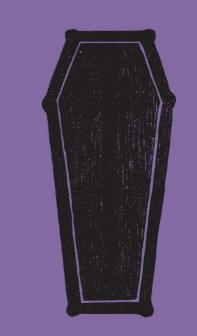
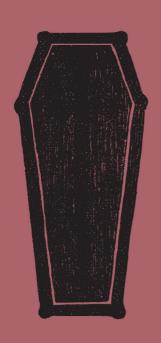
# The Evolution of the British Funeral Industry in the 20th Century

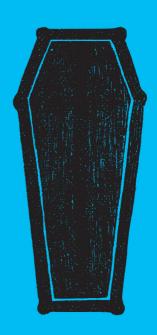
From Undertaker to Funeral Director

**Brian Parsons** 



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# THE EVOLUTION OF THE BRITISH FUNERAL INDUSTRY IN THE 20TH CENTURY: FROM UNDERTAKER TO FUNERAL DIRECTOR

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# THE EVOLUTION OF THE BRITISH FUNERAL INDUSTRY IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

FROM UNDERTAKER TO FUNERAL DIRECTOR

**BRIAN PARSONS** 



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# **Abbreviations**

## **Publications:**

BMJ British Medical Journal FSJ Funeral Service Journal TUJ The Undertakers' Journal

TUFDJ The Undertakers' and Funeral Directors' Journal

BUA Monthly British Undertakers' Association Monthly

TNFD The National Funeral Director TFD The Funeral Director (Monthly)

#### **Trade Associations:**

BES British Embalmers' Society

BFWA British Funeral Workers' Association BIFD British Institute of Funeral Directors

BIE British Institute of Embalmers
BIU British Institute of Undertakers
BUA British Undertakers' Association

IBCA Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration
FBCA Federation of British Cremation Authorities/Federation

of Burial & Cremation Authorities

ICCM Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management

LAFD London Association of Funeral Directors

NACCS National Association of Cemetery (and Crematorium)

Superintendents

#### xii Abbreviations

NAFD National Association of Funeral Directors

NCDD National Council for the Disposition of the Dead

SAIF National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral

Directors

### Others:

MMC Monopolies and Mergers Commission

OFT Office of Fair Trading

SCI Service Corporation International

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# **Preface**

In 1963, Robert Habenstein and William Lamers published *The History* of American Funeral Directing. Now in its sixth edition, the volume traces the origins of funeral service in the United States from the Egyptians to contemporary times. The subject has since been brought even further upto-date by Gary Laderman's Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America. This side of the Atlantic, those wishing to investigate a similar period of history need only refer to Julian Litten's authoritative work *The English Way of Death: The* Common Funeral Since 1450. His survey, however, concludes towards the end of the nineteenth century. The intention of this book is to start at this point by providing a comprehensive account of how funeral service developed in Britain during the following 110 years. In a period that has seen a shift from burial to cremation, the replacement of the horse-drawn hearse by motor vehicles, the introduction of embalming and the growth of large funeral firms operating on a centralised basis, there has also been an increasing preference by the industry for the description 'undertaker' to be replaced with 'funeral director'. Endorsing the desire to be perceived as a professional, this new term reflects the increase in responsibility and complexity of funerals acquired during the twentieth century.

This book draws together research I have carried out over the last 20 years. Some material was presented in 1997 to the University of Westminster as a thesis entitled 'Change and Development in the British Funeral Industry, with Special Reference to the Period 1960–1990'. Teaching on the foundation degree in Funeral Service at the University of Bath prompted the revision of the original along with new material, a move greatly assisted by unlimited access to the *Undertakers' Journal Funeral Service Journal* and the *BUA Monthly/National Funeral Director/Funeral Director Monthly*.

### xvi Preface

The development of the British funeral industry is a vast subject. It is hoped that this first text on the subject will provide a good starting point for anyone wishing to become acquainted with a fascinating but largely unexplored part of our social and industrial history.

**Brian Parsons**