A historical and cultural perspective on death and dying in Scotland from 16-20th Century.

- A good knowledge of things past is an armour against events to come

- Really?
May 19th 1537

Madeleine Queen of Scots
7th July 1537
**All Change**

- 1560
- Act of Parliament - Scotland becomes a *Protestant* country.

- John Knox forbids ministers from attending burials & forbids burials in churchyards
No Coffins

- 1563

General Assembly of the Church of Scotland declares that

“every parish should have a ‘bier’ in which to carry corpses to burial grounds where the **un-coffined** bodies should be buried under six feet of earth with ‘no religious service’”
1564 – Hawick Kirk Session on Burials

Banned were -

“burials within kirks and suchlike erection of tombs”

Prosecutions abounded for -

“breaking the kirk floor & burials of bairns”
End of the 16th Century – very agrarian society, with strong sense of local community (strengthened and facilitated by church adherence). Death and funeral handled by community. No religious presence at the funeral; no coffins; burial grounds used, prosecutions for the use of churchyards.
King Charles I approves an Act of Parliament (*Directory of Publick Worship*) which states that –

“praying, reading, and singing, have been grossly abused, are no way beneficial to the dead, and have proved many ways hurtful to the living; therefore let all such things be laid aside”
Death in Scotland Through the Centuries

End of the 17th Century – society largely the same, strong sense of local community (teaching, often by minister, enhances this). Death and funeral handled by community. No religious presence at the funeral; very few coffins; burial grounds used, fees and fee schedules for burials in churchyards. Annual kirk charges for retention of graves.
1740s -

- Mid Eighteenth Century

‘an expensive thing to die, and often a ruinous thing to be buried’

‘The feast was lavish and prolonged - the minister saying the blessing over the meat at vast length, which constituted the whole of his funeral service.’
1757 Inverarity Funeral

- Paid Out by Kirk Session

- To Candle for John Petrie’s funerals: 4/-
- To John Petrie’s Coffin: £2 18/-
- To Ale at his Funerals: £1 15/-
- To Expences (sic) at the Rouping: 12/-
- To Meat at the Funerals: 12/-
- To Two Graves making one to John Petrie and the other to Elspeth Petrie: 12/-

- To James Petrie’s Service for Attending His Father at his Death: 12/-
Mort Cloths
Parish in Shotts 1767-1768

- **May 17** best to Thomas PETTIGREW Kingshill
- **Sept 6** Rec from Wm SMELLIE in Overtoun payment for the plush mortcloth that was owing since 6th July 1766 for Robert CUNNINGHAM, son of Joseph CUNNINGHAM of Lockhill
- **Apr 10** plush to Christian TURNER relict of Thomas PETTIGREW in Kingshill
- **June 12** best to Thomas RUSSEL of Daviesdykes
- **April 15** for the new velvet mortcloth to Margaret KEDDER relict of John STEEL
- **May 5** for the new velvet mortcloth to David STEEL at Summerside

**Mort Cloths Costs :-**

- Velvet or best 8/-
- Plush or 2nd 5/-
- Child 2/-
Death in Scotland Through the Centuries

End of the 18th Century — early movements away from the country into urban areas, still a strong sense of local community (teaching again enhances this). Death and funeral handled by community. No religious presence at the funeral; coffins reasonably common if affordable; burial grounds used, fees and fee schedules for the use of churchyards. Annual kirk charges for retention of graves.
Rural Irish Funeral

- Circa 1810
UNDERTAKERS

1827

First ‘funeral undertaker’ listed in *Glasgow Post Office Directories*, though the trade as a commercial enterprise had probably been around for nearly a century.

The cost of the Scottish funeral in the mid-nineteenth century, and the public perception of the undertaker, seems to have been altogether more acceptable than in England.
SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1851
KIRKDEN BY ARBROATH

“You are aware that country churchyards are often neglected, but I am sure there are none more so than that of Kirkden.”

“It was but the other week that a relative of mine died, belonging to that Parish, When we arrived with the corpse, we were met by the old, but infirm, gravedigger, who had, of course, digged a grave.”

“Unfortunately it was neither deep enough nor long enough for the coffin, which had therefore to lie on the ground till the grave was made sufficiently large.”
1850s - Registration of Death

1854

Death Certificates become mandatory
All Deaths must be Registered

By this time ministerial services ‘extended only to ‘home-based devotions’, and did not include ‘solemnising the burial itself’
INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Mid/Late 1800s

Dundee 1871 Census

- 27 people recorded living in a 2 roomed house with no running water, no sewerage (midden in backlands) no toilets.
- High mortality rate among children – 2 in 5 die before 1st birthday, 4 in 5 die before age of 3
- Poverty rife
- Huge number of Pauper Funerals
- More millionaires per capita than anywhere in UK
MARTIN
SARA A
JAN. 10, 1865 — APR. 4, 1873
WILLIAM J.
DEC. 17, 1870 — JUNE 2, 1873
LILLIAN C.
NOV. 8, 1872 — MAY 7, 1874
Scottish Funeral & English Funeral 1881 1877
Hindoo Cremated – A cremation took place last Friday afternoon at the Glasgow Crematorium of a young Hindoo, who has been staying with friends in this country. This is the second cremation within the last month, and brings up the total to seven since the opening of the crematorium a few months ago.
Death in Scotland Through the Centuries

End of the 19th Century — huge social changes, different sense of local community (by 1870s teaching done by state). Death and funeral handled by community. Many more infant deaths. No religious presence at the funeral except for special funerals; coffins commonplace except for pauper burials. Purpose built cemeteries in towns. burial grounds used, fees and fee schedules for the use of churchyards. Cremation about to change things. Funeral directors have become professional
1914 – 1918

1914-1918

The Scottish National War Memorial commemorates nearly 150,000 Scottish casualties of the First World War. The unprecedented scale of suffering and mourning led to a change of the stance of the Church.

This war, and the Spanish Flu outbreak immediately afterwards, which officially claimed 17,575 Scottish lives (it is widely believed to have killed twice that number, saw the sanctioning of the ‘practice of prayers for the dead’.
1929 Third Article Declaratory
SCOTTISH CREMATORIA

1895    Glasgow Maryhill

1929    Edinburgh Warriston
Scottish Crematoria

1895  Glasgow Maryhill
1929  Edinburgh Warriston
1930s Dundee – Aberdeen – Paisley – Leith
1950s Glasgow Dardowie – Glasgow Craigton -
Kirkcaldy - Greenock
1960s Cardross – Falkirk – Glasgow Linn – Perth – Ayr
 – Clydebank – Edinburgh Mortonhall
1970s Dunfermline
1990s Friockheim – Inverness – Irvine – Moray
2000s Holytown - Dumfries - South Lanarkshire
2010s Livingstone – Melrose (total 27)
GOODBYE TO THE ‘HALF-CROWN’ ON THE MANTELPIECE

- 1948 Inception of NHS Scotland
- Doctors & hospitals deluged
- More effective drugs
- Infant mortality drastically improved
- More and more people are dying in hospitals
"You matter because you are you. You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die."

~ Dame Cicely Saunders
## FUNERALS IN SCOTLAND
### BURIALS & CREMATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Deaths</th>
<th>Burials</th>
<th>Cremations</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>64848</td>
<td>64477</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>64413</td>
<td>56816</td>
<td>7597</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>63061</td>
<td>51044</td>
<td>12017</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>63821</td>
<td>39448</td>
<td>24373</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>65747</td>
<td>30166</td>
<td>35581</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>60281</td>
<td>25263</td>
<td>35018</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>56024</td>
<td>21121</td>
<td>34903</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Death in Scotland Through the Centuries

End of the 20th Century — great social/community changes

- Desertion from church attendance
- Technological changes (tv/internet/social media)
- Move to cremation
- Deaths away from home
- Death as taboo subject
**Rites of Passage in 2010 Conducted by the Church of Scotland**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weddings</th>
<th>Baptisms</th>
<th>Funerals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>5048</td>
<td>5787</td>
<td>28046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>1111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundee</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>3320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Total No. of Marriages **27524** of which **5048** by Ch of Scotland (18.34%)
- Total No. of Funerals **53856** of which **28046** by Ch of Scotland (52.1%)
## Funeral Services at Perth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil/private</th>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>Humanist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2000</strong></td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2005</strong></td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2010</strong></td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HUMANIST CELEBRANTS : 1ST MAY 2011

- Empowered to Conduct Funerals  89
- Males  35 (39%)
- Females  54 (61%)

- Empowered to Conduct Weddings  66
  (37 female – 56%)
## Church of Scotland Ministers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>215 (23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2010 - 7 male & 8 female student ministers

### Scottish Episcopal Church – Priests

- 323 churches (of which 29 are vacant) & 92 women (37%)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Perth</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Picture in ‘Hebridean News’
Funeral of Linda Norgrove, Isle of Lewis Tuesday 26 Oct 2010 - in Hebridean News

‘It was a traditional Western Isles funeral, in many ways, with the pall bearers carrying the coffin in a wooden frame called a bier in a constantly rotating procession – how it had always been done on the island.’

‘In other ways it was an extremely modern service. One tradition was broken as the customary all-male procession was joined by several of Ms Norgrove’s female relatives.’
THE WAY AHEAD