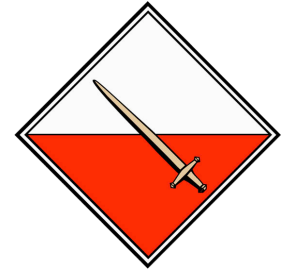


42 (North West) Brigade

MILITARY FUNERALS INVOLVING DIOCESAN CLERGY



A Short Briefing Paper

FIRST RESPONSE TO THE DEATH OF A SOLDIER ON OPERATIONS

Following the death of a serviceperson within your parish you may decide that it is appropriate for you to make contact with the next-of-kin (NOK). This paper is intended to try and help you with that endeavour by explaining the procedures that the military puts in place following a military bereavement so that together with the designated military carers, the bereaved family is best served by both the Church and the MOD.

Upon making contact with the family, try to discover from your initial conversation, who the military has appointed as the *Casualty Visiting Officer* (CVO). [The CVO is to be distinguished from the *Casualty Notification Officer* (CNO) whose sole role is to break the news of death or serious injury to the family. Following this the CNO usually introduces the CVO and the chaplain but then no longer features in the support of the family.] So it is the CVO along with the appointed military chaplain who have a pivotal role in liaising with the family and arranging the funeral. It is therefore critical to establish early contact with them both. They will be very useful in explaining the military procedures around in-service death and how military funerals are conducted if necessary.

The CVO will have explained to the family that they have a choice between a *private* and a *service* funeral. Everything flows from this primary decision. If the family decide upon a *private* funeral, then you can treat it as you would any other funeral. Military personal will attend the funeral simply as friends of the deceased. However, if the family decide upon a *service* funeral, then this is a very different and more complex beast which will require a lot more of your time and effort.

In the first instance, don't allow yourself to be rushed into setting an early date for the event as a service funeral may well be one of the most complex that you are ever likely to conduct, not least for all the local and potentially national media interest it could generate. Careful planning will be required and rehearsals conducted to provide a fitting and dignified service with full military honours. Apart from the representation and involvement of the military 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 conclusion of the service to bid it farewell formally outside the church. This can involve a salute given by a firing party usually comprised of six riflemen firing three blank rounds each. [This is usually carried out at the graveside or at the crematorium but occasionally it is conducted outside the church doors but always with local police consent.] The Union flag, which is draped over the coffin and on which normally, sits the soldier's headdress and medals, are formally handed back to the next of kin, at the graveside before the lowering of the coffin, or at the crematoria before the act of committal. The military formation to which the deceased belonged will normally take responsibility for organising the military aspects of the funeral, providing the bearers, firing party, and ushers. They will liaise with you primarily through both the Chaplain and the CVO. The chaplain is of particular importance here for advice as to how to arrange an appropriate liturgy for a military funeral taking account of local

regimental custom. These peculiar rites have huge significance for service personnel and should not be dismissed as irrelevant. Indeed, these can often help in the bereavement process by providing familiar and pertinent military points of reference during the liturgy.

As the military chaplain will have been informed of the death before you, they will have most likely already made contact with the family, and thus the next-of-kin may regard the chaplain as the lead clergy-person. If a parish church is to be the venue for the funeral then the chaplain will work with you closely to ensure that the needs of the family are at the heart of the event. Military chaplains come from a variety of denominational backgrounds, although the MOD only recognises the main Christian denominations as sending churches. These include Church of England, Catholic, Methodist, Church of Scotland, Baptist, Congregationalist, United Reformed, Pentecostal and Free Church of Scotland. All chaplains are expected to work ecumenically and normally have vast experience in this so they should provide whatever support is required of them. Where the parish church is the venue, the chaplain will probably expect to share the service with you.

FUNERAL VENUE

Some families believe that because their loved one died whilst serving their county, that he or she should have a public funeral at the local cathedral. If the local incumbent and the chaplain believe that there is good reason for this then the cathedral chapter will need to be consulted and permission sought. If this is granted then it is likely that local clergy will play a key role in the service along with the chaplain, although each cathedral will have its own policy.

PLANNING A MILITARY FUNERAL

In discussion with you and the chaplain the CVO will begin to make the arrangements. The Order of Service will generally be provided by the MOD and printed with no expense for the church or family. However, it should only go to print with your consent having first approved the contents and service order. We suggest that you contact the following:

- **The Diocesan Communications Officer:** to seek their guidance in dealing with the media. They will also liaise with the Bishop's office and the military press office for you.
- **The local police:** if the CVO has not already done so. The 5 Police Forces covering 42 (NW) Bde have all agreed to provide escort support to repatriated Service personnel unless there are "*exceptional operational demands*". Some have committed to a formal policy whilst others have opted to remain supportive on an informal basis. They will provide security for the service itself and the route to and from the church. They will also need to consent to the firing party giving a general salute. This is normally confirmed in writing. If the committal is at the crematorium, then the police will 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 at the crematoria even for a committal, as military services cannot be rushed. The bearer party needs to slow march the coffin into the chapel and lay it upon the catafalque; the coffin is then stripped of the union flag which is slowly folded and handed to the NOK, along with any headdress and medals; then the firing party needs to conduct the salute

at the door before the coffin can be lowered as the Last Post is sounded before the two minute silence.

- **The mayor or someone from the local civic authority** to represent the town/village and to ask for their support. For example, the town clerk might be willing to contact the other mayors in the county on your behalf and help with the practical arrangements like providing extra seating for the church; a suspension of local parking restrictions or making available a car park close to the church for the duration of the service.
- **To notify the office of Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant** as the funeral arrangements are agreed.
- **To liaise with the local branch, or county office, of the Royal British Legion.** The legion's inclusion requires sensitive handling because they will be very keen to show their support and pay their respects, but in order for this to be conducted in a dignified manner they will need very clear direction as to what part they are to play in the service and how many standards they expect to parade. In this regard, if the last post is to be played at either the service, or more fittingly at the crematoria, then the standard bearers will expect to lower their standards, and this needs to be factored in when arranging where they are allowed to stand.

LEADERSHIP ROLE

As one will see from the above, a military funeral is a complex service and the host priest/minister may find themselves exercising at least three different roles as pastor, president of the funeral liturgy and local community leader/coordinator. Their aim is to get everyone working together to the same end, which is to provide comfort to the bereaved and create a dignified occasion that will enable them in company with the local and military community to mark and honour the deceased before God. Thus every decision that you make has to balance the needs to the family, the local community and the military family. In particular, the latter will expect the parish priest to exercise their role effectively, so that everyone is clear about what is and what is not acceptable in their church during divine service. Where a military chaplain takes the lead, it is expected that their will liaise with you about these matters.

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Funeral directors are appointed in the usual way by the family and the CVO will work closely with them. Any fees associated with the service funeral are dealt with through the director as usual. The CVO should be able to advise you on what is and what is not covered by public funds and will brief the family accordingly. There are no charges payable for the military chaplain or the use of a military church if one is employed. It may well be the first time that the funeral director has undertaken a military funeral so please ensure that they are kept fully in the loop with all the arrangements as and when they are made.

REGIMENTAL TRADITION

Each military formation has its own traditions that reflect its proud past and achievements. These are a very important part of the military ethos and help to provide dignity and historical precedent for funerals that link the present with the past. These provide familiar way-markers for family and military colleagues who will be attending the event. The Chaplain should have a good appreciation of these traditions but they are

different for every regiment, squadron, and battery. At the very least, within the army context, each formation has its own collect which the chaplain will be able to provide.

ROYAL REPRESENTATION

You will find attached a memorandum issued by Buckingham Palace which details the procedures to be followed when welcoming her majesty's Lord-Lieutenant, or other representatives of the royal family in to the church.

PRESENTATIONS OF THE QUEEN ELIZABETH CROSS

In July 2009 the Queen announced the launch of a new award to be presented to the families of those who had lost loved ones whilst serving their country. The Queen Elizabeth Cross and Memorial Scroll is an award in recognition of the sacrifice made by families around the county and is normally presented by the Queens regional representative, the Lord-Lieutenant. This event sometimes takes place on the day of the funeral, at the family home, or at some later date as preferred by the NOK.

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 the 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 European Parliament & spouse
- Chief Constable & spouse

The first inbound procession therefore would include the Chief Constable and spouse (or who ever else is closest to the bottom of the list) and the final inbound procession would include the Lord-Lieutenant and spouse, followed by the coffin and the chief mourners. At the conclusion of the service the order is reversed, so that the coffin followed by the family leaves with the Lord-Lieutenant and spouse behind them and so on.

ON-GOING PASTORAL CARE

The CVO will usually be engaged with the family for up to nine months and so will remain a useful point of contact. The chaplain likewise will continue to offer pastoral support, but it is the local clergy who are best placed to provide continuity of pastoral support for the years that follow. It is hoped that the relationship that developed during the trauma of the funeral service will be strengthened in the days ahead and even if the family had no church history, that they will get comfort and strength from the local parish community.

CAUSE OF DEATH

Not all deaths of service personnel are due to operations. On occasion the death of a soldier may be due to natural or accidental causes. In such circumstances the funeral, whilst still tragic for all concerned, is more akin to the parish priests' usual experience. The military will still appoint a CVO and a chaplain, but is it likely that the level of interest from both the media and civic authorities/representatives will be significantly reduced.

CLERGY SUPPORT

Please remember that you are not on your own. The military chaplaincy has a great deal of experience in dealing with service funerals and will be glad to offer you support and advice about how best to prepare an appropriate liturgy and what are the military expectations. 42(North West) Brigade is also available to assist in whatever way we can, and my office can be contacted on the numbers provided below.

Finally, may I sincerely thank you for all you do in support of our service families.

The Reverend Cole Maynard CF (UB)
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ADDRESSES AND CONTACT DETAILS

[1] Lord-Lieutenant Offices within the North West area:

- Lancashire 01772 533364
- Manchester 0161 834 0490
- Liverpool 0151 224 4072
- Cheshire 01244 602213
- Cumbria 01228 606355

[2] Police: Special Point of Contact (SPOCs) for the five police forces within the North West Area for the relevant *Special Escort Groups* are:

- a. Cheshire Constabulary - Inspector Simon Meegan: 01244 612287,
07770 652647
- b. Merseyside Police - Chief Superintendent Tony Doherty: 0151 777 8584
Mob: 07720 557665
(Alternate: Inspector Dave Corcoran: 0151 777
2571 Mob: 07754290549)
- c. Greater Manchester Police - Police Constable Neil Entwistle: Mob 07917 233596
(Alternate: Inspector Paul Philbin
Mob: 07770643472)
- d. Lancashire Constabulary - Chief Inspector Val Prince 01772 412342
(Alternate: Inspector Nick Berry, 01772 410559
Mob: 07715168044)
- e. Cumbria Constabulary - Chief Inspector Mairi Stamper: 01768 217284

[3] 42 (North West) Brigade:

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