



INVESTMENT: The new fleet of cars, left. Right, the firm's original premises in Skinner Street, Stockton



Investment marks funeral firm's 40th anniversary

by Mike Bridgen

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A FUNERAL firm has marked its 40th anniversary with the completion of a near £1m investment plan.

Family-owned Crake and Mallon, of Norton Road, Stockton, has bought a new fleet of six burgundy-coloured Daimler Jaguar XJs cars, costing almost £700,000.

The four limousines and two hearses are the final part of a seven-year investment plan which has included the latest mortuary facilities.

Alison Crake, senior partner, said her family had provided funeral services for people on Teesside and the surrounding area since 1971.

"We are committed to continuing to serve and support the local community and providing the best levels of service for many years to come,

which is why we are continually updating our facilities," she said.

Her late father Robert – known as Bob – was originally from East Rainton, in County Durham, and began his career in the funeral profession in 1940. He moved to Stockton in 1956 as a funeral service manager and, with his wife Dorothy, set up his own business in 1971.

Two years later he was joined by Joseph Mallon and, apart from him, the staff at the firm's first premises in Skinner Street were all family members. His son, also Robert, joined in 1974 and daughter Alison in 1979. She and Robert still head the company as partners, along with Dorothy and James Ross, their brother-in-law.

Crake & Mallon's Norton Road premises, where they have been for 20 years, is now the base for 15 full-time and six part-time staff.



FAMILY BUSINESS: Alison Crake (front) with brother Robert Crake (left) and their brother-in-law James Ross with other staff outside the current Crake & Mallon premises in Stockton's Norton Road

As well as continuous staff training and modernisation of the premises and services, the company has adapted to changing attitudes to how funerals are arranged.

Alison Crake said: "Things have moved towards a much more personalised approach in recent years, particularly since the funeral of Princess Diana."

The introduction of pre-payment plans has encouraged people to think and talk about their funeral, gradually eroding the taboo of talking about death and dying.

"This really helps to lift the burden

of responsibility that a funeral can involve if it is left to the family to organise, as they are left wondering if they are doing things as the relative would have wanted," she said.

"People are much more open about things now than when my father started the business.

"We receive a much broader range of requests beyond simply arranging a funeral, such as planning memorial services, woodland burials, sourcing specific music, printing orders of service and arranging special transport such as a horse-drawn hearse."