

Lifestyle

Funeral director Patrick Skeffington of Quinn's of Glasstule. Photo: Steve Humphreys



Why do funerals in the UK take place so long after a death compared to Ireland?

Death is a universal experience but the way it is handled in the UK and Ireland is so different. *Sophie Grenham* speaks to experts and families on both sides of the Irish sea to find out why

When actor Maggie Smith and comedian Janey Godley died last autumn, I couldn't help but notice that their funerals took place around a month after their death announcements.

A gap with such heft fed unflinching in Ireland, where the average turnaround time is three to four days from the moment of death to the funeral service.

My mum in England died on February 10 (2009) and her funeral was on February 25. It's a long time compared to Ireland, but the population is huge in comparison. It also gives you more time to process it and organise what has to be done.

Richard Brown (54), a writer from Brighton with Irish roots said: "Priests seem to offer a limited choice of days, and coordinating with undertakers and burial grounds and gathering family and friends takes time.

"But we do turn it round quicker for people whose religion demands a quick burial." "I would have liked more time after my mum died," said Fiona McGowan (53), a stay-at-home mother from Kildare. "Doing shifts in the hospice, exhausted when she died and within an hour, the undertaker was there. Two hours later I was numb putting her things in a bag. I don't recall much of the funeral two days later."

Isabel Kendrick (56), a psychotherapist from Mayo who is now based in West Sussex said: "I experienced my first UK family death and appreciated the time and space given, rather than the Irish rush for a funeral."

She has a theory that fast funerals date back to the Famine, when there was no space to store bodies, so this became a crude form of infection control. Mass graves at Abbotsbury, west Cork, are the resting place of 10,000 bodies.

"Without doubt, the lack of refrigeration and any embalming skills meant that the challenge of holding on to a deceased person for longer than a few days was a great one," said Gus Nichols of Fanagans Funeral Directors regarding

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FIRST PERSON

'I quit my dream job with the UN after a week – now I write slam poetry'

After *Holly Hughes* made the bold move to step away from her ideal career, she rediscovered her passion for writing. Now she is preparing to represent Ireland at the Slam Poetry World Cup, and performing in her own stage show

A week into my dream job, I quit. I have always been socially conscious – at the age of 10, I became a vegetarian, which at that time in Clonakilty was a bit of a bold move considering it's a beef county.

I spent a few months in different places. I took every random menial job I could find. I worked in motels, cleaning, I worked on a building site. I graded oats in the middle of the outback. I just did it all, and took that time to figure out what a life that focused on pleasure would look like.

I made the decision that I wanted to finally come back and study creative writing, feeling there's nowhere in the world I could do that except Ireland because of our rich heritage and the way we use language.

"I used to be the person who, if I went out to dinner, would be bringing all the empty glasses back up to the bar, overextending myself and trying to be everyone's best friend. Then something just snapped"



Holly Hughes has written a show about becoming a Karen, which premieres at Smock Alley's Scene+Heard festival tonight. Photo: Gerry Mooney

It is about society's unsung heroes – us serial complainers – and tells the very true story of how, over the past couple of years, I've really been stepping into my Karen era.

Being one of the worst things a woman can be demanding. A lot of the shows on that concept of feeling like your voice isn't heard. Anytime that would happen to me, instead of letting it go, I would double down. And that's what the show is about.

From previous page after his parents' farewells. "Michael very kindly let me drive mum's bearse. I used to take her shopping in the car – it's the same route. I did one last journey for her," he says, tenderly.

"I was over for mum's anniversary mass and happened to be walking to the cemetery. Michael was passing and recognised me straight away. I had flowers in my hand. I know where you're headed," he said. "I'll give you a lift down there." Whenever I'm over, I'll always meet him for a pint.

Patrick Skeffington (28) of Quinn's Funeral Home in Glasstule, Dublin, who organised my own father's funeral in December, chimes in with Cooney's facts.

For those families who choose cremation and humanist ceremonies, the process is more straightforward. Skeffington, who is from Tubbercurry, Co Sligo, has a retail background and found his calling in funeral direction just five years ago when a former customer and subsequent colleague encouraged him into the field.

They're only open certain days," he explains. "By the time you get to early January, there is a backlog of funerals to be processed. Many families are having to wait two weeks and most of them find that very difficult to process."

KIRSTY BLAKE KNOX 8 standout Bafia moments – from Selena's slip up to Saoirse's Take That shout out, and a tricolour suit



We are now deep in the middle of awards season. Awards have been polished and handed out, carpets unfurled and champagne towers stacked. On Sunday night, the 78th British Academy Film Awards took place in London.

The BAFTAs has given us one of my favourite awards season moments of all time – Ariana DeBose's unforgettable 2023 rap in which she commended Angela Bassett for "Doing The Thing".

It was a showstopper, however, and personally, I thought it was staged by Jeff Goldblum when he was moving to perform Herman Hupfeld's *As Time Goes By* on the piano during the ceremony's In Memoriam segment.

Host David Tennant's opening monologue saw him stomp through the room belting out The Proclaimers song *I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)*. As if that wasn't entertaining enough, he also screamed in the faces of unsuspecting stars such as James McAvoy, Colman Domingo and Camila Cabello before forcing them to belt out the "Da da da" part of the song. It was a

bit like witnessing an aggressive showbiz karaoke session. The best part was when the camera cut to Jeff Goldblum, who looked both totally bemused and utterly delighted by the whole thing.

While Tennant pulled it off with ease, some gags later in the show were laboured and flabby, with one too many dad jokes. Tennant had said in advance that the jokes had been toned down after Cate Blanchett appeared to take offence at a one-liner.

It wasn't a showstopper, however, and personally, I thought it was staged by Jeff Goldblum when he was moving to perform Herman Hupfeld's *As Time Goes By* on the piano during the ceremony's In Memoriam segment.

After winning at the Critics' Choice and the Golden Globes, many assumed that Demi Moore would win for her roller horror-satire *The Substance*. Moore is getting long overdue credit for her work (before *The Substance*, she says she had never received an award for acting in 40 years). But the BAFTA went to Mikey Madison for playing erotic dancer and sex worker Ann in *Anora*.



Kneecap's DJ Próvaí stole the show in a tricolour cord suit alongside (from left) Mo Chara and Moglia Bap, and their director Rich Peppiatt. Photo: Getty

audience. "I probably should've listened to my publicist when she told me to write a speech" before dedicating her award to the sex worker community. Madison's BAFTA win signals that the Best Actress Oscar is anyone's to win.

Tricolour suits and puffa jackets The *Outrun* star Saoirse Ronan channelled old school Hollywood glamour in a pale eau de nil Louis Vuitton gown and stole (are they making an unexpected 2025 comeback?).

Special mention must go to *Kneecap* star JJ Ó Dochartaigh, aka JJ Próvaí, who arrived in a tricolour cord suit, which was eye-catching but I'd imagine pretty hot inside the auditorium.

Elsewhere, there were lots of gothic-inspired black outfits, such as Gwendoline Christie in Giles Deacon, while *Wicker's* Cynthia Erivo showed off her trademark bejewelled nails. But maybe the most reliable looker the night was from *The Substance* director Coralie Fargeat, who walked the red carpet wrapped in a duvet like puffer jacket over her glittering gown.

What did we miss? The telecast was two hours after the actual ceremony and so some jokes, and short outs, remained on the cutting room floor due to tight editing.

A handful of David Tennant's jokes about Donald Trump fell by the wayside – so did Zoe Saldana's multiple expletive reaction when the music began playing her off during her acceptance speech for *Emilia Pérez*. No F-Bombs here.

PDAs and lookalikes Timothée Chalamet may not have taken home any awards for *A Complete Unknown* (the film failed to pick up a single award). But he and his girlfriend Kylie Jenner brought a sprinkling of Hollywood glamour. They sat in the front row and their hand holding and PDAs were closely dissected. The *Daily Mail* said: "They couldn't keep their hands off each other," while *Vogue* claimed they "currently elicit the same reaction as Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in 1962".