Introduction:
Public Archaeologies of Death and Memory

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Abstract

This Introduction to AP*'s third special issue seeks to provide context and rationale to the study of 'public mortuary archaeology' before reviewing the development of the volume. Building on the presentations of the first Public Archaeology Twitter Conference of April 2017, these articles comprise a wide range of original analyses reflecting on the public archaeology of death. In addition to evaluations of fieldwork contexts, churches and museums, there are discussions of the digital dimensions to public mortuary archaeology, an appraisal of ancient and modern DNA research as public mortuary archaeology, and an evaluation of the relationship between mortuary archaeology and palliative care. Together, the articles constitute the state of current thinking on the public archaeology of death, burial and commemoration.*

Keywords

death, digital archaeology, mortuary archaeology, politics of the past, public archaeology

Introduction

There has been a steady growth of published academic research and debate on the intersecting fields of public archaeology and mortuary archaeology over recent decades. This work has focused on the complex and evolving ethics, politics and popular reception of the digging, displaying and curating human remains and other mortuary traces and environments (see Clegg et al. 2013; Fforde

2004; Giesen 2013; Redfern and Clegg 2017; Sayer 2010). Recently, Giles and Williams (2016) have suggested a re-definition and re-contextualization of mortuary archaeologists' public-facing work as part of a theoretically more robust and thematically wider field of archaeological and heritage investigation. In their view, the public archaeology of death is defined by the ways in which: '… archaeologists, in different ways and to different degrees, have become deathworkers: mediators who construct narratives about the dead… for the living' (Giles and Williams 2016: 12).

By adopting the title 'Death in the Contemporary World: Perspectives from Public Archaeology', this special issue takes forward this flexible and broad approach to the ethics, politics and popular culture of mortuary archaeology. This is because it recognizes mortuary archaeologists' and public archaeologists' many shifting relationships and interdependencies in contemporary society. Defined as 'public mortuary archaeology', a term that foregrounds the relationships and connectivities between the subdisciplines (see also Sayer 2010; Williams 2018a), this field extends the exploration of mortuary archaeology's public entanglements beyond the important and specific museum-focused discussions of reburial and repatriation. Certainly, the relationship between indigenous communities and archaeologists in post-colonial contexts in the Americas and Australasia (with offshoot European debates often framed in post-colonial terms) has been the most intensively discussed dimension of mortuary archaeology's place in contemporary society (e.g. Bienskowski and Coleman 2013; Fforde 2004; Giesen 2013; Jenkins 2011; Nilsson Stutz 2016). Yet, mortuary archaeology's wider relevance in education and fostering senses of place and identity also require study (Sayer 2010). Moreover, it is increasingly clear that mortuary archaeologists should regard human remains as but one element in considering the ethics, politics and popular dimensions of the archaeological dead. Grave-goods and grave-structures, tombs, cemeteries and ancient monuments, as well as their landscape contexts and environments, can also be important arenas of contestation and engagement between archaeologists and present-day communities and publics (Williams and Giles 2016).

Such studies might investigate appropriations and engagements with prehistoric and early historic cemeteries (e.g. Sayer and Sayer 2016). Yet they might also explore the more emotive instances of public engagement with archaeological work in relation to recent and contemporary graves and tombs (e.g. Anthony 2016). Among the most emotionally charged and contentious of all are instances where archaeologists work to investigate war crimes and/or recover human remains and graves from battlefields and other conflict contexts (e.g. Brown 2016). Public mortuary archaeology extends to evaluating societal participations and engagements with, as well as multi-vocal perspectives on, mortuary sites and remains (Bienskowski and Coleman 2013; Jenkins 2011) whilst also evaluating work with stakeholder groups and organizations in every stage of research from survey and excavation to laboratory analysis (McClelland and Cerezo-Román 2016).

The growing battery of archaeological and scientific methods available for analyses pose fresh ethical and theoretical challenges for mortuary archaeology. For instance, our desire to create individual personalities and name prehistoric and early historic individuals from our archaeological investigations constitutes a secular modern-day resurrection of 'immortal' ancestors, from the 'Amesbury Archer' to Lindow Man (see Nordström 2016). This strategy of public engagement has been enhanced in many instances through the deployment of life-like facial reconstructions. These come to operate as 'talking archaeo-heads', allowing people to establish dialogues with the dead. As accessible entry-points into different times and places, they collapse time and afford a personal, perhaps even intimate, connection to the distant past for contemporary communities (Williams 2014c). The Beaker Burial from Achavanich, Caithness is one such recent example (Hoole 2016; see Giles 2016). Likewise, these facial reconstructions are afforded to historical personages when uncovered and identified, most notably in the case of Leicester's Richard III (Greyfriars Research Team et al. 2015). While such resurrection strategies of public engagement can enhance emotive affinities and an individualized sense of relatedness between archaeological finds and modern people, they are also inherently problematic by perpetuating romanticized images of noble ancestors freed of disease and even detached from their own personal biographies and social contexts.

Exceptions prove the rule: some of the public responses to the skin pigmentation of the new facial reconstruction of 'Cheddar Man' in 2018 sheds light on the widespread and uncritical problematic 'whiteness' of previous facial reconstructions (both of this individual, and ancient people more broadly), as well as showing how issues of 'race' remain complex and contentious in 'Brexit Britain' as well as in many parts of the Global West. More positively though, the dark-skinned Cheddar Man affords an example how genome research, combined with such reconstructions, can rapidly and powerfully challenge popular misconceptions of the prehistoric past (Brace et al. 2018; see also Williams 2018d).

This last example leads us to consider further how genome research has, in recent years, begun a fundamental transformation of the theories and methods of mortuary archaeology as well as affecting how it is being disseminated in public contexts. Notably, DNA research is both fostering new debates and rehabilitating very old ones regarding past cultural identities and population movements. The topic of ancient migrations and diaspora is prominent here, including contentious discussions regarding the scale and character of Early Bronze Age and early medieval migrations based on ancient DNA evidence extracted from skeletal material found during archaeological excavations (summarized by Bodies and Academia 2018a). Equally though, there are high-profile controversies in the application of genome research, epitomized by the recent publications on the mummified Chilean infant 'Ata': while published in a high-profile peer-review academic journal, the study has been criticized for its methods, findings as well as its ethics (Bhattacharaya et al. 2018; Halcrow et al. 2018). Similarly, a media and academic furore recently surrounded the genomic evidence that supported earlier osteological identifications that a rich martial chamber-grave dated to the tenth century AD from Birka, Sweden, contained a biological adult female and not a male-sexed individual as might be supposed from the presence of weapons and other high-status items. The published academic study inferred that this might be the grave of a Viking 'warrior-woman' (Hedenstierna-Jonson et al. 2017). The vociferous responses from some quarters to the Birka 'warrior woman' grave draws attention to the many challenges archaeologists face in communicating their research in public environments and media. Likewise, such high-profile studies

chime with contemporary identity politics and raise many questions regarding both the appeal and the practice of mortuary archaeology, specifically how osteological and genome interpretations are integrated into archaeological inferences. Where do our ethical responsibilities begin and end in terms of public engagement and involvement with the archaeological dead when our research 'goes viral' via the media and social media?

Further dimensions of public mortuary archaeology include the investigation of the metal-detecting and the illicit trade in human remains and objects derived from mortuary contexts (Daubney 2017; Huffer and Graham 2017), as well as suspected ethical abuses of mortuary archaeological research itself (e.g. Halcrow et al. 2018). Public mortuary archaeologists, furthermore, might investigate political and popular appropriations and uses of mortuary archaeology's discoveries, concepts, methods and interpretations. Indeed, the wider popular culture of death is a burgeoning field in which mortuary archaeology can be considered a vibrant and diverse 'morbid space' for engagement with mortality in contemporary society (Penfold-Mounce 2018). Since the nineteenth century in particular, mortuary archaeology's data and methods, but also increasingly its concepts and perspectives, have inspired and infused Western popular culture's dealings with death and the dead. Notably, Egyptian, classical and medieval archaeology have inspired popular culture's perceptions of mortality. For example, we might critically explore the variegated and interweaving use of 'Viking' mortuary archaeological sites, monuments, themes and symbols in contemporary society, including their use in sports, neo-Pagan and specific musical subcultures, by some far-right groups (e.g. Trafford and Pluskowski 2007; Brandt Djupdræt 2016; Sturtevant 2017), but also specifically their deployment in contemporary death rituals (Ask a Mortician 2013).

Further examples of popular mortuary archaeology include critiques of how archaeologists and heritage professionals deal with death, burial and commemoration in heritage interpretation (e.g. Williams 2014a), popular and votive engagements with mortuary archaeological sites (e.g. e.g. Williams 2018b), as well as archaeology inspired/influenced popular fictional fascinations with dying, death and the dead in apocalyptic scenarios. Western

societies' specific obsession with zombies and other forms of the undead in horror fiction, for instance, can be considered to be in dialectic with archaeological discoveries and tropes (Penfold-Mounce 2018: 63-86; Williams 2018c).

From this contemporary and public-orientated perspective, mortuary archaeology permeates many different debates and environments in the Global West. Conversely, almost all mortuary archaeology possesses public dimensions by design or subsequent acquisition. Hence, public archaeological dimensions should be regarded as integral to all aspects of mortuary archaeological thinking and practice (see Williams 2018a). In particular, there are many ways in which mortuary archaeology can equally enhance insights and public education regarding the human past as well as facilitate engagements with mourning and mortality in the present and the future. Specifically, archaeology can form a key part of the broader 'death positive' movement by which people today confront mortality in the present through a deep-time and culturally contextual set of lenses (see Büster et al. this vol.; Lacy this vol.).

Despite the maturity of the ethics and reburial debates of recent decades, mortuary archaeologists are only now starting to tackle the many further interactions of its subject in popular culture. In particular, mortuary archaeology's digital dimensions demand detailed exploration, especially at time when the methods and practices of the subject are rapidly expanding (Ulguim, this vol.). The revolution in digital communication, learning and interaction has not only transformed the mourning and commemorative media and materials of our death, but it has also facilitated the revaluation of how Western societies perceive and deal with death in the human past (Sayer and Walter 2016). Williams and Atkins (2015) have sketched the sub-theme of digital public mortuary archaeology (DPMA) in broad terms, including the use of blogs, vlogs and social media, and they have identified some critical concerns for the future. Moreover, there have been some notable case studies investigating the digital applications to the public archaeology of death, burial and commemoration (e.g. Delaney et al. 2015; Huffer 2018; Huffer and Graham 2017; Sayer and Walter 2016). For instance, in the digital age, displaying the dead in public environments extends far

beyond museums and heritage sites (Williams and Atkin 2015): the archaeological dead (and mortuary archaeologists themselves) are far more readily encountered on Instagram or Twitter than in display cases or academic publications (e.g. Huffer 2018). By way of example, the appropriation and viral deployment of archaeological images of the dead undergoing excavation, as well as posed photographs of archaeologists themselves in laboratory and teaching environments via social media, is a serious area for ethical discussion. Here, the desire for public engagement with archaeological discoveries clashes with a professional need to retain ethical standards in writing and envisioning the dead (Williams and Atkins 2015). Archaeologists need to write and lobby in digital environments to retain context for their discoveries and interpretations, even if inevitably uncritical readings and disrespectful humour can exploit mortuary archaeological data (e.g. Finn 2018). This asserts the urgency for digital public archaeology and public mortuary archaeology to be fully enmeshed in theoretical and methodological terms. This concerns the ethics and politics of digital communication and digital participation (cf. Bonacchi 2017); as well as the production of mortuary archaeological knowledge and authority via digital media (cf. Richardson 2013; Richardson and Lindgren 2017).

My public mortuary archaeology background

Before proceeding, I wish to briefly sketch how my own work has attempted to explore the ethical, political and popular uses of mortuary archaeology, since this was integral to the rationale and motivation to take this project forward. My early archaeological research involved critiquing the history and popular misconceptions of the Early Middle Ages via its burial data and presenting a new interpretation of early Anglo-Saxon cremation practices in particular (e.g. Williams 2005; 2006; 2007). Subsequently, whilst directing fieldwork on a medieval manorial site adjacent to a contemporary churchyard at Stokenham, Devon, I learned why a community supported archaeological fieldwork near their burial ground. In this project, archaeological practice operated as a mechanism of 'digging for the dead', not in this instance by exploring ancient graves, but by facilitating the expansion of the churchyard for

the future-dead. Thus, fieldwork operated to support the village's engagement with the medieval past but also their aspirations for future burial and commemoration (see Williams and Williams 2007; Simpson and Williams 2008). In broader terms, whether we are dealing with early historic graves or 21st-century churchyards, archaeologists can find themselves working with and for the dead in multiple regards simultaneously.

This realization inspired further investigations into how and why the early medieval dead populate contemporary society through the ways they are envisioned in archaeological illustrations, artistic reconstructions and museum displays (Williams 2009). I also addressed how and why the prehistoric and early historic cremated dead are incorporated into museums and heritage sites and how displays often misrepresent cremation processes and variabilities (Williams 2016). This research has, in turn, suggested new ways in which we might engage with death and the dead through archaeology beyond the tendency to focus on whole and well-preserved, unburned and individuated bodies: namely mummies and articulated skeletons. Most recently, my fieldwork and research with Project Eliseg has investigated how fragments and partial traces of both cremated human bodies and textual memorials associated with a multi-period composite monument, afford particular challenges for public participation and engagement with the dead and their landscape contexts (Tong et al. 2015; Williams forthcoming). Simultaneously, I have explored dimensions of the contemporary archaeology of death in the 20th and early 21st centuries: attempting to pursue archaeological perspectives on today's deathways (e.g. Walls and Williams 2010; Williams 2011; 2014b; Williams and Wessman 2017).

Linked to these research endeavours, since 2013, I have been experimenting in new ways of communicating mortuary archaeological research online. Notably, I have deployed a Wordpress blog *Archaeodeath* as a medium for discussing the archaeology and heritage death, burial and commemoration beyond the academy: one of a series of academics and researchers who have deployed this medium for detailed yet public-facing discussions of mortuary archaeology (Meyers and Williams 2014; see also Meyers Emery and Killgrove 2015).

Bringing these strands together, as a mortuary archaeological researcher, I have come to regard public engagements as integral to many aspects of my academic endeavoirs. Public mortuary archaeology has become pivotal to how we write, envision, debate and disseminate the archaeological dead and their material cultures, spaces and landscapes. It is set against this background that I'm privileged to have had this opportunity to co-edit this special issue of *AP.*

Mortuary archaeology and the #PATC

Drawing together selected contributions from #PATC and respondents to an open call for papers, this special issue of the journal AP aims to show-case the latest research and critical thinking in the public archaeology of death. As such, this special collection fills a much-required niche for students and scholars in public archaeology and mortuary archaeology. Indeed, the digital environment of the conference is reflected in the manifold digital dimensions of the contributions. Specifically, the collection builds on the successful first Public Archaeology Twitter Conference (PATC 2017; 2018), organized by Dr Lorna Richardson. The conference included a striking range of public archaeology projects that contained a wide variety of mortuary and memorial themes tackling graves but also other memorial material cultures, monuments and landscapes. For while few of the presentations initially and explicitly framed themselves in terms of public mortuary archaeology, their memorial and funerary dimensions offered distinctive contributions not addressed in academic publications to date. Moreover, the #PATC format offered a more effective way of connecting academic arguments through case studies and evidence-based argumentation than more traditional academic conference venues.

Some examples (taken from the presentations delivered in the #PATC conference by authors who could not join the current special issue) provide additional evidence for the diverse ways by which mortuary archaeology infuses current public and community archaeology projects. Andy Jepson offered a review of work at Stobbs Camp First World War prisoner of war camp, including the investigation of the sites of graves of German soldiers subsequently exhumed for reburial at Cannock Chase. The project therefore was

not primarily about digging up graves, but investigating instead the site of a former cemetery: a public engagement with empty graves via archaeology. As such, the case study shows how archaeology can negotiate powerful and evocative mortuary absences through fieldwork (Stobbs Camp 2018).

Likewise, the themes of fragmentation and absence were central to Ben Wills-Eve's presentation. Drawing on computational approaches in the Digital Humanities, he considered how the National Trust site of Sutton Hoo (Suffolk) is partially portrayed via digital media. Despite cremation dominating the 'princely' burial site, his research showed how rarely this disposal method was featured in digital media about the site whereas much of the attention is afforded to the contents of the rich inhumation graves of Mound 1 and Mound 17 (see also Giles and Williams 2016: 7–10; Walsh and Williams 2018).

Other #PATC papers had implicit and implied mortuary dimensions. For example, Jennifer Thoms discussed Archaeology Scotland's initiative to foster local people to become 'heritage heroes'. Working with, and fostering local custodians of, local ancient monuments, this initiative encapsulates historic environments with mortuary dimensions, such as the historic Dunfermline Abbey graveyard (Seaborne 2018).

The unprovenanced and unrecorded portable antiquities from Lincolnshire discussed by Adam Daubney's #PATC talk are part of the UK's 'floating culture' (see Daubney 2017). Many will have originally had mortuary contexts and hence one might argue there is a pronounced ethical dimension to their retrieval and sale as a result, even though they have become divorced from a burial environment. This further underpins the imperative to promote understanding of mortuary contexts by antiquities vendors and collectors, as well as to work to educate metal-detectorists and, where possible and feasible, to work with them to investigate late prehistoric and early historic funerary contexts.

The AP special issue articles

The ten articles in this collection address a range of dimensions and significances of the archaeological dead in contemporary society. The ordering of the special issue is intended to chart the focus from field-based investigations (Goldstein; Lacy; Daly) to considerations of historic buildings and museums (McEvoy; Paites and Reeve). The special issue then tackles digital environments of death and archaeology's contribution towards them (Ulguim; Cook; Romero Pellitero et al.) before concluding with two broader discussions of mortuary archaeology and ancestry explored through DNA research and palliative care (Booth; Büster et al.).

Mortuary archaeology is always rooted in contemporary perceptions of space and place. Investigations respond to specific historical and cultural traditions of dialogues with the dead via material and corporeal means. Yet digital public mortuary archaeology in particular creates an inherently international profile and audience for discoveries, sites and monuments. Therefore, choices made over how to display and write about archaeological research in (for example) the UK might be read from Chile to New Zealand. Mortuary archaeologists need to be aware of these complex and diverse audiences to their research, and consider the implications regarding how they write and envision their research online for these audiences (see Williams and Atkin 2015). The global scope of mortuary archaeology's public engagements and manifestations is reflected in the articles, which extend from California, USA (Goldstein), Newfoundland, Canada (Daly and Lacy) and Barbados (Cook) to Granada, Spain (Romero Pellitero et al.) and the UK (Büster et al.; McEvoy; Paites and Reeve). Further studies tackle international and global themes (Booth; Ulguim).

Within this geographical spread, the articles engage with the diverse identities afforded to the archaeological dead in popular culture. These include migrants both ancient and recent (Booth; Paites and Reeves) as well as different social classes and ethnicities (Cook), religious affiliations (Goldstein; Romero Pellitero et al.), the victims of disasters (Daly), as well as those who might be perceived as founding fathers or 'ancestors' (in different spiritual, social and biological regards) to present-day communities (Goldstein; Lacy; McEvoy; Romero Pellitero et al.). The articles

together show that terms like 'ancestors' (see Redfern and Clegg 2013) and collective titles for the 'archaeological dead' are always problematic and political in different contexts and require nuanced deployment. Indeed, the traces of past human lives that mortuary archaeologists reveal often relate to multiple and shifting identities and categories. Moreover, some in the collection consider directly the potential for mortuary archaeological enterprises to transcend cultural restrictions to explore mortuary themes linking past and present from across the globe (Büster et al.).

While archaeological research has enabled some well-preserved human remains to become present-day celebrities (such as Ötzi and Lindow Man) (Giles and Williams 2016: 5-7; Nordström 2016), this collection instead aims to highlight the broader burial communities and population-level significance of the archaeological dead. Furthermore, the focus here is upon more historic-period mortuary traces, with only two articles touch directly upon prehistory (Booth; Büster et al., although see also Paites and Reeve). The hitherto relatively neglected significance of the ancient (here represented by Roman) and early medieval dead is countered through the articles (e.g. Paites and Reeve; Romero Pellitero et al.). Likewise, contributions address the enduring power of medieval monuments (McEvoy) and later historic burial sites cemeteries to enthral the public about life and death in the human past (Goldstein; Lacy).

What is also important is the broad scope of landscapes addressed in this special issue. These range from ancient and historic monuments and fieldwork in burial grounds and cemeteries (Lacy; Goldstein) to engaging with mortuary remains in museum settings (Paites and Reeve). We also find discussions of mortality mediated by archaeology taking place in quotidian settings: notably death cafés (Paites and Reeve; Büster et al.). Meanwhile, Booth addresses how academics must qualify and counter origin mythologies and ethnic narratives promulgated by popular misuses of the scientific analysis of ancient and modern DNA.

Human remains are often enmeshed to a wide range of other media and presences of the ancient dead in the landscape, akin to a form of distributed personhood (cf. McClelland and Cerezo-Román 2016; see also Giles and Williams 2016: 9). The articles in this collection illustrate well this point, since they foreground

networks of intangible, fragmented and cenotaphic citations to the dead, mediated by archaeological fieldwork, museum displays, archaeological publications and digital media (see also Williams forthcoming). This is in contrast to recent collections where the focus has remained on tangible bodies – usually whole and sometimes fleshed (Clegg et al. 2013; Giesen 2013; Williams 2016). Indeed, none of the studies focus specifically or directly on public participation and engagement with the discovery, analysis and interpretation of human remains per se (although see Romero Pellitero et al. this vol.). Instead, many of the articles in this special issue prefer to address materialities of absence: memorials and monuments, graves and artefacts that imply the archaeological dead in the absence of bones. For instance, Lacy's discussions are most directly linked with absence; she considers how visitors to her fieldwork were intrigued less with her discoveries as with the absence of imagined early colonial cemeteries in the vicinity. Perhaps among the most emotive of all the intangible categories of the archaeological dead is the cenotaph: Daly considers the role of a cemetery-like memorial to presence the absent graves of air-crash victims. Similarly, many of McEvoy's church monuments are either displaced or never were connected to graves to begin with: their significance relates to their individual and collective mnemonic power, including examples of their anthropomorphic form, and the names they bear in relation to the church architecture.

The theme of absence is considered further in the museum setting. UK and European museums continue to curate and display many different kinds of human remains, in contrast to many in North America and Australasia where bodies have been removed from the public gaze (see Nilsson Stutz 2016). While there have been recent debates regarding how these practices are adapted and retained (e.g. Bienskowski and Coleman 2013; Jenkins 2011; 2016), Paites and Reeve address their decision on practical and ethical grounds *not* to include human remains in their temporary exhibition on mortuary practices. Likewise, in their workshops, Büster et al. this vol.) they deployed images rather than material culture and human remains to facilitate engagements with mortality and mourning. Yet absence can still be key even when human remains are present: as with cremated remains (cf. Williams 2016). Goldstein evokes another form of absence: the poor preservation

of the Fort Ross human remains denying a ready attribution of most graves to any of the different ethnic groups that might have been interred there. Even when human remains are preserved, their display is temporary and only 3D modelling can preserve the funeral environment for the public to engage with (Romero Pellitero et al. (this vol.). Mortuary archaeology's public dimensions thus extend far beyond cemeteries and tombs to a variety of different landscapes of memory linking past, present and future (see Holtorf and Williams 2006).

The digital element is prominent for the first time for a collection focusing on mortuary archaeology's public engagements. A number of articles consider the potential of DPMA to facilitate online engagements with death and the dead from blogs and social media to more formal electronic publications. Notably, Cook and Ulguim, from contrasting perspectives, appraise the power of digital media for engaging with the archaeology of death, burial and commemoration. Cook focuses on memorials, while Ulguim considers bones and other mortuary remains, yet both show the potential of digital relationships to be fostered through the online arena. Romero Pellitero et al. address how their digital scans of graves during fieldwork fostered community engagement, and set the scene for future and broader debates on the deployment of Sketchfab in particular. Other papers also tackle aspects of the public and social media reception of mortuary archaeology (Daly; Lacy; Goldstein). McEvoy promotes digital media as new possibilities for engaging with complex three-dimensional church monuments, whilst Daly identifies the potential and threats to mortuary and memorial heritage sites of promoting fieldwork via social media.

Together, the articles highlight how important fieldwork, museum, heritage and digital environments have become for understanding death as both a conduit to past times and for reflecting on mortality today and tomorrow. Moreover, they reveal how relationships between archaeologists and the public are not static, but shift and evolve during and subsequent to particular research projects (Goldstein).

A venue for debate

How we publish our archaeological research is an ethical issue in itself. Indeed, publishing open access has been couched as ethical: allowing the public direct and unpaid access to the results of investigations. How and where we publish our research is especially important when considering mortuary archaeology because stakeholder communities are keen to acquire rapid and clear results from archaeological investigations. We wished to ensure that, were we to publish on the public archaeology of death inspired by the #PATC conference, an affordable venue was required.

The irony is not lost in the fact that both of the most recent outputs on this subject appear as standard-priced hardback academic books which are more difficult for heritage professionals and the public to access (Williams and Giles 2016; Williams et al. 2018). This reflects the complex challenges of costs and labour involved in disseminating archaeological research, in which funding is either sought through retail purchases or funding to cover 'Author Processing Charges' (APCs). Therefore, just as the media and the content of #PATC were interlinked, so is the rationale for publishing this special issue in an open-access journal without APCs. Indeed, of recent publications on this theme, there is only a single open-access journal discussion article (Parker Pearson et al. 2011) and a single book (Fletcher et al. 2014) available for free download. Meanwhile, the latest digital open-access companion has no dedicated focus to mortuary archaeology's public dimensions (Moshenska 2017). While there are a wide range of public-facing blogs by academics tackling popular themes (including Powered by Osteons (2018) and Bodies and Academia (2018b)), the facility of *AP* to provide a venue to publish peer-reviewed work in public archaeology is sincerely welcomed.

This collection will not be the last word in public mortuary archaeology. Yet it will hopefully foster critical engagement with, and exploration of, the diversity and significance of public archaeology's and mortuary archaeology's many intersections. With sustained ongoing research, public mortuary archaeology looks set to be a critical theme for understanding the value of archaeology in mediating both (pre)history and mortality in the Global West. Via real-world and digital environments, mortuary and memorial traces

and material cultures, monuments and landscapes are essential to death and contemporary society, mediated by archaeologists as deathworkers.

Acknowledgements

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