

DIOCESE OF HEREFORD



MILITARY FUNERALS INVOLVING DIOCESAN CLERGY a short briefing paper

We have been reflecting upon our involvement in two military funerals following deaths in Afghanistan in recent weeks: one that was conducted in Bromyard parish church and the other in the cathedral; and the Bishop has encouraged us to circulate the following notes, in the hope that they may help other diocesan clergy who are asked to organize a funeral of service personnel. We are indebted to The Revd Colin Butler, Senior Chaplain 143 (West Midlands) Brigade, The Revd Iain Skinner, Chaplain 22nd Special Air Service Regiment, Major James Hereford and Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Eames for their guidance and advice in the preparation of this paper.

FIRST RESPONSE TO THE DEATH OF A SOLDIER ON OPERATIONS

If you decide that it is appropriate for you to take the initiative following the death of a serviceman or woman from your parish, try to discover from your initial conversation with the family whom the military has appointed as the Casualty Visiting Officer (CVO): this officer has a pivotal role in liaising with the family and the military chaplaincy, and it is important to establish early contact with him/her. The CVO will have explained to the family that they have a choice between a *private* funeral and a *service* funeral: everything flows from this primary decision. If the family decides on a *private* funeral, then you can treat it as you would any other parish funeral: service personnel will attend the funeral simply as friends of the deceased. If the family decides on a *service* funeral, then please give yourself plenty of time and try not to be pushed into setting an early date for the funeral, as a service funeral may well be one of the most complex that you are ever likely to conduct, not least because it will probably attract local and national media interest: the arrangements will take a lot of time to put in place and much careful planning is required. Apart from the representation and involvement of the military in the funeral itself, they will expect to receive the coffin with a guard of honour when it arrives at the church, to provide a bearer party to carry the coffin

into and out of the church and, at the end of the service, to bid it farewell formally outside the church, when the Union flag and accoutrements are handed over to the family. The salute given by the firing party (usually six riflemen firing three blank rounds each) may take place at the graveside, at the crematorium, or occasionally outside the church door.

The military unit to which the deceased belonged will generally take responsibility for organising the military aspects of the funeral, providing the bearer and firing parties (and possibly ushers for the funeral) and they will liaise with you, probably through the CVO, to ensure the highest possible standard of occasion. A rehearsal will be required. A military chaplain is likely to have been involved with the family from an early stage. When a death occurs a chaplain is informed as early as possible and will probably have made contact with the family before you, so the family may regard a chaplain as *the lead clergy person*. If a parish church is to be the venue for the funeral, a chaplain will work with you closely to ensure that the needs of the family are at the heart of events: whereas contact may not take place in the case of a funeral at a crematorium.

Military chaplains come from a variety of denominational backgrounds: Anglican chaplains, where parish churches are the venue for the funeral, will probably look to share the service with you: chaplains from non-Anglican backgrounds may similarly negotiate a level of involvement with you, with the wishes of the family in mind.

LOCATION OF THE FUNERAL

Some families believe that, because their loved one died in action while serving their country, s/he should have a grand funeral in the cathedral. The funeral at Bromyard, however, proved that there are strong pastoral reasons for holding the funeral in the parish church, which is the spiritual home not only of the family but also of the local community, which (like the family) is grieving the death of one its own. Streets lined with local people paying their respects and the parish church packed to the doors and overflowing into the churchyard will speak volumes, and can be a great comfort and support to the family. That said, if the incumbent and military chaplain believe that there are good reasons for the funeral to be conducted in the cathedral, then the chapter will be sympathetic to such a request. As soon as the cathedral has accepted the funeral, however, control of all the arrangements passes immediately to the member of the cathedral chapter who will conduct the funeral and who will take up direct contact with the family and the CVO: the local clergy will still be invited to take part in the funeral, along with the appropriate military chaplain, but they will not be making any of the arrangements.

NEXT STEPS IN PLANNING A SERVICE FUNERAL

In discussion with you, the CVO (and the military chaplain, where one is actively involved) will begin to put arrangements in place: so, if you are to host a service funeral in your parish, we urge you –

- to contact Anni Holden, the Diocesan Communications Officer, and ask for her guidance in the dealing with the media: Anni will also liaise with the Bishop's office and military press office for you.
- to be ready, if the CVO or another military representative has not already done so, to establish contact with the local police, who will be responsible for ensuring that security arrangements before and after the service are properly organized and for approving the processional route through the town/village: the firing party's salute will also require written permission from the West Mercia Police or the Dyfed-Powys Police for Welsh parishes. If the committal is at the crematorium, then the police have to advise the crematorium in writing that they are aware of the date and time of the funeral and that they have authorised the salute. It is advisable to book a double slot for the committal at the crematorium, because it takes time to remove the flag from the coffin, to present it (with the medals, cap & belt) to the next of kin, and for the firing party to give the salute.
- to notify (if the military requests it) the mayor or someone in the local authority who represents (and can act on behalf of) the town/village, and ask for their support: for example, the town clerk may be willing to contact the other mayors in the county on your behalf, and to help with practical arrangements like providing extra seating in the church (and how it would get there), and agreeing special public transport arrangements to the church from any temporary car parks that will be established for the day.
- to notify the office of Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant as the funeral arrangements progress.
- to liaise with the local branch or the county office of the Royal British Legion: the Legion's inclusion requires sensitive handling because, in their eagerness to show their support, they will need clear and careful guidance as to their place and role in the service.

LEADERSHIP ROLE

In agreeing to host a service funeral, the parish priest may have to exercise at least three different roles as pastor, president of the funeral liturgy, and local community leader/co-ordinator. His/her aim is to get everyone working together for the same end, which is to comfort the

family in their bereavement and to create a dignified occasion that will enable the local community and the military to honour the deceased before God. Thus, each decision that the priest makes has to balance the pastoral needs of the family, the local community, and the military. In particular, the military (especially if a chaplain is not involved) will expect the parish priest to exercise this leadership role effectively, so that everyone is clear about what is acceptable in his/her church and is appropriate to divine worship. Where a military chaplain takes the lead, it is entirely reasonable that s/he will liaise with you about these matters.

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Funeral directors are appointed in the normal way by the family, and the CVO will work closely with them: any fees associated with a service funeral are dealt with through the funeral director. As it may be the first time that the local funeral director has undertaken a service funeral, please ensure that they are included in the detailed planning of the day, so that they are best placed to support the family.

HEALTH WARNING

Parochial clergy have plenty of experience of dealing with the mix of sorrow, loss and anger that is common at the time of a funeral. In the context of a service funeral, however, we need also to recognize that the focus of the liturgy can be deflected from God and used inappropriately to exert political pressure upon the government and/or the military commanders. We recommend, therefore, that the officiating priest oversees the content and length of any eulogies that will be given during the funeral, in order to ensure that they are appropriately focused and do not over-extend the service, which (ideally) should not exceed an hour. This oversight is important, as the media seek out and thrive on conflict, and tend to magnify controversial comments.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

As every regiment and corps has a different way of doing things, the guidance and advice of the military chaplaincy is invaluable in this regard. The Rifles Office in Shrewsbury has supplied some briefing notes (see Appendix 2) for dealing with the Rifles (the county regiment of Shropshire & Herefordshire), which may be of help when you are dealing with a Rifles fatality. The arrangements for other regiments and for the Royal Navy (including the Royal Marines) and the Royal Air Force, although broadly similar, will be slightly different.

ROYAL REPRESENTATION

As you may be unsure about how you should welcome Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant (or other representatives of the royal family) to your church or to the crematorium, we have appended a memorandum on the subject issued by the Lord Chamberlain, which you may find helpful.

OTHER CIVIC DIGNITARIES

It is likely that other civic dignitaries will attend the funeral, and you may be unfamiliar with the order in which they should be processed into church and seated. In July 1988 the Home Office issued a memorandum, which sets out the following order of precedence in England and Wales:

Lord-Lieutenant & spouse

High Sheriff & spouse

County Council Chairman & spouse

County Council Chief Executive & spouse

District Council Chairman & spouse

(or Mayor & Mayoress, where these offices exist)

District Council Chief Executive & spouse

Member of Parliament & spouse

Member of the European Parliament & spouse

Chief Constable & spouse

The first inbound procession, therefore, would include the Chief Constable and spouse (or whomsoever is closest to the bottom of this list) and the final inbound procession would include the Lord-Lieutenant and spouse: then the coffin and family mourners enter the church.

At the end of the service, this order is reversed, so that, after the coffin and the family mourners, the first outbound procession would include the Lord-Lieutenant and spouse, and so on down the precedence list.

POST-FUNERAL PASTORAL CARE

Even though many people will have been involved in the funeral itself, the military chaplaincy (and the cathedral chapter, if they were involved) will expect the local clergy to offer the family ongoing pastoral care. This is, perhaps, another good reason for keeping the funeral local, rather than using the cathedral for the service. The CVO will also remain in contact with the family for some months after the funeral: this aspect of the military's pastoral care has no fixed time limit, as it depends entirely on how the family circumstances develop.

CAUSE OF DEATH

Not all deaths of service personnel are due to operations: on occasions the death of a soldier may be due to natural or accidental causes. In such circumstances, the funeral, whilst still tragic for those concerned, is more akin to the parish priest's usual experience. The military will still appoint a CVO, and chaplaincy will still be involved: it is likely, however, that the level of interest from both the civic authorities/representatives and the media will be considerably reduced.

SUPPORT FOR THE CLERGY

Please bear in mind that you are not on your own! The military chaplaincy has a lot of experience in dealing with service funerals and they will gladly offer you plenty of advice about how to construct and conduct the liturgy and the events surrounding it: we urge you to pay the closest attention to their advice. We (Graham Sykes at Bromyard and Andrew Piper at the cathedral) are also willing to offer you our help, whenever you need it.

December 2009

APPENDIX I
CONTACT DETAILS

The Assistant Chaplain General 5 Division	
The Revd Tyrone Hillary	01743 262215
The Senior Chaplain 143 (West Midlands) Brigade	
The Revd Colin Butler	01785 787658
The Revd Graham Sykes	01885 482438
The Cathedral Office	01432 374200
The Revd Canon Andrew Piper	01432 266193
Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Eames	01432 374231
Ms Anni Holden	01432 373342
The Royal British Legion	
(Herefordshire County Office)	01432 278505
(Shropshire County Office)	01743 245104
West Mercia Police	0300 333 3000
Chief Superintendent Mark Turner	
(Herefordshire Divisional Commander)	
Chief Superintendent Andy Rowsell	
(Shropshire Divisional Commander)	
The Lord-Lieutenant of Herefordshire's office	01432 260494
The Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire's office	01743 252722
The Chairman's office (Herefordshire Council)	01432 260494
The Chairman's office (Shropshire Council)	01743 252003
The Mayor of Hereford's office	01432 260438

APPENDIX 2 – BRIEFING NOTE ON THE RIFLES
issued by The Rifles Office, Shrewsbury

The Rifles is the county regiment of Shropshire and Herefordshire: it was formed in 2007 by the amalgamation of a number of regiments. It is the successor to the Light Infantry and, before that, to the King's Shropshire Light Infantry & the Herefordshire Light Infantry (TA). There are five regular battalions of the regiment in which Shropshire and Herefordshire Riflemen are likely to be serving. There are TA elements of the Rifles, of which E (Rifles) Company of the 4th Battalion of the Mercian Regiment is based in Shrewsbury. The regimental headquarters is established in Winchester, and the battalions are permanently based as follows:

1 st Battalion	Chepstow
2 nd Battalion	Ballykinler, Northern Ireland
3 rd Battalion	Edinburgh
4 th Battalion	Bulford
5 th Battalion	Padderborn, Germany
E (Rifles) Company	Shrewsbury

A Rifles fatality will be likely to generate considerable local and national interest: there will be a number of civilian and military VIPs, therefore, who may wish to attend or be represented at the funeral. These include the Lord-Lieutenant and Deputy Lieutenants, the High Sheriff, the Chairman of Shropshire or Herefordshire Council, the Mayors of the Freedom Towns/Cities, and possibly mayors of the market towns. On the military side, the Colonel Commandant of the Rifles, or a representative, the Regional Colonel, and the County Colonels of Shropshire and/or Herefordshire and nearby Rifles counties and cities.

The battalion in which the deceased was serving is responsible for the providing the military support for the funeral, including the bearer party, firing party and guides. If the battalion is away on operations, there will be only a small rear party at the home base to do all the work. A representative will liaise with the Casualty Visiting Officer (CVO), and the incumbent or the cathedral chapter, and will attend meetings as needed. The Rifles Office in Shrewsbury is available to provide assistance and advice as needed, particularly with VIP arrangements. Their contact details are listed on the next page: the names of current office holders are included, but personalities change.

The Rifles Office: Copthorne Barracks
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY3 8LZ

Email: shrewsbury@the-rifles.co.uk

The Rifles Secretary: Major Nigel Jones
Telephone: 01743 262425

Assistant: Mrs Heather Morgan
Telephone: 01743 262430

POST-FUNERAL PASTORAL CARE

The Rifles will never forget the families of its fallen and wounded. The County Colonel or the Rifles Office in Shrewsbury should be contacted if any help is needed after the CVO has relinquished responsibility.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

MEMORANDUM

Members of the Royal Family may be represented at Funerals, Memorial Services and Crematoria where the incumbent has little or no experience of Royal Representation. It may be useful, therefore, to put into writing what is the customary procedure on these occasions.

1. Memorial Services

The Clergymen in whose Church the Service is being held should meet the Royal Representative at the Door of the Church and conduct him or her to a specially reserved seat, which should be in the front pew on the North side of the Centre Aisle, family mourners having been seated in the front pew on the South side of the Centre Aisle. It is usual for the Royal Representative to be conducted to a reserved seat after everyone else in the congregation, including the family mourners, has arrived in their seats, and just before the service is due to start. At the conclusion of the Service, the Clergyman should come to the Royal Representative's seat and should personally conduct him or her to the Church Door: the rest of the congregation, including the family mourners, remaining in their places.

2. Funeral Services

The Clergyman should meet the Royal Representative as in Paragraph 1, and conduct him or her to a reserved seat. If the Coffin is not prepositioned in the Church before the Service, the Royal Representative should be conducted to his or her seat by a Church Official immediately before the Coffin Procession enters the Church.

At the conclusion of the Service, the Royal Representative should follow the cortege from the Church, taking his or her place after the chief mourners and the near relatives of the deceased. As the Clergyman will be at the head of the cortege, he should arrange for a Church Official to indicate to the Royal Representative the moment when the procession should be joined behind the near relatives of the deceased. If the interment takes place in the graveyard adjoining the Church, the Royal Representative should follow the cortege to the grave-side, but should stand apart from the chief mourners and family. If the interment takes place at another ceremony, the Royal Representative should wait at the entrance door until the cortege and the mourners depart and then leave without ceremony.

3. Crematoria

If there has not been a Funeral Service in a Church beforehand, and the only Funeral Service is at the Crematorium, the Royal Representative should arrive at the door of the Crematorium five minutes before the time of the Service. He or she will be met by the Clergyman, and will be conducted immediately to a specially reserved pew, irrespective of whether or not the Coffin or the family have already arrived. At the end of the Service, the Clergyman will conduct the Royal Representative to the door before the Family.

NOTE

- (a) The front pew in which the Royal Representative is seated should not be occupied by anyone else except other Royal Representatives attending the Service.
- (b) If more than one Royal Representative is present, all should assemble at some convenient place at the entrance to the Church or Crematorium and be conducted in Procession to their places in the front pew, the junior ones first so that the senior sits nearest the Centre Aisle. At the conclusion of the Service, the procession is re-formed in reverse order, with the senior Royal Representative preceding the others.

Lord Chamberlain's Office