

NAFD SUMMER SCHOOL

enthralled participants

Across three sunny days in Durham, in July, the second NAFD Summer School brought together leaders from across the funeral profession for sessions on the future of funeral service that were rich in ideas, discussion and both personal and professional experience.

“The seminars and subject matter this year were enthralling,” said Natalya McLackland, of Regent Funeral Services, who was attending her second Summer School. “The learning and development is compelling. The Summer School forms an important part of Continuous Professional Development and can help anyone to learn and inspire themselves in their current roles and beyond.

For Natalya, the experience was all the more powerful for being a three-day retreat, involving participants fully in all discussions. “Like any course, the more you put into it, the more you get out and, with the Summer School, I truly believe that you must be able to give a part of yourself in this three-day course to get back something really meaningful,” she said.

Summer school was led once again by Professor Douglas Davies, one of the country's most respected theologians. Professor Davies leads the Centre for Death and Life Studies (CDALS) at Durham University, which exists to foster and conduct research into life-values, beliefs and practices that relate to living and dying. This year, Professor Davies brought CDALS colleagues and students along to contribute to the sessions.

“We delved deeper into elegies (funeral poetry) with Professor Stephen Regan where each of us contributed a poem or reading that was personal to us,” continued Natalya. “There was also an outstanding talk on funerals and death online from the perspective of Jonathan Lethaby, a 21-year-old undergraduate student.”

Also during the Summer School, PHD student Georgina Robinson, who is studying resomation (alkaline-hydrolysis), explored its introduction in other countries, her field trip to the USA and the progress towards it being introduced into the UK.

Each evening, guests were invited to enjoy a relaxed dinner and conversation, enabling the group to build a very strong bond across the three days.

Shirley Deighan, of Deighans Funeral Parlour, said she thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience. “I found all of the seminars very interesting and feel I have taken a lot away with me - I will never look at a poem in quite the same way! I also thought that it was also good to meet so many like-minded people ... I will look out for a few faces next time I attend an NAFD

“The Summer School was very enjoyable. I learnt so much and my other highlight was mingling with others, learning from each other and sharing our experiences. We had a lot of laughs too.”

Marian Sinclair,
Motorcycle Funerals

“It was an honour to be invited to speak at the Summer School about alkaline hydrolysis. Such stimulating discussion from participants, with real vision for the (near) future of UK funerary practices evident.”

Georgina Robinson,
PHD student CDALS



▲ Jonathan Lethaby with Professor Douglas Davies.

event and I am sure I will have a catch-up with them. I also have contacts in other parts of the country now, which is always a good thing. It was nice to do something for me! Unfortunately, in our profession, we seem to not prioritise ourselves.”

Newly elected President of the Yorkshire Area Federation, Leanne Rookledge, was also attracted to the blend of learning and networking: “I’m a sucker for academics, so being at Durham University for a few days certainly attracted me, but I was also interested in the topics which were due to be discussed, particularly resomation and the impact of COVID on direct cremation; the discussions which arose within the group in relation to these matters were very insightful and it was great to hear perspectives from funeral directors working within different regions and across various company types.

“I was also attracted due to the networking and social opportunities available as a result of the intimate size of the group. Although attending other NAFD events is also great for networking, the small size of the Summer

School encouraged deeper conversations between members who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to meet.”

All of the participants were full of praise for the NAFD Education Team and Board of Education which had organised the event, with interim Director of Education

Development, Angela Allen, and Karen Burton, Education Admissions and Quality Officer, both in attendance to make sure it all ran smoothly. Marion Sinclair of Motorcycle Funerals summed up her experience: “The lectures were awesome, the organisers did brilliantly, the location was amazing.”



“I have come away with a great respect for funeral directors and the multifaceted role they must work in.”

Jonathan Lethaby
Theology Student, CDALS

“I would definitely do something similar again. Put my name down!”

Shirley Deighan,
of Deighans Funeral Parlour

CONTINUE YOUR professional development!

Secure a place in the NAFD Learning Hub pilot

The NAFD's revolutionary new learning platform - the NAFD Learning Hub - sits at the centre of the NAFD's bold two-year plan for the introduction of mandatory Continuous Professional Development (CPD) within the NAFD, in line with the likely next steps that the Government will take.

When fully developed, the NAFD Learning Hub will use virtual reality and 3D models to create highly-engaging visual learning scenarios for funeral professionals, supported

by online assessment, remote invigilation and gap training. The use of virtual reality to aid training and development will be the first of its kind in the UK funeral sector.

A six-month trial to help scope out the full Learning Hub is now live.

During the trial, a select number of NAFD member funeral homes will be given access to more than 50 courses out of a potential total of 700 available to the NAFD Learning Hub. Each course is taken online, at a pace appropriate to the employee and in consultation with their employer. As well as being able to use the Hub's resources for training and developing your team, you will be

able to help to shape the content of the full version of the NAFD Learning Hub, which will be designed using feedback from NAFD members during the pilot.

The trial is open to just 200 funeral homes - out of nearly 4,000 in NAFD membership - for a nominal fee. You can choose to sign up all of your branches, or just one - to see whether it works for you - with licence bundles available for up to five employees at just £250. You can buy as many bundles as you wish.

Please email NAFD Education via education@nafd.org.uk today to secure access for you and your team.