

EIGHTH COLLOQUIUM ON CEMETERIES

INFORMATION

The Eighth Colloquium on Cemeteries will take place at the University of York on Friday, 18th May. This day event comprises an informal meeting of researchers in all disciplines with an interest in cemeteries; a particular focus is placed on new and emerging research. Postgraduates are particularly welcome.

Bookings for this event are now being taken. A fee of £25, payable in advance, will cover costs associated with attendance including refreshments and a light lunch. Please make cheques payable to the *University of York*. The next page of this document comprises a booking form, and you should complete and return the form, with your cheque, to Dr Julie Rugg, Cemetery Research Group, CHP, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD. The deadline for booking is 11th May. You are advised to book promptly, since there are a limited number of places.

The Colloquium will take place at the Alcuin Research Resource Centre at the University of York. Please do not bring a car to York, since parking is extremely limited both in the city and on the campus. There are regular trains to York from London, Scotland and the west of the country. For overseas visitors, access is particularly easy from Manchester Airport: a regular direct train route connects the Airport with York.

Taxis are available outside York rail station, and will take around 20 minutes to get to the University of York's main campus. The cost of the taxi fare should be no more than £5.00. A map of the campus is available on

<http://www.york.ac.uk/np/maps/hes.htm>

The event takes place in the Alcuin Research Resource Centre, which is building 39 on the downloaded map. If you ask a taxi to drop you at the Alcuin Porter's Lodge, the entrance to the ARRC is essentially between buildings 35 and 39 on the map. The entrance is up a flight of stairs: registration and drinks will be available in the lobby from 8:30. Alternatively, you can catch one of the futuristic purple buses (number 4) outside the rail station. A return ticket to the University currently costs £2.50, and there is a ticket machine immediately inside the bus (exact change required). The machines are invariably faulty, so an old-fashioned bus conductor will probably be on hand to take your money. Get off the bus at the second university stop, under the library walkway (see map, link above).

If you require accommodation, the following link to the City of York tourism website indicates local guesthouses:

<http://www.thisisyork.co.uk/york/insideout/stay/index.html>

It is perhaps best to try and arrange a stay somewhere close to the city centre, off Bootham (eg Longfield Terrace, Grosvenor Terrace, Queen Anne's Road, Sycamore Road).

NOTE: A traditional aspect of the Colloquium is an informal meeting the night before the event (ie Thursday 17th), for drinks and a meal. This year we will be gathering in The Yorkshire Hussar on North Street - which is very close to the rail station - from 7:30pm:

<http://www.streetmap.co.uk/newmap.srf?x=460077&y=451749&z=0&ar=Y>

The Eighth Colloquium on Cemeteries

BOOKING FORM

Name

Address
(to which a receipt will be sent)

.....
.....
.....
.....

Email

Any special dietary requirements?

The cost of attending this day event is £25, and is payable in advance.*

****Please make the cheques payable to THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK****

Send the cheque and the booking form to: Dr Julie Rugg, Cemetery Research Group, CHP, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD. A receipt for payment will be issued.

Eighth Colloquium on Cemeteries, 2007

**Friday 18th May,
Alcuin Research Resource Centre, University of York**

9:45-10:00	Welcome and introductions	
10:00-10:30	Peter Jupp	University of Durham
	<i>A tale of two scandals: burial and cremation in Aberdeen, 1899 and 1944</i>	
10:30-11:00	Sam Matthews	University of Sheffield
	<i>Necropolis, metropolis: figuring the cemetery in Victorian writings about London</i>	
11:00-11:15	COFFEE	
11:15-12:00	Willy Kitchen	University of Sheffield
	<i>Non-conformity or unconformity? The case of the Underbank Chapel Burial Ground, Stannington</i>	
12:00-12:30	Fiona Stirling	University of Sheffield
	<i>Grave reuse: understanding the impact on the cemetery landscape and its community</i>	
12:30-1:00	LUNCH	
1:00-1:30	Morgan Meyer and Kate Woodthorpe	University of Sheffield
	<i>The return of the living dead: a dialogue between cemeteries and museums</i>	
1:30-2:00	Maren Kurz	University College, London
	<i>Contested futures: contemporary practices in West Norwood Cemetery</i>	
2:30-3:00	Kate Woodthorpe	University of Sheffield
	<i>Tension and negotiation: the everyday contestation and construction of culture, discourse and practice in the contemporary cemetery landscape</i>	
3:00	CLOSE	

ABSTRACTS

10:00-10:30	Peter Jupp	University of Durham
	<i>A tale of two scandals: burial and cremation in Aberdeen, 1899 and 1944</i>	

In 1899 the manager of a privately-owned cemetery appeared in court in Aberdeen. He had ensured sufficient burial space by exhuming and relocating coffins without authority or permission. The manager was imprisoned for six months and the city of Aberdeen made aware of the conditions in which the poor of the city were buried. The cremationist Dr Robert Farquharson, MP for East Aberdeen, used the occasion to press for a crematorium, cremation having been legalised in the UK in 1884. A crematorium was not built, neither were burial conditions much improved.

In 1944, a court heard how the manager of the privately-owned crematorium in Aberdeen (opened in 1938) had stolen 1044 coffin lids and two coffins, passing a proportion of them on to a local funeral director. He was imprisoned for three years. The case had immediate policy implications for the UK cremation movement.

The paper first provides accounts of the two cases and then compares them according to a number of issues. These include: the rise of cremation in Scotland; the provision and ownership of cemeteries and crematoria; funeral costs and poverty; religious identity and clergy involvement. The two cases thus illustrate aspects of the growth of cremation and decline of burial in modern Scotland.

10:30-11:00	Sam Matthews	University of Sheffield
	<i>Necropolis, metropolis: figuring the cemetery in Victorian writings about London</i>	

From Lewis Mumford's influential model of urban civilisation terminating in 'the final cemetery, the Necropolis' to Iain Sinclair's vision of contemporary London as a 'necropolis culture', twentieth-century commentators have repeatedly defined the modern metropolis as a city of the dead. The dominance of necropolitan discourse in London literature has had a significant impact on representations of the city's cemeteries, ahistorically subordinating the particular local, historical, ideological and affective characteristics of individual cemeteries to a transcendent vision of cemetery as city of the dead – in the terms of James Thomson's 1874 poem, a 'City of Dreadful Night'. This paper argues that the relegation of the metropolitan cemetery to the realm of the figurative and symbolic has its roots in Victorian disenchantment with the cemetery as a solution to the problem of urban burial. As Victorian cemeteries grew in scale and multiplied in number, their signification shifted from pseudo-pastoral and suburban to metropolitan. No longer providing spaces of difference and psychic refuge from the expanding city, cemeteries came to duplicate, even darkly parody, London's uncontrolled growth. As the cemetery came to be viewed as a threat to the living – as in Charles Dickens's fantasy of London's 'enormous hosts of dead' being resurrected while the living sleep, and their 'vast armies' leave no space for the living – the cemetery's material and particular landscape was redefined as a symbolic space for the expression of anxieties about alienation, the loss of individuality and pressure

of uniformity in the modern metropolis. This paper explores the pressure of necropolitan symbolism on representations of London cemeteries in a range of texts from the second half of the nineteenth century, including cemetery promotional material, sermons, newspaper reports, and literary texts by writers including Dickens, G. A. Sala, James Thomson, Richard Jefferies, H. G. Wells and Ford Madox Ford.

11:15-12:00	Willy Kitchen	University of Sheffield
	<i>Non-conformity or unconformity? The case of the Underbank Chapel Burial Ground, Stannington</i>	

This paper presents some preliminary findings of a study of headstones and burial records from the Unitarian chapel at Stannington, some five kilometres north-west of Sheffield.

The mismatch between individuals named on tombstones and individuals listed in burial records suggests that it may be useful to conceive of each burial plot as having its own individual “life history”, in the same way that archaeologists have talked of the life cycle of individual artefacts or structures.

A number of ideas will be explored in relation to this model, including a discussion of the influences of family, community and stonemasons in the production, reproduction and relocation of memorials in time and space.

12:00-12:30	Fiona Stirling	University of Sheffield
	<i>Grave reuse: understanding the impact on the cemetery landscape and its community</i>	

In 2001, the House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee published its findings following an inquiry into UK cemeteries. One of their key recommendations was: ‘if the public are to continue to have access to affordable, accessible burial in cemeteries fit for the needs of the bereaved, there appears to be no alternative to grave re-use’.

Cemeteries were first established during the Victorian period to tackle problems of poor sanitation and lack of churchyard space in cities. Re-use had been common in UK churchyards for hundreds of years, but burial acts introduced during the 1850s made it illegal. This gave rise to the notion of burial in perpetuity which has resulted in a landscape that is socially and economically unsustainable. Many cemeteries incorporate vast areas of old burial which generate no income, are no longer visited and are poorly maintained. Theoretically, re-use seems straightforward, but UK cemeteries were never designed to be re-used. Consequently, potential areas for re-use are unlikely to be easily identified or conveniently grouped. Moreover, cemeteries also provide important sources of urban greenspace and ecological habitat and can be historically significant.

This research aims to investigate the implications and feasibility of introducing grave re-use, using case studies from Sheffield’s burial provision. The project uses GIS to pull together a range of data including historic maps and burial records, to reveal and

help understand the complex development of the cemetery landscape and to facilitate discussions with cemetery professionals regarding individual sites and their concerns surrounding re-use.

1:00-1:30	Morgan Meyer and Kate Woodthorpe	University of Sheffield
	<i>The return of the living dead: a dialogue between cemeteries and museums</i>	

Within the last decade there has been a revival in museum and heritage studies, reflecting the growth of their cultural and economic role in contemporary Western society. Whilst there have been some efforts to explore how cemeteries could benefit from this revival, to date cemeteries have not been widely included or recognised as ‘heritage’ spaces in either policy or research.

This paper addresses this disparity and makes tentative links between cemeteries and museums in their wider social, cultural and institutional context, in an attempt to incorporate cemeteries into this heritage revival. Drawing upon two individual ethnographic projects on the Natural History Museum in Luxembourg and the City of London Cemetery respectively this paper discusses some of the similarities and differences between these two spaces, including their role and function in society. We also make comparisons of the persistent and contradictory role of the dead in the museum and in the cemetery, two environments within which they are both present and absent.

Building on this, we examine how the management of these two sites are widely influenced by narratives of normative behaviour around ‘dead people’ and what constitutes the conservation and preservation of the dead. In an attempt to understand how these issues can be managed on a daily basis, the representation(s) of the dead in the cemetery and the museum will be examined in depth, exploring the scope for fruitful dialogue between these two spaces.

1:30-2:00	Maren Kurz	University College, London
	<i>Contested futures: contemporary practices in West Norwood Cemetery</i>	

During the course of my ethnographic fieldwork West Norwood Cemetery, one of the ‘Magnificent Seven’ Victorian cemeteries in London, became one of the focus points of my research. One of the main questions encountered throughout my work is how contemporary practices within the material and social dimension of the cemetery shape its future, with a particular emphasis on Victorian cemeteries as contested landscapes, contemporary heritage practices and material culture. This paper will explore these three themes from an anthropological perspective using an in-depth case-study of West Norwood Cemetery in order to provide ethnographic context. The paper will discuss examples of how the three themes are materially and/or socially articulated and represented within the cemetery landscape and propose ways in which they may be argued to be indicative of wider social phenomena, for instance by

relating to our understanding of the past, in particular the role of the Victorian era. Utilising established anthropological concepts, such as the nature/culture divide and phenomenological approaches towards landscape and materiality, the paper will show that by utilising these in the study of the contemporary condition of Victorian cemeteries questions about the contested nature of the future of existing cemetery landscapes can be explored and that these questions relate directly to larger social concerns at the heart of the anthropological project.

2:30-3:00	Kate Woodthorpe	University of Sheffield
	<i>Tension and negotiation: the everyday contestation and construction of culture, discourse and practice in the contemporary cemetery landscape</i>	

One does not have to look far nowadays to find evidence in the modern media of cemeteries making the news (see BBC 2003; 2005; 2006). Be it grave desecration, memorial regulation or safety in the local cemetery, they are sites that can frequently garner press attention, usually not for the most favourable of reasons. However, this attention does not equate to a general rise in the profile of cemeteries across the country which, this paper suggests, partly stems from the considerable ambiguities and contradictions that surround the contemporary cemetery in terms of its purpose, management and usage.

This paper is an overview of some of these ambiguities from the perspective of cemetery users and visitors, staff and the local community. It achieves this by exploring the cemetery landscape at different scales – moving from the detail of activity at the graveside, out to the management of the whole site and then wider still to the influence of cultural discourses of grief and conservation which frame cemetery management more broadly. Issues of contestation over ownership of grave plots, contradicting principles of rationality and the long term sustainability of the site come together in this shared dynamic space to both liberate and control activity and practice. It is how this happens and the effect this has on the cemetery landscape that is the focus of this paper, which is taken from an ethnographic project based at the City of London Cemetery.

Kate Woodthorpe
February 2006.

BBC (2003) 'Loose memorials tackled by council', available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2678047.stm> [date accessed 14/02/07]

BBC (2005) 'Outrage over cemetery destruction', available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/suffolk/4656535.stm> [date accessed 14/02/07]

BBC (2006) 'Children's Graves are desecrated', available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/devon/6041170.stm> [date accessed 14/02/07]