**Working knowledge: the industrial archaeology of the burial landscape**

**Julie Rugg**

**Abstract**

The study of churchyards and cemeteries can benefit from the application of core questions and methods of industrial archaeology, which encourages more detailed interrogation of fundamentals including the evolution of burial space over time in a particular location, and a higher level of attention to definition, ownership and purpose of the different types of spaces used for interment. Industrial archaeological approaches also invite exploration of the infrastructure of burial spaces; the scientific principles guiding the task of cemetery management; and the ‘working knowledge’ of gravediggers whose practices might follow more pragmatic imperatives. The framework of industrial archaeology carries the potential to consider new priorities for conservation, at the same time as highlighting tensions around the audiences and purpose of industrial heritage and interpretation.

**Keywords**: cemetery, churchyard, gravediggers, working knowledge, cemetery management.

**Introduction**

Sitting firmly within the Historic Environment Record (HER) category of ‘religious, ritual and funerary’, burial space constitutes a hugely complex component of the urban infrastructure of the historic period. Archaeological approaches to burial sites in the modern period have tended to have two focuses: the study of human remains and the study of funerary monuments. Osteoarchaeological study and funerary archaeology have followed instances of crypt clearance or excavation prior to redevelopment around churchyards or burial grounds (for example, Reeve and Adam, 1993; Richmond, 1999). These studies have contributed substantially to an understanding of the material culture of mortality ritual, in addition to recovering essential demographic and medical data. Above-ground archaeological study has generally comprised detailed analysis of funerary monuments, charting the chronologies of monument erection and style including the carving and language of epitaphs and iconography (Tarlow, 1999; Mytum, 1994). In neither instance does is appear that a clear ‘fit’ is immediately evident for the central concerns of industrial archaeology. However, this paper is not written by an archaeologist, but by a historian with an interest in changes in burial practice that followed the rapid expansion of urban settlement from the middle of the eighteenth century. In particular, interest rests upon the decisions made by contemporaries to reconcile new ‘scientific’ understandings of the dangers of insanitary burial practice and the ancient tradition of burial within the precincts of a Church of England churchyard. With this issue in view, it is here contended that the study of the evolution of burial space in the historic period benefits from multiple contributions from industrial archaeology, through the framing of appropriate research methods, theoretical considerations, and conservation expertise. Indeed, the task of arriving at a ‘dialogue’ between industrial archaeology and burial space as a heritage asset frames fresh questions about burial space and offers new perspectives on themes within industrial archaeology. In particular, this paper posits the notion of ‘working knowledge’ as a key component that has been lacking from an understanding of burial space in the urban context.

**The development of the burial landscape**

Perhaps the first arena in which burial space benefits from industrial archaeology is in the adoption of methods that track the process of development at site level. Neither churchyards nor cemeteries are generally regarded as dynamic landscapes. Above-ground archaeology has tended to record visible funerary structures as individual static artefacts, and it is rarely the case that an attempt is made to capture fundamental elements of the immediate physical context beyond any elaborate design intent in the larger ‘garden’ cemeteries. A shift in usage from churchyard to cemetery is perhaps the only aspect of process that is generally discussed, and this process is deemed largely to be unremarkable. Kjølbye-Biddle affords this development little more than a page in her extended study of burial practice in Winchester over a period of 2000 years (Kjølbye-Biddle, 1992), but Cherryson et al.’s broader review is indicative of the more detailed analysis that is possible where archaeological and historical evidence are combined (Cherryson et al*.*, 2012). There is clearly much to be said about the dynamics of burial space in the later historic period, including basic elucidation of the pattern and chronology of burial site use and ownership in the urban landscape, and changes in land use within each burial space. Indeed, there is a sense in which the ‘Manchester method’ of capturing the narrative of site type is a framework that serves burial provision well (Nevell, 2005). Added to this is the imperative – following Palmer and Neaverson – to determine the reason for the location for a particular enterprise (Palmer and Neaverson, 1998). These questions begin to problematise the process of change in burial provision in the historic period, to suggest a structure for formal data collection, and to allow comparison across settlements.

Burial provision tends not to fall within the purview of industrial archaeology, and so it is worthwhile presenting here a brief history of burial, from around 1740 to the present. In the Georgian period, settlements tended still to rely on the Church of England for burial provision. Church administration was based on the parish unit, the boundaries of which could encompass more than one ‘township’ or settlement. Conversely, a settlement could contain within itself more than one parish. An understanding of the parish system in a particular locale is essential to comprehension of the development of its burial landscape, since it was at parish level that the responsibility for providing burial space largely rested. Indeed, burial in the parish burial space was a right defined under Canon law (Bray, 1998). A large town might have one or many more parish churches and attached churchyards. For example in 1832, Birmingham had a total of 15 acres of burial space in six small churchyards; in Bristol, as reported in the local newspaper in 1835, there was just over 14 acres in eighteen churchyards (*Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 1832; *Bristol Mirror*, 1837). Increasingly during the eighteenth century, pressure on existing space led to the creation of ‘detached’ churchyards still owned and operated by the parish authorities but, at the time of construction, on the periphery of urban development. In Hull, for example, both St Mary’s and Holy Trinity had churchyards and additional burial grounds – indeed, the Holy Trinity detached churchyard was the principal burial site in the city, opened in 1783 and extending to a three acre portion of the Dock Green (Rugg, 1999, 219). Provision was likely to be augmented by Nonconformist burial grounds also centrally located, adjacent to chapels. For theological reasons, Baptists, Unitarians and Quakers were denominations most likely to have their own burial space, but in some parts of the country Methodists also had a tradition of separate provision. In some instances those burial grounds constituted a major contribution. For example, in Newcastle the detached Nonconformist burial ground at Ballast Hills was the main burial location for the town (Morgan, 2004). In the majority of places, it is likely that this provision accommodated perhaps much less than ten per cent of the settlement’s burials, as was the case for example in Sheffield (Haywood and Lee, 1843). By the end of the Georgian period, burial need in any settlement might be met by a complex patchwork of Anglican and Nonconformist burial space augmented by more or less commercial but small-scale enterprises; chapels offering interment in basement ‘vaults’ were also widespread London (Chadwick, 1843; Jupp, 1997; Cherryson et al*.,* 2012).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the first major shift in practice altered this multi-layered pattern by, for the most part, making it more complicated. Prisons, hospitals and workhouses were all new ‘civic’ buildings deemed indispensable to urban infrastructure, and were likely to have small burial grounds attached, as had been the case with almshouses and military barracks (Cherryson et al.*,* 2012). Pressure on urban space intensified use of all the existing burial sites, and concern began to be expressed that the nature of provision had become insanitary, particularly given their location close to residential property (Walker, 1839). The numbers of interments in individual sites, often constituting much less than an acre in extent, could be staggeringly high. The sanitary reformer Edwin Chadwick calculated an annual ‘burials per acre’ figure for over 180 parochial churchyards in the Diocese of London: ten of the sites each had the equivalent of well over 1,000 interments per acre, year after year (Chadwick, 1843, Appendix). Even in smaller settlements, intensive use of existing provision was in evidence: for example, in Knaresborough, burials in the churchyard of St John the Baptist totalled 3,472 in the twenty years prior to its first closure order in 1855 (Rugg, 2013, 75). In many cases, the sudden acceleration of burials had generally followed a slow but still steady increase through the eighteenth century.

The history of joint stock cemetery companies in the first half of the nineteenth century has been recounted on a number of occasions, and need not be repeated here (Rugg, 1998). Suffice to say, that these companies were established for varying reasons and operated in almost all the major settlements. The company cemeteries offered a substantial contribution to burial space, often providing upwards of ten new acres for interment. However, a less familiar story is to consider the impact of new cemetery provision on the existing churchyard burial space. The foundation of joint stock cemeteries did not prevent the continued use of the churchyard. In fact, in a parallel development, concern for the ‘ungodly’ nature of the rapidly massing urban population led to substantial investment in church building. The Church Building Act (1819) brought new churchyards along with the churches, and certainly exceeded cemetery provision in number. In Sheffield, the General Cemetery was laid out in 1836 at around the same time as five major new churchyards were opened on the outskirts of the Sheffield township: three were funded under the Church Building Act and a further two were built by private donation. Between them, St Philip’s, St George’s, St Mary’s, Bramall Lane, St John’s, Park and Christ Church at Fulwood accommodated burial numbers far in excess of the General Cemetery in its first few decades (Rugg et al, 2014).

Burial provision acquired yet another layer with the passage of the Burial Acts from 1850. An early, aborted Burial Act 1850 brought Brompton Cemetery into public ownership and aimed at universal state control of burial space (Finer, 1952). It was superseded by the Burial Act 1852, the provisions of which were extended to the rest of the country in the Burial Act 1853. These Acts brought a new framework for the creation of cemetery space, borrowing heavily from the traditions and practices of the parish system (Rugg, 2013a). Under the new legislation, vestries (the chief agency of parish administration) were able to finance the laying out of a cemetery by borrowing against the rates. In deference to what could be strongly political Nonconformist interests, half the cemetery was to remain unconsecrated. The remaining consecrated portion was to be regarded as an addition to parish burial space: essentially, an extension to the existing churchyard. This process for laying out new burial space was adopted extensively, in both urban and rural areas. The rapidly growing spa town of Harrogate had, by the 1880s, acquired two separate burial boards: the Harrogate Burial Board opened the rather grand 4.5 acre Grove Road Cemetery in 1864, but the parish of St Mary’s also used the Burial Acts to establish a cemetery adjacent to its donated mission church at Harlow Hill in 1870 (Rugg, 2013a).

A process for the creation of new cemeteries through the rate system made it more possible then for vestries to effect closure of their existing insanitary burial spaces. The earliest Burial Acts, in 1852 and 1853, had outlined a system whereby application could be made for an Order in Council to prohibit further burial in specific spaces. This process was initiated locally with churchyards subject to inspection by an Inspector from the Burials Office, which was then located within the Home Office. The Inspector would also take evidence on local opinion with regard to the site’s capacity, and make tailored recommendations for each site. Often it was possible for burials to continue, but in specified, restricted circumstances. For example, burial could take place in walled graves, or in graves where every coffin was separately enclosed by being embedded in charcoal or enclosed by brickwork. It should be noted that on occasion vestries simply ignored the requirements of the Order, and use of a churchyard could continue for decades after its supposed closure: this was the case at St John’s, Park in Sheffield despite the imposition of increasingly rigorous restrictions (Rugg et al., 2014). The legislation could also be applied to Nonconformist burial grounds and commercial burial chapels.

The Burial Acts were frequently adopted by vestries throughout the country in the second half of the nineteenth century. Burial provision thus entered into another distinct and again highly complex phase comprising widespread new cemetery establishment, the closing of churchyards, the continued building of new churches and churchyards, and the opening of new detached churchyard extensions. Three practices were largely in abeyance. First, interment within the church itself was severely curtailed. Order in Council churchyard closures tended to include an absolute prohibition of further burials in the church, and interment had been forbidden in the newer churches established under the ‘Million Act’. Second, there was a reduction in the establishment of new commercial cemeteries and chapels, the economic viability of which had been undermined by the Burial Acts. Third, the laying out of small Nonconformist burial grounds also appeared to diminish. This activity was regarded as being largely redundant as unconsecrated space was more readily available in burial board cemeteries. Furthermore, the Burial Grounds Amendment Act 1880 made it possible for Nonconformist ministers to take services in Anglican churchyards.

It is notable that as the nineteenth century progressed, the smaller denominational burial grounds disappeared from the urban landscape as a consequence of central urban development. Indeed, even the large central parish churchyards were also often subject to redevelopment, and now little trace remains of their existence even though the church itself might remain in place. For example, the small market town of Norton-on-Derwent had been served by the church and churchyard of St Nicholas on Church Road since the medieval period. The churchyard was closed in the 1850s, and a detached churchyard extension was laid out in Langton Road. By the 1880s, it was decided that Norton needed a larger church, and rather than disturb the remains in the churchyard, a new church was constructed adjacent to the detached churchyard extension. In 1889, the Archbishop of York expressed a promise that the old churchyard would be ‘planted and beautiful so that those who had friends there would see that it was well taken care of’ (*Malton Gazette*, 1889). By the end of the century, the Urban District Council had adopted maintenance responsibility for the site and plans for a new swimming pool – encroaching on the churchyard – were tabled. The swimming pool remains very much in place but little – if any – material evidence remains of the churchyard (Vestry meeting minutes, various dates).

For much of the twentieth century, there was a slight shift in focus, as extension of existing cemeteries was in many instances more practical and economic than establishing new sites. The penultimate Burial Act in 1900 removed a presumption of protection for the Church of England in changes to the way in which consecrated and unconsecrated space was apportioned, and in the payment of monument erection fees to Anglican clergy in the consecrated sections. In largely rural areas, churchyard use continued and indeed churchyard extension remained commonplace as a response to local burial need that would not require an increase in the local rates (Rugg, 2013a). In 1884, cremation was deemed to be a legal method for disposal of the dead, and the first crematorium was opened by the Cremation Society at Woking in the following year. However, cremation grew very slowly in popularity. Early municipal crematoria were often located within existing cemeteries, and only after 1945 did it become more typical to establish ‘stand-alone’ crematoria within landscaped gardens of rest (Jupp, 2006). By the mid-1960s, cremation had become the majority option. Propaganda favouring cremation over burial looked towards the re-development of older cemeteries as amenity spaces (Robinson, 1880). In practice, older cemeteries have generally continued in use, even when they contain little space for new burials. ‘Re-opens’ – or continued interment in large family graves – mean that these sites are generally maintained as cemeteries although there may be some rationalisation of the landscape to facilitate maintenance (Dunk and Rugg, 1994). For churchyards, the formal act of closure has allowed the Church of England to pass responsibility for maintenance to local government. However, in some instances churchyards continue to be used for the interment of cremated remains.

**Capturing landscape dynamics**

It is clear that this extended narrative lends itself to research methods honed through application to the industrial landscape. Following the imperative to ‘determine the sequence of events and account for [...] changes that have taken place’ (Palmer and Neaverson, 1998, 19), the task of re-creating the dynamic accretion and abandonment of burial site types would encompass use of historical material including maps, burial registers and other vestry records, town histories and local gazetteers. The *London Gazette*, which is the publication of record for many types of statutory notices, is also an essential resource since it reprinted all the churchyard closure orders issued through Orders in Council. Within the contemporary urban landscape, evidence of this burial history will certainly remain in the larger cemeteries located on what would have been the periphery of urban development in the nineteenth century; within memorials in and vaults beneath larger parish churches; and in the remnants of burial grounds and churchyards where memorials are now entirely absent or subsumed into walls or paving. One exercise in disentangling this history has concluded that the shift from churchyard to cemetery within an industrial setting — in this case, Sheffield — was far more protracted than might be supposed, and even by the end of the nineteenth century the Church of England retained a substantial hold on burial provision (Rugg et al. 2014). Other, similar studies are required before it is possible to generalise more widely about this aspect of urban infrastructure development.

To this end, two imperatives of industrial archaeology are particularly useful. First, there is a need to determine the rationale for location. In the case of industrial development, reasons tend to relate to the opportunities arising from particular topographical features such as water courses or inclines. Even at a very basic level, there has been little attention paid to understanding why, within any urban agglomeration, burial space is located where it is. The issue is particularly pertinent for sites laid out in the second half of the nineteenth century, as scientific understandings began to inform cemetery management, in seeking to institute burial practices that would minimise any impact on public health. Vestries — or any other ‘vestry-like agency’ adopting the Acts — were required by the Burials Office to complete a proforma indicating the suitability for interment of their chosen site. Criteria included size relative to prospective demand, location relative to residential property but also travel distance from the more distant parts of the settlement and whether a new road might be necessary; the nature of the soil as ascertained by trial holes at least eight feet deep, and the depth at which any water was found; potential for drainage and likely outflow into water used for domestic purposes, and location relative to any existing pumps or wells supplying drinking water. Guidance further detailed the dimensions of the grave, stressing that the grave needed to be located centrally within a plot of defined dimensions, and specified that just one interment should take place in each grave. These requirements rested on the intention to ensure rapid decomposition and proper circulation of air so that mephitic vapours emanating from the decomposing bodies would not become concentrated and so increase in toxicity (Rugg, 2013b). As the nineteenth century progressed and scientific understanding of the causes of disease further developed, attention shifted to the need to ensure that burials could not possibly contaminate the water course. Making the right decision on land purchase was not just an issue of scientific nicety. At Pateley Bridge, the decision to use the spatially convenient fields adjacent to St Mary’s Abbey was ill-advised given the poor drainage of the site. Remedial drainage works constituted a major expense that drove up burial fees at the site, and in early decades there was a local preference for burial in the churchyards of surrounding villages (Pately Bridge Minute Books, various dates). Thus, the location of cemeteries under the Burial Acts carried scientific imperatives.

A second issue is attention paid to the accurate application of definitional categories. Within osteoarchaeology and above-ground archaeological survey, the exact nature of the burial site in question not always regarded as central. However, in determining the *processes* of burial site development, more exact definition is essential. Within industrial archaeology, particular attention is generally paid to the need to recognise the function of a structure and to establish its chronology. Applying this approach to burial space, it becomes necessary to understand the differences between churchyards, sites that were extensions to the parish churchyard but detached from the existing church – here termed ‘detached churchyard extensions’, burial grounds owned by Protestant Nonconformists, Roman Catholics and Jews; commercial, private company cemeteries and cemeteries opened under the Burial Acts despite the fact that these sites may appear very similar (Rugg, 2000). It will be evident from the foregoing narrative that each of these sites had a distinct chronology and ‘meaning’ in the burial landscape and in particular could reflect the play of inter-denominational rivalries which could often rest on burial as a highly politicised ‘flash point’. It is notable that, in defining difference, it becomes possible to begin to disentangle a more nuanced burial history: for example, it becomes evident that formal, ‘scientific’ cemetery managerial practices start to be adopted by Church of England vestries in their detached churchyard extensions.

Analysis of the spatial dynamics of burial within single sites in the industrial period is also under-researched and again constitutes a task amenable to industrial archaeological methods. In the past, assessment of cemetery use has tended to focus on class distinctions, without much in the way of fuller site investigation (Parker Pearson, 1982). Other approaches can comprise more detailed study combining site survey and historical research. The Burial Acts required burial boards to keep both burial and grave registers: a burial ‘address’ is therefore available for each individual, and personal details are available for the individual including age at death, residence and place of death and profession. Information is also kept on the minister taking the funeral. Recent study has shown that the proportion of burials in the unconsecrated sections of the cemetery was remarkably variable, and did not necessarily reflect the strength of Nonconformity in a given location. There could also be substantial differences in the amount of space designated solely for Roman Catholic use. Again, outcomes could be less a reflection of the size of the Roman Catholic community than the tolerance of the burial board since such distinction was not a legislative requirement (Rugg, 2013b).

**‘Working knowledge’ in the burial landscape**

Industrial archaeology ‘illuminates the context of people working in the past’ (Palmer and Neaverson, 1998, 3). Very broadly stated, the subject of work within industrial archaeology can follow one of two principal threads. ‘Work’ encompasses discussion of labour practices, and in doing so adopts an innately political tone reflecting Marxist perspectives on class conflict in capitalist societies (for example, McGuire and Reckner, 2005). A second thread discusses ‘work’ as scientific endeavour and technological breakthrough, and addresses the broad theme of industrial innovation. However, a further thread might be to use industrial archaeology to locate ‘working knowledge’ in the past. Within ‘deep time’ archaeology, landscape and artefacts have been used to recreate an understanding of religious belief and, similarly, archaeologies of emotion have attempted to locate material evidence of the less tangible components of human experience (Tarlow, 1999). Recapturing the ‘working knowledge’ of the industrial past could be regarded as an analogous endeavour. Detailed reconstruction takes place of machinery to better understand its operation, and specific industrial processes are recreated. At the heart of these exercises is the notion that work is often problem-solving and industrial processes rest on what might be termed ‘operational evolution’. Skills develop and processes adapt at both micro and macro levels: formally, in the laboratory and less formally on the shop floor by the labourers who work within the processes. A focus on working knowledge constitutes an invitation to explore the agency of the labourer, expressed through known and ‘provable’ work practices, in contrast to the readily discussed and documented theoretical principles that created the structures in which the labourer worked.

This kind of functional analysis has been lacking in cemetery research which lends itself, rather, to cultural histories that usually focus on a progression of idealised landscapes (for example, Etlin, 1984). The cemetery has rarely been considered as a place of employment where the evolution of particular skill sets had a substantial impact on the landscape. A key individual within this process is the cemetery manager. This role emerged from an amalgam of two earlier roles: the church sexton who dug the graves and generally decided where in the churchyard space was available for further interment; and the parish clerk who undertook the task of arranging the funeral and paying the sexton. The Burial Acts brought new regulations to the practice of burial. The work of gravedigging continued, but a cemetery clerk was required to undertake the ‘white collar’ office work, which included completion of a new and more complex records (burial and grave registers) and to oversee the legalistic processes attached to the sale of rights of burial. For the first time, burial space was subject to active management according to particular set of principles, that were to a large degree set out in Home Office guidance but which also relied on a substantial amount of discretion and problem-solving.

A key question for Gordon and Malone within industrial archaeology was to assess ‘how and by whom new technologies were created and how their selection, use or rejection has been influenced by cultural values’ (Gordon and Malone, 11). This question certainly has resonance within cemetery management. Almost immediately as the Burial Acts were implemented, conflict became evident between the ‘scientific’ remit of the Home Office regulations, and the imperatives of local burial ground management. A particular source of conflict was the understanding embedded within the regulations that within sites managed according to scientific principles, decomposition would be sufficiently rapid for graves to be used again within a short time period. Indeed, it was suggested that within the right type of soil, in a properly constructed grave, and with only one interment in each grave, full decomposition would be effected in fourteen years (Cunningham Glen, 1858, 143-54). The contention that only one interment should take place in each grave was a particular source of tension, since it precluded the practice of family burial. Furthermore, in areas of high demand, where hundreds of burials may have taken place each year, digging individual graves for each funeral ran counter to what was regarded as a more practical option which was ‘shaft’ burial, with multiple interments and a deep first burial (Rugg, 2013b). It is evident that practice was remarkably variable in this and in other matters, largely reflecting the pragmatic decisions taken by individual cemetery managers aiming to reconcile practical exigencies with public expectations. As the decades progressed, cemetery managers became increasingly forthright in setting agendas for the cemetery landscape including introduction of the ‘lawn’ cemetery style through the twentieth century, which aimed for simpler and more uniform monumentation and a removal of ‘body mounds’ which had characterised the Victorian burial landscape (Rugg, 2006).

Thus it is evident that seeing the cemetery as a place of work and in seeking to understand the ‘working knowledge’ required of a cemetery manager, a new set of questions begins to emerge. The cemetery manager was not the only employee within the cemetery. Very little attention has been paid to the task of gravedigging, for example. Anthony has suggested that gravediggers’ management of space below the ground might not always match management ideals of order (Anthony, 2015). Technological advancement assisted the task of interment. Health and safety concerns led to the development of shoring techniques and equipment to stabilise very deep graves. Within larger cemeteries, the construction and sale of vaults required the particular expertise of local stonemasons. Attention paid to the aesthetics of above-ground monumentation has not been matched by assessment of developments in below-ground vault construction, and the practical task of building vault access into monument design. Overall, these approaches ‘acknowledge the role of the individual in the creation of material culture’ (Palmer and Neaverson, 1989, 7) and populate the cemetery not only with mourners but with managers, gravediggers, groundsmen and tradesmen, all with working knowledge that is evidenced in the evolving landscape.

**Conservation imperatives**

This final section of the paper considers a third and again substantive theme in industrial archaeology: heritage conservation. Tensions abound within the need to conserve material evidence of the industrial past, and the interpretation of that heritage to ensure its continued protection. These tensions can be articulated within the realm of cemetery conservation in very similar ways. The question remains whether conservation effort has been aimed at an idealised image of a Victorian cemetery landscape — epitomised by the neglected ‘magnificent seven’ cemeteries in London, including Highgate, Nunhead and West Norwoood — that largely overlooks any meaningful attempt to understand cemeteries as managed and functioning elements of the urban infrastructure. As in elements of industrial heritage, interest in cemetery conservation was first most strongly articulated in campaigns led by voluntary ‘Friends’ groups. These groups emerged in response to threats to joint stock company cemeteries, whose long-term decline was a consequence the failure of what was an essentially unsustainable business model. The early objectives of the ‘Friends’ movement were to protect what were usually neglected and overgrown sites from unsympathetic management which was likely to include the clearance of monuments by the local authorities that were often obliged to take responsibility (Dunk and Rugg, 1994).

The ‘Friends’ movement emerged during the 1980s, at a time of growing interest in Victorian aesthetics and culture. As a consequence, it could be argued, the sites were protected largely as quintessentially Victorian artefacts. Indeed, conservation effort within sites has largely concentrated on the architecture of lodges, chapels and gatehouses and the more elaborate monumentation in each cemetery’s ‘historic core’. Interpretive activity has generally focussed on the recounting the stories of people buried at the cemetery, and research effort has often concentrated on eliciting the biographical details of local ‘worthies’, or individuals connected in some way to national events. Latterly, education officers at some sites have been successful in offering sessions to local schools, developing packages that use the cemetery as a teaching resource (Samuel, 2012). As with industrial archaeology, heritage lottery funding is offering opportunities for burial sites to secure substantial sums to undertake conservation work on buildings and selected monuments: for example, the charitable body now managing Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol secured a grant of nearly £5m from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

However, it could be argued — as with voluntary efforts in industrial heritage — that cemetery conservation is not always best served by the intervention of volunteers. Jolly noted that volunteers are generally engaged with the task of ‘saving’, and are often seduced by a ‘secret garden’ motif, of a landscape hidden behind walls (Jolly, 2014). Conservation effort focuses on the protection of decay, and the idea of ‘cemetery’ is becoming inextricably associated with ivy-covered angels, decaying crosses and dilapidated chapels. Indeed, the cemetery is becoming yet another one of the ‘theme parks people visit for strong doses of heritage’ (Beaudry, 2005, 311). Furthermore, the ‘entertainment’ afforded by cemeteries is becoming suspect. Night tours are commonplace, and burial space is now a focus of dark tourism amenable to gothic reverie and ‘carve your own gravestone’ steam-punk re-imaginings. The past is there to consume as people see fit, but these developments carry a tendency to skew conservation effort to please popular demand. Indeed, the ersatz construct of a Victorian cemetery has been accepted as representing a valid image of nineteenth-century mortality, in contra-distinction to its somehow less compelling and unemotional 20th century counterpart. Few, if any, Friends groups regard the newer elements of their cemeteries worthy of regard or protection, despite the fact that their evidential value can be high. Unlike many elements of industrial archaeology, cemeteries as yet lack sufficient conservation expertise to ensure that their overall coherence as dynamic, managed landscapes is not lost.

**Conclusion**

An understanding of burial space in the historic period can benefit from the preoccupations and methods of industrial archaeology, which encourages analysis of the provision of burial space as a process within the urban landscape. Elucidating the chronology and rationale for shifts between site types allows for the creation of more complex and nuanced accounts of mortality in the industrial period. The supposed ‘secularity’ of cemetery space becomes questionable when half of that space is consecrated according to the rites of the Church of England, and use of unconsecrated space is expressive of Nonconformist doctrinal belief.

Furthermore, within each burial site, changes in attitudes towards mortality can often clearly be evidenced not only in shifting style of monumentation, but also in the principles informing the dynamics of management. Cemeteries were also places of employment, and sites where ‘working knowledge’ had a material impact on the landscape in ways that have remained largely unexplored. As a discipline, industrial archaeology has expert capacity to interrogate material evidence of particular work practices within burial sites, and to substantially enhance understandings of an under-researched element of the urban landscape.

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