

New Chairman, New Decade

By Christine Ogden, Dip CFC, new Chairman of the IoCF

Christine Ogden has been elected Chairman of the Institute of Civil Funerals (IoCF). She explains the career path that led to her taking up this new role.

I can only say that it was serendipity which led me to become a Civil Funeral Celebrant. My career began with a science degree which took me into industry and production planning and then customer service in the retail sector. After several years as a full-time mother of three sons, I re-trained to become a primary teacher; a job that I continued to thoroughly enjoy until I left full time employment to spend more time with my newly retired - and newly acquired! - second husband.

Then came that serendipitous moment: still only in my late forties, I needed employment to satisfy my intellectual and financial needs while allowing me time to share my husband's retirement activities. Glancing through the 'situations vacant' pages of the newspaper, a small advert caught my attention. It simply said, "Could you be a ceremony celebrant?" and was followed by a telephone

number. Now such 'phone this number' type adverts would usually prompt a suspicious reaction in me, but something made me dial that number.

Within a couple of weeks I attended an interview and assessment day with Civil Ceremonies Ltd and was deemed suitable to conduct naming, renewal of vows, commitment and wedding celebration ceremonies. I felt born to do this work. I had always loved ceremony ('pretend weddings' was a favourite childhood game) and, as a former teacher, was accustomed to organising rooms full of excited people. I was in my element.

At a later CCL training course, Anne Barber, Managing Director of CCL and founder of the Institute of Civil Funerals, took me to one side and said, "Christine, I think you would be good at funerals." Now, in any other walk of life, if someone approached you with such a comment you would be worried that they had discerned some rather macabre and mournful characteristic in your personality! However, Anne was merely suggesting that in training to become a Civil Funeral Celebrant, I would be able to apply my skills and experience in interacting with people, organisation and writing, to deliver bespoke funeral ceremonies on behalf of bereaved families. There was a whole raft of additional skills to consider: meeting the family, listening to their wishes and their concerns, writing a funeral ceremony script for their approval and, finally, delivering that ceremony at the venue of their choice.

At the end of 2005 I completed the CCL training course in Civil Funeral Celebrancy and, like every 'graduate' of that course, was fired up with enthusiasm to be able to provide this alternative choice of funeral service. My own parents had died in the previous five year period and, although I was

