

Get inspired in Italy

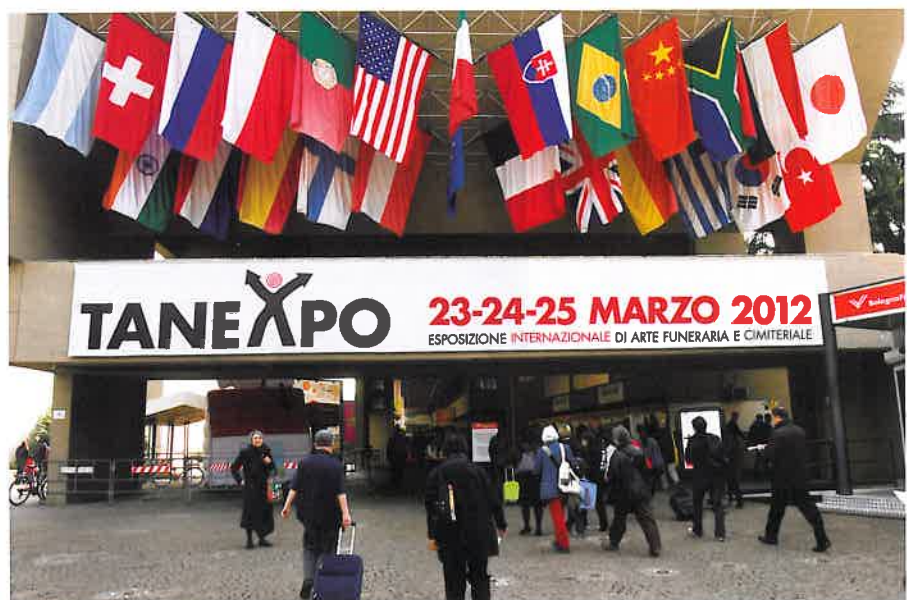
by David Hyde, organiser of the National Funeral Exhibition

“ For sheer opulence, you can't beat Italian products, especially their coffins ”

The last two years have flown by and I can't believe its TanExpo time again. For those of you who don't keep up with the overseas trade fairs, TanExpo is mainland Europe's most important funeral industry exhibition. A number of British visitors are coming over with us and there are two or three UK companies that will be exhibiting there for the first time.

I have very good reasons to go. It's an opportunity to meet potential exhibitors and encourage more people to come and visit our own show. Our promotion stands at various international shows have pushed the National Funeral Exhibition (NFE) way up the world ranking and highlighted a very positive British funeral industry.

If you've never visited an overseas trade show, TanExpo should be your first step. It's busy, bright and exciting and, just like NFE, you feel that real business is going on. You'll come back with ideas that could improve your own company and you'll get a real flavour of what is happening in Europe. You'll probably also find that the European economy isn't quite as bad as the doom and gloom merchants will have us believe. It's a salutary fact that the funeral industry around the world is relatively unaffected by the current crisis. In the last year, I have attended four family funerals



and had the duty of organising two of them. Even though we are all meant to be tightening our belts, I've spent very little time considering cost, mainly because it's not my money I'm spending. A funeral is a sign of respect and love for the deceased, and to penny pinch with money they've left behind would seem pretty mean, even if it does mean the 54 inch 3D TV has to wait another year.

But I digress. For sheer opulence, you can't beat the Italian products you'll see at TanExpo, especially their coffins. A couple of years ago I was invited to visit the factory of one Italian manufacturer and the craftsmanship and care in production were outstanding. When you see how they are made, you begin to understand why they cost that much more. Don't expect too much variety in shape though. You'll be very lucky if you find anything other than very solid, heavy, beautifully styled traditional designs, often inlaid with some incredible marquetry. As far as I know, coffins in Italy have to be made of wood, to a specific minimum thickness so, if you visit TanExpo, don't go looking for wicker, it's not the Italian way.

Talking about this reminds me of a discussion I had at the last TanExpo. A few of us were arguing the merits of what is considered to be a burial as opposed to a cremation coffin. Some say that a solid wood casket or coffin is just too good for a furnace and, in America, many people will request a vault that will protect their beautiful caskets for many years to come. Most British, on the other hand, are happy to let the crematoria get on with their job. I doubt that many even consider what happens once the curtain closes. The fact is that, once it's out of sight, it's gone forever.

Personally, I love the look and feel of real wood but, once I reach my coffin, I really won't be in a position to care what it's made of or what it looks like. In the UK we have the choice of veneered chipboard, wicker, wood, cardboard or metal and it can be just about any style, shape or colour you want. I did once see a space age egg shaped casket at Funeraire that took my fancy. but it would have been tempting fate to buy it. Ultimately, it is down to client choice and, in Britain, unlike many European countries, we are able to choose exactly what we want with little legal constraint.

Talking about the British way, we have a very good friend over in America who now conducts funerals in a classic British frock coat, which he bought at NFE. He just loves British style and I'm trying to persuade him to wear it at TanExpo. I've still got one that was given to me at the first NFE so I might dig it out of the wardrobe and join him. There again, our friend might just be tempted to purchase an exquisitely cut Italian suit complete with cape.

TanExpo takes place in Bologna on 23 - 25 March. If you would like information on how to travel or where to stay give us a call on +44 (0) 1926 815597 or you can visit www.tanexpo.com.

The next National Funeral Exhibition takes place on 7 - 9 June 2013. Our website is www.nationalfuneralexhibition.co.uk

FAIRWAYS PARTNERSHIP LIMITED

The directors of The Fairways Partnership wish to make contact with the proprietors of well run, privately owned funeral businesses that may be willing to consider selling their interests or simply require a valuation on the business to assist them in making a decision in the future.

Interested parties should contact:

Sam Kershaw - Director

The Fairways Partnership Limited
Roath Court Funeral Home
Newport Road, Cardiff,
South Glamorgan CF24 1XP

Tel: 029 20484040

Mobile Tel: 07834 531822

skershaw@fairwayspartnership.co.uk



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