



IOCF Best Practice Day

Saturday, 5th April, 2014 started out busy and noisy at The Claret Centre in Buckden ... as delegates, speakers and organisers gathered for the IOCF Best Practice Day.

Whenever Institute members get together, there is always LOTS of talking and 'networking', to use proper business speak! It's a lovely sound to hear and feedback from delegates confirmed the importance of all those conversations. Amongst other comments, they said they particularly enjoyed,

*Meeting old and new friends
Chatting to others
Discussion...
Being with like-minded people
Listening to ideas and suggestions*



Lunchtime

The Best Practice Days are primarily being organised by the Institute so members can usefully share their knowledge, ideas and experience... Also, so people can enjoy and relax in the company of their peers; most members work alone so it's a real treat to be able to share funeral stories – good and bad - with understanding colleagues.

Alongside the conference, Council aims to run Best Practice Days twice a year.

The feedback provided by delegates at the end of the day indicated that the event was a great success... The most common requests (duly noted for the future) were for more time - for networking and the workshops themselves – and for more sessions on PR and marketing.

Unfortunately, there were some issues with projection and IT in general... and I apologise again for the inconvenience this caused to everyone present. Hand on heart, I promise that everything is being done to ensure this doesn't happen again.

Our guest speaker was Poppy Mardall of Poppy's Funerals. Poppy was a fascinating speaker who won the Most Promising New Funeral Director at the Good Funerals Awards in 2013 and has recently been short-listed for the 2014 First Women Awards. For more information, see <http://www.poppysfunerals.co.uk>

Many, many thanks are due to all the members and Anne Barber, our President, who volunteered to lead the seven workshops/presentations during the day: Tricia Empson, Jane Grimes, Viv O'Neill, Karen Hopkins and me (Sarah Willis). As usual, Anne did more sessions than anyone else despite having only just finished a week's training course! Peter McNulty was to partner Karen but unfortunately, in the end, could not attend. Thanks to Peter, anyway, for the offer and for the work he must have done in preparation.



Jane Grimes

Topics covered during the day were committals, PR and marketing, client meetings, delivery and young people/bereavement... and, for the future, delegates asked for even more on PR and marketing plus the use of audio-visual aids, IT and poetry and tribute writing in general... Also, how to pull together a script when there is little or no information from the family! It's great to be reminded that we all face similar challenges!

Many thanks to Christine Ogden – the new IOCF Chair – who did a splendid job in keeping everyone on track throughout the day. Her welcome included a reminder of the importance of booking forms and of 'admin' in general, and also an introduction to members of the Council. Christine also had the honour of presenting flowers and a certificate to Jill Maguire to honour her contribution to the IOCF - Jill is one of our founding members - and to mark her retirement from the Council; Jill is now a Lifetime Fellow of the Institute.



Jill Maguire and Christine Ogden

Which leads me to the final thank-you... to Barbara Pearce, the IOCF Administrator who arranged everything so very, very well. Although she already had a prior commitment for the 5th April, Barbara nevertheless came along at the beginning and the end of the event to offer help and support. What a star!



Andre Hamel-Cooke, Barbara Pearce and Karen Hopkins

This was the first event that I've organised for the Institute. I've enjoyed it... been embarrassed by the things that went wrong... and felt very grateful for all the help and support...

The best thing has been meeting and getting to know more IOCF members, on the Council and through the event itself. I've learnt so much about my extraordinary job - and how I can do it better – not just in workshops and from presentations but also in meetings, and over lunch and coffee and biscuits...

The next IOCF Best Practice Day on the 19th July is a special 10th Anniversary event. Anne Barber, IOCF founder and President, will be the keynote speaker and there will also be sessions on *Damage Control... IT* and *Taking Care of Ourselves Emotionally*. All this and birthday cake, too! I hope to see you there...