



## Harlow selects Westerleigh as Partner

Westerleigh Group Ltd have been chosen by Harlow Council to manage their cemetery and crematorium service at Parndon Wood.

The decision followed a comprehensive tender process where Westerleigh scored highly due to their reputation for providing high quality care to the bereaved and proven experience in working with local authorities.

The 30 year contract will lead to substantial investment across the service including a major refurbishment of the crematorium and installation of new cremators and abatement equipment.



## KENT COUNTY CREMATORIUM PLC CHOOSES TO JOIN WESTERLEIGH

Kent County Crematorium Plc (KCC), owners and operators of the two distinguished crematoria at Charing and Barham, has been acquired by the Westerleigh Group.

The board of KCC had decided to carry out a strategic review of their company in June and had invited offers for the business. After an intense process, involving strategic and financial buyers, Westerleigh emerged as the preferred bidder with a strong recommendation from the board of KCC for shareholders to sell.

Charing Crematorium was the first crematorium to be built in Kent when it opened in 1936 and the company continued to be pioneers of the cremation movement by opening a second crematorium at Barham, near to Canterbury, in 1956. The two crematoria care for almost 3500 funerals each year and are renowned for the elegance and quality of their buildings and their stunning natural setting.

As an independent company for more than 75 years, the Board of KCC plc did not take lightly its decision to embark on a sale process but chose Westerleigh, for its commitment to providing the best possible service to the bereaved. The board had also recognised *'the benefit and enhanced opportunities that should be available to KCC plc and its management and employees as part of the Westerleigh Group in having a platform and increased resources available to it'*.

Jeremy Leigh Pemberton, Chairman of KCC plc, added: *'The new owners Westerleigh have a record of operating crematoria in the interests of all stakeholders'*.

Richard Evans was also delighted with the outcome; *'This should prove to be a great and rewarding union for the two companies. Westerleigh have gained a pair of iconic crematoria, widely admired for their wonderful landscapes and with a distinguished tradition. This legacy will be preserved but we also hope to use our experience and expertise to review the current operations and improve, where possible, the service to the bereaved.'*



# Westerleigh Lead Design of New Crematorium for Sandwell

A new crematorium for the residents of West Bromwich was opened in August 2010 following the successful completion of a three year build programme.

Westerleigh had been appointed in 2007 by Brendan Day, bereavement services manager, to assemble a design team for the project and had been selected due to their unrivalled experience of crematoria construction and refurbishment.

Adrian Britton, commercial director for Westerleigh, and Paul Daffurn, Group technical officer, led the early design discussions and oversaw the appointment of Martin Critchell Architects. Martin added 'Westerleigh are experts in the development and operation of crematoria and we found their early input critical in determining the overall site layout and ensuring that the ultimate building would meet the very highest expectations of the bereaved. The specification they produced was very precise and focused on ensuring that the money was spent in the right areas, where the public would benefit the most'.

The £3.25million building in West Bromwich held its first services, two weeks ahead of schedule and will be known as Sandwell Valley Crematorium. The new crematorium is larger, lighter, brighter and more environmentally friendly than the old building which is due to become a beautiful walled garden and café.

The new crematorium contains many modern features such as an online music selection service and the ability to broadcast services across the web for friends and relatives who can't make the actual funeral. The lighting inside the building can be set to over two million different colours and large funeral parties can watch the services on televisions in a covered area just outside the chapel should the main room, which can hold 125, be full.

New cremators and abatement equipment have also been fitted to ensure that the service meets the very latest environmental standards.

Sandwell Council's cabinet member for safer neighbourhoods Cllr Derek Rowley said: "We hope the new crematorium will make what is a difficult time for friends and family a little more pleasant. "The old crematorium was so dark and cramped and the new building couldn't be more different."

Sandwell Council's bereavement services manager Brendan Day added: "We think Sandwell Valley Crematorium is a great name, it reflects both the beautiful location and the borough."

## John Proffitt joins Westerleigh

Westerleigh are delighted to announce the appointment of John Proffitt as the company's Operations Manager.

Having working for over 25 years as a senior bereavement services manager, at four local authorities, John brings a wealth of industry and local government knowledge with him and is widely acknowledged, as a bereavement services expert. He has served on the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities Executive Committee and currently advises as part of their National Technical Committee.

Richard Evans, Managing Director for Westerleigh said, "We are delighted that John has agreed to join our senior management team and are sure that his bereavement services knowledge and technical expertise, will compliment those of our current



management. His appointment will also ensure that our ongoing commitment to provide quality services to the bereaved, either through partnership with local authorities or by new build, continues to be realised".

John added, "I am really looking forward to this new challenge and to using my own skills to compliment, what I already see as a quality product provided by Westerleigh."





## Opening of new crematorium in Cornwall

A new crematorium in the heart of West Cornwall opened before Christmas at Treswithian Downs, close to Camborne.

The new service was approved after a successful planning appeal in 2009 where inspectors agreed that there was an overriding need for a crematorium to serve the area. Construction started in the spring of 2010 with the building finished on time despite the terrible winter weather.

The size of the site and its natural tree-lined boundary has allowed a very private and secluded place to be created. The grounds have also been carefully designed to ensure that the natural landscape is retained with stunning views from the chapel looking down across the valley.

*'We are very pleased with the final outcome of this long term project as everyone can see what a wonderful place that has been created'* commented Richard Evans, Managing Director of Westerleigh, *'We now have the chance to pay back the fantastic support we have had from local funeral directors and clergy and to provide a special place for the communities in this area to hold their funerals'*.

A fact confirmed by Vincent Young of Colin Matthews Funeral Directors: *'We are delighted to see the new crematorium as it is a service that people in this area have desperately needed for a very long time. The crematorium will be much more conveniently placed and is specifically designed to cater for the people of West Cornwall. It is also set in a lovely, natural spot and people have time to hold their service without being hurried along'*.

The Crematorium has been designed to meet the different needs of the bereaved, regardless of faith or belief, and the chapel can be altered to ensure that a fitting environment can be provided for any funeral. Modern music and lighting systems have been installed and the building has a light, natural look in sympathy with its rural surroundings.

### Other features include:

- Built in natural materials in keeping with traditional style.
- Seating for approximately 100 people plus standing room for over double that number.
- Retention of existing hedgerows and trees supplemented with further tree planting and shrubs and flowers.
- Large bay window in the chapel to create a light and open space and allow views across the fields and woods below.
- Abatement equipment will be fitted to eliminate emissions and to produce a smoke-free environment.
- Wesley music system with loop facility and a traditional organ.

The other major difference will be the huge reduction in travelling times for the bereaved in West Cornwall. Currently, round trips to Truro crematorium can take over 3 hours at busy times from Penzance and surrounding areas and even mourners in Camborne typically face a 45 minute drive. Darren Collick, Manager at Treswithian Downs added, *"As a local person I know how much this crematorium is needed and I am sure that families will appreciate the natural setting and general peace and tranquillity. We know how difficult bereavement is and will ensure that we provide the best possible level of care to everyone who holds a funeral here."*



# The Opening of West Lothian Crematorium

The opening of West Lothian Crematorium in April saw the Westerleigh Group's first sojourn into Scotland and the opening of their thirteenth operational site, located at Cousland Wood, Livingston.

The new crematorium is the result of a partnership between Westerleigh Group and West Lothian Council following an extensive tendering process. The Council provided the 25 acre woodland site in the heart of their district offering a very private and secluded setting for the crematorium and Gardens of Remembrance. The grounds have been carefully designed to ensure that the natural tree lined landscape is retained with the building blending beautifully into the undulating grounds, shaped with pools and burns of running water.



The building took place during one of the worst Scottish winters in living memory with snow on the ground from 17th December 2009 until the first week in April 2010.

The crematorium opened on 27th April 2010 and is easily

accessed from the two major centres of Bathgate and Livingston and meets a significant need for the people of West Lothian and beyond. The 96 seat crematorium chapel has the state of the art Wesley sound system, capable of providing live web casts and an almost unlimited music library.

A service of dedication was held on 9th September 2010 led by the Revd. Norman MacRae, Moderator of the Presbytery of West Lothian with a number of other religious and secular leaders participating in the service, reflecting the differing beliefs within the area. Following the Dedication Service the Provost of West Lothian Council, Councillor Tom Kerr, closed the service stating that *"West Lothian Council was delighted to be associated with the new crematorium which had been the Council's intention to build 20 years earlier."*

*The Council will be pleased to work with the Westerleigh Group and are confident that they will deliver a quality service which will meet the significant needs of the people of West Lothian".*

A sculpture depicting three deer was commissioned by Mor Design following a long consultation process with the local community as part of the planning agreement with the Council and led by the authority's arts officer. The sculpture has been positioned close to the main drive and is linked to a poem 'an image to time' by Sorley Maclean, a well known Gaelic Poet.



## Work set to start in the Borders

Plans for a new crematorium to serve the Borders were finally approved at the end of 2010 after a fifteen year search for a suitable site.

Currently families have to travel to Edinburgh, Dumfries or Carlisle for a cremation and the new facility at Melrose will greatly reduce journey times as well as providing a more relevant local facility.

The setting will also be spectacular, lying beneath the Eildon Hills, close to the banks of the River Tweed. The rural look will be preserved by the establishment of twelve acres of woodland in the adjoining fields and this will also help to create a private setting for the mourners.

The building will be dressed with local stone with open views from the chapel over the surrounding countryside. Abatement equipment will be fitted to ensure that emissions will be eliminated.

The crematorium will eventually hold 900 funerals a year with at least an hour allowed for each service. This should ensure that local people are finally able to hold a dignified, unhurried funeral in their own area.

