



**sclarke  
+son** SINCE 1918  
A FOURTH GENERATION FAMILY BUSINESS

## a brief history

### THE EARLY YEARS

**1918:** After Samuel Clarke completed his apprenticeship with John Hanna & Co. Funeral Directors & Building Contractors, he founded his own business in Greenwell Street, Newtownards.

**1920's:** The young entrepreneur worked hard to develop his small business. He excelled at everything he turned his hand to and bought horses, stabling them in Greenwell Street.



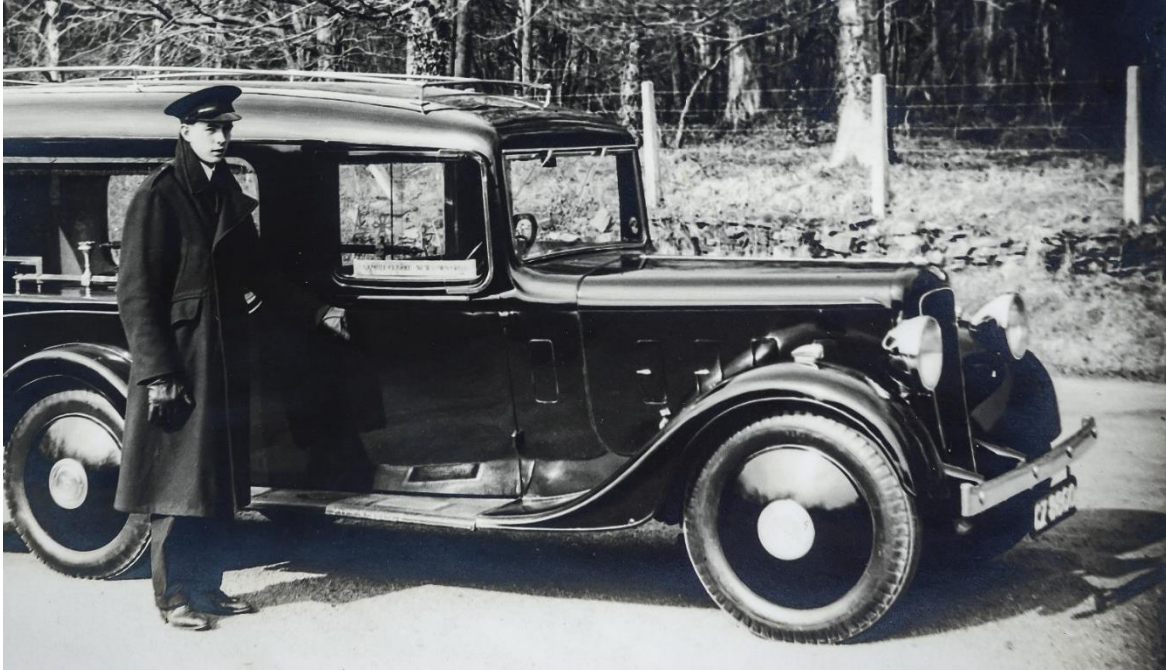
**1925:** After meeting local girl, Minnie, they got married and she joined the business doing the book-keeping. Samuel built a house for him and his new wife in Upper Greenwell Street (beside where the shops are today).

**1926:** The couple were delighted when son, John, was born.



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**1929:** Samuel took a radical step and bought a motorised hearse. This 'modern contraption' was the talk of the town as it was a first for Newtownards!

**1938:** Due to the business growing, larger premises in Movilla Street were purchased, with space for a joinery workshop, timber store, stabling for four horses which later became garaging for vehicles. As was common practice until recent years, the family lived beside the business premises.

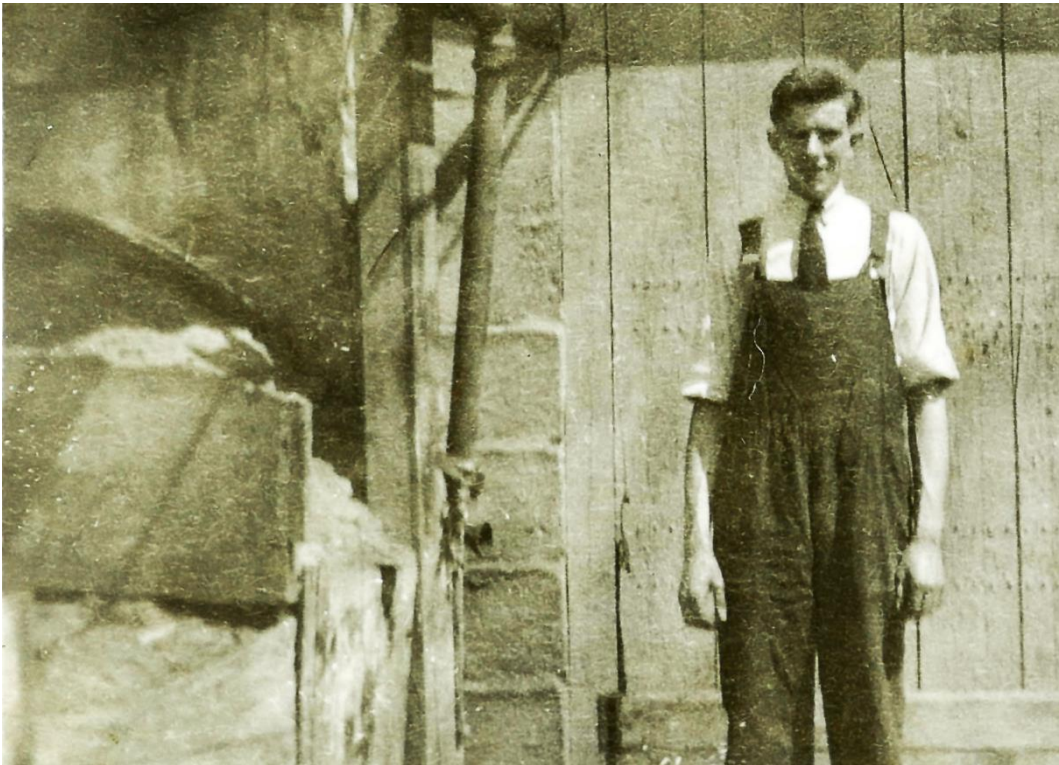
Young John when not playing in the yard, helped his parents in the firm from an early age.





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### THE WAR YEARS

During WWII after the s.clarke+son was contracted to undertake for fatalities amongst RAF personnel, the horses were sold to accommodate a fully motorised fleet. The old stables to the rear of the Movilla Street premises were converted to garages for the hearses and limousines.

**1940:** John Clarke entered his father's employ at the young age of 14 and together they saw the business grow.

**1952:** John (aged 26) married Lylla and she joined John in the family business doing the books and engraving coffin plates. That year John became a fully qualified embalmer, joining the British Institute of Embalmers.

**1970:** Further business growth meant that a funeral church was needed. The first one was built in Court Square, beside a back entry to the houses on Canal Row. (That back entry 20 years later, would become a new reception area / entrance hall to a further expanded s.clarke+son!)





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**1979:** Samuel, the original founder of the firm, died aged 81.

John Clarke, now managing the business, was joined by his son Jim. s.clarke+son now spanned three generations of the Clarke family.

**1990:** The steady growth in business necessitated the move to the present address at Court Square, Newtownards. The new premises for s.clarke+son included a suite of offices and modern embalming theatre facilities, a new funeral church, accommodating up to 140 mourners, with individual rest rooms garages for the fleet and extensive car parking to the rear.



**1992:** Like his dad 40 years before him, Jim qualified as an embalmer, joining the [British Institute of Embalmers](#).



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**2004:** The company opened its Bangor branch. A funeral church seating 200, private rest rooms, arranging rooms and office facilities, it allowed the company to have a presence in Bangor as well as Newtownards.

**2006:** s.clarke+son started a web-view service, streaming funerals live online, becoming the first in the world to do so! This service is still available today and was used even more extensively during restrictions imposed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Click [HERE](#) for more details.

**2017:** The end of an era as John (second generation in the family firm) passed away at the age of 91.

### 2018: CENTENARY

To acknowledge 100 years in business, s.clarke+son undertook a major refurbishment of both branches. Air conditioning was added to both funeral churches along with increased office and ancillary areas added. The results are enhanced facilities that offer ease of access to high-quality, tranquil and serene surroundings.

**2019:** The historic **Flax House**, (a listed Scrabo sandstone building shown to the right to the existing Newtownards premises), was purchased and converted into further offices and arranging rooms.

The beautiful **Priory Walled Garden** to the rear would become a unique outdoor funeral venue during the 2020 spring-summer Covid 19 restrictions.





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**2019:** 101 years after Samuel started the family business in Greenwell Street, Newtownards, his great-grandson, Johnathan joined his dad, Jim, in the firm full-time.

**2020–22:** A challenging time for us all, new strategies were introduced to allow funeral and memorial arrangements to be done remotely. With the lockdown and closure of cemeteries, some funerals had to proceed without family members present. Graveside video recordings were offered to allow families to feel less disconnected. Restricted numbers in funeral churches meant an increase in Live streaming and video recordings of funerals.

**2022:** A large investment into greener energy was completed with the installation of 20KW of solar panels across the Bangor and Newtownards funeral churches. The company introduced the first fully electric ambulance in Northern Ireland and a fleet of six new, plug-in-hybrid electric vehicles, including hearses, a limousine and company cars. Energy harvested from the solar panels now runs the company's entire fleet of vehicles and funeral churches.

s.clarke+son took the eco-friendly concept further and now uses de-ionised collected rainwater to wash all vehicles to cut down on water usage.



### THE FUTURE

Innovation has been at the core of the company since its formation in 1918. From being the first funeral director in the world in 2006 to offer virtual funerals via live-streaming services, to the first all solar-powered funeral operations by 2022, s.clarke+son hopes to continue to be at the forefront of new innovations for many years to come.

In business for over a century, s.clarke+son remains a privately-owned, independent family firm. Today, run by the 3rd and 4th generations of the local Clarke family, they continue to serve the community in Ards and North Down.