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1 Introduction: Death and Burial in Post-medieval Europe

What does the below-ground archaeology of death and burial teach us about people in the post-medieval past? How much did practices vary across Europe? Do mortuary practices in this period reflect religious beliefs, social aspirations, thoughts about life and death, emotional responses to love and loss, or a combination of those factors? Or none of them? Given the volume of raw archaeological evidence, these questions remain surprisingly hard to answer.

The archaeology of death and burial in Europe in the post-medieval period is not a very extensively developed research area. In part this mirrors the low level of attention paid to post-medieval archaeology generally in many European countries, and its relative newness as a disciplinary field. Additionally, post-medieval mortuary archaeology is overwhelmingly determined by the needs of developers rather than researchers, and is geographically concentrated in those areas (generally larger cities) where churchyards, cemeteries and other burial grounds of the last 500 years have been threatened or destroyed because of new development programmes. Because of the economic imperatives of conducting commercial archaeology, which are different to the freedoms often enjoyed by university-based researchers, the results and interpretations of much of the work that is carried out are not always published in a widely accessible form. Moreover, there is very little literature that offers synthesis or generalised observations on the archaeology of post-medieval death and burial even within a single country and none that attempts to draw general conclusions internationally. Overwhelmingly, archaeological writings on the subject are related to a single site only; overwhelmingly those works are more descriptive than interpretive; and overwhelmingly they are not well-known by other archaeologists, even within their own countries. (There are of course exceptions: some sites are superbly interpretive and some, like the Spitalfields site in London (Molleson & Cox, 1993; Reeve & Adams, 1993), are well published and widely known internationally. But these sites are very few).

However, there is now a real appetite on the part of those researching the burial practices of the last 500 years or so for an opportunity to present and discuss our work. This volume represents, we hope, an early contribution to an international discussion of what is still a new and fragmented area of archaeological research. Why now? Two reasons: first, attention to burial practices of the last 500 years is intimately linked to the general recognition that the archaeological study of recent centuries can be an interesting and valuable part of our disciplinary endeavours. New journals such as *Archaeologia Postmedievale* in Italy, the Czech *Studies in Post-Medieval Archaeology*, and the publications of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit in Germany and the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group signal both the volume of post-medieval archaeology

in some European countries and its growing academic respectability (see Courtney, 2013; Mehler, 2013 for useful recent overviews of post-medieval archaeology in Europe). Secondly, legislation designed to protect the archaeological heritage in many European countries demands that archaeological excavation and recording be carried out when construction, mineral extraction or other activities disturb historically and prehistorically significant deposits. Because of the huge expansion in European towns and cities, the quantity of urban archaeology undertaken has increased vastly; this is mostly medieval and post-medieval in nature. So post-medieval burial archaeology demands attention because there is now so much of it. However, our ability to frame and answer research questions, to synthesize the great number of disparate site reports that are generated every year has not kept pace with the generation of primary data. Despite the publication of some really excellent site reports and some very thorough studies, we still need to do a lot of work to pull together our original observations. In particular, we need to be able to cross national borders to examine the development of burial practices in an international way. Questions such as the influence of legislative or religious directives, the spread of fashion, the power of tradition can only be addressed fully if we have a good contextual knowledge of what was happening elsewhere. For example, the impact of the Reformation is often stressed as a significant factor when explaining changes in burial practices in the post-medieval period (e.g. Marshall, 2002). A comparison between Protestant, Catholic as well as practices within other faiths and beliefs is necessary to understand the role of religion in burial practices relative to other social and cultural developments in society (Curvers, 2011; Kenzler, 2011).

The present volume builds on a project which aimed to compile and interpret all the archaeologically excavated and described evidence of post-medieval burial in Britain and Ireland that I could find. It took me more than three years, even with the help of Annia Cherryson, and the resulting gazetteer (Cherryson, Crossland & Tarlow, 2012) is, I am aware, still far from exhaustive. Through discussion with European colleagues who have also worked on later historical burial practices, I became aware of interesting similarities and differences in our various areas, even when the burials we were examining all came from Protestant contexts in northern Europe around the same time. Yet I could find no archaeological work that attempted to look across European borders, or to facilitate comparison. Because of the existence of parallel national and linguistic traditionsthis can even be a problem for people working in neighbouring countries. This volume begins to fill that gap. For example, our review of post-medieval burial archaeology in the UK revealed a number of trends which would be more meaningful in a European context. These include, among other things:

– The continuing adherence to a West-East orientation in burial among all denominations except Quakers, until the rational spatial organisation of the new municipal cemeteries of the 19th century.
– Overall, an increasing relocation of control over burial from Church to State, as burial becomes subject to an increasing burden of legislation, which specified

aspects of funerary practice from the fabric of grave clothes to the permitted treatment of a suicide. Despite local variations and some exceptions this is a gradual trend that slowly unfolded between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries.
- A paucity of grave goods. Such goods as do appear, always in a minority of graves, are more likely to be personal than spiritual items (for example, jewellery or false teeth rather than rosaries or religious medals)
- The relative infrequency of commemoration or permanent marking of graves, at least until the 19th century, and often into the 20th.
- Dominance of single burial being gradually replaced over 19th century by burial and commemoration as couples or family groups.

Not all these patterns that characterise the period in Britain are the same across Europe: one of the interesting things to emerge from reading this collection of papers with British eyes is that many of the contributors record far higher and more diverse quantities of grave goods, clothes etc. than are typically found in a British burial ground. Similarly the importance of religious artefacts appears much greater, especially in countries with two or more powerful religious confessions, such as much of Germany where large populations of Catholics and Protestants co-existed. The largely unchallenged dominance of a single Protestant confession in most of the UK perhaps made this aspect of identity less important.

There have been high profile and extensive excavation projects of post-medieval cemeteries in many European countries in recent years, which have begun to attract the attention of archaeologists in those countries, but which are still not as widely known as they should be outside their national tradition. A couple of examples would be La Ciotat, a 16th to 19th-century cemetery in France (Richier, 2011), and Marco Milanese's investigations (2010) of the plague cemetery of San Michele in Alghero, Sardinia. Both of these projects were major excavations which are well published in their own countries. Both have implications for our work in other countries.

1.1 Problems We Share

Post-medieval burial archaeologists in many European countries struggle with the same issues:
- A general unwillingness to see the archaeology of later periods as 'real archaeology' at all. Sometimes heritage legislation does not extend to post-medieval sites; university departments have only recently begun to teach the archaeology of later periods. Funding for the excavation, post-excavation analysis and full publication of such sites can be hard to find in the face of hostility or incomprehension from people inside and outside of the profession. Moreover, when significant

assemblages of post-medieval burials are excavated and published they often occur on multi-period sites and so they are subsumed in a publication which is described and marketed as primarily medieval. The potential readership of such work might well not realise the significance of the data.

– The absence of a research tradition with a range of approaches and questions relating to mortuary practices. In lieu of this, the field has been to a large extent dominated by osteoarchaeology, with a focus on demographic and pathological issues. Although much of this work is excellent, it has often eclipsed work on more social and cultural aspects of burial archaeology. This contrasts with the study of medieval death and burial, where cultural aspects of mortuary practice are far more extensively considered and purely osteological work plays a smaller part. Kenzler (pers. comm.) tells me that the opposite situation prevails in Germany, where osteological study dominates medieval burial archaeology, and mortuary practices are more extensively considered in relation to the much newer study of post-medieval burial grounds. In many other areas of post-medieval archaeology, American historical archaeology has influenced the direction of study in Europe. In the mortuary field, however, there is far less comparable archaeological work, perhaps because of the highly politicised and controversial status of human remains in American society and archaeology.
– The difficulty of locating comparable sites and synthetic or interpretive work. Even within one country much of the archaeological research that has been carried out into post-medieval burial grounds can be hard to track down. Because of the scarcity of secondary and synthetic work, the option of following up references cited in books and articles is often unavailable. I am sure that I cannot be the only person to have had conversations with other archaeologists who say: "Oh, so you're interested in historical burial grounds? So you must know about the excavations at St Mary's just along the road from me?" Usually the answer is, sadly, no, I don't! Such work has often not made it to publication, or is only briefly mentioned in a local journal's summary of ongoing work, or publication has taken the form of a couple of pieces of paper in a filing cabinet in some regional office.
– Many of those who find themselves excavating historical period burial grounds are general archaeologists employed by contracting archaeological organisations. They have no particular expertise or interest in this kind of site, and often find that there is nobody else in their institution who can help and advise, nor is there an interest group, journal or conference they can turn to. They are struggling alone to make some kind of sense of their work.
– Sometimes, local people and even colleagues can feel that is ghoulish or disrespectful to disinter the bodies of those who have died in the last few hundred years. Although the excavation of post-medieval cemeteries is not usually motivated purely by curiosity – and is usually an attempt to record a site that is about to be destroyed or damaged anyway – research involving the graves and

bones of the post-medieval dead can irritate sensitivities, even of people who have no objection to the excavation of older burials. Public misconceptions about the nature of archaeological research and the legal and ethical frameworks of burial archaeology can fuel suspicions that archaeologists act out of ghoulish prurience and without respect towards the dead.

Yet historical burial grounds are an enormous archaeological resource and have the potential to inform studies not only of demographic questions or the history of disease and mortality, but also histories and archaeologies of the body, of emotion and changing relationships, of religious and other beliefs about death, of changing social relationships, tastes, values and aspirations: key cross-period, international and interdisciplinary research objectives.

1.2 Aspirations we Share: The Value and Potential of Post-medieval Mortuary Archaeology

Mortuary practices have been one of the main sources of evidence for archaeologists since the earliest years of our discipline. Egyptian pyramids, north European megalithic burial mounds and lavish early-medieval graves are all well known inside and outside the profession. In these contexts archaeologists are accustomed to recognising that burials can tell us not only about mortuary practice, but also about the kind of society that they related to. Processual archaeologists tried to find ways in which burial practice could index degrees of social complexity or stratification (Binford, 1971; Brown, 1981; Saxe, 1970; Shennan, 1975; Tainter, 1978). Their successors examined them for indications of the operation of power, the work of ideology, symbolic representations of status and so on, all of which would tell us about the values and understandings of past societies (Barrett, 1994; Hodder, 1982; Kristiansen, 1984; Shanks & Tilley, 1982). For some reason, burials in historical periods was rarely interrogated so closely or interpreted so ambitiously as prehistoric ones, though in recent years medieval burial practices have been subject to analysis of a more interpretative kind (Andrén, 1993; Gilchrist, 2008; Williams, 2006, 2013). Howard Williams suggests that "late historical mortuary practice suffers from the same intellectual imperialism as early historic archaeology; namely that prehistorians have let 'prehistory' exist and fester as a legitimate subdiscipline and gain theoretical credence as the discipline of archaeology… It is a tyranny of prehistory that we have politely let reign. It has many insidious ramifications, including entire projects that skip vast tracts of early historic and (sometimes) late historical periods (Williams 2014, pers comm).

Excavated post-medieval burial archaeology in Europe, in contrast to prehistoric sites, has not often moved beyond the level of site report. Certainly in anglophone countries, post-medieval graveyards have been very much overshadowed in research

terms by their medieval counterparts. Although many site reports are excellent in terms of the level of detail, they remain essentially descriptive, often fail to integrate specialist data very successfully; and are limited in ambition to the illumination of local history.

Death and commemoration have had a substantial material impact on the rural and urban landscapes of Europe in the last 500 years. The archaeology of death in this period includes both above- and below-ground material. Above ground are the memorial monuments to individuals, families, groups and communities. These include gravestones in cemeteries, the collective and communal memorials to wars disasters or martyrs, and architectural structures of death such as columbaria, mausolea, cenotaphs and memorial chapels; and can be either individually crafted or mass-produced.

Commemorative monuments constitute an excellent resource for our qualitative understanding of attitudes to death in the past (Mytum, 2000). What are the dominant metaphors and analogies of death, expressed both in words and in the material form of the grave? What can the language of commemoration and the traditions of burial tell us about attitudes to family, to ethnic, religious or gender identity? In many contexts the choice of commemorative language is a political decision (e.g. Mytum, 1994). Other local politics of status and power are also negotiated through the size, ostentation, positioning, material, form, decoration and language of commemoration (Cannon, 1989; Little et al., 1992). Classic marxist interpretations of commemorative practice, such as, for example, Parker Pearson (1982) and McGuire (1988) have considered the role of monuments in naturalising or obscuring unequal relationships of power and wealth in society.

The potential of the above-ground archaeology of death is more extensively reviewed in Tarlow (1999a), Mytum (2004) and Sattenspiel & Stoops (2010). The focus of this volume, however, is on the archaeology of the dead themselves: the below-ground material remains of buried individuals recovered by archaeological excavation. It also considers burials recovered from crypts, vaults and mausolea, which have been influential in several countries – see, for example, Reeve & Adams (1993) and Fingerlin (1992). The authors included in the volume represent a diverse range of countries, perspectives and approaches. However, all share a belief that the potential of the below-ground archaeology of death in the post-medieval period has not yet been fully exploited. Much of the work in this area to date has taken place outside the academic framework of research themes and established programmes. Research questions, when stated, are often low-level: what was the site's period of use? How far did the cemetery extend? And so on. We believe that this rich evidence can and should be used to address much more ambitious questions about the nature of society, belief and cultural history in the recent past.

1.3 Health and Demography

Post-medieval burial grounds are a source of very large assemblages of human remains, the scientific analysis of which can deepen our knowledge and appreciation of numerous aspects of social history. Large assemblages, such as more recent sites often provide, enable more statistically valid observations of the health and nutritional status of past communities, including the prevalence of many chronic and congenital conditions that affect the skeleton. At the same time, biases in deposition, preservation, collection and analysis mean that in later historical periods there are often better sources of evidence for basic population demographics: sex ratios, absolute population numbers, age at death and the impact of epidemic disease are all usually more reliably observed in historical sources such as parish registers, census data and so on (Appleby, 2011; Ubelaker, 2008). The evaluation of physical and medical characteristics at an individual, group or population level should be a first step in the development of complex and nuanced understandings about the cultural, medical and social aspects of the human past, and not normally an end in itself.

1.4 Social Meanings

Detailed analysis of human remains can reveal much about the living society to which those past people belonged. However, by paying attention to the burial practices we can learn a good deal about past attitudes to death, beliefs about the body, expectations and aspirations in terms of age, gender and social position, about emotions and family relationships, religious identity and faith, and about how those who threatened society were policed and disciplined.

For example, whether a person is buried in a single grave, with their spouse, with several family members or with unrelated people in a mass grave can tell us about attitudes to family and marriage, and feeds into broader histories of emotion. In my own work in Orkney there was a significant change from the individual commemoration of a single person on each headstone in the mid-18th century to commemoration of a whole family in the mid-19th century and then to the married couple in the early 20th (Tarlow, 1999a).

One widely observed trend in post-medieval mortuary practice is the so-called 'beautification of death', manifested archaeologically in the increased attention given to the aesthetics of the corpse. Burials in special grave clothes (Janaway, 1998), with false teeth and hair, such as are known from English sites such as St Nicholas, Sevenoaks, Kent (Boyle & Keevill, 1998, p. 92), or St George's Bloomsbury in London (Boston, Boyle & Witkin, 2006), and evidence that the body was buried with foliage or flowers which would both look attractive and help to mask unpleasant odours (Tranberg, this volume) all suggest that a high level of care went into preparing the body for disposal. This attention to beautification can be seen in many parts of Europe

from the 17th century but is clearest in the 19th century, a period during which the cultural elaboration of death in art, literature and social practice was highly developed. Beautification of death relates to modern attitudes to the body, to an emotional and individualised pattern of interpersonal relationships and perhaps also to a waning or changing religious faith. Interestingly the attention paid to elaborating, enclosing and disposing carefully of the corpse is not compatible with the doctrine of either Catholic or Protestant theologians that attention to the body is worthless and vain, and that the soul should be the focus of spiritual beautification instead. However, the care expended in laying out a beautiful corpse is evidence of an emotional investment in the body (Nyberg, 2010). Perhaps especially in Protestant contexts where the bereaved were no longer able to affect the fate of a loved one's soul after death by endowment or prayer, the body acquired special significance in mediating that relationship (Tarlow, 1999b).

The post-medieval period was a time of complex and multiple beliefs about the dead body, many of which existed in parallel in the same group. For example, care for the beautification of a highly individualised body as the focus of emotional relationships grew alongside a modern, scientific understanding of the human body (Ariès, 1981; Farrell, 1980, pp. 4-5; Swedlund, 2010; Tarlow 2011). The development of this medical model required a regular supply of human bodies understood as universal and interchangeable bodies rather than unique individuals (Harris, Robb & Tarlow, 2013, p. 175) to allow knowledge to be extended and shared. While many people reaped the benefits of the new medicine, very few were prepared to allow their own bodies or those of their kin and friends to be used for this purpose. The archaeology of 18th to 19th-century Europe thus reveals an interesting geography of bodily anxiety in the form of devices and practices designed to secure new burials against grave-robbers (Scottish examples are especially common and well-known – see, for example, Ritchie, 1921).

Prehistorians have traditionally looked to cemetery data as a way of determining the kind and degree of complexity and stratification of past societies. In the case of post-medieval historically-known societies there are usually better sources for such information. However, cemetery patterning in this period does allow us to see how material culture, spatial organisation and the adoption of innovative or traditional practices can operate to legitimise, uphold or challenge social relationships of power, authority and inequality. Parker Pearson's classic study of Cambridge cemeteries concluded that the apparent egalitarianism of memorial monuments – nearly all of the mid-20th century monuments are small and plain – actually functions ideologically to mask real differences in wealth and power (Parker Pearson, 1982). In this way, the study of post-medieval cemeteries is not usually undertaken to uncover facts about the past that are not otherwise knowable (most basic 'facts' about this period are more easily understood through historical documents, though in the absence of relevant documentary sources, archaeological evidence can have an important role to play in revealing primary truths about the experience of illiterate, oppressed or

subaltern groups, *contra* Moreland, 2001). Instead, attention to the material practices associated with known communities, events and processes can help to reveal the mechanisms by which relationships, beliefs, identities and aspirations are produced and reproduced.

It has been noted that mortuary practices are often conservative and slower to change than some other areas of human experience (Rebay-Salisbury, 2012; Williams, 2006), but trends in funerary tradition can be a useful barometer of social attitudes. One example would be the treatment of infants and children (Baxter, 2005). Although infants and children rarely have a major social role in terms of power and authority, and their deaths do not usually provoke the kind of social re-organisation or renegotiation that is occasioned by the death of a wealthy and powerful individual who needs to be succeeded or inherited from, such losses nevertheless have and had profound emotional impact on bereaved parents and families. Responses to child death are socially variable, and there might even be discrepancies between the official, collective and often religious response and the personal response of those directly affected, as witnessed by the Irish cillini tradition – the special, unofficial burial places maintained for unbaptised babies and other marginal individuals such as suicides and strangers (Donnelly & Murphy, 2008). In Germany, the special treatment of children and especially of unbaptised babies, is well-known archaeologically (Gutscher & Ulrich-Boschler, 1998; Ulrich-Boschler, 1997).

Related to the special treatments accorded to children are those reserved for people who die outside the norms of thier society. The 'deviant' dead (a term critiqued by Aspoeck (2008) because of its negative connotations – 'deviancy', she points out would often be better understood as 'non-normative' or 'minority') attract special burial treatment. Executed criminals, for example, were frequently buried beneath their gallows – a tradition that is known in many parts of northern Europe (Auler, 2007; 2008). Analysis of the composition of 'deviant groups' and the respects in which mortuary treatment might differ help us to better understand the core values of a community. In this period, the treatment of the war dead, bodies of 'strangers' and unknown bodies washed up by the sea, and the clandestine disposal of excommunicants, the unbaptised, victims of murder and so on all provide examples of special groups whose treatment illuminates normative social attitudes.

1.5 Politics, Ethics and Anxieties in the Treatment of the Post-medieval Dead

Archaeological excavation of human burials is an emotionally and at times politically charged subject. For the most part, European archaeologists have not had to negotiate the turbulent waters surrounding the excavation of human remains in North America or Australia (Pardoe, 2013; Watkins, 2013). Nevertheless, disturbing the burials of the dead is a sensitive area, especially when relatively recent burials are involved

(Sayer, 2010). Looking at a number of examples in the UK and elsewhere, Sayer (2010) shows that in Europe the excavation of historically recent graves is equally likely to be embraced or condemned by the local community, and that archaeologists can often foster public goodwill by being open and informative about the goals, process and results of their research. When protests occur these can be on religious, political or environmental grounds. For example, opposition to the excavations of human burials at Bonn Square in Oxford was largely voiced by the same ecological protesters who campaigned against the removal of trees and the redevelopment of this urban area. By contrast, criticism of the excavation of the Australian and British First World War casualties at Fromelles, France, represented an emotionally powerful opportunity for opponents of the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, to condemn his poor decision making (Sayer, 2010, pp. 87-92). Thus protests about the excavation of the recent dead can sometimes be stress points for the eruption of existing tensions around other grievances or differences.

Although people can sometimes find it disrespectful or uncomfortable to excavate the dead of recent years, archaeological research on graves in modern history can also be cathartic, especially in post-conflict situations. Archaeology can help to complete stories and clarify historical events, especially when the chaos of conflict, or deliberate concealment or distortion of events, has obscured the truth. The role of archaeology in identifying and completing the histories of the victims of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist period is increasingly well known (González-Ruibal, 2007; Renshaw, 2011). Similarly the First World War battlefields of northern Europe have been subject to a great deal of archaeological attention. This has not only enhanced our historical understanding of the nature of battle and soldiers' experience of the front line, but has also had emotional and psychological benefits for the descendants, relatives and communities of those involved as well as for the modern inhabitants of the battlefield areas (Desfossés, Jacques & Prilaux, 2008; Jacquemot & Legendre, 2011; Robertshaw & Kenyon, 2008).

Furthermore, although the excavation of graves can be controversial, the commemoration and memorials of the dead are often significant foci of community and public projects. In many countries there is great interest in family and genealogical history and memorial cultures are often central to such studies.

1.6 Challenges for the Future

1.6.1 Relevance

Post-medieval mortuary archaeology, like other kinds of post-medieval archaeology, needs to engage fully with the broader discipline, and indeed with other traditions outside archaeology. It is not useful to generate a list of research priorities that have no point of contact with the development of methods, theories and approaches

that our colleagues are pursuing. Such a hermetic sub-discipline can neither learn from nor contribute to a challenging and academic environment. The contextually-rich archaeology of burial in later periods stands to make significant contributions to areas of current interest in the discipline including archaeologies of emotion and experience (Tarlow, 2000, 2012), religion and belief (Insoll, 2013) and the body (Hamilakis, Pluciennik & Tarlow, 2001; Robb & Harris, 2013). We can help to develop more sophisticated approaches to understanding the significance of lineage, descent and relatedness by bringing together archaeology, history and genetics in innovative ways. Additionally, and importantly, by breaching the defences around sub-disciplines, new questions and more radical thinking are promoted. What if human burial is considered alongside animal burial, for example? Or if the values and aspirations evident in the decoration of ceramics, the organisation of a town or the shape of a window can enhance our understanding of the social and cultural meaning of death? The glorious thing about historical archaeology is its rich and diverse data; it is at its best when it makes connections: between a gridded street plan and a creamware plate; between burial in day clothes and drinking from a Chinese tea cup; between field hedges and church pews.

Although the specialist skills of the osteoarchaeologist, the archaeobotanist and others with highly-developed areas of expertise are invaluable to students of burial practices, we need to move further towards the integration of insights derived from specialist work into overall interpretative frameworks. Post-medieval archaeology continues in many countries to be dominated by osteoarchaeology, with limited attention paid to burial practice in comparison to the mortuary archaeology of prehistoric or medieval periods.

We cannot expect that developers and planners will recognise the importance of post-medieval burial grounds if we cannot provide engaging, interpretive, historically-informed bodies of work which combine rigorous analysis and adventurous interpretation around them.

1.6.2 An End to Uncontrolled Data Collection

More controversially, we need to recognise that there are sites that we do not need to excavate. Every Palaeolithic grave or cemetery with archaeologically recoverable remains is an exciting and important contribution to a small corpus. In the post-medieval period we do not have a problem with accessing huge numbers of graves and whole assemblages of many hundreds or thousands of individuals. Simply because there are so many recent deaths (the World Health Organisation estimates that around 55 million people died during 2011), there are huge numbers of recent graves also. Post-medieval burial grounds are being disturbed almost daily, and there is often pressure to excavate and record the burials before they are reinterred. However it is entirely appropriate to ask whether the automatic collection and recording of all historically

recent cemeteries is necessary or appropriate. Moreover, when modern burial grounds are disturbed by various authorities there can be asymmetries of treatment between different religious, ethnic or class groups. Archaeologists must consider that the politics of collusion in some schemes to destroy burial places may not be something we are happy to swallow. Especially given the ethical concerns about disturbing burials, discussed above, human remains – even pathological specimens – need only be considered for excavation and collection when they answer a clear research need. And there is no need to deploy expensive archaeological expertise in recording huge quantities of data – especially skeletal data – when the records are ultimately destined to rest forever in a filing cabinet or in some form of data storage that will never be accessed (though see Gieson 2013 for some thoughtful ideas on this issue). It is also irresponsible to undertake excavation without the resources for the proper study and curation of material remains – and post-medieval cemeteries frequently produce finds including textiles, wood and delicate botanical remains which all need to be properly cared for. Therefore all archaeological investigation of post-medieval cemeteries must be carried out in response to a clear research question, and the data collected and samples retained should be adequate to address that question. Speculative recording nearly always omits the key information needed for interpretive analysis. A clear idea of research priorities will help us decide which burial sites will repay archaeological attention, and which can be subject only to basic monitoring and respectful reinterment.

1.6.3 Safeguarding, Recording, Preserving

Given the ethical anxieties around the excavation and especially the retention of the bodies of the dead, what is the best way to ensure that archaeological research carried out today is available for future researchers? How can we record our field and post-excavation work in a way that is useful for future researchers into burial practice, as well as research based on human osteology? Can we devise sampling strategies that respect ethical and social sensitivities, do not overburden our limited curatorial resources, and also constitute a genuinely useful collection for researchers?

1.6.4 Working with Communities

There have been notably successful community archaeology projects involving later historical burial grounds in North America, such as the Freedman's Cemetery in Dallas, which managed to negotiate racial tensions to conduct a genuinely collaborative and consultative excavation that local African American groups experienced as empowering, although not without difficult and contested issues (Davidson & Brandon, 2012), in contrast to the early problems during the excavation of New York's African

burial ground (Perry, 1997). Community participation in cemetery excavation projects is not so well established in Europe, but represents an arena in which co-operative approaches to the past and improved popular appreciation of archaeological practice – especially in such a 'suspicious' activity as the exhumation of the dead – can be enhanced. It is worth noting that the significant community, if there is one, might not be the local community. Given the displacements, relocations, migrations and, of course, genocides, in European history, the genetic or cultural descendants of those buried might not be local, although they might also feel a legitimate interest in a site. 'Community' is, of course, not a straightforward term.

1.6.5 Engagement with other Subdisciplines

While we may lament the failure of our prehistorian colleagues to pay much attention to the interesting archaeological insights proceeding from the study of later periods, it is important that we also benefit from the insights of archaeologists working on other chronological periods. For example, several of the papers in this volume deal with the issue of grave-goods, which seem to be much more frequent and widespread in the post-medieval period than a strictly textual reading of the theological and historical sources suggest. Archaeologists of the classical and medieval world have examined and interpreted the phenonmenon of grave-goods extensively within their particular contexts: there can be no doubt that we are in a position to benefit from their considered analysis (see, for example, Härke's recent (2014) review and discussion of how one could and should interpret the phenomenon of grave goods).

1.7 This Volume

Most of the papers presented here originated in a session held at the European Association of Archaeologists annual meeting in Helsinki in 2012, chaired by Jenny Nyberg of Stockholm University and myself. Some additional contributions were solicited or volunteered after the conference, and some of the original participants were unable to continue to publication here. For these reasons, this volume does not aim for an even European coverage or seek to include a full range of thematic or chronological contributions. It is intened as a conversation starter – an opening offer in what we hope will be a continuing exchange of ideas.

Contributions to this volume are organised into two main sections. The first part deals with the body itself. Tagesson's chapter takes as its starting point a view of the body as a cultural object, an approach very usefully developed in prehistory by the osteoarchaeologist Jo Sofaer (2006). He interprets his observations of the care taken in preparing the human body for death within the context of emergent capitalism in early 18th century Sweden, and a more individualised way of relating to the world

and to others. In his characterisation of the changing nature of care for the dead body, Tagesson finds evidence of a wider cultural shift in terms of individualisation and emotional bonds that can also be traced in the development of urban space and patterns of material consumption that characterise Sweden's Golden Age.

In the same section Muižnieks considers the way that the dead body is dressed for burial. From the late medieval period into early modernity two separate traditions are evident in Latvian burial practice: simple shroud burial, and clothing the corpse in normal clothing. While both types of practice were Christian – and indeed both practised by both Protestant and Catholic families – these parallel traditions seem to represent the co-existence of an international, European religious belief, and local folkloric traditions.

Dramatic stories are evident in Europe's unusual burials – its mass graves, plague pits and exceptional interments. Souquet-Leroy, Réveillas and Castex discuss how the degree of care for the dead bodies of victims of epidemic disease is related to changing ideas about disease and medicine. As modern medical ideas of contagion took hold across Europe, the willingness of the living to have extensive contact with diseased bodies reduced considerably, and this is clear from their detailed study of a number of epidemic burial sites in France.

Angela Boyle looks back over many years of osteoarchaeological research on the post-medieval period with some reflections about the research trends and possible futures of this area of study.

The second section of papers explores the way that the burial of the dead creates memories and shapes posterity for the living and for future generations. Gonzalez returns to Sweden to consider the clothing and reclothing of two very high status royal burials. Burial dress not only reflects status of the buried individual, but also actively creates legitimacy for an elite lineage, and can be manipulated and reinterpreted even years after the original interment.

Kenzler looks at the practices of Protestant and Catholic burial in Germany – a particularly fascinating part of Europe after the Reformation because of the parallel existence of the two traditions. Notable differences in practices such as the inclusion of burial goods relate not only to liturgical requirements but also to the values of emerging modernity – individuality, cleanliness and the significance of the body for example.

Valk makes fascinating use of ethnographic and folkloric research on beliefs about death to explore the relationship between the living and the dead, throwing light on the way that material objects can mediate this complex part of experience. His contribution reminds us of the range of traditional beliefs that were still in currency only a few years ago, even in modern, industrial Europe.

The final section considers the placing of the dead. This relates both to the geographical spaces allocated to burial – considered in some detail in Anthony's analysis of the organisation of bodies and charnel in the 18th and 19th-century Assistens Cemetery of Copenhagen, but also the social place of the dead in relation to the living.

Gabriela Blažková, Martin Omelka and Otakara Řebounová discuss burial practices in post-medieval Prague, when adherence to Catholic practices was quite closely policed. People responded by conforming to the requirements of the Church, but at the same time managed to individualise their dead through the inclusion in graves of very personal and idiosyncratic items such as medical aids.

Tranberg's discussion of folk practices and particularly of the use of plants in Finnish graves illustrates another way in which a meaningful and often emotional relationship between the dead and the living was articulated. By bringing the insights of environmental archaeology – in this case the study of plant remains - to the post-medieval period, new sources of evidence are opened up.

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