

# Man pleads guilty to fraudulent scheme at Edinburgh cemetery



A man responsible for a fraudulent scheme at an Edinburgh cemetery has today been convicted at Edinburgh Sheriff Court.

William Henderson pled guilty to a fraud offence, which affected 13 individuals and took place at the Mount Vernon Cemetery in Liberton between 2006 and 2015.

Between 1997 and 2015, Henderson (45) was employed at the cemetery. From 2006 onwards he was responsible for the fraudulent creation of burial deeds and obtaining funds for these deeds.

In addition, Henderson oversaw the 'overburial' of two individuals where families were sold plots believing these to be fresh graves. However, these in fact were unmarked graves that were already occupied.

In total, Henderson was able to obtain thousands of pounds in profit.

Following administrative changes at the top of the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh in 2013, irregularities in a number of burial ledgers and other documentation was observed and Police Scotland was contacted.

A robust inquiry was thereafter launched by detectives from Edinburgh's CID, resulting in William Henderson being charged in November 2016.

He will now be sentenced on Friday 29th September following today's guilty plea.

Detective Chief Inspector Paul Grainger, who led on this investigation, said: "William Henderson targeted vulnerable families when they were grieving and distressed. He offered them plots within Mount Vernon Cemetery, when no such sites were available, for his own individual financial gain.

"His deception and exploitation led to Henderson amassing thousands of pounds from these families, which, he hid from his employers.

"This was a challenging and complex investigation from the beginning and involved officers having to engage with families who had been defrauded by Henderson over a number of years.

In many some of these occasions they had to relive very painful memories and discuss the deaths of loved ones and so we took a very sensitive approach so we could provide them with all the support and assistance they required, while conducting our inquiries to gather evidence.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all families who supported us in our enquiry and while nothing can undo the distress Henderson's actions have had on the families affected, I hope that today's outcome will offer them some comfort that both Police Scotland and the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh have taken significant action to bring the perpetrator to justice and to ensure something like this does not happen at the cemetery again.

Dr Elspeth Atkinson, Chief Operating Officer of the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh said:

"Willie Henderson's criminal behaviour betrayed the trust of his employer, the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh, from whom he stole from but, much more importantly and distressingly, he betrayed the trust of those families who were exploited at a time when they were grieving and vulnerable.

“That’s why his crimes are so shocking and that’s why we are grateful to Police Scotland for working so diligently over the past two years in order to bring Henderson to justice.

“The Archdiocese deeply regrets the criminal activities of Willie Henderson and has been working hard over the past months, in close collaboration with Police Scotland, to offer both pastoral and practical support to those families affected by his actions and we will, of course, continue to do so in the months to come.”