



westerleigh
GROUP

Covid-19 Memorials Souvenir Brochure
Summer 2021





Contents

Introduction	3
About Westerleigh Group	4
Covid-19 Memorial Concept	5
Bringing the Concept to Life	6
Community Involvement	7
Meet the Design Winners	8 - 10
Acknowledgements	11

Introduction from Roger Mclaughlan, Westerleigh Group CEO



I am proud to write the introduction to this commemorative brochure to mark the official launch of Covid-19 memorials at our crematoria throughout England, Wales and Scotland.

All our communities have been hugely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Sadly, some families lost loved ones, and our thoughts and sincere condolences go to them, first and foremost.

Human nature is such that, over the centuries, people have commemorated significant, life-changing, events by creating permanent memorials. We felt we needed to do something, not only to remember those who passed away but also to honour others who did so many positive and selfless acts to support people and bring their communities closer together.

Our crematoria enjoy close links with the people who live and work in the surrounding areas and we wanted to strengthen those relationships even further by creating lasting memorials in our grounds, providing tranquil places for people to remember and reflect; where they can seek some comfort knowing that the legacy of those lost is not only being recognised but will be remembered for many generations to come.

When we started planning the memorials, we felt it was very important to give local people an opportunity to contribute to them. That's why we launched a competition – open to absolutely everyone – to create a design that could be etched onto the stone obelisks at the heart of each memorial.

It has taken many months of planning and work - under lockdown restrictions - to bring these memorials to life but we are delighted with how they have turned out.

I hope people will get as much satisfaction from visiting our Covid-19 memorials as we have gained from creating them.

About Westerleigh Group

Westerleigh Group is the largest independent owner and operator of crematoria and cemeteries, with 35 sites across England, Scotland and Wales, which care for more than 45,000 funerals every year.

Westerleigh Group is a private limited company, funded by investors, which has been building and managing crematoria for more than 25 years. Westerleigh has worked hard to earn a reputation for creating beautifully landscaped, high-quality, peaceful facilities with service to the bereaved at their heart.

As an organisation, we truly appreciate the social, environmental and financial benefits of providing professionally managed facilities in this highly specialist field.

At the heart of Westerleigh's business is a commitment to continuing investment, in both people and facilities, to ensure that the bereaved receive the highest level of care in a safe, pleasant and welcoming environment.

We provide exceptional care in beautiful settings so that families can remember, mourn and celebrate the lives of their loved ones in a way that is uniquely personal.



Covid-19 Memorial Concept

The concept for the Covid-19 memorials was simple; Westerleigh Group wanted to create tranquil places within the landscaped grounds of its crematoria throughout England, Scotland and Wales for people to visit and remember loved ones who died during the pandemic.

The permanent, lasting, memorials would also provide places for people to remember, reflect on and give thanks for the way in which the NHS, key workers and whole communities pulled together during the crisis, and pay tribute to those who sacrificed so much to help others who were sick, isolated or vulnerable.

The original idea was for each memorial to be beautifully-landscaped, with colourful, seasonal planting being used to create a rainbow, which for many had become a symbol of hope during the pandemic.

This rainbow would stand alongside the centre-piece of each memorial, which would be an all-polished, black granite obelisk with an appropriate inscription and design, individually carved by Westerleigh Group's own highly-skilled stonemasons.

An artist's impression was created to illustrate how the gardens might look. This was posted on all the Westerleigh Group's websites and social media pages and issued to the media.

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Bringing the Concept to Life

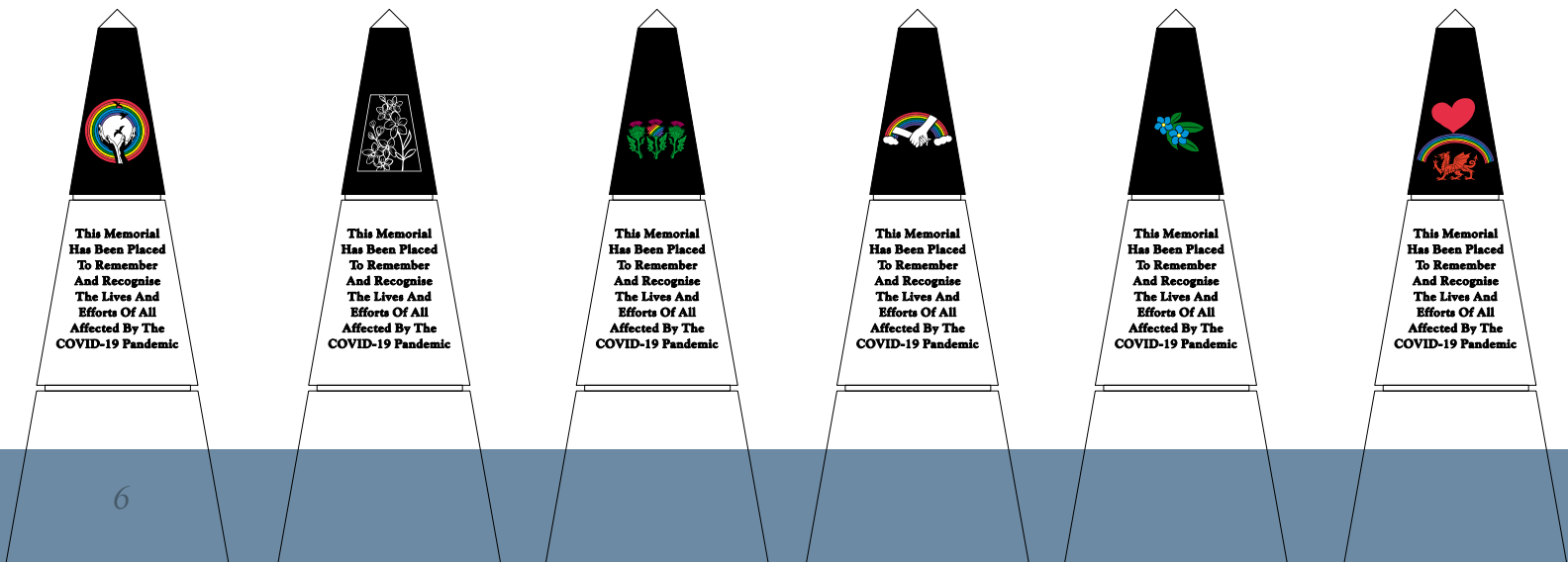
Work started in March 2021 preparing the land at each of Westerleigh's sites where a memorial would be placed. It was left to the teams at the individual crematoria to decide the most appropriate place within their grounds for the memorial.

The stone obelisks arrived at AK Lander in Basildon, our business arm for memorials and masonry, ready to be worked on by its highly-skilled stonemasons. Each obelisk is 1.5m high and weighs 1.3 tonnes.

Each was inscribed with: *"This memorial has been placed to remember and recognise the lives and efforts of all affected by the COVID-19 pandemic."*

Our wild flower planting around each obelisk contains all of the colours of the rainbow to make a symbolic gesture to the rainbows so commonly drawn during the Covid-19 pandemic. Always considerate to the natural habitats on our beautiful grounds, wild flower planting will help attract bees, invertebrates and other pollinators too.

This memorial has been placed to remember and recognise the lives and efforts of all affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Community Involvement

Westerleigh Group was determined to find a way for local people to become directly involved in the memorials so that they would be places of real significance to local communities.

Having chosen the inscription for the stone obelisks, it was agreed that some sort of design should also be etched onto the stones – and that provided the opportunity for local people to make their mark on the memorials.

Aspiring artists, school children, retired people and creative folk – in fact, anyone and everyone, of all ages and walks of life – were invited to submit their designs.

Six winners were chosen, one for each of Westerleigh Group's own geographic regions. Their work was etched onto the obelisk at each of the crematoria in their region.

Contributors were asked to consider imagery which represented the pandemic but to also think about including features relevant to their region, such as a local landmark or some other symbol synonymous with their area.

The competition attracted hundreds of entries from people of all different ages and from all over England, Scotland and Wales.

Roger McLaughlan, Chief Executive Officer of Westerleigh Group, said:
"We were overwhelmed by the creativity shown by the many people who submitted their imaginative designs and the judging process was a moving experience as it was clear that a lot of heartfelt thought had been put into each entry."

The creators of the winning designs would have the satisfaction of knowing that their work would form part of a lasting memorial for many generations to come.

Meet the Design Winners

Rachel Almond

North Region Winner



North region: Babworth, Gedling, Great Glen, Howe Bridge, Vale Royal and West Lancashire crematoria.

"I felt compelled to create something that was simple, elegant and symbolic, based on forget-me-nots."

Part-time teacher and part-time artist

Rachel (39) bought some watercolour paints to learn a new skill during lockdown. She learned about the competition just a few weeks after the sudden death of her aunt.

"At my aunt's funeral, we were all given a pack of forget-me-not seeds to plant in her memory, and this is where the inspiration for my design came from."

"I hope the design is meaningful and evokes emotion, not forgetting loved ones and acting as a symbol of remembrance, love and growth."

Jake Insall

South West Region Winner



South West region: Forest of Dean, Sedgemoor, Treswithian Downs and Westerleigh crematoria.

"My design has a rainbow, clouds at the end of the rainbow, and two hands reaching through and over the rainbow, holding hands."

Ten-year-old Jake was "happy, excited, emotional and a little bit nervous" when he was told his artwork will feature on memorials at several crematoria in the South West of England.

"I wanted to make a positive contribution to the community."

"The hand that comes through the rainbow represents a person who has been lost and the hand that is coming over the rainbow is a person who is still alive. Holding hands, they are still connected and, in some way, still together."

Faith Williams

Wales Region Winner



Wales region: Aberystwyth, Langstone Vale, Llanelli and Sirhowy Valley crematoria.

"I felt it was important to remember those who lost their lives to Coronavirus and those who have helped others."

Schoolgirl Faith has done her ambition of becoming a professional illustrator no harm at all after her design was chosen as the winning entry for Westerleigh Group's Welsh region.

Faith, aged 11, from Newport, was told about the competition by her grandmother, Hannah Parker.

"My design includes the Welsh dragon, from the Welsh flag. Above the dragon is a rainbow, which represents the NHS and key workers and is a message of hope. At the top is a heart, which represents the families, friends and communities supporting each other."

Poppy Lunn

Scotland Region Winner



Scotland region: Borders, Stirlingshire and West Lothian crematoria.

"I have drawn three thistles. The middle one has a rainbow which represents the NHS and all they have done for us. The other thistles on each side are protecting the

NHS, just like we have tried to do."

Poppy was "totally shocked" when she was told her artwork will be etched onto the memorials at Westerleigh Group's three crematoria in Scotland.

"I entered the competition for family friend who had Covid. I also know a few people who work at the local hospital (Borders General Hospital) so I also wanted to show how much I appreciated everything they have been doing."

"I was so happy when I found out I had won. I know it means a lot to my family, especially my Nana."

Angela Moran-Sharpness

South Region Winner



South region: Aylesbury Vale, North Wiltshire, Test Valley, The Vale, Wessex Vale, West Berkshire and West Wiltshire crematoria.

“In the midst of darkness, a little light can be found.”

Retired nurse and carer Angela was “honoured”

to discover her artwork had been chosen to feature on the obelisks at seven crematoria in the south of England. Angela, aged 70, from Gloucestershire, created a design which featured a pair of forget-me-nots with foliage.

“Nature is my inspiration and I thought flowers would look suitable.”

“I was inspired by thinking about people who have sadly died from Covid, and how they mustn’t be forgotten.”

“Hopefully, families and friends can visit the Memorial Gardens and take away a little peace and solace from the lovely surroundings.”

Camilla Fitzjohn

London & East Region Winner



London & East Region: Barham, Basildon & District, Cam Valley, Charing, Cromer, Forest Park, New Southgate, Parndon Wood, West Suffolk and Woollensbrook crematoria.

“The birds being released represent the lives lost and released into the spirit world, where they will be one with nature.”

Art graduate and history lover Camilla, aged 52, from Harlow, has made her mark on history after her design was chosen for the memorials at crematoria around London and the east of England.

It features a round white globe surrounded by a rainbow, with hands reaching up into the centre, releasing three birds of paradise.

“I wanted to incorporate the rainbow because this has been used through the pandemic, and it is to recognise the doctors and nurses who are working so hard in such a difficult situation.”

“It feels great and wonderful that something of my art will be looked at by people from the future, there is no prize bigger than that.”

Acknowledgements

Westerleigh Group sincerely wishes to thank the following for their support in bringing the Covid-19 Memorial project to life:

Memorial design winners:

Angela Moran-Sharpness

Camilla Fitzjohn

Rachel Almond

Faith Williams

Jake Insall

Poppy Lunn

We would also like to thank everyone who took the time to submit entries to the memorial design competition.

Other supporters and contributors:

AK Lander

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London Borough of Redbridge and Harlow Council

Memsafe/Teleshore

TK Group Services

Westerleigh Group would also like to recognise and thank colleagues across the Group for bringing this project to life.





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