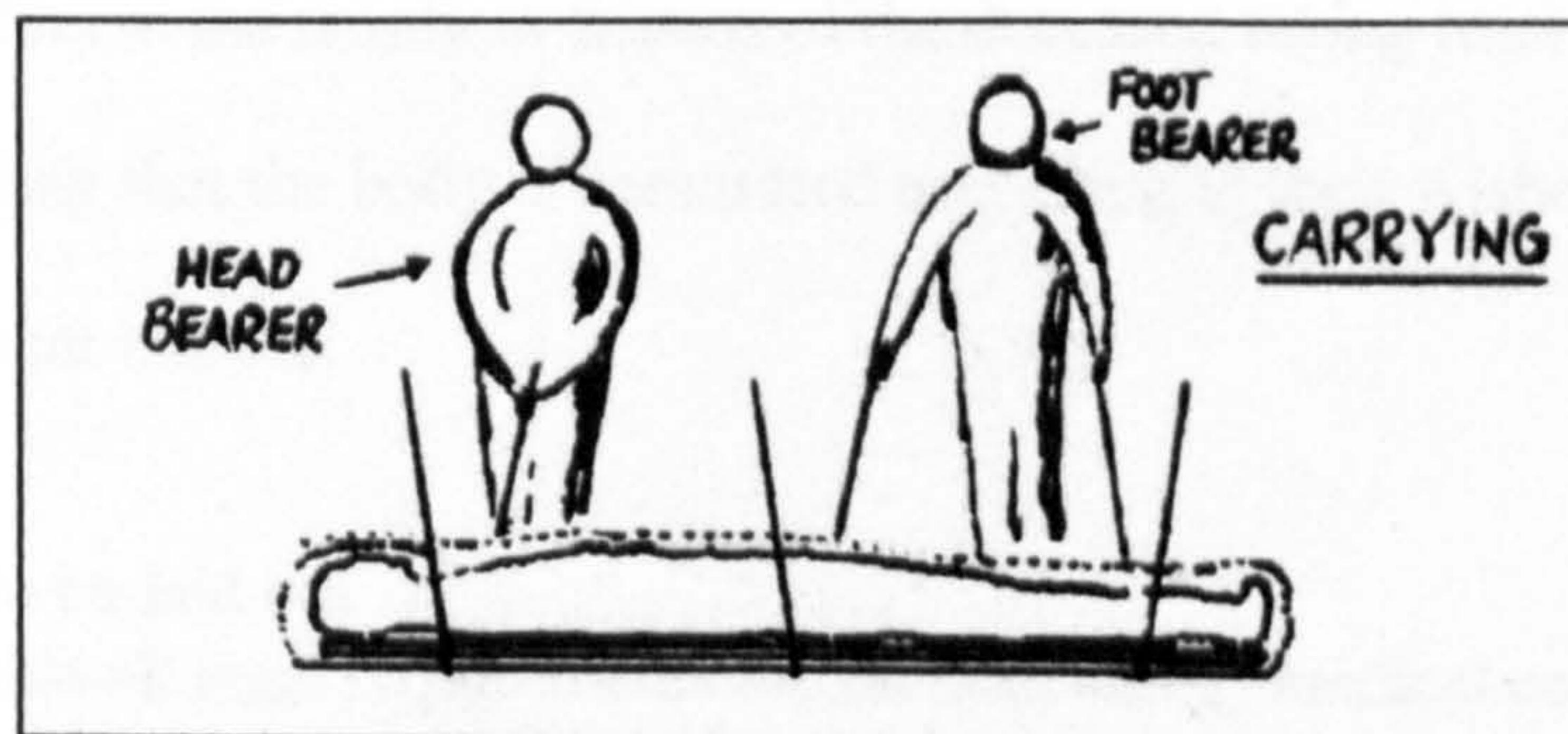
‘The shroud comprises a cream wool sheet woven on the loom in the City of Carlisle. The body can be wrapped inside the shroud and, if wished, padding used to give the body a smooth outline. The ropes are dropped into the grave over the body and are not removed.’<sup>35</sup>

The shroud is large, measuring 200 cms by 280 cms, and uses a piece of chipboard as a backboard to support the body.



### 11.xi The 'Carlisle Burial Shroud'

Cream wool, woven in the city, with three black ropes stitched in place





The Global Ideas Bank website, [www.globalideasbank.org](http://www.globalideasbank.org), has a 'Death and Dying' section. From this one can download details on how to make a funeral gown, the information provided by Lancastrian designer Yvonne Malik, who also accepts commissions. The contents of the page include the following points and ideas:

- Funeral gowns have no waist or curve; are backless; and the sleeves are attached later with pins or handstitching.
- Today's gowns are reminiscent of the baby clothes of a century ago.
- Make yourself something to be seen dead in.
- Make a matching face cover, pillow and heading (for inside the coffin).
- Gowns can be pleated, painted, appliquéd; can be a patchwork or have fabric flowers.
- You can add pockets or jewellery made of real flowers, leaves, shells.
- Make a flower headdress or a buttonhole.

At the 'funeral' weekend in Cumbria, noted earlier, Tessa Sowerby, a freelance HIV / AIDS counselling trainer and consultant, displayed her own shroud, a winding sheet, which was gradually being assembled using the modern technology of computer-scanned screen prints. It incorporated photographs; pockets for letters to her five godchildren; and artistic works which had had an impact on her life. This winding sheet was regularly displayed for her family, and incorporated many of their ideas.

## **2.ii Do It Yourself: DIY Funerals**

A DIY funeral refers to the family or friends of the deceased taking total charge of the funeral, and ensuring that the body is committed according to their wishes. Actions needed for this event include:

- the body to be laid out
- ensuring that all legal requirements are met, including medical certificate(s) and the death registered
- place of committal chosen, time booked, if appropriate, and papers delivered
- coffin or burial shroud obtained
- grave clothes obtained / organised
- transport arranged if required



Within these areas there are many available options, and permutations, some of which have already been included in this study, such as the making of a shroud and coffin. For some, the simplest and also most personal funeral is where there is sufficient land, and perhaps sufficient money, for the body to be buried on one's own property, a method that has always been used by the aristocracy if they so choose, and the local undertakers and doctors understand the family and their desired methods. There is likely to be the family chapel, either within the House, or on the estate, and estate workers to prepare the grave or open up the mausoleum. However, these are not the 'personal' funerals that are now becoming more common, both in Sheffield and in Britain generally. When Jane Spottiswoode wrote her story of arranging a 'DIY' funeral in 1991, she told of arranging a funeral for her husband, and later broadcasting details of the saga. She had found it almost impossible to buy a coffin, and suggested that after she had managed to do so, pretending to need one for an amateur dramatic production, the supplier publicly denied selling her one, as the firm was subject to funeral directors' embargoes:

'The BBC telephoned. Could I let them have the exact name of the coffin-manufacturers who had supplied me, as they had been inundated with calls asking for it ... Perhaps it will come as no surprise to my readers to hear not only that all knowledge of selling me a coffin was denied but even that they were now, or ever had been, coffin-manufacturers. The funeral directors' lobby is very strong.'<sup>36</sup>

The ashes of her husband were placed on their compost heap, according to his wishes. Her own coffin is stored in the loft, in the shadows behind the water tank, so that the plumber is not alarmed.

*The New Natural Death Handbook* includes a chapter 'Inexpensive, Green, Family-organised Funerals'. Its introductory paragraph includes the following:



'This chapter, parts of which are not for the squeamish, aims to help you find the courage to organise and design such a funeral, by arming you with the essential information and with tales from some pioneers.'<sup>37</sup>

The 'help' offered by this volume, such as advice on using a mortuary and keeping the body cool, is now offered by Sheffield Bereavement Services to those who wish to arrange a funeral without resorting to funeral directors.

Those who not only arrange the funeral themselves, but have a garden burial are likely to find the event newsworthy. In June 1996, the 'Daily Telegraph' reported that a burial in the small garden of a semi-detached house in Knaresborough had caused distress to neighbours, who are quoted as saying:

'This poor lady is buried only three yards from our bedroom window. .. when they bury human beings under your window it's time something was done.'

The report continues:

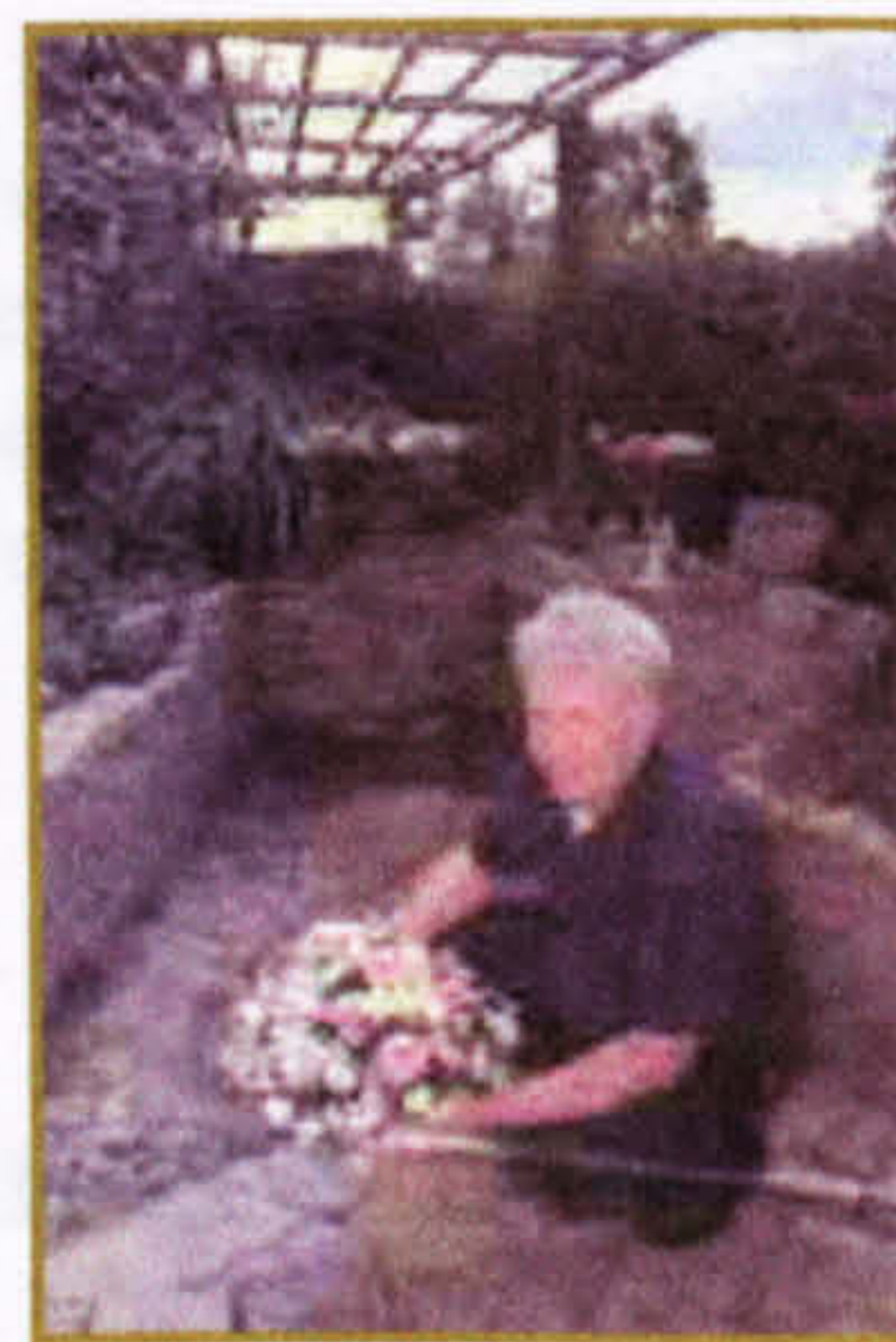
'The freedom to join the humus of one's own land dates back to the 17th century when Quakers won the right to be buried in unconsecrated ground.'<sup>38</sup>

Two years later, the dispute was still continuing, the local Member of Parliament stating that: 'It seems to me that this is an area in which the law should be changed.'<sup>39</sup>

However, there is no law to change.

### **11.xii Grave difficulties**

Peter Jackson buried his wife under the pergola; the neighbours objected.



'DIY' funerals are a slightly easier task if the committal is on communal territory.

Jane Spottiswoode had no problems at the crematorium, nor did a Moyra Bremner,



whose article on the funeral of her mother highlighted the usefulness of the Natural Death Centre:

**'Here at last I found people who understood the meaning of death. ... Checking the first of four recommended crematoria, I told the official apologetically that I might be rather odd and do the funeral without undertakers. "Oh, there's nothing odd about that," she smiled. "Lots of people do that now, it's no problem at all." .. Her life and the cycle of birth and death had been honoured and celebrated as I felt she would have wanted.'**<sup>40</sup>

Other funerals are individual, with strong elements of 'DIY', such as that of Gervase Jackson-Stops, the architectural adviser to the National Trust, who, laid out in a cardboard coffin, was transported to his grave in a trailer on top of some straw bales, pulled by a 4x4, and buried in a plot marked by a sapling.<sup>41</sup> Transport features strongly in Natural Death Funerals; the obtaining of a long enough vehicle can be quite expensive. Not all mourners have access to a Ford Mondeo or Volvo estate, and the cost of hiring a suitable vehicle can greatly increase the costs of a funeral. The Natural Death Centre is building a databank of volunteers willing to help, such as the West Sussex volunteer who 'has a friend who can supply a Volvo (from £25) for transporting the coffin.'<sup>42</sup> Yet a cardboard coffin can fit inside a three wheeler, as a page on the Internet notes:

**'My father's body was cremated at the Carlisle crematorium which couldn't have been more helpful. We bought one of their cardboard coffins and I found that it just fitted into my Reliant Rialto three wheeler – when I took the front seat out – thereby saving the inconvenience and cost of hiring a big estate car.'**<sup>43</sup>

### **3. Meaningful funerals**

A 'meaningful' funeral is one that is designed to best fit the life of the dead person and to have relevance to the lifestyle that has ended. The publisher's information on the back cover of Walter, 1990, states:

**'Dr Tony Walter shows how funerals today can be more meaningful and compassionate ..'**<sup>44</sup>



In his opening statements, the author comments:

**'The funeral is the final statement about a person. Within a century, we have swung from showy funerals that went way over the top in displaying social status, to plastic funerals that say nothing, that say the person was nothing.'**<sup>45</sup>

For most who now organise the common Sheffield funeral, options concerning participation are offered by all ministers in this present research who take services.

These options were also quoted by respondents to the study:

- Do you want to read something?
- Is there a particular song / hymn that would be appropriate?
- Is there anyone who will want to say something?
- Do any of the family want to take part?
- Are the family going to help carry the coffin?

*The New Natural Death Handbook* notes that Walter, 1990, is 'a particularly useful book' in its section on 'Non assembly-line funerals'. Simple notions are here put forward, such as placing something on top of the coffin to remind everyone about the person: a hat, a scarf, or a toy. The funeral could be in the home or in the garden, in woodland, or by the sea; extra sessions could be booked at the crematorium to make time for decorations and an extended service; a table or box of objects could be placed on display to commemorate the person; jazz bands or other less common instrumentalists, such as the 'Eureka New Orleans Jazz Band', could lead the procession to the place of committal; one flower from each person present could be placed on the coffin; or the building decorated with paintings and various forms of art work.

*The Dead Good Funeral Book* suggests many innovative methods of transforming the funeral into something very special, and decidedly meaningful. Their suggestions include:



- an action at the start, such as lighting a candle or lantern (made from paper and withies)
- mood music and readings
- tributes
- have a painted coffin or casket
- have a slide-show of the person's life events
- stop the funeral procession at a favoured place

The last idea is traditional, in that the cortège is frequently taken past somewhere of significance, as noted earlier. However, in Gill and Fox, there is a report of a funeral procession with a difference:

'In 1993, Keith Hunt, a lorry driver, died ... He had lived a year longer than diagnosed and in that time planned his own funeral, with his wife, to celebrate his love of the road. It was reported, with interest and respect, in the national press. He wanted his coffin transported on the back of a flatbed truck, via the route he drove every working day of his life along the M54. He wanted the funeral procession to pull into his usual truck stop for a last mug of tea together, before driving on to the graveyard. This has to be a true ritual for the 1990's for this man and his family and his workmates.'<sup>46</sup>

Gill and Fox make ten key points about good funerals:<sup>47</sup>

1. We don't own our bodies; our appointed executor can do as he /she wishes.
2. The wishes of the bereaved are crucial. A husband may expect to be buried in the back garden or his ashes riddled in the compost, but this may be too gritty for his wife.
3. The future is uncertain; plans should be updated.
4. Imaginative ideas should be practical; a 'Viking funeral' is not possible, the law preventing the burning of a body on an open fire, long boats are expensive and you would be a danger to shipping.
5. We think too much and use too little intuition.
6. Even if customary practices are rituals, each ritual is an individual event for the participants.
7. Very little invention is possible in the short time between death and the funeral. Think ahead. If possible.
8. Being busy is good for deep shock. A funeral gives you plenty to do.
9. Poetry is useful because it distances and distils emotion.
10. Is the funeral a celebration or an elegy? Or both?

#### 4.i Bereavement and counselling

None of the respondents in this study had any personal experience of counselling, though all were bereaved at some point. However, specific contributors to the study,



such as clergy and members of the police force, had direct experience of bereavement counselling. The Revd Brian Cranwell, past Chairman of the Sheffield branch of Cruse, Bereavement Care, and past Chair of the Sheffield Area Bereavement Forum, which was set up after the Hillsborough disaster, is a contributor to this study. He is presently a trainer for Cruse, Bereavement Care, in Sheffield and Rotherham, and is particularly concerned with counselling bereaved children and the families of children who have died. There is a current joint project, in Sheffield, using the forces of Sheffield Area Bereavement Forum and Hallam University School of Education, called the 'Gone Forever' project, which is dedicated to those who have responsibility for bereaved children, such as teachers and nurses. One of the findings of this project is that, if a school is in mourning for a child, the worst thing to do for the children left behind, is to remove the child's desk and belongings overnight, as if they had not existed. It is better to wait for natural events to call for rearrangement or re-ordering of a room or tutor group. The School Psychology Service undergoes contingency training for major disasters. Other aspects of bereavement work in Sheffield involve the training of the managements of large firms to enable them to deal with bereaved staff. However, not all firms are seen as co-operative; the management of the Meadowhall shopping complex arranged a training session and then did not release appropriate staff.

Sheffield Area Bereavement Forum was set up in 1989 and is a registered charity, managed by a Joint Committee of Trustees and advisers. 'SABF' offers training, including seminars and workshops. It also operates a Directory of Bereavement Services. Those services available in the Sheffield region include:



- *The Cavendish Centre*: complementary care for cancer sufferers
- *St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Service*: befriending and counselling for the dying and bereaved people
- *Children's Hospital, Sheffield*: support for bereaved parents
- *Bereavement Drop-in Centre, Crystal Peaks*: befriending and counselling for the local area
- *Bereavement Drop-in, Jaunty Springs*: weekly drop-in befriending and self-help group for those in the Gleadless area
- *Sheffield AIDS Memorial Quilt Project*: meets weekly to share work on the quilt
- *Compassionate Friends*: monthly self-help group for bereaved parents and siblings
- *SANDS*: self-help and befriending service for parents

There are also many additional groups run within the religious organisations of Sheffield. It must be noted that a disaster prompts the call for bereavement and counselling services, and firms offer these facilities to their staff, often to avoid later litigation.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4.ii Alternatives

Although Sheffield is an inland city there are still those who would wish to be buried at sea. However, all available information points to the difficulties that such a committal entails as is noted in Chapter Six of this study. Sea burials tend to be costly, around £2,000 to £3,000, particularly if organised through a funeral director, as there are only two licensed sites off the coasts of Britain now that the Cornish site is closed following bodies being washed up: the spoil site, off the Needles, and near Newhaven, East Sussex. A friend with a private yacht could help reduce the cost considerably.

Yet not all appreciate the difficulties of a legal burial at sea. A brief item about sea burials in Peterborough, in the 'Daily Telegraph', notes:

'They are ecological, cheap (all it costs is the hire of the boat and a drink for the crew), and dignified. I cannot think of a better place to be buried, and I hope the upsetting and rare case of a body being washed ashore earlier this week in Cornwall will not provide some Continental regulator with an excuse to interfere with an old tradition. For a creature largely made of salt and water, the ocean makes a far more appropriate resting-place than a landlocked grave. Whatever the Prayer Book may say



about earth returning to earth, and dust to dust, I plan to follow biology and go seawater to seawater.’<sup>49</sup>

However, Alf Treneer, the local undertaker and joiner on St Mary’s, in the Scilly Isles, says:

‘Several local people, whom you wouldn’t think would want to be buried at sea, have asked if there would be any problem about it, and I told them no. Obviously you have to refer it to the coroner in Penzance, and there are certain places where you go depending on weather conditions and which way the wind is. You use canvas, as on board ship. If you weighted a coffin you wouldn’t be able to manage it. The number of burials at sea has only been in the teens since I’ve been doing it and that’s for about forty years.’<sup>50</sup>

The Scillies have quite separate rules and ways of life to those experienced on the mainland. For instance, islanders have only recently had to take driving tests, and there is no MOT for their elderly vehicles. As a boatman said, matter-of-factly, in 1999:

‘We don’t have any crime, and certainly our children are safe. Any trouble and it’s a concrete overcoat out beyond the Bishop.’<sup>51</sup>

The Bishop Rock lighthouse is somewhat isolated. There are no problems about the scattering of ashes on the sea, apart from the wind.

The second alternative method of disposal is the donation of the body to medical science: anatomical dissections. Yet this is not necessarily easy, for the local medical schools may not want it. They may have enough, or the body may have undergone operations or be otherwise unsuitable for teaching purposes. Green and Green state:

‘Those who wish to bequeath their bodies for anatomical dissection should contact the Anatomy Department in their nearest medical school. ... Most departments issue a standard letter detailing the procedures which potential donors and their executors should follow. ... When the body is no longer required by the department, and within the statutory three-year period, the medical school authorities arrange interment or cremation according to the religious or secular rites specified by the deceased or the executor. The next of kin are notified of the time and place of the ceremony and they may attend if they wish. ... Persons wishing to bequeath their bodies should make the arrangements well in advance. It is often difficult for relatives to organize donation after death has occurred. It should also be understood that the Anatomy Department is under no obligation to accept the offered body.’<sup>52</sup>



Michael Green, Professor of Forensic Pathology and Consultant Pathologist to the Home Office, stated that most bodies are refused, unless there is something unusual about them. If the bodies are accepted and when they have served their purpose, the remains are usually cremated at the expense of the medical school.<sup>53</sup>

‘Alternative funerals’ can take on unexpected meanings in the 1990’s. Dame Barbara Cartland is reported to have wanted an appropriate marble construction covered in angels and a floral display to mark her final resting place in her local parish church. However, the Archdeacon has insisted on ground-level plaques. Dame Barbara dismissed the suggestion:

‘The graves will be like envelopes and apparently it is all so the graveyard chap can mow the place better. .. I have decided to be buried in my own garden because of the appalling way the church treats burials.’<sup>54</sup>

‘Natural Death’ and ‘Personal Funerals’ are concepts that fully recognise the indisputable fact that there is only one opportunity to conduct this rite of passage. There are no second chances, no ‘second funerals’ as there are ‘second marriages’. Some mourners manufacture their personal second opportunity by holding a memorial service, or in practices relating to ashes, such as interment or scattering. Again, the erecting of a grave marker, or memorial, is the opportunity for adding further to their fund of memories, and a chance to act, for there is a need to frame the disposal of a corpse in ritual. Every society and stratum has its ritual which operates on all levels: family, national, and international. Humans are ritualistic animals; for us, rituals are powerful, and vital for personal development, with the lack of ritual leading to social disorder. Ritual is at the root of what it means to be human, making all part of a group, and thus handing on stories, values, treasures and traditions. The blend of



**action and stillness, and the balance of structure and freedom within funerary rituals serve a need to identify the beginning and end of an existence.**



## Notes

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41. 'Sunday Telegraph', July 9, 1995, p.12
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49. 'Daily Telegraph', May 25, 1994, p.21
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### Illustrations

- 11.i **Caroline Menis' painted coffin:** 'Sheffield Telegraph', March 18, 1994, p.13
- 11.ii **Living Will Summary:** Albery, N., Elliot, G., and Elliot, J., (eds), *The New Natural Death Handbook*, London, Rider, 1997, p.54
- 11.iii **The 'New British Way of Death':** 'Times', November 26, 1994, p.1
- 11.iv **Basic coffin designs:** Illingworth, M., *How to Direct your own Funeral*, Bristol, Bookstall Publications, 1972, pp. 42-44
- 11.v **Plan for a reusable coffin:** Albery, N., Elliot, G., and Elliot, J., (eds), *The New Natural Death Handbook*, London, Rider, 1997, p.138
- 11.vi **'Dead easy guide to knocking up a coffin':** 'Daily Express', April 28, 1994, p13
- 11.vii **Sign for the future?:** 'Big Issue', March 20, 1995, p.21
- 11.viii **A wicker 'chrysalis' for the final transformation:** 'Daily Telegraph', May 18, 1956, p.18
- 11.ix **Mawdesley Willow Coffin:** 'Funeral Service Journal', November 1998, p.92
- 11.x **Disintegrating wicker coffin:** Jalland, P., *Death in the Victorian Family*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, Plate 17; text source: Litten, J., *The English Way of Death*, London, Robert Hale, 1991, p. 117
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- 11.xii **Grave difficulties:** 'Daily Telegraph Magazine', May 23, 1998, p.80



## **Chapter Twelve**

### **Continuity and Change**

#### **1. Introduction**

This study of the funerary rituals in the City of Sheffield has concentrated its attention on the religious aspects of the final rite of passage as identified over the period of time first marked by the incorporation of the town of Sheffield as a municipal borough, 1843, up to the present; indeed, the timing of the instigation of this present study coincided with the centenary of Sheffield as a city. Saunders, 1992, identified aspects of past and present funeral practices and their connection with organised religion that were considered worthy of further research: Jewish burial practices, sectarian practices and a strong multi-cultural element were facets that were potential fields of study when investigating the customs and rituals of the population of the city. This present research thus had, as its aim, an exploration of the effects of religious influences on the funerary practices of the parishioners of Sheffield, to be achieved by investigating continuity and change in the customs and rituals of death, with particular reference to religious aspects. This study sets out the substantial results of that research, and highlights areas worthy of additional research.

The methodology used during the two previous studies, 1975, and 1992, was again utilised and served as an adequate initial database, although the need for extension was quickly realised. The scope of the study was wide, for religion plays a considerable role both in the history of the city and its population, the education of its citizens, and also in its everyday life, and the role of religion within a population cannot be separated into discrete compartments. When investigating any continuity, changes or trends in funeral practices, and how these may be influenced by religious



conventions and established practices, it is necessary to consider other, related influences that affect a cohesive and stable yet open society.

### **1.i Social and political influences**

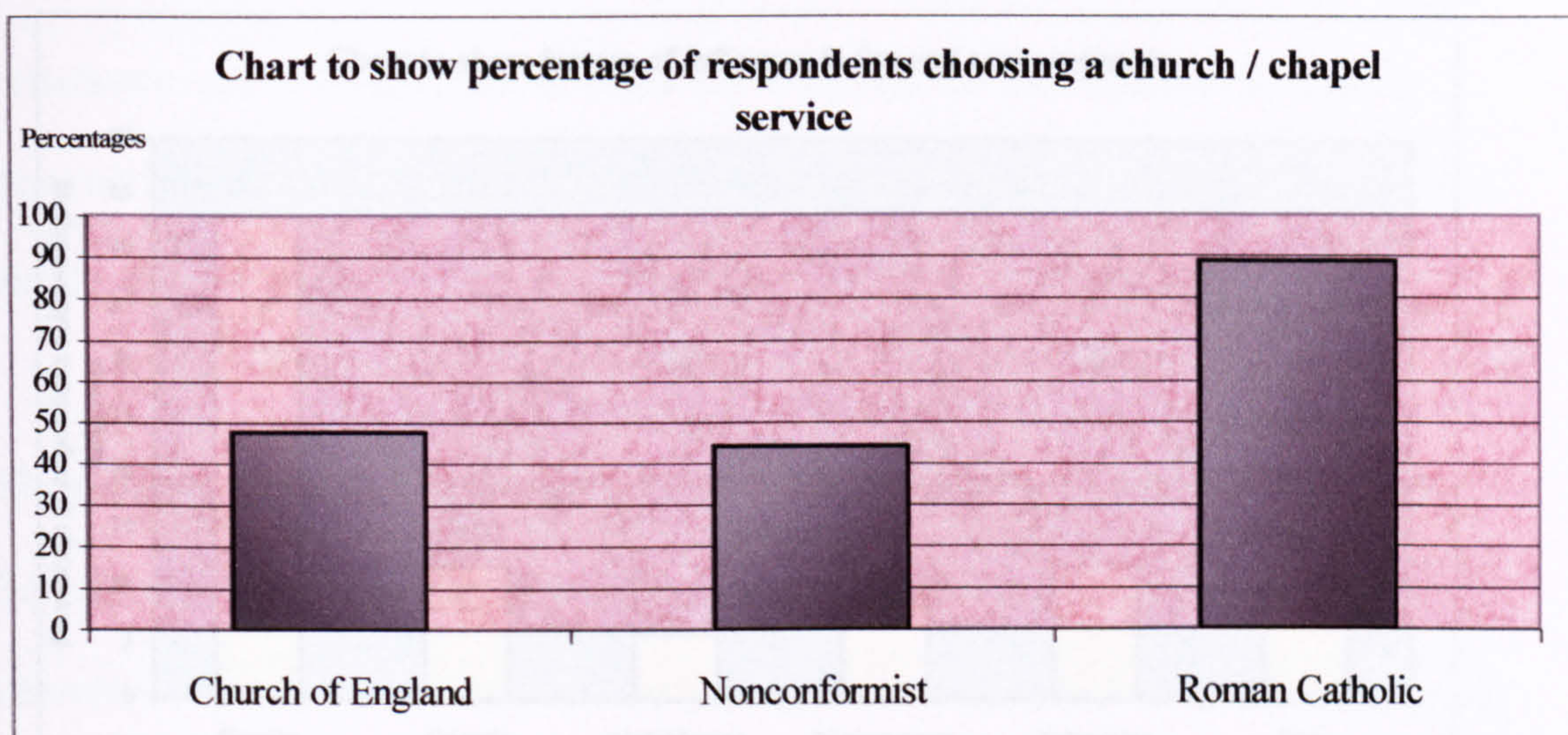
The English funeral has become established as a customary ritual based on the past and little regard has been taken for any future developments. Until very recently, existing customs have been seen as sufficient for any given set of circumstances. From the time of the establishment of the funeral guilds and the subsequent funeral trade of undertaking, with the requirement that it 'provides what is customary', the English funeral has been subject to the influences of sociological factors, as noted in Chapter Three. By the end of the Victorian era, funerals had become far less elaborate, the displays of wealth and hidden debt being replaced by an increasing emphasis on the religious components. For, although the Book of Common Prayer allowed for both a church service and a burial service, it was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that a service in church became the dominant feature of the funeral. As Litten notes:

'Spiritually, greater emphasis was being placed on the format of the church service, resulting in an embellished liturgy, and less attention being paid to the outward and visible accoutrements of the public face of private mourning.'<sup>1</sup>

Research for this study pointed to a significant percentage of respondents choosing a religious service in a specific place of worship prior to committal of the deceased, these respondents or the deceased being present or past practising members of a religious group or community, as discussed in Chapter Eight.



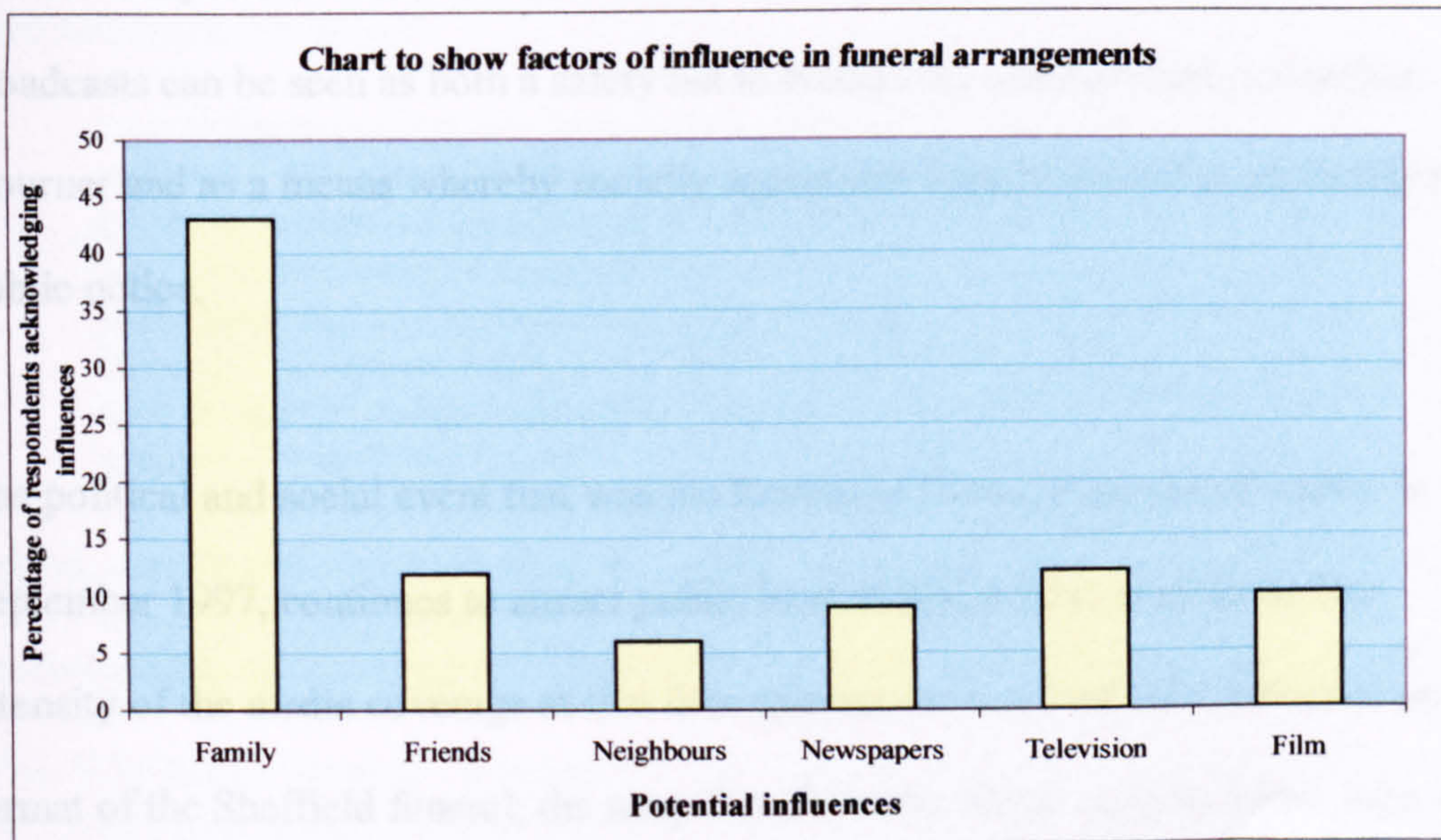
**Chart 12.i**



To behave in a customary manner is still the norm for British mourners, who have as their role models family and family history, friends and neighbours, and the wider community; the religious community is included within the overall concept of community, and for some mourners it is the greatest influence on ritual behaviour. In this overall view the mourners of Sheffield do not differ from those observed in the country as a whole. Social factors are seen to have particular influence on observed and noted funeral rituals. Sheffield residents who were respondents to this study and who claimed responsibility for arranging a funeral were asked about any funerals that they knew of, that they had been present at, or had observed, that might have influenced their own particular arrangements, other than those religious factors noted earlier. Positive responses, acknowledging influences, fitted into two broad categories: family, friends and neighbours, and those noted in the various media, such as factual newspaper and television reporting, and fictional funerals, particularly those portrayed in the television 'soaps'.



Chart 12.ii



Of the 67 respondents to this main section of the study, 12 stated that they knew of no particular influence when making their arrangements, whilst others gave more than one source of probable and possible influence. Notably, the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was mentioned by seven respondents as prompting them to include a piece of poetry in their particular funeral service. The television ‘soaps’ are seen as reflecting an aspect of reality; fictional funerals are marketed as an audience attraction but attain a lower level of interest than do weddings, and are unlikely to feature on the cover of *Radio Times*. However, the televised funeral of the ITV *Coronation Street* character ‘Judy Mallett’ on 1st October 1999, which saw the character’s infant twins taken to her funeral service, was seen by the respondents to this study as an abnormal event and not a reflection of reality, and as such unlikely to influence future funeral customs. Conversely, the televised funerals of newsworthy people can indeed promote changes in fashion and customs, such as the use of horses and nostalgic hearses, as noted in Chapter Seven; perhaps the greatest influence that the media have on current



funeral patterns lies within the scope of investigative journalism, whether written or televised, aspects of which are also discussed in Chapter Seven. ‘Watchdog’<sup>2</sup>-style broadcasts can be seen as both a safety net to protect the unaware and unfamiliar mourner and as a means whereby socially acceptable funeral practices are brought to public notice.

The political and social event that was the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, in September 1997, continues to attract public interest and private comment. The intensity of the media coverage at that time appears to have had little influence on the format of the Sheffield funeral; the song *Candle in the Wind*, sung by Elton John and referring specifically to the Princess, would be inappropriate for anyone else, and the John Tavener extract *Alleluia* is relatively unfamiliar, and likely to be used only in a recorded version: it is a piece of considerable musical difficulty. Although a Buckingham Palace spokesman described the planned funeral service as ‘a unique funeral for a unique person’<sup>3</sup>, in essence, it took the format of a conventional Church of England service: music, hymns and anthem(s), prayers and readings. However, of pertinence are the published comments which sought to reflect social moods, anxieties and doubts concerning the death and funeral of the Princess, events which allowed for no forethought in political attitudes and stances. That the Prime Minister and Government, recently swept to power, were involved in the funeral has never been disputed; that the level of involvement was unwise and likely to attract criticism is worthy of reflection, a situation commented upon barely two weeks after the Princess’s death:

‘Labour accused over funeral ...

The Government has commandeered the death of Diana, Princess of Wales for political purposes, it was claimed last night. Labour is behaving as though it owns the Royal family ... Labour officials denied trying to make political capital.’<sup>4</sup>



Again, the Queen's televised address to the nation, delivered prior to the funeral, attracted much comment:

'..on closer inspection, the language was quite unlike that of any previous Queen's message. " We have all been trying in our different ways, to cope" ... the word "cope" common enough but not particularly regal ... there can seldom have been a more direct and personal Sovereign-to-subject appeal than: "So what I say to you now, as your Queen and as a grandmother, I say from my heart." Students of royal-speak were stunned. The explanation, I gather, lies neither at Balmoral nor the Palace. The credit for this opening section belongs to one who knows all about "reaching out" to "the people" – Tony Blair.' <sup>5</sup>

Indeed, certain aspects of the content and delivery of that broadcast bore a strong and uncomfortable resemblance to the 'play what I wrote' aspects of the Morecambe and Wise 'Christmas Specials', a broadcast that was part of a Royal recovery package orchestrated by the government following increasing publicity surrounding public grief. The funeral was indeed a political event:

'It is a measure of how far the Prime Minister became associated in the public mind with Diana that there was little controversy in the decision he should have a central role in the Westminster Abbey service, with a reading from the Bible. ...' <sup>6</sup>

The delivery of the reading was stylised, with an emphasis on rehearsed, emotive delivery rather than content. As one Sheffield-based theatrical producer operating within the amateur field stated:

'I'm afraid he failed his audition.' <sup>7</sup>

***12.i Tony Blair reading a passage from  
1 Corinthians 13***



The political and social debate concerning the death of such a public figure as Diana, Princess of Wales, involved all aspects of public life. A 'Daily Telegraph' Court and Social Notebook, in 1999, comments, concerning an essay in a collection of similar



essays from academics at Lancaster University:

‘...[The] contributor informs us that the Princess’s death was “possibly the biggest single event in world history, if we define an event as something contemporary which living human beings share”. Move over Berlin Wall, Hiroshima ...’<sup>8</sup>

Any analysis and study of the recorded events is likely to be lengthy, thus:

- why the massive, blanketing media coverage?
- why the lake of flowers?
- why the mass television audience for the funeral?
- why the public screams, sobs and thrown flowers?
- why the labels *hysteria; religious revival; grief manipulation; orchestration?*
- why were other potentially newsworthy items, such as the death of Mother Teresa, given comparatively little attention?

This debate has received the deserved attention of academics concerned with folklore.

Articles in *Folklore*, published the year after her death, add substantially to any informed analysis; descriptive markers, set down by Bowman, can thus ‘be used as raw data in the future’.<sup>9</sup> Her article includes observations of variations in public reactions to the death of Diana in the City of Bath, noting that regional variations and innovations in these reactions need to be recorded. She introduces her article by presuming that:

‘where were you when you heard the news about Diana?’ will become a significant question in the future; it will become the catalyst personal experience narratives, contemporary legends, examples of folk poetry and reminiscences and reflections about what changes (if any) her death set in motion.’

Bowman’s concluding remarks question what forms of remembrance, if any, would be noticed one year after her death. On this, Walter notes:

‘In the event, very little happened at the anniversary.’<sup>10</sup>

Notes to Bowman’s article include the observation that just one memorial dedicated to Mother Theresa was noticed. It is predicted that Mother Theresa will soon be



beatified: a precursor to sainthood. Notions of sainthood for Diana, as a note on a floral tribute at Kensington Palace emphasised: 'Saint Princess Diana, Queen of Hearts',<sup>11</sup> did not survive. Again, a proposal that a Nobel Peace Prize be dedicated to Diana headed the agenda for a committee meeting called to consider how best to honour the princess.<sup>12</sup> The dedication did not occur.

Evans' article, in the same section of the publication, catalogues 'The Diana Phenomenon' in the Midlands of England, concluding:

'It may be that the response to the death of Diana was a popular attempt to create a mechanism for expressing a sense of loss in a society where "correct" or traditional methods are no longer seen as suitable.'<sup>13</sup>

This section opens with a pertinent article by Biddle and Walter, which includes the comment that:

'The media have for some time been on the lookout for the emotions of grieving ... an emotional "invigilation" which reached new heights (or depths) in the aftermath of Diana's death. ... we have suggested that the press selectively constructed their stereo type of expressive mourners ... perhaps the public expressiveness was not primarily about grief at all, but an expression of the guilt and pathos felt at the end of a story that went terribly wrong.'<sup>14</sup>

Biddle and Walter note here that the press were 'clearly articulating, perpetuating and honouring two contradictory types of grief; the openly expressive and the controlled private'. However, the Sheffield funeral is not a political event. Rather, it is the necessarily public exposure of a private ritual. The extremes of the national media event that was the funeral of Diana are unlikely to be reflected in Sheffield.

## **1.ii Religious liturgy and change**

Within religious communities the private ritual of a funeral for close family and friends is likely to be extended to encompass the wider structure present within that



community. Commenting on the public aspects of the funeral for Diana, Princess of Wales, an editorial comment in the 'Daily Telegraph' notes:

**'The astonishing thing about the mourning for Diana has been its intensity among people who had never met her. ... Some people clearly felt she was part of their own extended family. ... The expressions of grief also have the appearance of a spiritual outpouring. People do need to express, from time to time, emotions such as sadness, guilt and grief. In a religious society, these emotions would frequently find their expression in church services. But in an agnostic society, people lack an opportunity to vent them. Diana's death has offered an exceptional opportunity for people to express emotions that normally must hide in the shadows.'** <sup>15</sup>

This 'appearance of a spiritual outpouring' is seen to have prompted the agenda of a confidential meeting of the House of Bishops of the Church of England, in October 1997, to debate how the Church should respond to these outward signs of spiritual hunger. A collation of comments and hypothetical questions, identified or anonymous, were gathered under the banner of '*Diana's death brings Church inquest*' in a short newspaper article on likely topics to be discussed during the forthcoming scheduled termly meeting of Bishops. <sup>16</sup> The tabled comments and questions concerning the content of the funeral service itself, and any associated religious events, were divisive, and included such diverse generalisations as:

- some clergy cheered by attendances at churches
- some clergy felt that the Church's response catered for people's needs
- some worried by the secular overtones of much of the mourning
- the established Church appeared to be "sidelined" during the funeral

An anonymous General Synod member interviewed is stated to have commented:

- 'We have got serious lessons to learn about the spiritual mood of the nation.
- The Church has a responsibility to look at its role in the face of popular religion and popular sentiment. The Church should examine the culture, context and status of religion in society. Most of the religion came from the Prime Minister and from the temporary shrines in the streets. It was almost "new-agey".
- We were swept along just as the Queen was. A lot of us were bullied.
- The funeral service was more like Desert Island Discs than a funeral.
- The Westminster Abbey service featured Elton John but no sermon or mention of the Resurrection, which has appalled many traditionalists, and has led to a huge increase in requests for similar services.
- The bishops could have taken a much more direct and active response. The service missed out on the opportunity to speak to the nation on the themes of death and resurrection.'



The Bishop of Chichester is quoted:

‘The Church needs to reflect very carefully on the phenomenon of the people who filled the churches. It was a warning to clergy who concentrate just on building the congregation of a church rather than having responsibility to everyone within the parish.’

and the Bishop of Ely:

‘The Princess’s death had a massive impact on the church. There is a great deal to think about. This event shook a lot of people.’

Again, from the Bishop of Hull:

‘The death showed the spiritual vacuum in people’s lives. It gave them an opportunity to grieve for other losses. The Princess became a symbol of compassion and there is an appetite for symbols of compassion in our society. Funerals will never be the same again because of this. It’s something we need to reflect upon.’

The spiritual leader of the Church of England, Dr George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke of the unifying aspects of this funeral during a lecture in October 1997 on preparing the Church for the millennium, referring to the humbling and astonishing reaction to the death which proved that Christianity still thrived in Britain, and applauded Westminster Abbey for providing the country with an accessible, inclusive and yet distinctly religious setting.<sup>17</sup> Yet Fr. Geoffrey Kirk, representing the Diocese of London, and an Anglo-Catholic traditionalist, was set to question the Archbishop at the November Synod meeting on the format of the funeral service itself, believing that the Church of England was seriously wrong to allow funerals to be performed in this way. He is quoted in a newspaper article as saying:

‘This is not what the universal Church does in commending a soul to Jesus Christ. If the Church of England gets conned into doing this kind of thing, it gets conned into not caring about everlasting life.’<sup>18</sup>

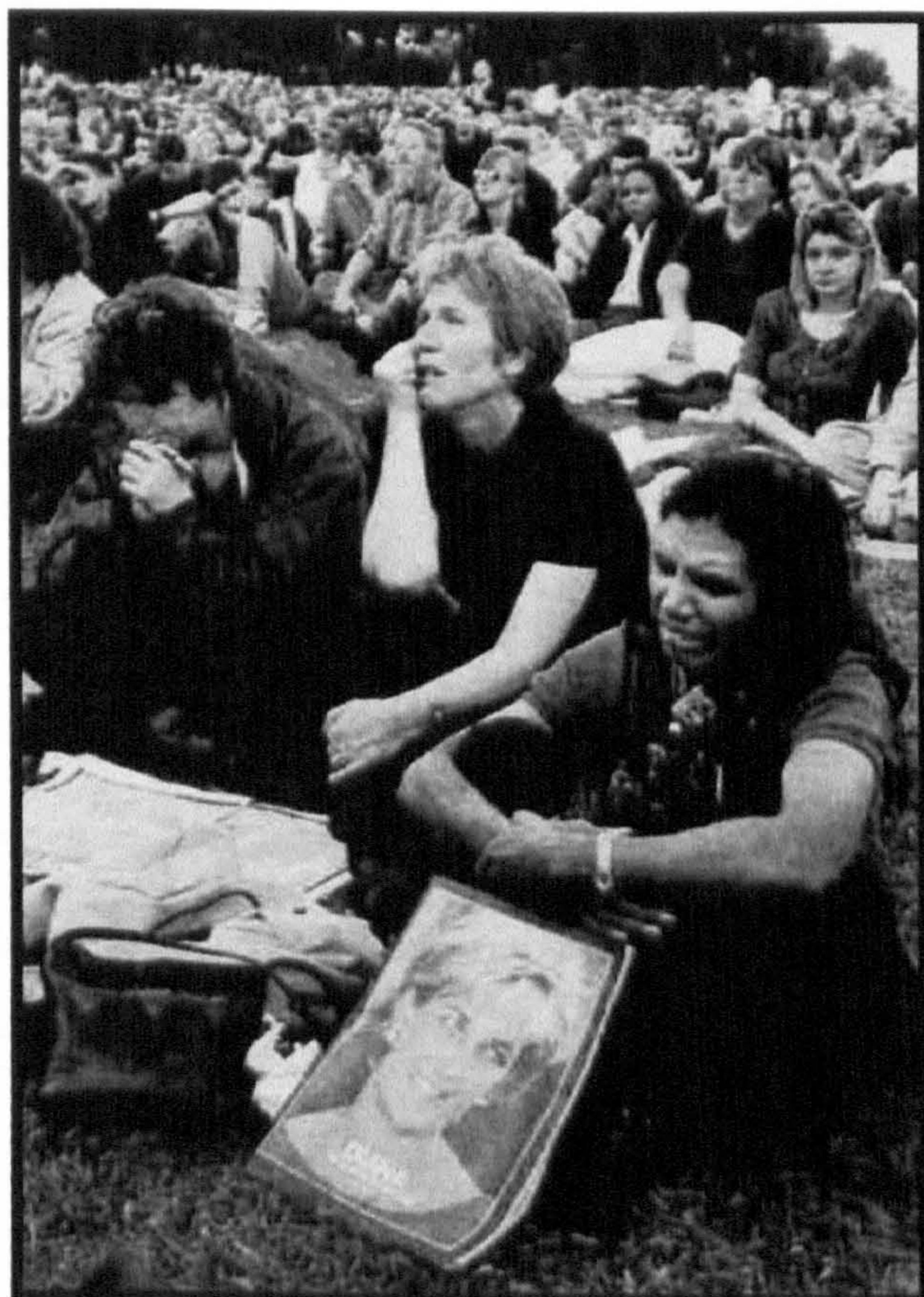
The same article comments that Fr. Kirk was not expecting much support from Synod because the funeral was widely praised for its ability to draw people in and help the nation in its mourning. The optimism for a spiritual revival following the reaction to



the death and subsequent funeral of Diana did not last. As a November 1997 letter to the 'Daily Telegraph' comments:

'Certain Anglican officials claim that a "new mood of spirituality has swept the country" since the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. This is sheer fantasy with not a scrap of solid evidence to support it. A much loved public figure dies in tragic circumstances and is mourned by millions – who, after a few days or weeks, revert to their old ways. All the great spiritual movements – the Reformation, the Wesleyan Revival ... owed their origins and progress to men who walked close to God and saw the needs of their times with the eye of faith. ... When commenting on the state of their Church, Anglican leaders should confine themselves to observed and measurable facts.'<sup>19</sup>

In Sheffield, the Rural Dean of Ecclesall, the Revd David Williams, stated, in his sermon of Sunday 14th September, that much of the public mourning was in effect private mourning for those who had never been fully mourned before: that an opportunity to focus the mind on loss and anguish instead of utilising coping strategies based on the denial of grief was taken up to the full. There was no shame in mourning.



### *12.ii Grief*

The funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales,  
Hyde Park, London  
September 6, 1997



It could be said that whilst crowd behaviour had a large part to play in the observed behaviour in the London parks, the massive audience for the broadcast service reflected something of the mood of the population. Royal and state funerals are seen as a vital part of the character of perceived religion; the state funeral for Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, is known to have been planned for some considerable time. The funeral for Diana was unexpected, and in that circumstance must lie some of the reasons for the controversies surrounding recorded events. The public and media's response to this one death is, in itself, an area for further, considered research, as part of a study of the customs and rituals surrounding the deaths of media 'icons'. It must be considered that the renewal strategies for common funerals within the Established Church are likely to have to wait until the new *Common Worship Liturgy* comes into use in 2001, when it will replace the *Alternative Services Book*.<sup>20</sup>

## **2.i The secular alternative**

The population of Sheffield appear to maintain their settled way of life throughout change and adversity. The present population can give many examples of stress and trouble: unemployment; poor housing; chronic ill-health; bombings; strikes; resettlement; rising costs; political battles. Throughout all these 't'owd church', the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, has been at the centre of the city and city life, and available for the various needs of the population, including their funeral services, and, for hundreds of years, a place for the burial of the dead. However, this same population has had religious needs other than those ascribed to the Established Church. Not only was Sheffield a strong centre for Nonconformism, and its University known as an establishment promoting Methodism, its General Cemetery



was one of the first to be funded. To this pattern of living and dying must be added the secular facets of mortality, that is, rituals without any religious component.

Just as the services of a funeral director are not obligatory, as discussed in Chapter Eleven, so funerals need no service, religious or secular. A body, suitably and simply prepared and coffined or shrouded as appropriate, can be delivered to a local authority burial ground or crematorium and it will receive respectful disposal. All that is required is that the appropriate fee be paid. Similarly, a body may be disposed of in one's own land, with no religious service. Yet, for the vast majority of the people of Sheffield and of Britain, such actions promote distaste and are seen as inappropriate ways of behaving. A religious service, and particularly a Christian Church of England service, is seen as an obligation to the deceased, unless there are definite alternative needs which have been previously laid down. The 'New Humanist', the Journal of the Rationalist Press Association, categorically opposes all forms of taught religion, and consists of articles and reviews of publications which are seen to support humanist values and discredit any religion. A 1999 survey of its readership contains the information that the readership wishes to be known by many titles: rationalist; humanist; freethinker; atheist; agnostic; secularist; scientific humanist; ethical humanist; religious humanist as well as the ubiquitous 'other'. The British Humanist Association publishes a small book, noted in Chapter Two of this study, *Funerals Without God*. This contains helpful information on the possible contents of a secular funeral ceremony. The Introduction comments on the need for a ceremony:

'The public expression and sharing of grief are generally considered an essential part of recovery after the death of someone close, and the opportunity for this shared grieving is provided by the various world religions according to their own rites. But it can be both distasteful and distressing for those present if a religious service is carried out for someone who had no religious belief.'



Humanists believe that there is a growth in demand for non-religious funerals; the

Introduction continues:

'This has presented the Humanist movement with a considerable challenge. ... as the demand for officiants grows, we are kept busy running training courses for new volunteers.'<sup>21</sup>

The Humanists also appear to have the ability to smile at themselves, as noted by this example in the June 1999 edition of the *Sheffield Humanist Newsletter*:

**NEWS!!**

An animal loving atheist who didn't want to be buried on consecrated ground has become the first person to be interred at a pets' cemetery in Crawshawbooth, Lancashire.

(Manchester Evening News, 7.5.99)

Again, secular ceremonies are willingly offered by those within the Unitarian church, such as those taken by the Revd. Baker of the Underbank Chapel, Stannington. Any apparent growing popularity of the secular funeral is unlikely to be experienced to the full within the traditionalist population of the City of Sheffield; however, it remains an available alternative ceremony to the religious funeral service.

## 2.ii Urban versus rural

With increasing ease of transportation and better communications, the disparity observed within the various communities and villages that comprise Sheffield grows less with each decade, and observed similarities increase. The open, urban communities and suburbs exhibit similar patterns of funeral customs. Saunders, 1992, studied three distinct demographical areas of the city, and found that two of the areas, Ecclesall and Grenoside, had open, urban characteristics, that is, open to influences of



change, whilst the third, Woodhouse, had remained partially closed, cut off physically and socially from the city. In the concluding chapter, Saunders states:

**'The funeral in an open, urban community is designed to disrupt the family as little as possible. ... The body normally rests at the premises of an undertaker before the committal. It seldom returns to its former home. ... Neighbours may not be aware of a death until the funeral cortege draws up outside the home. This occurrence is less likely in village-type communities where everyone's business is common. There is also a growing trend for mourners to meet at the place of service or committal: neighbours may remain in ignorance.'**<sup>22</sup>

In practical terms, Woodhouse is now suburban; the Woodhouse village undertaker, H. Keeton, has opened a suite of small rooms which are used as chapels of rest, yet the village has poorer communications than in 1992, with a reduced bus service and the new Supertram passing it by on its way to the thriving township of Mosborough. The population is increasingly elderly and the school rolls are shrinking rapidly. The village remains closed to newer, innovative approaches to a funeral service; Revd Brian Cranwell, vicar of Woodhouse until 1999, states that the family and friends of the deceased could not be persuaded to participate in the funeral service: that was the vicar's role.

Again, the commuter village of Grenoside was the setting for a traditional village funeral in November 1999, when a funeral and service of thanksgiving for the life of a woman who had been actively involved in many aspects of village life was held in the parish church of St. Mark, the service being conducted by the Revd Mark Carey, the son of the Archbishop. Long before the start of the service the little church was more crowded than could be imagined, and the only area not crammed with those sitting, squatting or standing was the sanctuary. The family home was almost opposite the church and before the service the house received a continual stream of visitors carrying cards. The funeral procession met at the house and walked from there behind the hearse and so into the church. The service included musical items from the local



Male Voice Choir, and the coffin was carried out to a movement from 'Elijah', a recording of a concert given by Sheffield Oratorio Chorus, in which the deceased had participated. Grenoside maintains many of its rural attributes.

The notion of urban versus rural in terms of funerals is gaining a novel definition which applies purely to the geographical location of the place of committal or interment. The new, private crematorium of Grenoside is marketed not only in terms of its facilities, but also for its attractive, rural situation. As a Bereavement Officer at the City Road Crematorium said:

'You look out at horses in the next field. How can we compete? On City Road?'<sup>23</sup>

However, plans are presently in hand to turn a stretch of wasteland adjacent to the City Road Cemetery and Crematorium into pleasing parkland.<sup>24</sup> Again, Bradfield's Burton Cemetery at Oughtibridge is known for its rural outlook, and the outlying cemeteries at Woodhouse and Handsworth have rural views. Just as weddings are held in attractive surroundings, so the notion of place of committal is seen as having increasing importance in the future.

### 2.iii A multi-ethnic society

Sheffield Bereavement Services makes every effort to accommodate the needs of the representatives of the major faiths who live in the city. This study identified one major deficit in its provisions, and that is one of running water for the dispersal of ashes for Hindus. The River Don is accepted as too small to be used for such a need, and therefore ashes are kept in Sheffield until they can be returned to India and the River Ganges. A minor cause for concern identified by this section of the study was a criticism of the positive discriminatory provisions made by Sheffield Bereavement



Services, in that facilities were available for the speedy committal of bodies for religious reasons. This complaint of unfairness was only applied to a particularly busy season, such as during an extended holiday period at Christmas and New Year.

However, those complaining did not wish the facility to be removed for those needing it; rather they wished that circumstances could be changed to accommodate their own needs. That this might involve using a pre-dug grave with no choice of site was not however apparent. At no time during the study was it suggested that any religious community purchase their own burial ground or crematorium, run in the same way as the Jewish Cemetery in Ecclesfield. To put such a notion into practice would be inordinately expensive. The existing Jewish Cemetery is contained within a large, underdeveloped site, and is likely to be of sufficient size for many years.

#### **2.iv Trading Patterns**

If the concept of private, single-faith cemeteries is futuristic, the notion of private, rural cemeteries is not. The woodland cemetery at Ulley, near Rotherham, is viable, although the rural aspects are marred by the nearby motorway noise. However, as burials count for less than 30% of all committals, private cemeteries are not seen as a profitable venture unless an appropriate marketing gap can be identified and developed. To accommodate those who wish for a woodland burial and yet remain within a Local Authority operation, the newly developed section of Wisewood Cemetery is offered as an operational alternative. Sheffield has its first private crematorium at Grenoside, which is well placed to serve those living in the north of the city, together with others who wish to make use of its modern facilities and rural situation. It is already popular, and is likely to be profitable.



The marketing of pre-need plans as an insurance policy is a developing enterprise that is subject to regular sales drives and leaflet distribution. Material is set out on display for mourners who attend funeral directors for whatever reason, and the strategy is included in publication-based advertising. As Saunders, 1992, states:

**'Insurance to cover funeral costs has long been popular in this country. ... Various forms of insurance are currently available, all of which are designed to cover funeral costs. The form of insurance offered by funeral pre-payment plans is specific. It allows the insured to specify precise details about his own funeral.'** <sup>25</sup>

These planned funerals are more expensive than those purchased at the time of need, and they are sold as ensuring that the purchaser gets the funeral desired. Some plans are advertised without regard to British law, which lays down that the body is the property of the next of kin or executor, who can deliver it to a crematorium in a cardboard coffin if that is the chosen desire, rather than have, as the funeral and committal, the church service and burial in the family plot in the parish churchyard that has been organised and paid for by a pre-need funeral plan.

The 'Age Concern Funeral Plan', marketed under the auspices of the registered charity 'Age Concern' yet largely owned by the American-owned Service Corporation International, presently sells its pre-paid plans on the basis that the purchaser can decide beforehand how he wishes his body to be committed, and that his wishes must be adhered to: a policy and belief firmly stated by the American SCI spokesperson in October 1999. <sup>26</sup>



### 12.iii Age Concern Marketing Leaflet, 1999



#### 'THE AGE CONCERN FUNERAL PLAN GUARANTEES

- A choice of funeral plans to suit your needs and budget.
- The funeral exactly as you've planned it.\*

*\*Where a church service is required, the content of the service is of course subject to approval by the relevant church.'*<sup>27</sup>

This policy is presently being challenged by the Natural Death Society and the Terence Higgins Trust. Nevertheless, given that most relatives, next of kin or executors would wish to comply with the funeral plans made and paid for by the deceased, it is expected that the selling of funeral plans will continue to be available for an increasing market. The Age Concern website<sup>28</sup> contains details of nine organisations which market plans which can also be sold through funeral directors.

A developing method of trading is that of the fast-growing field of electronic information and sales; internet trading is being heavily promoted in many sections of marketing, including commodity purchases such as groceries, records and books, and banking. This study of funeral practices identified many aspects of relevant information and materials that can be obtained via the internet; coffins, tributes,

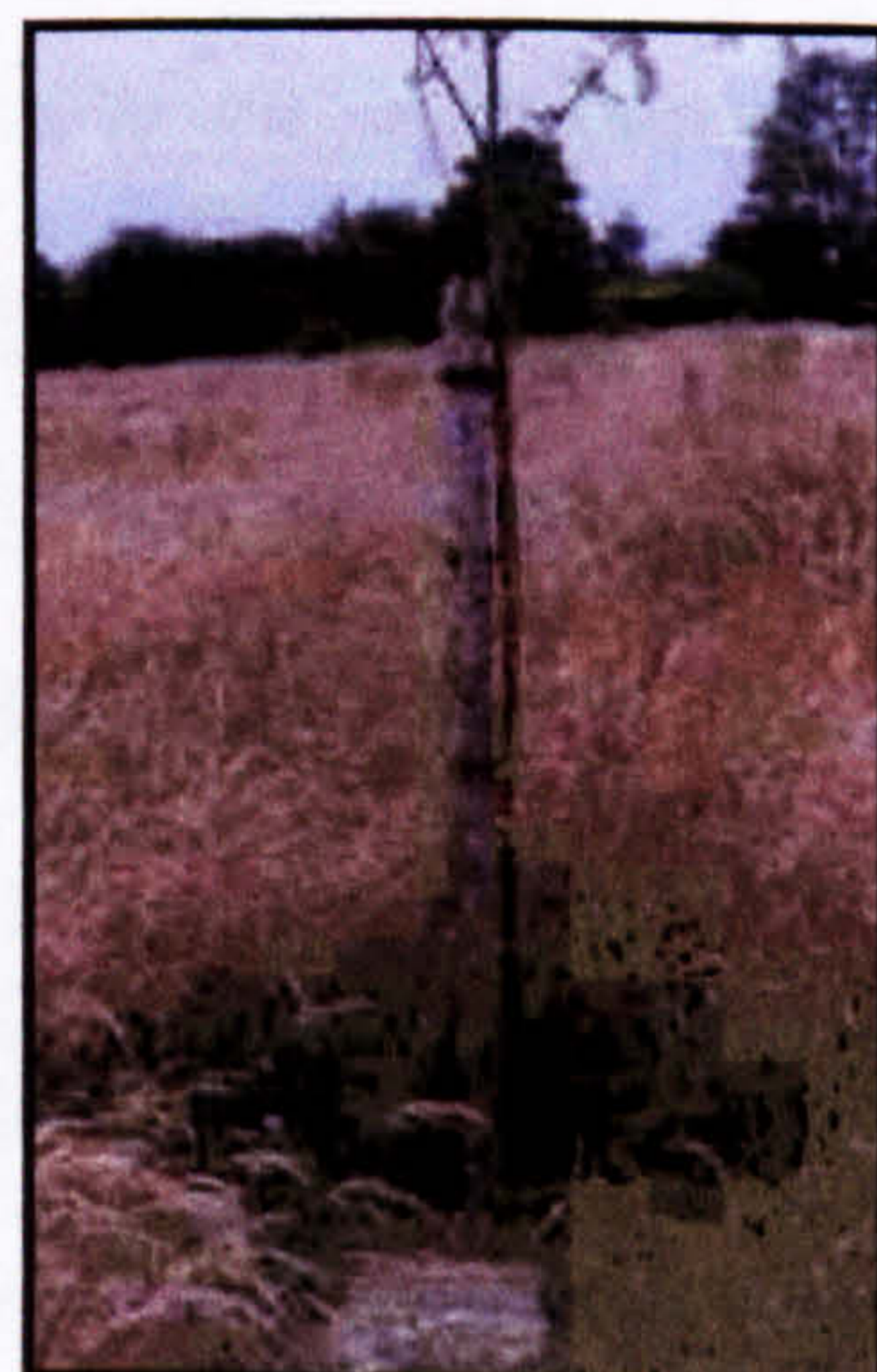


gravestones and prayers can all be purchased, pre-need funeral plans arranged, and electronic ‘memorials’ placed on websites. The field of ‘electronic’ funerals is worthy of further research.

### 3.i The ‘Green’ Movement

The primary concern of the ‘Green Movement’ is ecology and the general environment. Burial is still the preferred choice of about 30% of the population, whether for reasons of religion, distance from a crematorium or perhaps the ownership of a family plot, or indeed for any imaginable reason; many Roman Catholics choose burial as their traditional method of committal even though cremation is now considered acceptable. For most of these 30% the ‘Green Movement’ is inconsequential, their choice of committal having little to do with conservation or ecology. Dedicated followers of the ‘Green Movement’ would choose a DIY burial on their own land, without the use of purchased coffin or any of the services of an undertaker. However, as noted in Chapters Six and Eleven of this study, there are many degrees of adherence to an ecologically sound practice. For many it will simply be the use of an ‘environmentally-friendly’ cardboard coffin for a cremation, although here there are now strongly-voiced doubts as to just how friendly these coffins are. For others, a green burial is one where the interment is in a woodland burial ground: ‘I’m going to be an oak.’

#### 12.iv *Woodland Burial, Wisewood* Copse or forest?





Many who are environmentally conscious would seek to continue to use existing burial grounds as they are seen as a vital patch of 'green' in a city or town, operating as the lungs of the environment, and a safe habitat for wildlife, as well as being an educational resource. Whilst there is a growth in the interest shown in woodland burials, the provision of one small section of one cemetery by Sheffield's Bereavement Services does not indicate that this method of interment is 'the way forward' for the future. Rather, it reflects the current attitude of the Sheffield authorities, that a given need will be met, if at all possible. Yet the strength of the movement should not be underestimated: the Anglican church has made a positive response to such a need.

'A woodland burial site, with trees replacing gravestones and coffins of cardboard, is to be opened by the Church of England. Ely diocese intends to buy a 30-acre plot in Cambridgeshire. ... There are few woodland burial sites, but until now the church has distanced itself from what seemed a setting for pagans and humanists. ... The Rev Peter Owen-Jones, who was behind the campaign for a woodland site, said: "Woodland burials are not pagan. It is not about becoming a tree in the after-life. It is about recognising that we have been sustained by creation, and that in death we can give something back."'<sup>29</sup>

### 3.ii The Sheffield Funeral and the The English Way

Jessica Mitford's volume, *The American Way of Death*, with its stringent overview of the funeral industry in the United States of America, was regarded as revealing a scandal at the time of its publication in 1963. The style of funeral in Britain at that time was considered tasteful, subdued and respectful, following traditions laid down by one's forefathers. Money-markets formed the basis of the American industry, and its high-pressure selling and apparent glorifying of the dead, were seen by Mitford as:

'adopting a code of morality devised by undertakers for themselves ... many a badly stung survivor ... has ruefully concluded that the victory has been won hands down by a funeral establishment in a disastrously unequal battle.'<sup>30</sup> ... A brief look backwards would seem to establish that there is no resemblance between the funeral practices of today and those of even 50 to 100 years ago, and that there is nothing in the "history



of Western Civilization” to support the thesis of continuity and gradual development of funeral customs.’<sup>31</sup>

Mitford also comments that the American funeral directors often say ‘England is about 50 years behind us’ and that it is unwise to underestimate the penetrating power of American enterprise; the American missionary schemes to ‘civilize’ English funerals are already underway.<sup>32</sup> Yet here one must once again refer to Litten’s artistic yet historical overview of *The English Way of Death: the Common Funeral Since 1450*. However, the timespan of his work ceases at the start of the First World War, and does not continue to the time of its publication in 1991. Litten plots the changes noted in the English common funeral as well as information on the Heraldic funerals of old. The funeral customs now being enacted by the common people of Britain reflect some of the characteristics of those identified in Mitford, but with a heavy overlay of commonsense. Massive vaults and marble statues are no longer permitted in Britain’s public cemeteries. Hygienic treatment is sold by the large conglomerates but they are still faced by the sceptical Briton who believes in value for money. The ‘mob hysteria’ at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, a phenomenon identified as such by the columnist Claudia FitzHerbert in the ‘Daily Telegraph’,<sup>33</sup> was seen as a special situation and one unlikely to be repeated in the foreseeable future. The English way is private, contained and restrained, and is likely to remain so.

This study has sought to demonstrate that the prominence of the funerary rites of the Sheffield funeral differ from that identified by van Gennep. The model of the Sheffield funeral, set out in Table 3.i, points to the prominent preliminal rites of separation, such as coffins and flowers; funeral directors and notices; and the funeral procession itself, and the lesser importance of other rituals such as a period of



mourning; vigils and Chapels of Rest; the suspension of social life and an obligatory dress code. In Sheffield, it can be seen that the rites of incorporation for the deceased, which include any funeral ceremony, have a lesser impact than those of separation, but these postliminal rituals have a degree of importance for the mourner, although the provision of funeral food is often seen as a commercial extra which must be included, and as simply and cheaply as possible. A mourner outside the family finds attendance at this particular ritual increasingly problematical, thereby giving the rite a greater focus of attention that it would seem to merit, and thus demonstrating the subtle changes identified in an urban funeral. The funeral ceremonies are fleeting and remembrances frequently focus on the coffin, the flowers and the mechanisms of committal:

- 'It was leaving the coffin there. I'll never forget that.' *Grenoside Crematorium*
- 'Why do they have to have those curtains closing? Awful - I can see it now.' *City Road Crematorium, optional closing*
- 'The flowers – they were beautiful. And the scent. Yes- the smell of a funeral. No one tells you about that.' *Abbey Lane burial*
- 'It was better than my Grandmother's at Sefton. There, the coffin sank into the ground.' *City Road Crematorium*
- 'It was cold. And wet. We stood around, and a few people threw a flower in the grave. It was lined with artificial green stuff. I could do with some of that. We all had to take turns to go and look in the grave, at him. I just followed all the others.' *Ecclesall Graveyard*

### 3.iii Religious responses

Given humanity's need for development and subsequent change, the response of the religious community to death and any funeral is also subject to change: it cannot be static. The notion that 'this is how things are done and this is how things will remain' is understandable, but implausible. Just as Mitford saw no substance in the thesis of change, so many now would seek to keep that with which they are familiar. Any change is unsettling, and changes of known funeral rituals particularly so, given the



need for stability at a time of bereavement. The Church of England now prints a modernised version of the Lord's Prayer in its *Alternative Services*, a prayer book which is now obsolete. However, most clergy interviewed acknowledged the need for using the long-established wording during a funeral; many mourners would know only the traditional words, and, indeed, it is considered likely that it is the only prayer known by many. A funeral is not a time for the introduction of new concepts. Given that the Anglican church is set to introduce new liturgy in 2001, the likelihood of unsettling change is high. However, it is expected that the new services will seek to re-establish some of the old liturgy that was lost during the Reformation period, and that a greater variety of funeral services, catering for various periods of mourning and different circumstances, is to be introduced, rather in the manner of the new Roman Catholic liturgy. Indeed, it is also expected that the new rite will merely encompass services and rituals that are already offered by priests who feel a strong need within their community for such services and celebrations. The Anglican church is busy redesigning its offerings on death; these include more clergy acting as Bereavement Counsellors, and the establishment of regular memorial services: grief management is likely to be seen as a major part of the clergy's' job description with regard to aspects of death. However, Walter, 1996, notes:

'Today, even though a priest is likely to officiate at the funeral, the actual business of disposing of the body and many of the rituals surrounding this, have passed into secular hands ... people today dispose of their dead within a substantially secular frame.'<sup>34</sup>

Priests have a need to participate in the rituals surrounding death, and to claim back that which they consider to have lost: a prime role in bereavement. Yet Walter, 1996, continues:

'The bereavement counsellor or fellow widow who listens to and accepts the widow's private feelings and personal meanings is acceptable; the priest authoritatively



offering God's solace is not – unless he recasts himself as a counsellor – which many clergy are in fact doing.'<sup>35</sup>

As there is no legal requirement for a funeral 'service' as there is for a marriage, it is considered very unlikely that a secular, official funeral ceremony will be established as in the manner of the registrar's function at a secular wedding. A marriage can be dissolved: death is everlasting, and religion is seen as the concept that can best handle the insecurities of an eternity.

#### 4. Conclusions

Religion continues to dominate certain aspects of the Sheffield funeral, most notably the funeral service and committal. The funerals of the minority religions are least subject to any change, most notably those of the Jewish faith, and yet even here the introduction of horizontal grave markers as a defence against vandalism is not a change that has been readily and totally accepted, the traditional upright stele or grave marker having been in use for thousands of years.



#### **12.v A lone upright gravemarker in the Jewish Cemetery**

It is now recommended that gravemarkers are horizontal as a deterrent to vandalism.

Again, the Muslim community has adapted traditional funeral customs to fit into the British way of death: here the body cannot be carried through the streets, being passed from person to person, each wishing to participate in the ritual and so gain rewards. At a Muslim funeral in Britain all present strive to participate in the handling of the coffin, but only at a socially acceptable place, the graveside. Sikhs and Hindus cannot



light the funeral pyre, but they can press the button that charges the cremator and so fulfil some of their needs.

As noted earlier in this chapter, secular practices now deal with the physical disposal of the body. For many mourners, the terms 'bodily disposal', 'committal', and 'funeral' are synonymous, the latter being the favoured, acceptable term. When a funeral is discussed, as in the course of this study, it is the manner of committal that is brought to mind. The question: 'What sort of funeral was it?' will prompt the reply that it was a cremation or perhaps a burial. The style and manner of any service is rarely mentioned unless specific questions are asked. The exceptions are those funerals where there was a strong religious connection, where the format of a service is likely to be mentioned before the manner of committal. The Sheffield funeral is seen as a ritual that attempts to merge the individual with a traditional rite. The predominantly nominal Anglican population of Sheffield necessarily organise their funerals within an established secular framework yet require a traditional religious tone to colour their actions. The religious service is the core of the ritual; without this the strength of the final rite of passage would lack vital substance: it provides strength to the mourner when the structure of existence would appear to be crumbling. Sheffield's clergy may indeed retrain as Bereavement Counsellors to aid the mourners they consider to be within their care, and this service may benefit those whom they seek to aid, yet the prime function of organised religion in funerals in Sheffield is still seen to be the offering and provision of a funeral service appropriate to the needs of the mourners in a ritual that best reflects and acknowledges the life of the deceased.



## Notes

1. Litten, p.171
2. Current / recent television programmes: BBC: 'Watchdog'; ITV: 'We can work it out', both consumer-based, featuring investigative reporting
3. 'Daily Telegraph', September 2, 1997, p.1
4. 'Daily Telegraph', September 14, 1997, p.5
5. 'Daily Telegraph', September 11, 1997, p.28
6. 'Sunday Telegraph', September 7, 1997, p.18
7. Primary evidence: conversation, Jean Thornton, Ecclesall Players, September 1997
8. 'Daily Telegraph', August 19, 1999, p.20, 'Court and Social'
9. Bowman, M., "Research Note: After Diana", *Folklore*, Vol.109, 1998, pp. 99-101
10. Walter, T., (ed.), *The Mourning for Diana*, Oxford, Berg, 1999, p. 273
11. 'Sunday Telegraph', September 14, 1997, p.22
12. 'Sunday Telegraph', September 21, 1997, p.5
13. Evans, M., "The Diana Phenomenon: Reaction in the East Midlands", *Folklore*, Vol. 109, 1998, p.103
14. Biddle, L., and Walter, T., "The Emotional Queen of Hearts", *Folklore*, Vol. 109, 1998, p.99
15. 'Daily Telegraph', September 12, 1997, p.27
16. 'Sunday Telegraph', October 5, 1997, p.7
17. 'Daily Telegraph', October 14, 1997, p.11
18. 'Daily Telegraph', November 24, 1997, p.7
19. 'Daily Telegraph', November 17, 1997, p.19
20. The forthcoming *Common Worship Liturgy* has yet to be published
21. Willson, pp. 5, 6
22. Saunders, 1992, pp. 152, 153



**PAGE**  
**NUMBERING**  
**AS ORIGINAL**



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The National Association of Funeral directors (NAFD): [www.members.tripod.com/](http://www.members.tripod.com/)

The Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF): [www.saif.org.uk/](http://www.saif.org.uk/)

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## APPENDIX A

### Contents: Databases

#### 1. Representatives

- 1.i Religious representatives and places of worship
- 1.ii Trade representatives
- 1.iii Professional Representatives

#### 2. Respondents / selected

#### 3. Places

#### 1.i Religious Representatives and Places of Worship

##### Church of England

**Cathedral:** Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and  
Saint Paul  
The Very Revd Michael Sadgrove, Provost  
The Very Revd John Gladwin, past Provost,  
(now Bishop of Guildford)  
Revd Canon Jane Sinclair  
Revd Canon Christopher Smith  
William Ross, Head Verger

**Traditional:** St. John the Evangelist, Abbeydale  
Revd Vic Filer  
Revd Wilfred Hudson  
Revd Brian Cranwell

**Low Church:** St John, Park  
Revd Clive Kemp

**Evangelical:** All Saints, Ecclesall  
Revd Canon Dr. Peter Williams  
Bob Chapman, churchyard information

St Gabriel, Greystones  
Revd Pedr Beckley

**Anglo-Catholic:** St. Matthew, Carver Street  
Revd Mark Wakely

##### Roman Catholic

**Cathedral:** Cathedral Church of St Marie  
Fr Brian Stocks

St Theresa, Prince of Wales Road  
Fr Brian Davies (now at Wombwell)

Our Lady of Beauchief and St Thomas  
Fr Mark McManus



Mother of God  
Mgr William Kilgannon

Polish Centre  
Fr Andrew Pyster

St Joseph, Handsworth  
Fr Thomas White

**Methodist**

Carver Street Methodist Church  
Revd Jonathan Kerry

Woodhouse  
Revd Brian Bullick

Bents Green  
Revd Edward Curliss

**Baptist**

Cemetery Road Baptist Church  
Revd Chris Ellis

**United Reformed**

Central United Reformed Church  
Revd Frank Beattie

**Congregational**

Hillsborough Tabernacle Congregational  
Revd Martin Hill

**Pentecostal**

Elim Pentecostal  
Central, Campo Lane  
John Mirfin

Assembly of the Church of God  
South Parade  
Sarah Bird

**Greek Orthodox**

St Matthew, Carver Street  
Nigel Gotteri

**Unitarian**

Underbank Chapel  
Revd Ernest Baker

**Quaker** – The Religious Society of Friends

Friends Meeting House  
Faith Roger



**Jewish**

Orthodox  
Wilson Road (now at Psalter Lane)  
Judy Ballin: Burial Society

Liberal (small cong.)  
Ranmoor Church hall  
Shirley and David Lee

**Muslim**

Sunni - Deobandi  
Islamic Centre, Wolseley Road  
Imran Nazir  
Surriya Chaudry

**Sikh** ( including Khalsa)

Gurdwara – ‘Sikh Temple’  
Ellesmere Road North  
P. Thandi

**Buddhist**

New Kadampa Tradition

Gyaltsabje Buddhist Centre  
Nether Edge  
Kelsang Shenzen

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

Sheffield Buddhist Centre  
Glossop Road  
Su Siddhi

**Humanist**

Gordon Sinclair, Hoyland



## **1.ii Trade Representatives**

### **Funeral Directors**

- **B&C Funeral Services**, Suffolk Road, Sheffield  
Contact: Malcolm Bratton
- **John Fairest Funeral Home**, Penistone Road, Sheffield  
Contacts: Martin Askew; Steven Willis
- **John Heath & Sons**, Earsham Street, Sheffield  
Contacts: Michael Heath, Jason Heath
- **H. Keeton**, Highfield Lane, Handsworth, Sheffield  
Contact: Harry Keeton
- **G. & M. Lunt Ltd.**, Camping Lane, Sheffield  
Contact: Richard Knowles
- **C. Pritchard & Son**, Swallownest, Sheffield  
Contact: Lynne Grieveson
- **Sheffield & Ecclesall Funeral Services**, Eyre Street, Sheffield  
Contact: Christopher Axe
- **Peace Funerals**  
Gleadless Mount, Sheffield  
Contact: John Mallatratt

### **Artists**

- Lorna Graves, Hunsonby, Cumbria
- Caroline Menis, Sheffield
- John Fox, Artistic Director, Welfare State International, Cumbria
- Caroline Scott, Glasgow
- Lorna Moone, Saltburn



## **Monumental Masons**

- **Fidler Bros., Mansfield Road, Sheffield**
- **Hopkinson Memorials Ltd., City Road, Sheffield; High Street, Staveley**
- **James Linley & Son, Worrall Road, Wadsley, Sheffield**
- **G Paramore and Son, Abbey lane, Sheffield**



### **1.iii Professional Representatives**

#### **Legal Consultants**

- Professor Geoffrey Woodroffe, Funeral Ombudsman
- Professor Michael Green, Professor of Forensic Pathology
- Gareth Owen, Rogers and Howe, Sheffield
- Vivienne Wild, Huddersfield University
- David A Smale, F Inst. BCA (Dip)
- Stephen White, University of Wales

#### **Musicians**

<b>Organists</b>	<b>Churches</b>
• John Shaw	St Mark's, Grenoside
• Alan Eost	St John's, Abbeydale
• Andrew Wilson	St Matthew's, Sheffield
• Alan Barker	..
• Andrew Linn	..
• John Ibbotson	St Gabriel's, Greystones
• Ron Law	Holy Trinity, Millhouses
• Peter Hackett	St James', Norton [Sunday]
• Alan Smith	Cemetery Road Baptist
• Bob Johnson	St John's, Abbeydale and freelance
• Geoff Edwards	St John's, Ranmoore
• Anthony McCarthy	All Saints, Ecclesall
• Peter Williams	..
• Graham Wilkinson	Hallam Methodist
• Tim Broughton	Sheffield Cathedral
• Simon Lole	..
• Mark Pibus	..
• Neil Taylor	..
• Hugh Finnegan	St Marie's RC Cathedral
• Peter Hackett	Synagogue [Saturday]



## 2. Respondents / selected

Respondents Database: by religion and denomination

Total Respondents / selected = 67; M = 36; F = 31

### Christian total = 54

<b>Church of England</b> 23 respondents:	Male 11; Female 12
Davis, B., All Saints, Ecclesall	F
Pearson, R., St. Timothy, Crookes	F
Atkins, C., Christ Church, Fulwood	M
Durling, P., St Andrew, Psalter Lane	F
Wilson, J., St Columba, Crosspool	F
Barwell, J., St James, Norton	F
Cambell, N., St John, Park	M
Pratt, P., St. John, Abbeydale	M
Miles, R., St John, Ranmoor	M
Saunders, J., St Mark, Broomhill	F
Shaw, J., St Mark, Grenoside	M
Woodhead, C., St Mary, Walkley	F
Torr, A., d.1998, Sheffield Cathedral	F
Cranwell, A., St. James, Woodhouse	F
Williams, K., St Augustine, Endcliffe	M
Gazzard, J., St Peter, Greenhill	F
Ibbeson, J., St Gabriel, Greystones	M
Houghton, B., Holy Trinity, Millhouses	F
Bland, M., St Chad, Woodseats	M
Linskill, P., St Matthew, City	M
Ridsdale, G., St Andrew, Sharrow	M
Wheatley, M., St Cecelia, Parson Cross	F
Bainbridge, G., St. John, Abbeydale	M

<b>Roman Catholic</b> 9 respondents:	M. 5; F. 4
Denial, E., St Theresa, Manor	F
Brighton, A., St Thomas, Meadowhead	F
Overend, J. St Marie, Cathedral	F
Krajewski, J., Polish Centre, Hunters Bar	M
Green, S., St. Wilfred, Millhouses	F
O'Hara, B., St William, Ecclesall,	M
Cahill, P., St Patrick, Barnsley Road	M
Walsh, D., St Francis, Sandygate	M
Firth, J., St Theresa, Manor	M

<b>Methodist</b> 7 respondents	M. 3, F. 4
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Bowns, D., Wisewood	F
Hebden, R., Millhouses	M
Carter, R., Bents Green	F
Schofield, P., Wisewood	F
Lamb, K., Psalter Lane	F
Hiscoe, B., Psalter Lane	M
Smith, M., Millhouse	M
<b>United Reformed</b>	
Richards, C., Trinity	F
Pearson, R., Central	M
Jameson, N., Central	F
Walker, B., Meersbrook Park	M
<b>Baptist</b>	
Harrison, M., d.2000, Cemetery Rd.	F
Cowling, M., Cemetery Road	M
Ellis, M., Cemetery road	F
<b>Congregational</b>	
Lomas, S., Tapton	F
Coates, M., Tapton	F
<b>Greek Orthodox</b>	
Moran, A., at St Matthew	M
<b>Pentecostal</b>	
Mirfin, J., Elim, Central	M
Mils. S., AOG, Ebenezer	F
<b>Quaker</b>	
Salt, G.,	M
<b>Unitarian</b>	
Helliwell, G., Underbank	M
Usher, G. Upper Chapel	M



**Non-Christian      total = 13**

**Jewish**

Moore, K., Orthodox	M
Isaacs, E., Orthodox	M
Patnick, K., Orthodox	M

**Muslim**

Chauhdry, S., Sunni	F
Khan, Z., Sunni	M
Hussain, N., Jafferia	M

**Buddhist**

'Rosie', FWBO	F
'Sally' NKT	F

**Hindu**

Patel, G.,	M
Kumar, D.,	F

**Sikh**

Thandi, P., Ellesmere	M
Khalsi, G	M

**Humanist**

<u>Sinclair, G.,</u>	<u>M</u>
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67

**'Folk': volunteers**

Barton, A.,	F
Clarke, P.,	M

**'Green, Pagan' volunteer**

Dickinson, C.,	F
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### 3. Places Database

#### Cemeteries

Name	Date of Establishment
• General Cemetery	1836*
• Darnall	1859
• Burngreave	1860*
• Norton	1868*
• Burncross	1877
• Woodhouse	1879
• City Road	1880
• Intake	1880
• Tinsley	1882
• Handsworth	1901
• Crookes	1910
• Abbey Lane	1916
• Ecclesfield	1920
• Shiregreen	1927
• Wisewood	1934
• Stocksbridge	1950
• Beighton	1967
• Woodhouse old	1875
• Handsworth old	1875
• Attercliffe old	1859
• Wardsend old	1857

\* disused

#### Religious Burial Grounds

• Loxely	interment of ashes
• St Mary's, Walkley	interment of ashes
• Walkley: Jewish	disused
• Ecclesfield: Jewish	disused
• Ecclesfield: Jewish	in use
• Sheffield Cathedral	disused
• St Mary's, Beighton	in use
• St Nicholas, Bradfield	in use
• Christ Church, Dore	interment of ashes
• All Saint's, Ecclesall	in use
• St Mary's, Ecclesfield	interment of ashes
• St Mary's, Handsworth	interment of ashes
• St Joseph's R.C., Handsworth	in use
• St Mary's, High Green	in use
• St James', Norton	interment of ashes
• St Michael's R.C., Rivelin	in use



- Upper Chapel, Unitarian            disused
- Underbank, Unitarian            in use
- Quaker, Stannington            disused

**Crematoria, Scattering Grounds and Gardens of Rest**

- City Road            Sheffield Bereavement services
- Hutcliffe Wood    Sheffield Bereavement Services
- Grenoside            B&C Funeral Services



## APPENDIX B

### Contents: Questionnaires and response examples

#### Questions

1. Questionnaire: Respondent / selected
2. Questionnaire: Respondent / random
3. Questionnaire: Representative – Religious
4. Questionnaire: Representative – Funeral Director

#### Responses

5. Respondent / selected: Roman Catholic
6. Respondent / random: Cemetery
7. Respondent / random: Columbarium
8. Respondent / random: Garden of Rest
9. Representative: Religious Congregational
10. Representative: Trade Funeral Director
11. Representative: Professional Musician:- Tape transcript
12. Respondent / volunteer:- Tape transcript





*Pamela C. Saunders*  
*University of Sheffield*  
*English and Linguistics*

**Respondents / selected  
Questionnaire**

**Funerals in Sheffield 1843 - present**  
In depth open-ended questionnaire

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

- Q.1** I understand that you are ..... . Is that right?  
*establish religion / denomination*
- Q.2** Do you practice your faith?  
*prompt: how often a place of worship (or other) is attended*
- Q.3** I understand that you have been to a funeral in Sheffield recently, of someone of your faith. Who was this for?  
*(phrase according to the personal circumstance of respondent - possible mourner)*
- Q.4** When was this?
- Q.5** Why did you attend this funeral?
- Q.6** Do you remember any that you did not attend?  
*Probe reasons*
- Q.7** How soon after the death was the funeral?
- Q.8** Do you know anything about the 'Last Rites'?
- Q.9** Was there any sort of previous 'wake'?
- Q.10** Was there any form of vigil?
- Q.11** Was the committal a cremation or a burial?
- Q.12** Where did the funeral take place?  
*(accept answers naming more than one place)*

***Section for family / those responsible for organising funeral:***

- Q.13** Why was this place(s) chosen?  
*prompt: religion; situation; familiarity; family connections*
- Q.14** Would you have preferred another place(s)?  
*prompt: religion; family situation / origins; familiarity*



**ALL RESPONDENTS**

**Q.15 Was there a religious service?**

*(accept answers naming more than one form of service)*

*IF YES*

**Q.16 Who led the funeral / took any service?**

**Q.17 What denomination / religion was this?**

*IF ANGLICAN*

**Q.18 What do you expect from an Anglican funeral service?**

*prompt for: words; any religious service*

**Q.19 Can you tell me about your opinions of this service?**

*prompt: liked: disliked: would have liked  
family/mourner participation; music; eulogy*

*IF NONCONFORMIST*

**Q.20 What did you expect at this funeral?**

*prompt: participation; set service; special rituals*

*IF ROMAN CATHOLIC*

**Q.21 Was the service what you expected?**

*IF NO*

**Q.22 Who led any service?**

**ALL**

**Q.23 What was your overall opinion of the service?**

**Q.24 What was the format of the service / ritual?**  
*(if not already answered)*

**Q.25 Was there any music?**  
*prompt: organ; songs / hymns; entry / exit; no music*

**Q.26 Do you have a favourite hymn?**

**Q.27 Were there any special rituals? *probe***

**Q.28 Did any mourners participate in the service?**

**Q.29 Was a particular funeral director used?**

**Q.30 What sort of special transport was used (if any)?**  
*prompt: hearse ....*

**Q.31 Did the hearse stop or pause on the way to the funeral?**

**Q.32 Did you view the deceased?**

**Q.33 Can you describe the coffin?**  
*prompt: coffin, casket (rectangular), ornamented, plain, cardboard, fabric-covered; shroud*



*Section for family / those responsible for organising funeral*

- Q.34** Do you think it is necessary for the family to attend a funeral?
- Q.35** Do you think you were influenced in your choice of arrangements?  
*prompt: family; neighbours; film; television ....*
- Q.36** Had there been a pre-paid funeral plan?
- Q.37** Had this funeral been planned beforehand in any way?
- IF YES*      **Q.38** What sorts of things were planned?
- Q.39** Why did you choose this type of coffin?
- Q.40** Did the deceased wear any special clothes?
- Q.41** Did the deceased carry any religious symbol?
- Q.42** Was anything special put into the coffin with the deceased?
- Q.43** Did you view the deceased?
- Q.44** Did you use a Chapel of Rest?
- Q.45** Did you receive any help in your bereavement?  
*prompt: counselling; neighbour; religious representative; remember what someone said?*
- Q.46** Can I ask you about organ donation? probe carefully

**ALL RESPONDENTS**

- Q.47** Were there flowers at the funeral?
- IF YES*      **Q.48** Can you tell me about them?  
*prompt: family only; quantity; arrangements; variety*
- Q.49** Were any taken into the service?
- Q.50** Were there opportunities for donations to a charity / place of worship?
- Q.51** How large was the congregation?
- Q.52** Were there equal numbers of men and women?
- Q.53** Did you wear any special clothing?
- Q.54** How were other mourners dressed?
- Q.55** Where was the committal?  
*(answer may have been offered)*



*Section for family / those responsible for organising funeral*

**Q.56** Why was this place chosen?

*prompt: religion; situation; family connections*

*IF BURIAL*

**Q.57** Was a family plot used?

**Q.58** Is the grave in a particular section of the burial ground?

**Q.59** Is there /there to be a grave marker (gravestone)?  
*(probe description)*

*IF CREMATION*

**Q.60** Can you tell me about the ashes?

*prompt: casket; distribution; interment; scattering; repatriation;  
kept; other*

**Q.61** Are there / there to be any memorials

*prompt: kerb plaque; Book of Remembrance; other*

**ALL COMMITTALS**

**Q.62** Are there /there to be any other memorials?

*prompt: seats; religious artefacts; donations; other*

**Q.63** Was there food provided after the service?

**Q.64** What do you remember most about this funeral?

**Q.65** Have you noticed any changes in the Sheffield funeral?

**Q.66** What changes would you like to see, if any, in the Sheffield funeral?

**Q.67** What do you think the Sheffield funeral of the future will actually be like?

**Q.68** Have you heard of any strange things that happen when someone dies?

*(inform of the traditions element to this research)*

*prompt: dogs howling ....*

**Q.69** Is there any information you would like to add to help in this research?

Closing thanks, and offering of 'Thank You' card





*Pamela C. Saunders  
University of Sheffield  
English and Linguistics*

**Respondents / random  
Questionnaire**

**Funerals in Sheffield 1843 – present  
Questionnaire**

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

*SAMPLE FROM BURIAL GROUND SITE*

- Q.1 Are you here for a special reason?**
- Q.2 Whose grave is it?**
- Q.3 Could you tell me if the deceased followed any particular religion / faith?**
- Q.4 How often do you visit?**
- Q.5 Do you tend the grave?**

*IF GRAVESITE ORNAMENTED / PERSONALISED*

- Q.6 Can you tell me anything about the special .....?**
- Q.7 Did you choose this cemetery / burial ground?**  
*IF YES*
- Q.8 Why was it chosen?**  
*prompt: family; location; attractiveness; atmosphere; view; religion; other*
- Q.9 Are you happy with your choice?**  
*prompt: location; religion; maintainance; attractiveness; family satisfaction / dissatisfaction; neglect; vandalism; other*
- Q.10 Can you tell me anything about the gravestone, and why it was chosen?**  
*prompt: proper memorial; religion / religious symbols; wording: epitaphs, language and script, quotations; attractiveness; similar to others nearby; cemetery / graveyard policy; money issues; other*
- IF NO*
- Q.11 Do you know why this place was chosen?**  
*prompt: family; location; attractiveness; atmosphere; view; religion; other*
- Q.12 Is there anything you would like to have here, but are not allowed to?**  
*prompt: plants; ornaments; fencing / plot markings; plastic flowers; different gravestone; other*

**Go to Q.34 →**



*SAMPLE FROM COLUMBARIUM SITE*

**Q. 13** Are you here for a special reason?

**Q.14** Whose niche is it?

**Q.15** Could you tell me if the deceased / family followed any particular religion / faith?

**Q.16** How often do you visit?

**Q.17** Do you place any flowers?

*IF ORNAMENTED / PERSONALISED*

**Q.18** Can you tell me anything about the special .....?

**Q.19** Did you choose this place to inter the ashes?

*IF YES*

**Q.20** Why was it chosen?

*prompt: family; location; attractiveness; atmosphere; view; religion; other*

**Q.21** Are you happy with your choice?

*prompt: location; religion; maintainance; attractiveness; family satisfaction / dissatisfaction; neglect; vandalism; other*

**Q.22** Can you tell me anything about the plaque?

*prompt: religion / religious symbols; wording, epitaphs, language and script, quotations, standard policy; other*

*IF NO*

**Q.23** Do you know why this place was chosen?

*prompt: family; location; attractiveness; atmosphere; view; religion; other*

**Q.24** Is there anything you would like to have here, but are not allowed to?

*prompt: plants; ornaments; plastic flowers; different plaque; other*

**Go to Q.34** →

*SAMPLE FROM A GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE*

**Q.25** Are you here for a special reason?

**Q.26** Did the deceased / family followed any particular religion / faith?

**Q.27** How often do you visit?

*IF AT ORNAMENTED KERB PLAQUE*

**Q.28** Can you tell me anything about the special .....?



**Q.29 Did you choose this Garden?**

*IF YES*

**Q.30 Why was it chosen?**

*prompt: family; location; attractiveness; atmosphere; view; religion; other*

**Q.31 Are you happy with your choice?**

*prompt: location; religion; maintainance; attractiveness; family satisfaction / dissatisfaction; neglect; vandalism; other*

*IF NO*

**Q.32 Do you know why this Garden was chosen?**

*prompt: family; location; attractiveness; atmosphere; view; religion; other*

**Q.33 Is there anything you would like to have here, but are not allowed to?**

*prompt: personal plants; ornaments; plastic flowers; other*

#### ALL RESPONDENTS

**Q.34 Is the deceased remembered in any special memorial?**

*prompt: Book of Remembrance; bench / seat; religious article or gift; tree; plants; other*

**Q.35 Is the deceased remembered at an anniversary in any special way?**

*prompt: In Memoriam columns; religious services; visits to place of interment / scattering; other*

Closing thanks, and offering of 'Thank You' card





*Pamela C. Saunders  
University of Sheffield  
English and Linguistics*

**Representatives  
Religious  
Questionnaire**

**Funerals in Sheffield 1843 - present**  
In depth open-ended questionnaire

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

- Q.1** Please can you tell me your name, which religion or denomination you practice, your position, and the name of your church / chapel / place of worship.
- Q.2** How large is your congregation / membership?
- Q.3** Is it a fluctuating membership?
- Q.4** How many funerals are there likely to be in any year?
- Q.5** Have you taken part in any recently?
- Q.6** How many?
- Q.7** What has been your role?
- Q.8** Have you received any special training to help you in this work?
- Q.9** What do you see as the role of a .... funeral?
- Q.10** Is there a typical .... funeral?
- Q.11** Are there any pre-funeral rituals? (*Reception?*)
- Q.12** Do you visit the home beforehand?
- Q.13** Are you asked to view the deceased?
- Q.14** Is the committal likely to be burial / cremation / other?
- Q.15** Where might this be?
- Q.16** Where does the service take place? Is there more than one?
- Q.17** (*Christian*)  
Is there anything noticeable in a ..... funeral that sets it apart from other Christian funerals?  
*prompt: pall; flowers; incense; water; style of coffin; pall, open coffin; cards*
- Q.18** Do you follow any set order of service?
- Q.19** Do relatives help plan the service?



- Q.20** Do relatives take part in the service?
- Q.21** What might be the content of a service?  
*prompt: prayers; readings; sermon / homily / eulogy; hymns / songs; music*
- Q.22** Are there any favourite hymns?
- Q.23** Do you wear any special robes?
- Q.24** What style / colour of clothing do the relatives / congregation wear?
- Q.25** What is your role at any separate committal?
- Q.26** Are there any trends in catering?
- Q.27** Do you go with the funeral party for refreshments?
- Q.28** Is there any provision for scattering or interment of ashes after a cremation?
- Q.29** Do you make follow-up calls or visits?
- Q.30** Do you offer anniversary or memorial services?
- Q.31** Do you foresee any changes in a .... funeral in Sheffield?
- Q.32** Are there any changes in a funeral that you would like to see?
- Q.33** What is the likelihood of a coffin or casket like these being used at a funeral?  
*(show photographs of colourful painted coffin / casket)*
- Q. 34** What is your opinion on the videoing of a funeral?
- Q.35** Is there any information that you would like to offer to this research?

Closing thanks, and offering of 'Thank You' card





*Pamela C. Saunders  
University of Sheffield  
English and Linguistics*

**Representatives  
Funeral directors  
Questionnaire**

## **Funerals in Sheffield 1843 - present**

In depth open-ended questionnaire

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

- Q.1 Do your clients come from any particular area of the city?**
- Q.2 Do you have clients who come to because of their faith?**
- Q.3 Do you have a service chapel?**
- IF YES*      **Q.3a What are its uses?**
- Q.4 Do you have a Chapel of Rest?**
- IF YES*      **Q.4a How is it used?**
- Q.5 Can you accommodate speedy funerals, for those who require this service?**
- Q.6 What is the size of your staff?**
- Q.7 Can you tell me about your mortuary?**
- Q.8 Do you offer hygienic treatment?**
- IF YES*      **Q.8a Do you think this is essential?**
- Q.8b Does the religion of the deceased affect relatives accepting hygienic treatment?**
- Q.9 Can you tell me about clothes for the deceased, such as the shrouds you offer?**
- Q.10 Would the style of clothing for the deceased be influenced by religion?**
- Q.11 Can you tell me about styles of coffin offered?**
- Q.12 Does religion have any bearing on the choice or shape of coffin?**
- Q.13 Does religion have any bearing on the decoration on any coffin?**
- Q.14 Does religion affect the choice of place of service/ committal?**
- Q.15 How does the deceased's religion affect what your conductor and bearers do during a funeral, particularly inside the place for a service or the committal?**
- Q.16 Do your staff ever participate in a service?**



- Q.17 Do your staff shoulder the coffin?**
- Q.18 Can you provide Orders of Service?**
- IF YES*      **Q.18a Does religion affect these service sheets?**
- Q.19 How do you find religion affects the choice of the cremation and crematorium, burial and burial ground?**
- Q.20 Do your clients mostly require burial or cremation?**
- Q.21 Do your clients have a favoured crematorium or burial ground?**
- Q.22 Can you provide flowers?**
- Q.23 Have you noticed any trends in the choice of flowers?**
- Q.24 Can you describe your transport fleet?**
- Q.25 Do you offer horse-drawn vehicles?**
- Q.26 Have you noticed any trends in transport requirements?**
- Q.27 Does religion affect the size of a congregation at a funeral service?**
- Q.28 Have you noticed any trends in the size of a congregation?**
- Q.29 Have you notices any changes in the numbers of male or female mourners?**
- Q.30 Have you notices any trends in the style of mourning clothes**
- Q.31 Can you tell me about any refreshment services that you provide?**
- Q.32 Have you noticed any trends in the provision of refreshments?**
- Q.33 Have you been asked to arrange any unusual funerals?**
- Q.34 Do people who want a 'New Age' funeral come to you? *(give some definition)***
- Q.35 What is your reaction to these styles of coffin and casket? *(show illustrations)***
- Q.36 What do you think is the future for the Sheffield funeral?**
- Q.37 Do you offer pre-paid funeral plans?**
- Q.38 Would you recommend the funeral service as a growth industry?**
- Q.39 Do you have a website and e-mail facilities?**
- Q.40 Is this firm part of a group?**
- Q.41 Are you a member of an affiliation?**

Closing thanks, and offering of 'Thank You' card





*Pamela C. Saunders*  
*University of Sheffield*  
*English and Linguistics*

**Respondents / selected**  
**Roman Catholic**

**Funerals in Sheffield 1843 - present**  
In depth open-ended questionnaire

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

- Q.1** I understand that you are Catholic. Is that right?  
Sure.
- Q.2** Do you practice your faith?  
I go to Mass. I teach here at the school. [*Catholic; Mass weekly, minimum*]
- Q.3** I understand that you have been to a funeral in Sheffield recently, of someone of your faith. Who was this for?  
A little baby. 'Victoria' was six months old.
- Q.4** When was this?  
Last week.
- Q.5** Why did you attend this funeral?  
She was in the parish.
- Q.6** How soon after the death was the funeral?  
Only about five days. They knew she was dying.
- Q.7** Was there any sort of previous 'wake'?  
No. No.
- Q.8** Was there any form of vigil?  
They didn't have a reception. You wouldn't leave a baby by itself at night.
- Q.9** Was the committal a cremation or a burial?  
It was a burial.
- Q.10** Where did the funeral take place?  
St. Theresa's, Prince of Wales Road
- Q.13** Was there a religious service?  
Yes, a Requiem Mass
- Q.14** Who took the service?  
Father Brian Davies.
- Q.15** What religion was this?  
Catholic
- Q.19** Was the service what you expected?  
They are.



## **ALL**

- Q.21 What was your overall opinion of the service?**  
Oh. Well. It's a Requiem.
- Q.22 What was the format of the service?**  
It was really just the Requiem.
- Q.23 Was there any music?**  
Hymns. The ones we do. I think - Sweet Sacrament; Abba Father
- Q.24 Were there any special rituals?**  
We sang the Angels' Song, the 'In Paradisum', because she was a baby.
- Q.25 Did any mourners participate in the service?**  
Not this time. They couldn't. Could you?
- Q.26 Was a particular funeral director used?**  
It was Lunts. Catholics have him. Here that is. And the Polish use them. From the Polish Centre. There's a lot in Sheffield. Something to do with the war.
- Q.27 What sort of special transport was used?**  
Ordinary.
- Q.28 Did you view the deceased?**  
Why ...?
- Q.29 Can you describe the coffin?**  
It was tiny, and white. It was little.

## **ALL RESPONDENTS**

- Q.40 Were there flowers at the funeral?**  
Yes
- Q.41 Can you tell me about them?**  
There was one white spray, in the hearse.
- Q.42 Were any taken into the service?**  
No. We don't do that.
- Q.43 Were there opportunities for donations to a charity / place of worship?**  
Just the usual collection box at the back.
- Q.44 How large was the congregation?**  
It was crowded. The parish was there in support, as well as all the Junior children from the school.
- Q.45 Were there equal numbers of men and women?**  
It was just people .....
- Q.46 Did you wear any special clothing?**  
Work clothes



**Q.47 How were other mourners dressed?**  
The family were in black.

**Q.48 Where was the committal?**  
Abbey Lane. They've got a Catholic section.

### **ALL COMMITTALS**

**Q.55 Are there /there to be any other memorials?**  
I couldn't say. Probably. People do.

**Q.56 Have you noticed any changes in the Sheffield funeral?**  
Here? We use the white covering for the coffin now – the pall cloth.

**Q.57 What changes would you like to see, if any, in the Sheffield funeral?**  
Fewer children.

**Q.58 What do you think the Sheffield funeral of the future will actually be like?**  
Happy, because we'll only bury old ones!

**Q.59 Have you heard of any strange things that happen when someone dies?**  
MMM. Yes .... animals do know, before, so they say.

**Q.60 Is there any information you would like to add to help in this research?**  
The children of the school, of the parish, go to our funerals. The school sits upstairs, so they are out of the way, but they have a really good view; it is part of school life. We often have someone from the family saying something, like reading the lesson, but you couldn't, not with a baby. We aren't supposed to be unhappy because she had been handicapped since she was born – very ill. But it's still a funeral.

Closing thanks, and offering of 'Thank You' card





*Pamela C. Saunders  
University of Sheffield  
English and Linguistics*

**Respondents / random  
Burial Ground**

**Funerals in Sheffield 1843 – present**  
Questionnaire

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

*SAMPLE FROM BURIAL GROUND SITE*

Respondent: Muslim male; age 50+: requested not to be named  
Very recent grave, has a spray of flowers in water  
Tinsley Cemetery, Muslim section

*[Note: Wording has been altered to be more appropriate; an additional question is recorded.]*

- Q.1 Are you here for a special reason?**  
I came to see if the grave was alright. It was last week. It still looks tidy. The flowers are here.
- Q.2 Whose grave is it?**  
An acquaintance, a friend.
- Q.3 Could you tell me if the deceased followed any particular religion / faith?**  
We are Muslim.
- Q.4 (How often do you visit?)  
Have you been back before?**  
No. This is the first time.
- Q.5 (Do you tend the grave?)  
Have you need to see to anything?**  
No. It looks fine.
- Why is the next grave covered with that sheet of corrugated iron?**  
It is ready. We need to bury people very quickly. So, they make graves ready.
- Q.11 Do you know why this place was chosen?**  
*prompt: family; location; attractiveness; atmosphere; view; religion; other*  
This is where we come. If we cannot send them home. Back to Karachi.
- Q.12 Is there anything you would like to have here, but are not allowed to?**  
*prompt: plants; ornaments; fencing / plot markings; plastic flowers; different gravestone; other*  
I think you can have what you want. For English places. Come and see my family grave. It is down here. My father. It looks very nice. It is in Urdu. Of Course.



**Q.34 Is the deceased remembered in any special memorial?** *Answers: cards / random prompt: Book of Remembrance; bench / seat; religious article or gift; tree; plants; other*  
My family? We give money. To the religion, you understand.

**Q.35 Is the deceased remembered at an anniversary in any special way?** *prompt: In Memoriam columns; religious services; visits to place of interment / scattering; other*  
We go to the mosque, and say prayers on the anniversary, and at special times.

Closing thanks, and offering of 'Thank You' card



The new grave in this Muslim section of Tinsley cemetery has one bunch of flowers. It is adjacent to a grave dug in readiness.





*Pamela C. Saunders  
University of Sheffield  
English and Linguistics*

**Respondents / random  
Columbarium**

**Funerals in Sheffield 1843 – present  
Questionnaire**

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

***SAMPLE FROM COLUMBARIUM SITE***

**Respondent:** Mrs Matthewman  
Burncross Cemetery Columbarium

**Q.13 Are you here for a special reason?**

I like to come every week, when I go to the Library. I do the flowers and sort them out.

**Q.14 Whose niche is it?**

It's my husband Jack. He's over there.

**Q.15 Could you tell me if you followed any particular religion / faith? [words adapted]**

Oh. We've always been Methodists.

**Q.16 How often do you visit?**

*[Answered in Q.13]*

**Q.17 Do you place any flowers?**

*[Answered in Q13].*

**Q.18 Can you tell me anything about the special wreaths and cards tied to the plaques?**

*Others like to tie things onto the front. Can you see? They're not supposed to. That one, she put on a birthday card from his Granddaughter. They should make them keep them neat and tidy.*

**Q.19 Did you choose this place to inter the ashes?**

Oh, yes.

**Q.20 Why was it chosen?**

*prompt: family; location; attractiveness; atmosphere; view; religion; other*

It's nice here. They always look after it. Mind, it's gone down a lot. You can't do anything at the church. Anyway, I don't go. Nor did Jack. He had no time for the jiggling about they do now.

**Q.21 Are you happy with your choice?**



*prompt: location; religion; maintainance; attractiveness; family satisfaction / dissatisfaction; neglect; vandalism; other*

I keep finding his flowers have been moved. You are supposed to have your own place, and put them in order on the top. If you are at the back it's too bad. But her, she always pushes his back and pulls hers to the front. It's wrong. I keep complaining but they don't do nothing. Trouble is, we haven't got enough space. We used to put the big vases on the floor at the back, but now they've put down this carpet and it might get wet. Silly. Carpet in here. It won't last. A right waste of money. Still, what can you do?

**Q.22 Can you tell me anything about the plaque?**

*prompt: religion / religious symbols; wording, epitaphs, language and script, quotations, standard policy; other*

You can only have the words they let you. It all has to be very neat. It looks nice – neat.

**Q.24 Is there anything you would like to have here, but are not allowed to?**

*prompt: plants; ornaments; plastic flowers; different plaque; other*

I think we ought to have our floor back, and stop this tying on of bits of plastic. And the cards. They fall over. Silly.

**Q.34 Is the deceased remembered in any special memorial?**

*prompt: Book of Remembrance; bench / seat; religious article or gift; tree; plants; other*

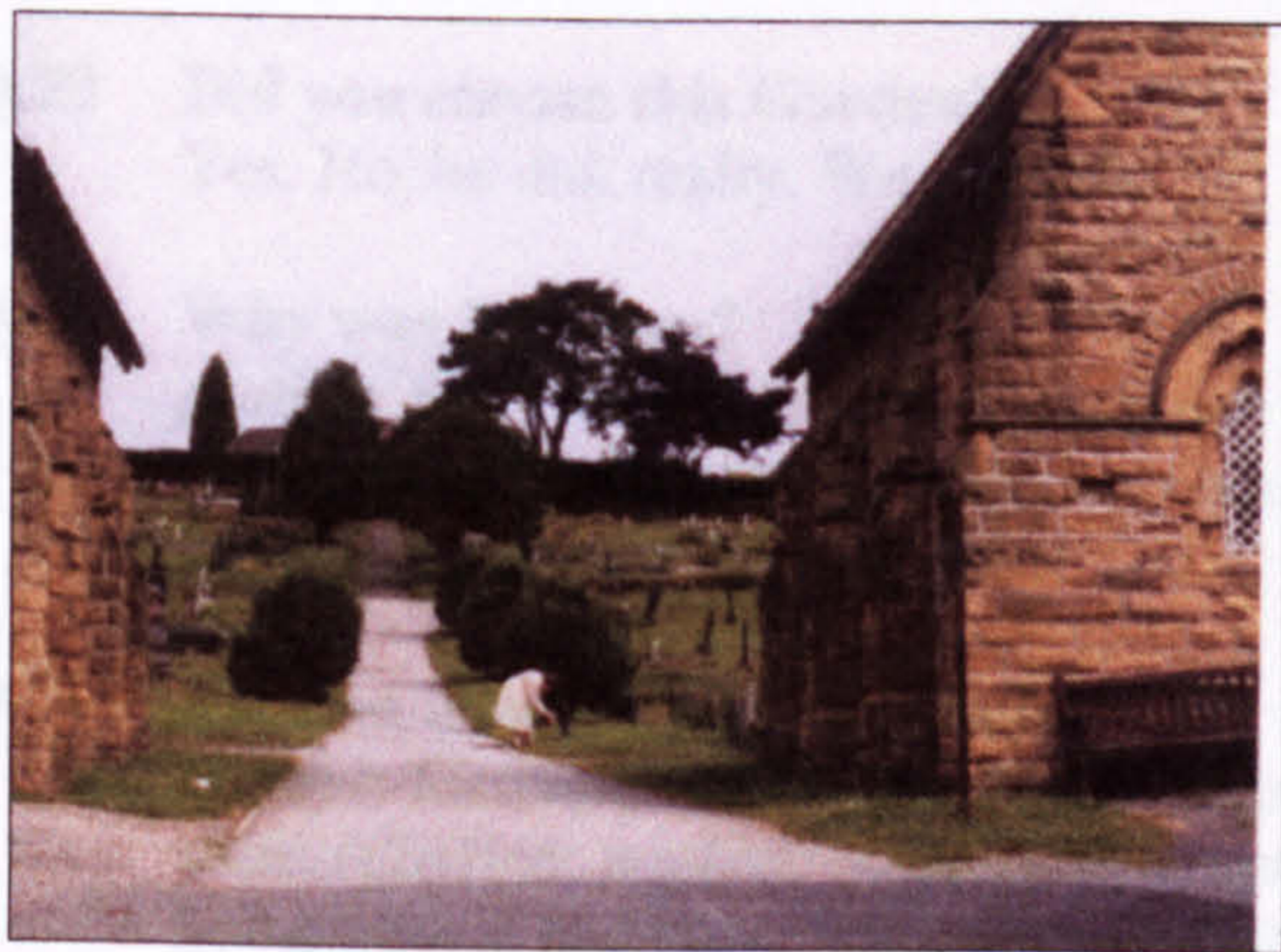
No. I don't do any of that.

**Q.35 Is the deceased remembered at an anniversary in any special way?**

*prompt: In Memoriam columns; religious services; visits to place of interment / scattering; other*

I put a notice in the paper, and I bring the grandchildren. They like it here. Call it Granddad's little house.

Closing thanks, and offering of 'Thank You' card.



Mrs Matthewman collecting water. the columbarium is to her left. The other chapel is used to store workmen's tools.

[Note: The niches at Burncross can be seen in 10.ii]





*Pamela C. Saunders  
University of Sheffield  
English and Linguistics*

**Respondents / random  
Questionnaire  
Garden of Remembrance**

**Funerals in Sheffield 1843 – present  
Questionnaire**

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

*SAMPLE FROM A GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE*

Respondent: Grandmother with grandchild  
Hutcliffe Wood

**Q.25 Are you here for a special reason?**

We are putting this little bunch of flowers in his bit. It's his Granddad.  
We like to say hello, don't we? *[to child]*

**Q.26 Did the deceased / family followed any particular religion / faith?**

We don't go to church. He had the minister here. Yes, Church of England.

**Q.27 How often do you visit?**

I like to come every week and change his flowers.

*IF AT ORNAMENTED KERB PLAQUE*

**Q.28 Can you tell me anything about the special container?**

It is a little metal tube. You get them from the florists. They have them. You just change the water and put in the flowers.

**Q.29 Did you choose this Garden?**

Yes. No, he did, really. We both did.

**Q.30 Why was it chosen?**

*prompt: family; location; attractiveness; atmosphere; view; religion; other*

He was cremated here and the ashes were scattered here. He liked these gardens. we know other people who are here.

**Q.31 Are you happy with your choice?**

*prompt: location; religion; maintainance; attractiveness; family satisfaction / dissatisfaction; neglect; vandalism; other*

Some people had those brass plates but they were stolen. I didn't want that. awful. You can't put flowers here, but we do. They don't take them away. Good job too!

**Q.33 Is there anything you would like to have here, but are not allowed to?**

*prompt: personal plants; ornaments; plastic flowers; other*

No, just leave these alone. We like to do our little thing.



**ALL RESPONDENTS**

**Q.34 Is the deceased remembered in any special memorial?**

*prompt: Book of Remembrance; bench / seat; religious article or gift; tree; plants; other*

He's in the Book, here.

**Q.35 Is the deceased remembered at an anniversary in any special way?**

*prompt: In Memoriam columns; religious services; visits to place of interment / scattering; other*

We come here a lot. I look at the Book on his anniversary. I do it by myself. Have a little weep. You know.

Closing thanks, and offering of 'Thank You' card



Respondent and grandchild.  
The bottle contains water for  
the flower container.





*Pamela C. Saunders  
University of Sheffield  
English and Linguistics*

**Representatives  
Funeral directors**

## **Funerals in Sheffield 1843 - present**

In depth open-ended questionnaire

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

Funeral Director: Jason R. Heath B.A.  
John Heath & Sons  
4 – 16 Earsham Street  
Sheffield S4 7LS

- Q.1 Do your clients come from any particular area of the city?**  
Our clients come from all over the city, but particularly from the central areas, and the southern suburbs.
- Q.2 Do you have clients who come to because of their faith?**  
Not especially, though we accommodate most requirements. The Jews go elsewhere.
- Q.3 Do you have a service chapel?**  
Yes, but it is not used for many services.
- Q.3a What are its uses?**  
Well, we display coffins in a likely situation.
- Q.4 Do you have a Chapel of Rest?**  
Indeed, yes, there is the corridor with the Chapels of Rest on each side. We have one for each body. Others move the deceased into their 'Chapel of Rest'.
- Q.5 Can you accommodate speedy funerals, for those who require this service?**  
We are a large firm; the need for speed is accommodated.
- Q.6 What is the size of your staff?**  
Adequate, I think.
- Q.7 Can you tell me about your mortuary? I didn't see it on the two previous visits.**  
Come along and see. It is just a simple mortuary, with chill cabinets.
- Q.8 Do you offer hygienic treatment?**  
Yes.
- Q.8a Do you think this is essential?**  
It helps - in some situations.
- Q.8b Does the religion of the deceased affect relatives accepting hygienic treatment?**



Some certainly won't have it. The Muslims are noted for that. They want a quick interment though. Did you know you can't have it for woodland burials? The tree would be poisoned by the chemicals.

- Q.9 Can you tell me about clothes for the deceased, such as the shrouds you offer?**  
Ah, yes. Come and see. Now – Catholics like these with the religious symbols woven in. We have white, pink, dark blue, whatever – or we can obtain.
- Q.10 Would the style of clothing for the deceased be influenced by religion?**  
It depends on the – how devout they are. We use the Hajj robes for some Muslims. But they handle the deceased themselves. We have special gowns for the West Indians – the Pentecostals and the Baptists.
- Q.11 Can you tell me about styles of coffin offered?**  
We make our wooden coffins here, using English Oak. We have cloth –covered chipboard coffins. They are of a very old style. They are supposed to be environmentally friendly, but research now says that wood from sustainable forests is better. We stain coffins any colour. If it's wanted. Mahogany is popular. Eight people have wanted our metal coffins recently. We have special shaped caskets for children. Then we engrave our own coffin plates. We have a range of caskets for ashes. We can do cardboard. If you want.
- Q.12 Does religion have any bearing on the choice or shape of coffin?**  
Catholics have those rectangular caskets with the crucifix on the top. The West Indians love our elaborate caskets - we don't call them coffins. See, they are lined with pleated silk, and are part-opening so that the body can be displayed. The Pentecostal funeral is very joyful. Everyone goes past the body and kisses it, in church.
- Q.13 Does religion have any bearing on the decoration on any coffin?**  
*[answered in Q.12 ]*
- Q.14 Does religion affect the choice of place of service/ committal?**  
Of course. Some won't be cremated. Some have a service at their own place of worship. Some are secular and use our chapel, perhaps, or the crematorium.
- Q.15 How does the deceased's religion affect what your conductor and bearers do during a funeral, particularly inside the place used for a service or committal?**  
We know what is required. Certain churches have certain traditions, and we follow them. Ecclesall people want the coffin shouldered. Of course we do that anyway. We put out the mass cards at a Catholic funeral. We do about 30% of the Catholics in the city, Lunts do the rest.
- Q.16 Do your staff ever participate in a service?**  
No. It is not required.
- Q.17 Do your staff shoulder the coffin?**  
*[answered in Q.15]*
- Q.18 Can you provide Orders of Service?**  
Yes indeed. Our printing is competitive. We have examples of styles from which the family make their selection. Black-edged writing paper and envelopes? I'm afraid that is no longer provided. There is no call for it.



- Q.18a Does religion affect these service sheets?**  
The Pentecostals and Baptists - West Indians, like a photo on them. We print, leaving a space, though we are now able to offer inclusive printing of the photos at very competitive rates. Technology, you see. Some of the Free Churches make their own hymn sheets. Orders of Service can be elaborate or simple, just like anything else. The Catholics really don't use them.
- Q.19 How do you find religion affects the choice of the cremation and crematorium, burial and burial ground?**  
Abbey Lane has sections for the various religions. The Muslims like Tinsley. The Chinese Buddhists use Crookes, or perhaps Tinsley. Orthodox Jews have their own facility at Ecclesfield. We don't do those. Thomlinson and Windley do theirs. The Liberal Jews have a large section at Abbey Lane, but there aren't many - people or burials. Catholics use Abbey Lane - usually. Ecclesall has its own churchyard, but you can't get in there. You could, where you live.
- Q.20 Do your clients mostly require burial or cremation?**  
Now - - I have to say 70% about want cremation.
- Q.21 Do your clients have a favoured crematorium or burial ground?**  
They often know what they want. Maybe it's family, or it's near, or their friend used it. Sheffielder's know what's around and what they should do. Of course, now B&C have opened up at Grenoside, all those north of the city will go there. Word spread. The Co-op own Fairest. Did you know? Fairest get the trade in the north. Yes.
- Q.22 Can you provide flowers?**  
We use 'Flora', on Ecclesall Road. You can tell their tributes. Satisfactory.
- Q.23 Have you noticed any trends in the choice of flowers?**  
Family flowers only, or just donations. Not always of course. You still have hearses piled high with tributes. We don't get so many of the 'themed' ones, like football, or trades. Our clients are more traditional.
- Q.24 Can you describe your transport fleet?**  
Mercedes. Very reliable. Good for weddings too. Black and green, the same colours. People know us.
- Q.25 Do you offer horse-drawn vehicles?**  
Oh. Well. We have hills. Lots of hills. We could.
- Q.26 Have you noticed any trends in transport requirements?**  
I see the horses on television, but not in Sheffield. Most have a hearse and one limousine, maybe two. We did Marti Caine's. Did you know? Did you see it? The fleet looked impressive.
- Q.27 Does religion affect the size of a congregation at a funeral service?**  
You get a good turnout for the West Indians. They'll block the road, and you can hear them singing from outside. The Catholics like a good funeral. And if you're well known you'll see a lot, but not inside. Village people get the biggest support. Old village people.
- Q.28 Have you noticed any trends in the size of a congregation?**  
People can't get time off work. Generally. So fewer go.
- Q.29 Have you notices any changes in the numbers of male or female mourners?**



Men still feel they represent the family.

- Q.30 Have you noticed any trends in the style of mourning clothes**  
Black is less common. The trend is for subdued, unless a request has been made. And you get that.
- Q.31 Can you tell me about any refreshment services that you provide?**  
Food and dead bodies don't mix. Have I said that to you before? Oh. My father did! Yes, he says that too. We use the Beauchief. Or similar.
- Q.32 Have you noticed any trends in the provision of refreshments?**  
Less in the home. A lot less. Too much bother at a tricky time. Church halls are common. The ladies of a congregation will help out.
- Q.33 Have you been asked to arrange any unusual funerals?**  
Each is individual, and some are splendid. Not really unusual.
- Q.34 Do people who want a 'New Age' funeral come to you? (gave some definition)**  
Well. We have done a couple of Humanist. Really simple. But nothing else.
- Q.35 What is your reaction to these styles of coffin and casket? (showed illustrations)**  
Oh. (shake of the head)
- Q.36 What do you think is the future for the Sheffield funeral?**  
It will get both simpler and more individual. We must be ready to provide what is customary. Now there's an old phrase for your research!
- Q.37 Do you offer pre-paid funeral plans?**  
Yes, The 'Chosen Heritage' at present.
- Q.38 Would you recommend the funeral service as a growth industry?**  
It is steady but very competitive. The markets need analysing, and firms have to keep up with facilities, and must offer what is available elsewhere.
- Q.39 Do you have a website and e-mail facilities?**  
Not yet.
- Q.40 Is this firm part of a group?**  
John Heath have several branches, but no, we are not part of a multinational group.
- Q.41 Are you a member of an affiliation?**  
Yes. NSM; NAFD; BIE; BIFD

Closing thanks,  
and offering of 'Thank You' card



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*Pamela C. Saunders  
University of Sheffield  
English and Linguistics*

**Representatives  
Musician**

## **Funerals in Sheffield 1843 - present**

Transcript of taped interview

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

Organist: Alan J Eost M.A. (Cantab.) ARCM, ARCO  
St John the Evangelist, Abbeydale  
Hon. Conductor Sheffield Oratorio Chorus  
Teaching Staff: University of Sheffield

**Q.1 I understand you went to a funeral recently, at a Methodist church. Who was it for?**

This was for Keith Gathercole, a former treasurer of the Sheffield Oratorio Chorus.

**Q.2 Why did you go?**

When I first became conductor, he was the treasurer, and I had worked with him for two or three years, so I felt I ought to go.

**Q.3 Are you familiar with funerals in recent times?**

I am fairly familiar with funerals because of course, being an organist, I play for some from time to time. [*self-effacing – 2/3 per week: freelance*]

**Q.4 Was this funeral for Keith a conventional funeral?**

Well it wasn't exactly a funeral because it took place after the cremation, so it wasn't strictly speaking a funeral at all. They termed it a 'Service of Thanksgiving'. That is the first time I can recall doing a 'funeral' like that.

**Q.5 Are you familiar with Methodist services?**

I am fairly familiar with Methodist services because I was brought up in the Methodist church, and so my earlier years were spent on Sunday mornings going to church.

**Q.6 Did you know that this was going to be a thanksgiving service when you went?**

Yes. I wasn't quite sure of the exact form, but I was aware that it was a thanksgiving service, yes.

**Q.7 Can you describe what happened when you started to enter the premises?**

I arrived about ten minutes beforehand. There was quite a queue to get into the church in the first place, which in itself is quite unusual.

**Q.8 Where you given an order of service?**

We were given one before we went in, yes.

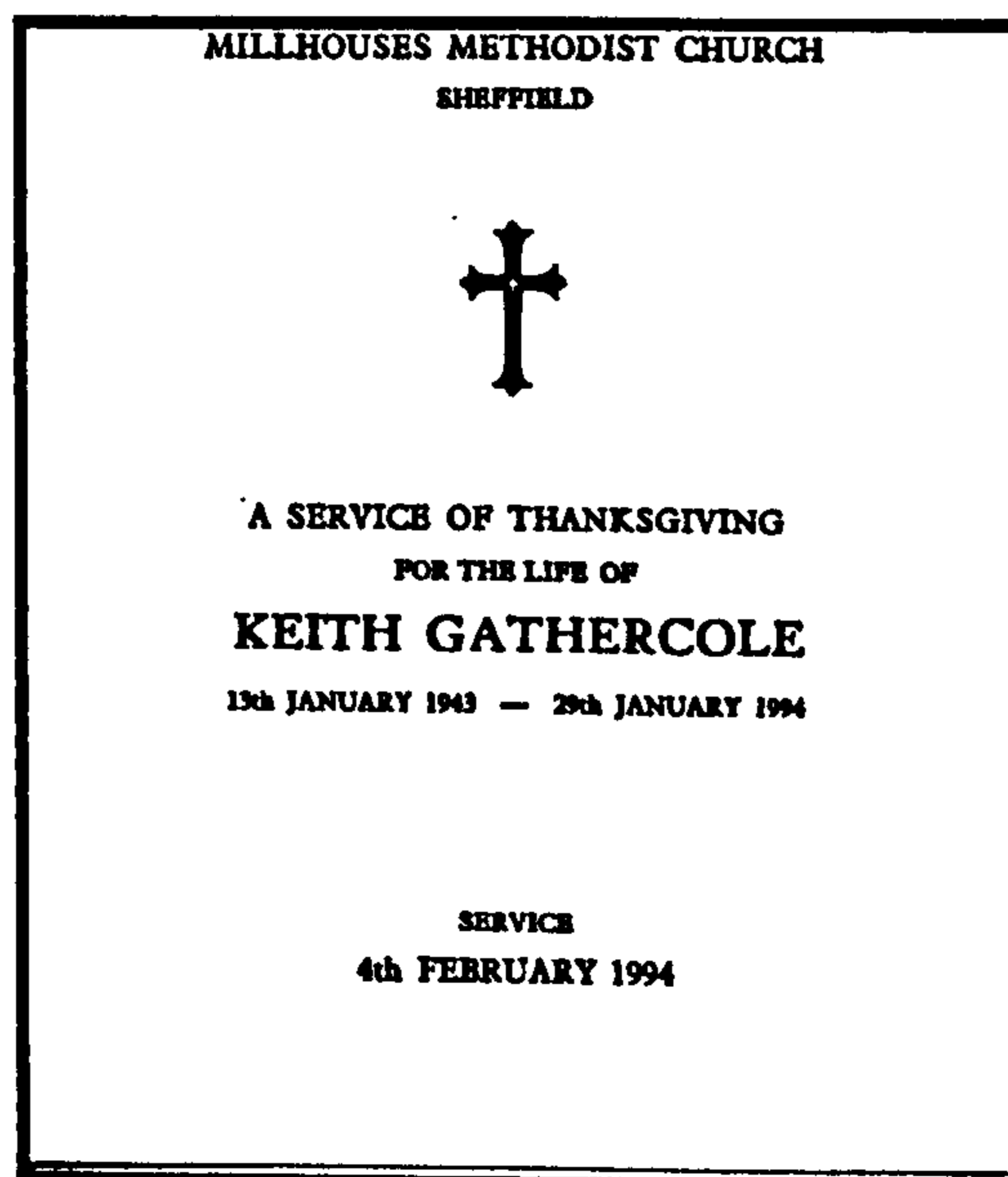


- Q.9 What was in it?**  
It was a printed sheet with the hymns, and saying the 'Service of Thanksgiving' on the front. There were no printed prayers included. Hymn books were out in the pews, but they weren't need, of course.
- Q.10 Did you see the family arrive or were they there when you got there?**  
The odd thing is, I don't think they were there when I arrived, and I noticed, at some point later, that they were there, right at the very front, but I didn't actually see them arrive as such.
- Q.11 Were there any signs in the church that this was anything to do with somebody's death, such as special floral tributes or arrangements?**  
There didn't seem to be.
- Q.12 Would anyone walking into the building unexpectedly have known it was a 'funeral' service of some description?**  
I think people would have noticed. The atmosphere was solemn and dignified and people were generally wearing – I mean most of the men were wearing dark suits. Yes, I think you would have realised it was a funeral of sorts.
- Q.13 Did you notice any signs of black ties or armbands?**  
People mostly wore fairly dark - I didn't actually see any dark ties.
- Q.14 Were there any women there?**  
There weren't many. They were not dressed in black particularly. Everyone was dressed fairly soberly.
- Q.15 Did any of the ladies wear hats?**  
I didn't notice any.
- Q.15 Was there anything in the service that had any particular significance musically? Did this particular service stand out in any way from conventional funeral services?**  
Well, certainly at the beginning, an except from the 'Dream of Gerontius' was played, presumably it was a request from Keith; the 'Praise to the Holiest' section from Part One. This was a recording. I think that is the only unusual thing, except possibly the nature of the hymns themselves. 'Love divine, all loves excelling' is a hymn more commonly associated with weddings and joy, and similarly, 'Guide me, Oh thou great Jehovah', not a hymn one immediately associates with a funeral.
- Q.16 What about the singing itself?**  
The singing was actually very - really quite lusty and forthright. The minister commented on it. I think we wanted to give him a good send off, so we sang – lustily!
- Q.17 Were there were people there from various choirs?**  
Yes, from both the Philharmonic and the Oratorio, and part of the church choir was there as well, although I gather he wasn't a member of the church choir.
- Q.18 What about the prayers during this service of thanksgiving Were they given by a minister?**  
There were prayers. They were given mostly by the former minister, because the present incumbent has apparently only been there since September, so the previous minister came back, and the main section of prayers was given by him.



- Q.19 Were there any readings?**  
Yes, I think there were. I think there was one. I can't remember what it was: it didn't stand out. There was a fairly brief address - just - sort of recollections of Keith's life. He simply stood at the alter rail.
- Q.20 Were any of the family involved in any way?**  
No, they did not say anything, and did not participate in any way.
- Q.21 Was there a closing piece of music?**  
I don't think so. I didn't notice.
- Q.22 Did people congregate outside after this service? Was anything planned?**  
There was a buffet as such, which was held in the church hall afterwards, to which everyone was invited, and some went and some didn't. I didn't go along - I was teaching.
- Q.23 If there wasn't a time problem might, you have gone?**  
I don't know - possibly. A number of people weren't sure whether they should go or not. People weren't sure where they stood in respect to the family. People like myself, who weren't exactly close friends of the family but had had associations with Keith, were perhaps a little bit uncertain about quite how far the level of closeness extended, or should extend, in this sort of situation. One felt that not going was sort of safer than ...
- Q.24 Was there any gathering outside that you were party to?**  
I met with other Oratorio people and passed a few pleasantries.
- Q.25 What was the mood after the service within the congregation as a whole?**  
It seemed to be subdued.
- Q.26 Was there a difference, at the end, between this service of thanksgiving and the exit at a conventional funeral?**  
There wasn't the focus of the coffin leaving, and the family; there was nothing to naturally sort of follow on to - just like after a normal service - people just got up and weren't quite sure what to do - whether to hang around or whether to go straight into the eating + buffet. There was some uncertainty about what was the correct form: the right thing to do.

Closing thanks,  
and offering of 'Thank You' card







*Pamela C. Saunders*  
*University of Sheffield*  
*English and Linguistics*

**Respondent: volunteer**  
**Sheffield / Derbyshire**  
Not eligible for database

## **Funerals in Sheffield 1843 - present**

Transcript of taped interview

***I am carrying out some research into the links between religion and funerals, particularly in Sheffield. Thank you for agreeing to help. All information is gathered for academic purposes.***

**Q.1 I understand you have recently been to an Anglican funeral. Can you tell me about it?**

It was at Ecclesall. It is a very big barn of a church with a huge churchyard, a very good suburban area.

**Q.2 Who was this for?**

It was someone who had been at Italian classes with me.

**Q.3 Was it what you expected?**

I didn't have a lot of expectations. I've not been to a lot, and particularly, I'm out of touch with Anglican funerals, so I didn't know what to expect. I noticed that it was the modern service – there were little books that were put out for people to look at. It was a huge, bare sort of – well Anglican churches tend to be bare to me, being a Catholic, and we were scattered about like peas in a pod. And then the coffin was brought in and we had 'Abide with me'; we had something terrible – we had Crimmond probably, yes – the two hymns that are at the top of my hate list.

**Q.4 Was this different from the Catholic funerals that you might have been to ?**

Yes, because we didn't actually pray for the repose of his soul, and at the end, there was no incense, and no Holy Water, and it felt sort of cold and chill and nothing.

**Q.5 There would be no Requiem Mass and therefore no communion. Would you miss this?**

If I went to a Catholic funeral there would be a Requiem and you would be able to participate in Holy Communion. There is a special sort of bond between you, even people you only know slightly. If you meet somebody, in any circumstances and you find out you're both Catholics, well, it's as though you've found a relation, if it's somebody in the congregation, they're part of you, and although you are not going to see them any more, you still feel part of it, and you feel one together. Even in a tragic situation. I went to one a young boy's funeral at our church. He was killed in a car accident, and it was very moving, very touching, but still you feel there is hope.

**Q.6 Can you explain about mass cards?**

The friends and relations will send – will ask the priest to say mass for the dead person, and make an offering actually to the priest, and you get a special card. It's a bit like those sympathy cards that you see, but the wording inside says 'Holy Mass will be offered'. The priest fills the time in, and he signs it, and he keeps a record of masses that he says for any sort of intentions, and then at the funeral all the cards are placed on the coffin, and the coffin stands in front of the altar, and all the cards are arranged on it There'll be different masses for the cards. You'll see in the weekly



Bulletin it tells you everything - what the Masses are - what the intention is. If you see somebody you know, you might make a point of going to that particular mass. They'll be said throughout the year, and very often people will have a mass for the anniversary of the death. You think how much loved this person was that so many people took this trouble. It's in the same way that people say 'look at this mass of flowers' or 'what a lot of money they collected for cancer research' or what ever they do.

**Q.6 Does the priest always use Holy Water and incense at the end of the mass?**  
I've always seen it done.

**Q.7 I understand that you have made plans for your own funeral.**  
Yes. I don't want that awful piped music at the crematorium and I don't want 'Abide with me', 'Jesu lover of my soul', 'The Lord's my Shepherd' to Crimmond, or any of those other Mickey Mouse hymns the Catholic church is addicted to.

Closing thanks, and offering of 'Thank You' card

Format of 'Thank you' card



*Thank You*  
*for helping*  
*in this research*

*Pamela Saunders*  
*University of Sheffield*



## APPENDIX C

### SAFEC: SAUNDERS FUNERAL EPHEMERA AND CUTTINGS

**CD**                    **Diana**, Princess of Wales, BBC recording of the Funeral Service  
BBC Worldwide Music 449 800-2

**Audio Tapes**

**Radio Programmes:** eight tapes

BBB Radio 4 **Rites of Passage**

- |    |  |          |
|----|--|----------|
| 1. | Earth from Israel: Jewish                  | 29.08.93 |
| 2. | Ashes to the East Coast: Hindu             | 05.09.93 |
| 3. | Always facing Mecca: Muslim                | 12.09.93 |
| 4. | Building the Promised Land:<br>Rastafarian | 19.09.93 |
| 5. | Feeding Hungry Ghosts: Chinese             | 26.09.93 |
| 6. | Fading Laments: Greek Orthodox             | 04.10.93 |

**Conference:**

Recordings made at: 'Funerals' Weekend, conference, Barhaugh Hall  
19/20 March 1994

**Interviews:**

Tony Greatorex, Funeral Director, Conisborough, Yorkshire  
Sarya and Surriya Chauhdry, Heeley, Sheffield, Muslim rituals  
Angela Barton, CECTAL, University of Sheffield, funeral experiences  
Bob Miles, Christian and Mason, funeral experiences (two tapes)  
Alan Eost, organist, funeral experiences  
Revd Martin Hill, Congregational minister  
Angela Barton, Derbyshire  
Martyn Askew, Funeral Director, John Fairest

**Videos**

**Diana**, Princess of Wales,  
funeral programmes    3 tapes                    06.09.97

**TV News items:**

- |                                      |          |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| North Korea                          | 11.07.94 |
| BBC1 News / Epitaphs                 | 09.08.94 |
| Roy Castle, funeral                  | 08.09.94 |
| Look North BBC 1: Aysgarth           | 25.10.94 |
| BBC 2: Siren Spirits: Tale           | 29.12.94 |
| Look North News                      | 31.01.95 |
| Advertisement – Cost of Funerals Ch4 | 02.06.95 |
| Harold Wilson                        | 06.06.95 |
| Marti Caine                          | 13.11.95 |



Marti Caine	20.11.95
Sheffield fireman	05.01.96
Headless body	19.02.96
Biker's funeral	13.02.97

### Programmes

Muslims – A Way of Life	BBC1	10.02.94
L.A. Requiem	Ch4	28.11.94
The Vacillations of Poppy Carew	ITV	05.03.95
Waiting for God	BBC2	23.02.95
Everyman: Death's Door	BBC1	10.04.95
Lucinda Lampton: Opulent Endings	BBC2	11.12.95
Picture This – Afro-Caribbean	BBC2	11.12.95
Cutting Edge	Ch4	11.05.96
Last Rites	ITV	19.01.98
Last Rites	ITV	26.01.98
Undercover Britain	Ch4	12.05.98
Everyman: Death in Brighton	BBC1	14.06.98
The Long Goodbye	BBC2	06.05.99
Neighbours from Hell	ITV	25.02.00
Great Undertakings	Ch4	03.02.00
		10.02.00
		17.02.00
		24.02.00

## Primary Evidence: Photographic

### Slides

#### Burial grounds

Ecclesall	All Saints	25
Rivelin	St Michael	11

#### Cemeteries and crematorium

Abbey Lane Cemetery	10
General Cemetery	26
Hutcliffe Wood Crematorium	1
York Cemetery	15

### Photographs

#### Churchyards, burial grounds and places of worship

Beighton	St Mary	5
Bradfield	St Nicholas	12
Bradwell	St Barnabas	7
Cathedral	St Peter and St Paul	38
City	Upper Chapel	7
Ecclesall	All Saints	25
Ecclesfield	St Mary churchyard	8



Ecclesfield	St Mary burial ground	7
Ecclesfield	Jewish old	3
Ecclesfield	Jewish	26
Fulwood	Christ Church	30
Handsworth	St Mary	2
Loxely	United Reformed	12
Norton	St James	11
Rivelin	St Michael Roman Catholic	6
Stannington	Quaker Shore plot	4
Stannington	Underbank Unitarian	13
Walkely	St Mary	18
Walkley	Jewish North Street congregation	6
Wards End	St Philip	8

### **Cemeteries**

Abbey Lane	41
Attercliffe disused	22
Beighton	8
Bradford Undercliffe	8
Burncross	12
Burngreave disused	7
Bradfield Birtin	21
Carlisle	17
City Road	11
Crookes	18
Darnall	5
Ecclesfield	4
General Cemetery	37
Handsworth disused	7
Handsworth	12
Intake	7
Norton disused	13
Shiregreen	17
Stocksbridge	5
Tinsley	24
Ulley woodland	16
Woodhouse disused	5
Woodhouse	3
Wisewood	23

### **Crematoria**

City Road	5
Grenoside	9
Hutcliffe Wood	8

### **Other**



Ecclesall Woods	4	charcoal burner's grave
Hillsborough	1	Memorial gates
Roadside memorials	5	
		/ flowers

## Press Cuttings

<b>Death of Diana, Princess of Wales</b>		
complete newspapers:	'Daily Telegraph'	01.09.97
		02.09.97
		03.09.97
		04.09.97
		05.09.97
		06.09.97
		08.09.97
	'Telegraph Special'	01.09.97
	'Sunday Telegraph'	07.09.97
assorted cuttings	57	

## Sheffield

Graves	general, including disputes	35
	vandalism	29
	Supertram exhumations	23
	General Cemetery	14
	general	13
Funerals		31
Theft	funeral money; flowers	5
Advertisements		17
Notices		32
General issues		13

## National and International

Funerals	159
Religious aspects	34
Alternative	73
Coffins and shrouds	101
Cemeteries	45
War	15
Memorial Services	23
Trade; monetary issues; pre-planning; SCI	59
Internet	23
Pets' funerals	4
General issues	84
Cremation	78
Funeral topics	91



**Information Packs**

Conference packs: abstracts; papers; publications:	Death and Disposal conference National Funerals College 'Funerals' weekend
Cemetery Information packs:	York General Cemetery, Sheffield Undercliffe, Bradford Highgate, London Kensal Green, London
Crematoria Information packs	Sheffield Bereavement Services Solihull Crematorium Pentrebychan Crematorium, Wales
Funeral Directors' packs	John Heath, Sheffield Pritchards, SCI, Sheffield John Fairest, Sheffield S&E, Sheffield B&C, Sheffield Lunt, Sheffield Keeton, Woodhouse, Sheffield Peace Funerals, Sheffield James Hughes, Mold
Monumental masons packs	Hopkinson, Sheffield SCI

**Ephemera**

Academic	3
Bereavement leaflets	17
Charity leaflets	15
Codes of Practice	3
Crematoria leaflets	7
Funeral cards	13
Funeral pre-payment leaflets	23
Funeral address:	1
Greeting cards	15



Guides, postcards	12
Miscellaneous	25
Orders of Service	12
Religious leaflets	13
War Graves Memorial	1



## APPENDIX D

### **Selected Literature: the novel, story, poem and play**

Literature may be imaginative, figurative, allegorical, metaphorical, or indeed any combination of style and method. Subjective, fictional, works are read because of these qualities. Just as the audience at an Ayckbourn play laugh at their neighbours, but never at themselves, and identify with the 'good guy' image in films, or weep in sympathy when watching an Alan Bennett monologue on television, so readers enjoy recognising their perceptions of life, experienced, envied or observed, reflected in their choice of fiction. Writers have a need to communicate: publishers know that identification sells; fear of life and of the future; accepting the inevitable; recognising the imaginary, are all marketable commodities.

Of interest is Stewart's work based on his grant funded thesis concerning 'death in the narrative' in English literature, which is a comprehensive study of representational language, and largely devoted to the period of this study. The major works are subject to his analysis: it serves as a foundation from which to approach the three aspects of deathways in fiction selected for this study:

- novel and story
- poem and play
- legend and tale.

Although Stewart does not approach the narrative through legend or tale, his seminal work has pertinence: Victorian rhetoric is examined, and deathways in Hardy analysed. The work is substantial; it includes style elements and comprehensive notes.

Of the fictional Victorian death, he writes:

**'Some characters must die in any period of novel writing. As everyone allows, characters die more often, more slowly, and more vocally in the Victorian age than ever before or since.'**<sup>1</sup>



## Novel and story

The Victorian writers are indeed noted for their lengthy deathbed scenes: consider

George Eliot and the death of Casaubon in *Middlemarch*:

'When the commonplace "We must all die" transforms itself suddenly into the acute consciousness "I must die – and soon", then death grapples us, and his fingers are cruel; afterwards, he may come to fold us in his arms as our mother did, and our last moment of dim earthly discerning may be like the first. To Mr Casaubon now, it was as if he suddenly found himself on the dark river-brink and heard the plash of the oncoming oar, not discerning the forms, but expecting the summons.'<sup>2</sup>

Casaubon has just heard that his illness, a degeneration of the heart, cannot be cured:

he already hears the ferryman's oars coming to take him across the river. As Stewart analyses:

'Like so many other Victorian writers, Eliot anticipates the event of death by its vocabulary, the moment by metaphor.'<sup>3</sup>

Fictional death and the funeral are commonly portrayed as mournful. However, the delightful Evelyn Waugh novel *The Loved One* is both humorous and sardonic, with the tragedy of human death intricately involved in the ritualised business of American funerals – for pets.<sup>4</sup> Again, wry humour is an essential component of the 1996 novel *Last Orders*, by Graham Swift. This is the saga of a physical and metaphorical journey from Bermondsey to Margate, with a task: to scatter ashes. The novel describes a multitude of funerary incidents in its portrayal of people and death:

'... all he's carrying, under one arm, is a plain brown cardboard box, about a foot high and six inches square. He looks like a man who's been down the shops and bought a set of bathroom tiles. ... He feels inside the box and slowly pulls out a plastic container. It looks like a large instant-coffee jar, it's got the same kind of screw-on cap. But it's not glass, it's bronzy-coloured, faintly shiny plastic. ... I reckon I wouldn't fill it, being on the small side. I suppose it wouldn't do to unscrew the cap.'<sup>5</sup>

The continuation of normal behaviour patterns when dealing with unexpected death is vividly depicted in Lawrence's short story, *Odour of Chrysanthemums*. A miner is suffocated underground and is brought home to be laid out in the front parlour. The mother and the wife strip, wash and dress the man:



‘ “Have you got his shirt, ‘Lizabeth?” ... She went into the kitchen and returned with the garment. “It is aired,” she said, grasping the cotton shirt here and there to try.’<sup>6</sup>

### Poem and play

Poetic death may also be thought of as sad melancholy. However, the anthology *Death*,<sup>7</sup> edited by Enright, displays poetic and literary death as many-faceted.

Humour, wit and sensitive reflection are elements in his morbid selections relating to: death, suicide, mourning, graveyards and funerals. On children and death, Enright notes:

‘The fear of death has no meaning to a child ... It was actually possible for a child, who was over eight years old at the time, coming home from a visit to the Natural History Museum, to say to his mother:

“I’m so fond of you, Mummy: when you die, I’ll have you stuffed and I’ll keep you in this room, so that I can see you *all* the time.”’<sup>8</sup>

Auden’s works have received unprecedented attention since the release and subsequent popularity of the film, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. ‘Stop all the clocks’,<sup>9</sup> read by a mourning partner at the funeral of the title, is noted for its sensitive and memorable reaction to unexpected death. Here, poetic words spoken by a talented actor conveyed a depth of emotion that no portrayed weeping and wailing could reach. Dramatic death is not restricted to the tragedy experienced in a *Romeo and Juliet*, or the horror in a *Macbeth*. It can be portrayed in a wry style with the potential for loud humour in plays such as *Abigail’s Party*,<sup>10</sup> devised by Mike Leigh. Death and funerals are regular features in fictional broadcasting. The radio programme: ‘The Archers’ has had many deaths within its story lines, but none so memorable as that of Grace Archer, who perished in a fire, and on the night when she could have been watching the opening night of commercial television. Publicity about a forthcoming ‘death’ in a television series is likely to result in an increased audience. ‘Coronation Street’ has seen the death of many characters: ‘Jack Walker’, ‘Valerie Barlow’ and



‘Len Fairclough’ of distant memory, and more recently ‘Alf Roberts’. Funerals are portrayed in many ways, the most memorable recently is perhaps the funeral in ‘Four Weddings and a Funeral’. Again, an historical funeral is portrayed in the 1979, Roman Polanski film *Tess*, where Tess is forced to bury ‘Sorrow’, her baby, outside the church walls, and is seen returning at night to put a small marmalade jar of flowers on his grave, to the mournful interpretation of the tune ‘Bye Baby Bunting’.

### **Legend and tale**

Death, death ritual and their associated beliefs are often ingredients in tales and legends as well as being the subject of urban myths and folktales. Thus one finds the retelling of the folk belief in the healing powers of the body of an executed man in Hardy’s *The Withered Arm*, where Gertrude Lodge had her withered arm laid ‘.. across the dead man’s neck, upon a line the colour of an unripe blackberry, which surrounded it.’<sup>11</sup> A tale of quite a different kind is that spoken of at Kirby Malham in the Yorkshire Dales, where a widow planned to be buried the other side of a stream from her seafaring husband: as she was separated from him in life by water, so she was to be separated in death. The tombstone has an archway through which runs a little stream. However, it would seem that the land was such that she had to be buried on the same side of the stream as her husband.<sup>12</sup>

When considering the fiction of death, the task for the purposes of this study was not simply one of selection rather than that of search, for the subjective approach is a singularly strong element in this form of fictional choice. During the long period of this research, the constant awareness of the ongoing study increased awareness of any fictional representation of death and its associated practices. The works cited in this section of the study are merely selected as examples from the extensive range of



material available that serve as a support to primary research, for all such representation of a reality, once read, is absorbed into a widening fund of knowledge. Thus, they are also chosen because they are known and familiar.

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3. Stewart, p.114
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8. Freud, in Enright, p.270
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