

Out with a bang

Time to go out with a bang. Why more and more of us are choosing to say farewell with a grand flourish

When Dame Anita Roddick lost her mother, Gilda Perilli, she said goodbye with a spectacular firework display. Held on 15th December on what would have been Gilda's 93rd birthday it was one of the biggest events ever to be seen in Littlehampton. The event was rounded off with a grand finale section in which memorial fireworks were set off incorporating her ashes to her favourite pieces of music including 'Born Free' and 'Fly me to the Moon'.

It was, by all accounts, a wonderful and cathartic event – a fitting way to say farewell to a loved one. The company that organised the event, Heavens Above Fireworks, is one of a number of companies to have emerged in recent years allowing relatives to disperse a portion of their loved one's ashes by embedding them into a firework. Launched three years ago it has quickly taken off.

"Our clients come from all walks of life," says Fergus Jamieson, Heavens Above's managing director. "There have been some particularly significant ones. We helped John Atlee, a young paratrooper 'Go Out with Bang' and in our most spectacular display yet, we arranged a magnificent 'Grande Finale' to disperse Gilda Perilli's ashes."

Heavens Above Fireworks, and other similar companies, have plugged into a growing enthusiasm among the public to celebrate a life rather than mourn a passing. Of course, viewing the funeral as a time for celebration has a long and proud history in this country. Traditionally the vigil or wake was as much an excuse for a party. »

