

Arson attack on the Stables, Navestock.

Our prestigious collection of vintage funeral carriages worth over £1/2m was destroyed in an arson attack at the stables, Middlebrook Farm, Murthing Lane, Navestock, Essex,

The attack happened at 9.25pm on the evening of 6th December. Sarah Harris, great, great granddaughter of Thomas Cribb the founder of the business, which was established in 1881, was first on the scene.

Sarah's first thought was to save the horses stabled at the farm. She ran through the burning horse boxes to lead the horses into a paddock away from the burning vehicles. Sarah's mother Sharon, was next on the scene having first called the fire brigade, Thanks to Sarah's quick thinking and bravery none of the horses were injured. However the irreplaceable vintage horse drawn hearses and carriages that the horses led were totally destroyed along with the three horseboxes in which they were loaded.

Our priceless original horse-drawn hearse built by Dotteridge of London around 1890 was totally burnt out in the arson attack. This was a particularly fine example on light decoratively carved under works with large highly etched glass windows. The small arched side windows to the front and rear depicted floral urns. The interior featured the original varnished elm ceiling with cream sides and coach-lined in pale blue. The exterior was black with blue coach-lines, carved top panels depicting oak leaves finished in gold leaf and ornate gold roof crown mouldings.

Also destroyed were two Marston hearses. These black canoe shaped hearses with blue and gold lining were built by John Marston of Birmingham circa 1910 -1912 .The interiors were mahogany lined with floor hatch. They were decorated with navy blue cloth upholstery and gold, silver and blue gold tassels. The rails and rollers were white metal. The front and rear doors were bowed and the glass finely etched with floral and leaf motifs.

Amongst the equipment destroyed were the original velvet drapes and truncheons that had been in the Cribb family since the nineteenth century. The drapes were still in excellent condition and had continued to adorn funerals together with bespoke harness which was also lost.

Sarah Harris commented:

'Tradition has played a key role in the day-to-day running of our business with great emphasis being placed on attention to detail. This mindless arson attack has resulted in the loss to the funeral profession of irreplaceable elements of funeral vehicle history.

Despite the loss we continue to be able to offer our clients a lovingly restored replica of the Dotteridge hearse, a Shillibeer Hearse, London Van, Marston Mourner's

Coach, Park Drag Coach, Town Coach, Landau, Thrupp & Mapley Barouche, a Norfolk Cart and a Beaufort Sporting Brake.

We would like to thank most sincerely all who have phoned to offer assistance with vehicles and equipment, in particular Darren Carpenter of Birds Family Funeral Directors in Kent for the generous loan of a transporter and 'hearse'.

Our horse-drawn hearses led by black Dutch Friesian horses are recognised as the premier turnout in Great Britain and this year have won the Newbury Show – Coaching Class – 1st Place, Royal Windsor – Light Trade – 1st Place and Smith's Lawn – Four Wheel Class – 1st Place

They are in everyday use for funerals carried out all over the country.



2010-12-06



2010-12-06



2010-12-06 – White Marsdon – Saved from the Flames.



2010-12-07



2010-12-07



2010-12-07



2010-12-07



2010-12-07 – Burnt out lorry, with Stables just meters behind.



2010-12-07 – Narrow escape for the Greys.