BOOK REVIEW
IN THE MIDST OF LIFE by Graeme M. Griffin and Des. Tobin, Melbourne University Press, 1982. (rrp $7.95)

Graeme Griffin is professor at the Uniting Church Theological Hall and Des. Tobin is a director of Tobin Brothers Funeral Directors. Both are foundation members and have been active leaders of the National Association for Loss and Grief.

This paperback is probably the first serious dissertation on death, its attendant emotions, the concomitant industries which serve it and place of death both physical and emotional in Australian history. It is remarkably up to date in attitude and other ways.

Various chapters, there are nine and an afterword, cover the subjects of grief, current attitudes to dying, details of funerals, costs and, not surprisingly, the undertaker, or as he is now known, the friendly funeral director. The notes on each chapter are comprehensive and workman-like. They even contain a 1982 item, admittedly a scale of undertaking charges.

But it is the chapter on graves and graveyards which will be of greatest interest to our readers. The sections on grief and mourning will not necessarily reflect Historic Environment readers' experiences because many of their family backgrounds will still contain residual traces of Victorian attitudes to death.

The relevant chapters of this book might teach something to anybody born after 1945.

In regard to the history of burial and its logistics; the story is taken from the crude and unsanitary beginnings in the capital cities to the (over?) sanitised practices today. Sydney's unique harnessing of the railway system to the death industry is noted. That Gothic funeral station at Sydney Central remains, but the facility at the other end of the journey (to Rookwood Cemetery) ended up, stone for stone as an Anglican Church in Canberra. Melbourne had no such delicacy; funeral trains with their inevitable freight left Princes Bridge Station along with commuters and conventional goods.
The recent Council for the Historic Environment cemetery tour made over-
night experts of many of us in the history of tombstone design. Harry
Norris' moderne extravagances and Lutyen's gesture to Sidney Myer at Box
Hill, are still fresh, if that is the adjective to seek, in our minds.

Many of us could have suggested a hundred significant and/or bizarre
examples of the mason's art to the authors for inclusion. As it is, a
photograph of Walter Lindrum's last resting place, in the form of a
billiard table will take some beating.

All in all, an excellent handbook of an important subject. The impressive
bibliography is alone worth the price.

Reviewed by NEIL CLEREHAN