DEALING WITH THE DEAD: UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND HUMAN REMAINS

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

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SCHOOL OF ARTS, LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
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Abstract

This thesis examines the practice of UK mortuary archaeology—the study of past practices and beliefs relating to death, dying and the dead using archaeological theories, methods and techniques—and the impact of this work upon its practitioners and the human remains they encounter (Meyers and Williams 2014: 152). Using a mixed-method ethnographic methodology, it explores the specific triggers that underlie affective encounters between archaeologists and the dead, together with how these professionals ‘come to terms’ with the work that they do—facilitated by the transformative process of archaeology which sees human remains transition from the vestiges of past people to ‘objects’ of science, together with the cognitive techniques employed by individuals themselves—within a professional culture in which emotional detachment is held up as necessary prerequisite for effective work with the dead. In studying the attitudes that surround professional engagement with archaeological human remains and the ways in which these may affect professional practice, this thesis therefore addresses a number of fundamental questions surrounding the visibility and handling of mortality in a society in which the tactile experience of death and dead matter is arguably located at the periphery of ‘normal’ human encounters.
Declaration

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For my beloved father, Patrick Neil Crouch: a promise kept.

7th March 1944–5th May 2016
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The long (and more than occasionally fraught) journey of writing this thesis has been made possible only with the guidance and support of many people to whom I owe a considerable debt. Firstly, my dream of pursuing a PhD would always have remained just that were it not for the funding I received from the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the University of Manchester’s President’s Doctoral Scholar Award: thank you for providing me with the means to pursue a long-held ambition.

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During the course of researching and writing this thesis, I have had the enormous privilege of meeting a great variety of fascinating people and I am grateful to all those who generously agreed to participate, both formally and informally, in this project, particularly those at York Archaeological Trust, the Poulton Research Project and the Centre for Human Bioarchaeology at the Museum of London. Somewhat ironically, it is not possible to individually thank all the participants in this study, but I am so grateful for all of your contributions and this thesis would not exist without you.

I have been hugely inspired by the research and writing of a number of archaeologists, particularly Professor Howard Williams and Dr. Duncan Sayer—who graciously supplied me with copies of a number of forthcoming papers—and it is with pleasure that I acknowledge the intellectual debt I owe not only to them, but also to the growing interdisciplinary community of ‘deathxperts’ that is populated by people with a passion for understanding what it means to die, whether in the past, the present or, indeed, the future.
A special thank you goes to my long-suffering friends who have been forced to put up with a rather unsociable and frazzled version of me during the completion of this project. Accordingly, a particularly honourable mention must go to my fellow PhD-ers at the University of Manchester, Scott Midson, Naomi Billingsley, Johannes Lotze, Miri Jak and Rosie Edgley, who have been an invaluable source of coffee, hugs and laughter.

Finally, but by absolutely no means least, I would like to thank my family for their unfailing support and understanding, particularly my parents, Vanessa and Patrick, who have always been my greatest champions. The completion of this thesis has proved to be a bittersweet experience due to the death of my father, in the wake of which I struggled with finding the energy or enthusiasm to see it through. I could not have done it without the love and encouragement from my wonderful and inspirational mother: thank you.
Preface

I want to acknowledge that there is no such thing as academic distance when we come to study death (Bradbury 1999: xix).

In 2009, I undertook a work placement at an archaeology museum as part of my Masters degree in Museum Studies, where I assisted the curator in photographing, cataloguing and repacking a human skeletal collection in order to facilitate the creation of an online database for researchers. I had taken a short course in human osteology the year before and was eager to build on my newfound (albeit very basic) skills and while I had been warned by the curator that the work might lose its appeal after a while due to its repetitive nature, I found myself engrossed by it. A week or so into the project and, after having worked on an adult skeleton earlier that morning, we came to our first set of child remains. The curator and I were normally quite chatty as we set about laying out the bones, but as we removed the remains of this individual from the box and placed them on the table, the conversation became stilted as she turned the bones over in her hands, commenting on how small and delicate they were. Eventually, she took a step back from the table and, looking troubled, said that she was finding the laying out of these specific remains much more difficult than the others. I initially thought she was referring to the ‘fiddliness’ of working with such small bones, but it became clear that she was speaking in terms of their emotional affectivity. It was the first time she had mentioned feeling any kind of discomfort in regards to the work we were doing and I wasn’t quite sure what to make of her admission.

As she waited for me to say something, I can remember feeling a distinct sense of embarrassment because I did not possess any kind of familiarity with death that would enable me to talk about it in anything other than trite clichés. Mortality was
still very much an abstract concept for me and in many ways the intense curiosity this provoked has driven my entire academic career, as I have sought to understand this most fascinating and unsettling aspect of the human experience. More than embarrassment, however, the remains elicited a twinge of guilt: while I could acknowledge that it did seem ‘unjust’ that this individual had not lived a long and full life, the presence of their bones didn’t physically upset me because they bore so little resemblance to an actual living person and, as hard as I tried, I could not make the cognitive leap that would turn the bones into a child. Even worse, I had been thoroughly enjoying the work: I hadn’t encountered the remains of children before and thus, for me, the skeleton was an ‘object’ of fascination as I busied myself with examining the developmental changes in the bones. As such, I struggled to understand how someone could be so deeply affected by a death that had occurred many hundreds of years ago and I wondered if my enthusiasm for working with human remains had made me appear callous. I thus offered the curator some vague platitudes, wary that I was now wading into potentially sensitive territory, and there followed silence again for what felt much too long to be comfortable, but it eventually passed and we resumed our chatter. Still, as we worked, I wondered if there was something ‘missing’ inside me that prevented me from feeling a deeper sadness and I actively made myself try and feel something more ‘appropriate’ than fascination by dwelling on the tiny size of the bones and imagining various scenarios that could have led to this young life being ‘snuffed out’ so soon.

With the skeleton photographed, we re-boxed the remains, leaving tiny flaked fragments of bone and dust on the table. The curator asked me to sweep this up with a dustpan and brush, which I did, and when I asked what I should do with it, she looked at me in such a manner as to suggest that the answer was patently obvious and told me to put it in the wastepaper bin as there was “no point in keeping it”. I understood that this ‘detritus’ was useless in terms of its research potential, but as I disposed of the contents of the dustpan I felt a pang of regret. I brushed this off as being completely irrational, but nonetheless, the act of throwing parts of a ‘person’ away deeply bothered me. I wondered how the curator, who had appeared so unnerved earlier, could now be entirely at ease with disposing of human remains in
this manner, but perhaps this was not the case and that is the reason the task always fell to me. More than that, however, I wondered why it should bother me at all—particularly considering the infinitesimally small fragments I was dealing with—when I had been struggling to form a meaningful connection with the bones just moments earlier. Over the coming weeks, however, we repeated the procedure of unpacking, laying out the bones, photographing, cataloguing, re-boxing and sweeping away the traces the dead left behind. I became used to it and congratulated myself on ‘getting over’ the initial feelings of unease I had experienced. When the time thus came to enter the field for this research project in 2014, I felt confident that I had gained at least a modicum of experience of working with human remains so as to enable me to assume the role of the ‘objective’ researcher without difficulty. It came as quite a surprise, as my field notes below recall, to find myself hunched over the partial remains of an adult female, horrified at the thought that, as an inexperienced digger, I may have accidentally ‘chucked’ the remains of her ‘baby’ on to the spoil heap:

Mark came over to help me lift the remains and while he was working on the torso, he came across what looked like a twig in what would have been the area of the abdomen. The more I looked at it, however, the more it began to assume a vaguely familiar shape, although I could not recall seeing it in any of the skeletal remains I’ve encountered before. After much deliberation about what we were looking at and further investigation of the area, we realised that what we had was the remains of a neonate and a few more tiny bones began to emerge from the soil. My stomach lurched and I was filled with a sense of rising panic. Could I have inadvertently excavated some of these tiny bones and dumped them on the spoil heap? I couldn’t recollect having come across anything that looked like this, but then I’m not professionally trained in osteology and I wasn’t actively looking for such remains either. I replayed in my mind what I’d excavated today and, to my surprise, felt tears pricking my eyes and I had to bite my tongue to stop myself from crying in front of the others. I was overcome by the desperate urge to run over to the spoil heap and start going through it, just to check.

Seeing that I was somewhat unsettled by this development, Mark assured me that due to the positioning of the bones underneath the skeleton of the adult and the concrete-like soil that had covered the remains, it was impossible that ‘the baby’—because this is what it has now become for me—was on the spoil heap. I appreciated his attempts to put my mind at rest and I knew, rationally, that he was right, but it hasn’t stopped me from dwelling on it all evening. Before we finished lifting, the site director came over and asked, jokingly, if I now shared in their ‘guilt’ and I told him that I was taken aback by how strongly I had reacted to the situation. It’s not like me. I feel a bit embarrassed about it now, to be honest, particularly as the others seemed so relaxed about it all and reminded me that the spoil heap is full of fragmentary ‘bits’ of the people who were buried here.

Mark asked me if I’d considered the impact excavating human remains could have on me: I think he’s worried that I’m a delicate soul and won’t be able to continue with it, but I assured him that as far as I’m concerned once you’re dead, that’s it. Yet I cannot deny that in that moment, the thought of chucking bones on to the spoil heap—particularly those of
a child—deeply troubled me. In my panic over the unexpected discovery of the neonate remains, the reality of what we’d uncovered today didn’t even register with me. It wasn’t until later this evening and writing up these notes that the blindingly obvious has hit me and I’ve realised that I’ve spent all day excavating the remains of a woman who died in either the later stages of pregnancy or during childbirth. The circumstances of this burial have now changed completely and what started off as ‘just’ a pair of disembodied legs this morning has now become something altogether more profound.

As it transpired—and much to my relief—there were no further neonate remains in the grave cut, but in that moment of discovery, I felt a terrible sense of guilt and sadness, not just at the thought of human remains ending up in the spoil heap (which was inevitable due the urban nature of the site and the heavily truncated and disarticulated state of the dead), but at the undoing of an intentional and purposeful act. This was just one of many emotional reactions I experienced during my encounters with human remains as part of my fieldwork which were unanticipated and, at times, disconcerting. While I had been asked to consider the possibility that I might be emotionally affected by the presence of the dead as part of the process of gaining ethical approval for this study and I accepted that it was a possibility, it was not something that I had really seriously entertained due to my prior study of, interest in and experience of, human remains. I was much more concerned—having never had the opportunity to excavate human remains myself—with being entrusted with such a responsibility and the desire to prove myself as worthy and competent in the eyes of my hosts, rather than any potential ‘feelings’ the remains of the dead might provoke in me. I had thus entered the field believing that I was sufficiently emotionally inured towards human remains, yet the reality of it was to prove somewhat different and it was not always possible to maintain an illusion of academic detachment. I was not alone in this predicament, however, and I quickly discovered that my experiences were reflective of those I had come to learn from.

In the time between these two experiences, I have asked myself what changed in order to prompt such markedly different responses. Context almost certainly played a part: extricating bones from the earth perhaps provokes a more immediate and visceral reaction than those that have travelled through the process of ‘museification’ and become archaeological ‘artefacts’. On a more personal level, however, I am now older with more experience of both life and loss and while I am not a mother myself, I have
watched close friends and relatives embark upon starting their own families. Indeed, at the time of entering the field, my sister’s first-born was approaching his second birthday and as a result, it no longer took a great leap of the imagination to envision the remains of the children I was excavating as living, breathing human beings. Yet, pregnancy and childbirth are still risky endeavours, even in the 21st century, and not all of these new chapters have ended happily. With the passage of time has therefore come a new awareness of the tenuous grasp we all have on life and its incredible fragility: an understanding which has been significantly deepened during the process of researching and writing this thesis by the deaths of friends and acquaintances, my grandparents and, most painfully of all, my father.

To be present at the moment a person dies is undoubtedly a profound and life-altering experience: it is an encounter with another world and it leaves its mark upon you. I sat with my father for hours afterwards, holding his hands and talking to him, as he slowly became cold, his skin turned grey, then yellow, and rigor mortis began to work its way through his body. This experience of the first ‘fresh’ dead body I have ever encountered—far removed from the dry bones I excavated as part of my fieldwork or the mummies I have gazed at in museums—now sits, intentionally or not, at the centre of this thesis, which was completed in the aftermath of this emotionally fraught experience. I make no secret of the fact that with his death, the academic objectivity to which we are perhaps taught to value above all things has been penetrated by all the pain and confusion that can be provoked by this most challenging of subjects. In sharing these experiences with the reader, however, I do not seek to indulge in narcissistic reverie, but to highlight commonalities of experience with the practitioners of mortuary archaeology featured in this study and to illustrate how contingent our responses towards the dead are, shaped both by our culture and our own life histories.

Studying the way in which past societies have coped in the face of mortality has paved the way for my own journey through loss and grief, but similarly, my own experiences mean that death is now very much a part of my life. We are, therefore, the sum of our parts and both my personal and academic identities have shaped the way in which I have interpreted and presented my findings here and they will undoubtedly continue
to influence the way I think and write about the past and the ever-expanding community of the dead. This is an admission that I feel is important to make in a study such as this where it includes the responsibility of representing the lives and professions of others: I hope that I have done them justice (Letherby 2013: 136-137). At the heart of this thesis thus lies the question: is it possible for practitioners of mortuary archaeology to keep the personal and the professional separate? I am inclined to agree with Bradbury (1999: xix), quoted at the beginning of this study, for despite what they may tell their peers, the outside world and even themselves, there are invariably times when working with human remains provokes ‘unprofessional’ feelings in practitioners of mortuary archaeology because they are so uniquely powerful in unsettling the divide we construct between the past and the present. Thus, while on the surface of it the deaths that mortuary archaeologists typically encounter are many generations removed from us in the here and now—their names and life stories lost to time—they still retain the potential to fascinate, disturb, or simply make us pause for thought.
Chapter One

Archaeological encounters with human remains

I doubt any modern archaeologist or student has ever been truly upset by the remains of people who died a ‘thousand-odd years ago’ and nobody would expect such (Mortimer 2016).

I excavated my first body in 1994 and I have no desire to excavate another one. This admission from an archaeologist who has spent the past 15 years considering how we respond to death might be a strange one, but in truth, that first finding, appreciating and disassembling of the skeleton of a man who lived c.5000–4400 years ago has haunted me ever since (Finn 2007: 25).

1.1. Introduction

This thesis examines the practice of UK mortuary archaeology—the study of past practices and beliefs relating to death, dying and the dead using archaeological theories, methods and techniques—and the impact of this work upon its practitioners, as well as the remains they encounter (Meyers and Williams 2014: 152). As part of the broad spectrum of professional deathworkers with whom archaeologists “share the experience of walking the line that separates the living and the dead” (Joyce 2015), many will routinely handle human remains as part of their professional training and fieldwork experience (Giles and Williams 2016: 11). While this undoubtedly represents a palpably different kind of encounter than preparing the recently deceased for burial or cremation, or taking the body apart through the
process of autopsy (ibid.), this exposure to the “material intimacy of death”—particularly the handling of “the tactile dead body”—is an unusual experience for the vast majority of people living in Western societies in the 21st century (Sørensen 2009: 123). As Joyce (2015) therefore observes, archaeologists need “to acknowledge that, at least in the world today, our intimate experience with the dead marks us. We are not everyday”.

As a discipline that deals in death, “digging up graves” has become “iconic of both what archaeology is and what archaeologists do” (Williams 2010), with individuals often drawn to the discipline by a “deep-rooted fascination” with how past human populations have coped in the face of our inevitable mortality (Gilchrist 2005). This image of archaeology arguably perpetuates an assumption and, perhaps, an expectation, among both professionals and the wider public that archaeologists find working with human remains unproblematic in emotional terms. Yet, the remains of the dead—as both a class of archaeological evidence and as the vestiges of once living people—are unquestionably ontologically unstable and imbued with an “affective presence and emotive materiality” unlike any other artefact type that archaeologists might encounter (Bones Collective 2009). ‘Embodying’ a “spectral quality that elides the normative distinctions” we construct around life and death, as well as the past and the present, the physical remains of past people are not simply present as ‘things’, but also evoke an absence, “a something else that they are but also are not” (Filippucci et al. 2012: 207).

Anecdotal evidence suggests, therefore, that archaeologists may struggle with treating the remains of the dead “with the same moral and emotional indifference” that they do other kinds of archaeological material (Scarre 2013: 666). Yet, even a cursory review of the archaeological literature will reveal considerable confusion among professionals as to the categorisation of the remains of the dead—as people, objects or ‘something’ in-between—not to mention the potency of their affectivity. While Swain (2002: 99) therefore argues that the “ubiquity of human skeletons within Western culture” renders them “less personal than, say, the shoes worn by a long-dead person”, professional guidance on the treatment of human remains explicitly states that “bones belong to their owners in a much more intimate sense than do their pots,
jewellery, or weapons” and therefore demand “a special kind of recognition” and respect (Mays 2017: 8). Despite such intentions, however, the pressures encountered within modern archaeological practice often lead to the treatment of human remains much like any other bulk find (Swain 2006: 98): in ways that “define them as inert things rather than continued people” (Robb 2013: 443).

While many archaeologists may therefore speak of what Giles (2009: 89) calls a “personal amity . . . between excavator and excavated”, with practitioners often reporting feelings of being “touched and honoured” at the opportunity to work with human remains, the practice of mortuary archaeology may be intruded upon by any number of competing and contradictory feelings. Such work is demanding yet rewarding, painstaking and intricate, but also mundane and tedious. It is frustrating, challenging and enlightening, as well as fascinating, revolting and disturbing. Accordingly, this chapter provides an overview of a research project that explores not only how UK archaeologists—in the field, the laboratory and the museum—feel about working with human remains as both professionals and people, but also how they “come to rationalise and cope with the fact” they do so (Martin 2015), together with what this relationship with the dead does to their own sense of personhood and “way of being in the world” (Joyce 2015).

This chapter proceeds by contextualising the strands of practice that constitute the field of mortuary archaeology within the UK and the place emotion occupies within this area of archaeological expertise. Following this, the rationale behind this research project is introduced and the specific aims and questions it seeks to answer will be delineated, before outlining why studying the impact of mortuary archaeology on both its practitioners and the remains of the dead it unearths constitutes a valuable area of academic enquiry. Next, the chapter establishes the methodological framework underpinning the thesis: it explains the specific research methods and instruments used, alongside the reasoning behind their selection, as well as introducing the fieldwork sites that provided data, together with how this information was analysed. Finally, the chapter describes the ethical safeguards put in place for this study and concludes by providing the reader with a summary of the subsequent chapters to be found in the thesis.
1.2. The practice of mortuary archaeology in the UK

Excavation is powerful, since it binds people together, living and dead (Nilsson 2011: 29).

On an island where space is becoming an increasingly precious commodity, it is perhaps inevitable that final resting places are not quite as final as we might hope, as the needs of the living population take precedence over any possible ‘rights’ of the dead to rest in undisturbed peace (see Figure 1, Appendix 1: 379). Accordingly, the majority of human remains excavated within the UK each year are disturbed as a result of archaeological survey and investigation in advance of construction or other land development (Mays 2017: 5). This sees commercial units—operating as independent trusts or attached to universities or local authorities—undertaking work for developers within the planning framework, after the reform of planning policy in 1990 stipulated that developers should pay for archaeological work as a condition of planning permission, under what is referred to as the ‘polluter pays’ principle (see Everill 2012). The remainder of human remains excavated in the UK are removed as part of academic research projects conducted principally through universities and, less frequently, through field schools that teach students the practical skills of the discipline. In addition, in the last 30 years archaeologists have begun to encounter the remains of the very recently dead through the sub-discipline of forensic archaeology (see Moon 2013), where they are employed in the investigation of national crime cases or mass graves resulting from international war crimes (see Crossland 2000; Renshaw 2010; Sturdy Colls 2012). This work is a particularly compelling and challenging mix of science and human rights (Rosenblatt 2015: 18), with archaeologists collecting evidence so as to seek “retributive justice, to counter efforts at denial and historical revisionism, to help in the process of reconciliation, [as well as] in the commemoration of atrocity for war tourists” (Perring and van der Linde 2009: 200).

As Leighton (2010: 80) therefore observes, more archaeologists than ever before are now coming into contact with human remains, in varying—and confronting—states of “dryness/wetness, articulation/fragmentation, age and recognition”, not only as part of (pre)history, but right up to, and including, the present day, both in Britain
and as part of projects further afield. Through this work, archaeologists may not only come ‘face-to-face’ with the remains of those who have died as a result of disease or at a young age (Giles and Williams 2016: 12), but they may also be exposed to many of the less palatable aspects of human behaviour and experience (see Figure 2, Appendix 1: 380), including “war, murder, human sacrifice, infanticide, starvation, oppression, and tragedy” (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 1), as well as domestic violence (see Redfern 2017), suicide (see Cox et al. 1990), and perhaps even burial alive (see Soden 2000). Yet, while they may be accustomed to “downplaying such potent images of cruelty and bloodshed [and] presenting horrific events in a dispassionate manner” (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 6), such discoveries may, on occasion, oppose their own personal values, beliefs, and attitudes about life and death, as well as straddle the divide between the past and the present, creating unsettling connections with the excavator’s own biographical experiences. In these instances, human remains may evoke responses that will vie with practitioners’ efforts to maintain a level of dispassionate objectivity and test their professional resilience: prerequisites deemed necessary for effective work with the dead in all professions that engage closely with the dead human body (Giles and Williams 2016: 12).

Archaeologists’ ability to remain emotionally detached, however, may also be breeched by the practice of archaeology itself, for as Bradbury (1999: 183) observes, “the physical nature of death does not always lend itself to the kind of order and decorum” we expect of professionals who participate in the intimate yet intrusive work of caring for the dead. Indeed, many of our death practices are suffused with a degree of “detectable tension” (ibid.), and this is perhaps particularly visible within the field of mortuary archaeology and the ways in which the excavation, analysis and curation of human remains—a process that is both destructive and transformative (Demoule 2011: 6)—may elicit a variety of reactions that generate “conflicting definitions of appropriate professionalism” (Leighton 2010: 80). This tension is arguably compounded within archaeological practice for it is permeated by ambiguity, both in regards to the ontological status of human remains, as well as the ethical premise of disturbing the dead for the ultimate benefit of the living. Archaeological excavation is a transgressive act and its practitioners, as Joyce (2015) duly notes,
constitute perhaps the only professional group that routinely engages in this process “without the consent of the dead or their relations”, leaving them potentially vulnerable to feelings of guilt or regret.

As a consequence, archaeologists have long-grappled with the question as to whether there is any “justification for responsible, educated people” deliberately disturbing the dead (see Bahn 1984: 220, Bahn and Paterson 1986; Jones and Harris 1998; Wilkinson 2002; Scarre 2003; O’Sullivan and Kilgore 2003; McEvoy and Conway 2004), with Scarre (2003: 238) questioning the “moral complacency” of those archaeologists who have “developed a property of easiness” in dealing with human remains. It is not unusual, therefore, to see practitioners treating the remains of the dead “with a certain reverence”, often referring to them as belonging to a person who is still very much present (Rojas-Perez 2015), as McClelland and Cerezo-Román (2016: 44) observe:

> On occasion in archaeological excavations, laboratories, and museums . . . [We] have witnessed archaeologists, crew members and descendant community members actively avoiding physical contact with human remains, and funerary objects and/or being in the same room as where these items are excavated, analysed, and/or stored. On the other hand we have also experienced individuals treating the remains as if they were living entities.

Yet, like their colleagues engaged in other areas of deathwork, archaeologists may also approach human remains with a scientific ‘gaze’ and subject them to a raft of practices that arguably serve to depersonalise, dehumanise and objectify. As such, practitioners may find themselves caught between two different modes of relating to human remains due to their “evasive and shifting” humanity: one which reconfigures the body as an ‘object’ of scientific investigation and the other as a continued ‘person’ (Montross 2007: 24; Rojas-Perez 2015). In recent years, these differing views regarding the posthumous personhood of human remains have presented significant ethical challenges for practitioners of mortuary archaeology: while their biological and social lives may be over (Leighton 2010: 79), human remains may continue to possess a social and physical existence—sometimes contentiously so—as embodied in the debates that have surrounded the repatriation and reburial of human remains from UK institutions (Chapter 2.6).
The excavation, analysis, interpretation, curation and display of human remains has therefore increasingly called for archaeologists to skilfully manoeuvre around “many ethical and moral pitfalls”, while following professional guidance that is often deliberately ambiguous, as well as legislation that was never designed for the purposes of archaeology, all while avoiding “imposing modern sensibilities on to past societies” and ensuring that the communities of both the living and the dead are treated with ‘respect’ (Williams 2013). This fraught and challenging situation has been compounded in recent years by the high public profile of mortuary archaeology in the media, prompted by the excavation and subsequent reburial of the skeletal remains of King Richard III (see Figure 3, Appendix 1: 381). The discovery of the royal remains has arguably led to a widespread fascination with the search for, and exhumation of, the ‘celebrity dead’ (see Figure 4, Appendix 1: 382), evident in the “monarch-mining” headlines seen in both the British and worldwide media (Klevnäs 2016: 50; see Read 2013; Farmer 2014; Kennedy 2014; Killgrove 2015; Worley 2016; BBC News 2017a; BBC News 2017b). Yet, this appetite for archaeological human remains forms part of a wider enthralment with mortality and, more specifically, the corpse which has become an ‘object’ of intense interest for academics and the public alike (Foltyn 2008a: 99).

Archaeology is undoubtedly well-placed to contribute to the growing discourse surrounding death, dying and the dead, offering an enriched cross-cultural and deep-time perspective towards this most fundamental condition of humanity (Tarlow 2001a: 24). Current research in mortuary archaeology is thus marked by an increasing interest in experiential aspects of dying, bereavement, commemoration, emotion and memory, seeking to incorporate these into the narratives it constructs about the past by drawing on the work of sociologists, anthropologists, historians and care and bereavement specialists (Härke 2002: 340). Research by Williams and Williams (2007) and Croucher (2017), for example, not only illuminates how past societies have approached death, but how this intersects with the ways in which we conceive of, and handle, mortality in the present, while also revealing how archaeologists themselves may be brought into contact with modern practices “surrounding burial pilgrimage, mourning and commemoration” (Williams and Williams 2007: 92).
Indeed, the practices of the past themselves are increasingly becoming the inspiration for ‘new’ ways of disposing of our dead, as in the recently constructed ‘Neolithic’ long barrow at All Cannings, Wiltshire (Klevnäs 2016: 53, see BBC 2014; Williams 2016a; de Bruxelles 2017), while archaeological investigations of death in the past may also create an outlet for contemporary expressions of mourning and remembrance, as at Crossbones Graveyard in London (see Figure 5, Appendix 1: 383). Nevertheless, it is considerably more difficult to find archaeologists actively reflecting, in public at least, on the relationships they themselves have forged with the dead. By its very nature, however, mortuary archaeology—as a profession of “death-dealers” that trade in ‘morbid’ discoveries and interpretations (Williams 2013)—is perhaps as much about “exploring one’s own mortality, and beliefs and perceptions about death and the dead”, as it is about discovering those of past people (Williams and Atkin 2015). With this in mind, what might explain this lack of critical engagement with, and open discussion of, this aspect of archaeological practice?

1.3. Emotion in archaeology

Corporeal material culture inserts the personal and the painful into empirical, impersonal research (Callow 2012: 29).

In the late 1980s, academia witnessed a “turn to emotion”, in which it became a subject of study for many disciplines, including anthropology (see Rosaldo 1984; Lutz and White 1986; Levy and Wellenkamp 1989; Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; White 1993; Overing and Passes 2000), geography (see Tuan 1974; Davidson, Bondi and Smith 2005; Löfgren 2008), sociology (see Harré 1986; Thoits 1989; Kemper 1993; Stets and Turner 2006), philosophy (see Solomon 1993), history (see Stearns 1993; Pinch 1995) and cognitive science (see Averill 1992; Panksepp 1998; Damasio 1999; Dolan 2002). Archaeology, as a discipline that engages with the evocative remnants of the past, has arguably been well-positioned to contribute to this body of scholarship, yet as Tarlow (2012: 170) observes, “only a handful of developed archaeological studies of emotion have been published, together with a small number of theoretical

Until about 20 years ago, the experiential aspects of the human past were considered to be largely beyond the reach of archaeological investigation and it continues to be a matter of debate as to whether archaeologists can “excavate” emotion—due to a mistrust of its “inherently ‘subjective’ or even ‘speculative’” nature (Harris and Sørensen 2010: 145)—or whether such attempts merely reflect the imposition of Western understandings of emotion on to the experiences of past people (Williams 2007: 110). Yet, at the same time, and driven by the impact of a number of linked developments in archaeological theory—including postprocessual archaeology, as well as Feminist and Marxist archaeologies—there have been attempts by practitioners “to incorporate a more experiential and emotional dimension” into their research and writing in an attempt to better represent “past people as thinking, feeling, experiencing beings” (Tarlow 2000: 725).

In addition, there has been an increased interest in what has been deemed ‘osteobiography’ (see Brickley et al. 2006; Knüsel et al. 2010; Melton et al. 2013), a term coined by Saul and Saul (1989) to refer to the concept of ‘reading’ the human skeleton, and further developed by Robb (2002) as the reconstruction of an individual’s embodied life experiences. It combines the “osteological evidence of life history from the skeleton” with insights derived from the material culture associated with the burial and, “in some post-medieval contexts, the private and official records that pertain to an individual’s life and death”, so as to build a more complete picture of a past person (Renshaw and Powers 2016: 165). Osteobiography therefore helps to present information in a more vivid, engaging, and potentially, emotionally affective way—particularly for ‘lay’ audiences—‘re-humanising’ the past through individuated biographies. Ironically, however, despite this attempt at ‘re-peopling’ archaeological narratives, they are largely peopled by the dead alone, while the experiences of those who unearth and ‘re-flesh’ the bones for the consumption of the living are almost entirely absent.
1.3.1. Musing on mortality: Poetry, popular writing, and personal reflections

I wrote about the excavation, clanking out the details on a manual typewriter for inclusion in *Discovery And Excavation In Scotland*, the archaeology journal, where it duly appeared, rewritten to include decorous references to ‘human skeletal remains’ rather than callow poetic musings about how strange it is to hold someone else’s teeth in your hand. Still, it was my first by-line and had the effect of encouraging me towards journalism rather than continuing towards the hitherto intended life as an archaeologist (Ross 2015).

The lack of consideration given to the role of emotion within archaeological practice is arguably rooted in the notion that it is antithetical to science and to the “presence of reason” (Horsley 2012: 548), with no place in what has become an increasingly professionalised and scientific discipline: to this end, the Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) was granted a Royal Charter in 2014 which commentators have noted will “hopefully begin the process of elevating archaeology away from its traditional amateurish image of bearded enthusiasts in funny jumpers towards a more serious professional ethos” (Shepperson 2017). The risk, however, is that open discussions about emotional responses to affective ‘material’ such as human remains are perhaps increasingly suppressed or discouraged (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 3).

Indeed, Davidson’s recollections (2016: 239-40) of working with the preserved fragments of a 19th century baby’s bonnet speak of the loss she has experienced in ‘stripping’ archaeological literature of the human aspects of working with the remains of the dead. She states that:

Writing an archaeological report based in scientific conventions of presentation gives less room even than an academic article for addressing emotions . . . It requires reasonable neutrality, a mild-mannered presentation and discussion of the objects. All of the personal responses are stripped, all the conversations you have with colleagues, for the conventions of apparent objectivity. The baby’s bonnet, for example, made various curators, conservators and archaeologists who worked with it coo, cluck and go ‘Awww.’ That is an indelible part of my experience of analysis and identification but has little place in the final, impersonal report.

The omission of such elements from published discourse arguably relates to their perceived ability to “disturb, weaken or even change the direction of the leading narrative” (Wieczorkiewicz 2005: 56) or, as Holloway and Klevnäs (2007: 3) suggest, the risk that such ‘outpourings’ of feeling are inappropriate: a sign of weakness,
sensationalism and navel-gazing. Yet, earlier traditions of archaeological writing frequently related discovery with emotion, with Thomas Browne’s *Hydriotaphia* (1658) for example—“one of the earliest comprehensive European reflections on the place of cremation among the other funeral customs of the world” (Davies and Mates 2005: 95)—using cremation urns from Norfolk “as a starting-point for an extended reflection on mortality, memory, and the fate of the soul” (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 1). Such lyrical musings were, however, “as much a piece of standard academic discourse [then] as the [more] clinical descriptions” we are accustomed to today (ibid: 2), which are produced by practitioners trained to subsume their emotions underneath a “professional veneer”, especially in print, where they learn to adopt “a cool, calm and rational third-person scientific’ persona” as befits our understanding of professionalism (Flatman and Rockman 2012: 21).

Nevertheless, the discovery of human remains has proved to be a powerful source of inspiration for poets, including the Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney (2002) and has, in the past, even inspired archaeologists to put pen to paper, as in the case of Jacquetta Hawkes’ (1949) poetry from an excavation at Mount Carmel in Palestine. Furthermore, while the overt language of emotion may have disappeared from formal archaeological discourse, it has remained a staple feature of writing for popular audiences, with both archaeologists and authors consistently focusing on the emotive appeal of archaeological discoveries (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 4). Alongside the allure of unearthing hidden ‘treasure’ (Holtorf 2005: 27), archaeological news stories that focus on death and violence—particularly ‘taboo’ subjects such as cannibalism or human sacrifice—continue to exhibit a particularly strong public appeal (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 4). Indeed, McAdam (1999: 52) has lamented modern archaeological writing’s failure to satisfy the public’s demand for the bizarre and the macabre, while Fagan (2006: 22) advises archaeologists *should* include their own emotional responses so as to enliven their narratives when writing for a “mass-market audience”.

A more reflexive approach characterises museum archaeology: the controversial Lindow Man exhibition in Manchester in 2009 utilised a multi-vocal approach to present the story of the discovery of the Iron Age bog body to visitors (Chapter 2.6.4;
see Sitch 2008, 2010; Brown 2011), while the recently-refurbished Jorvik Centre in York includes personal and humorous anecdotes from those associated with the Coppergate excavations within the exhibition narrative (see Hilts 2017). Nonetheless, in print, these recollections of the more ephemeral and intangible aspects of the archaeological process are largely included within publications as throw-away anecdotes intended to provide colour—as opposed to a subject worthy of serious discussion—or relegated to non-professional fora, such as social media or blogs. A particularly poignant example of the latter written by May (2014) conveys how personal grief has shaped the way she thinks about death and how it was marked in the past:

Most people don’t know about my daughter because she died before she was born. Only my husband, myself and the celebrant attended her funeral – our families would have come, but live too far. Infant plots in that cemetery are 1/4 adult plots and are not permitted to have headstones or permanent markers. When I visit there is always a new set of flowers and toys for new families saying goodbye. Her coffin was cardboard and since she was so small I expect her remains won’t last as long as an adult’s. In archaeological terms, ephemeral. In terms of Portsmouth heritage, inconsequential. In terms of my heritage, monumental. It changes how I view cemeteries in general and that one in particular . . . I was nervous to post this, but in the end I think it’s important. Partly because I think we are all underpinned by private heritages. I wanted to share mine to underline that we all have them . . . Partly because our perspectives colour the stories we tell about heritage . . . But mostly because it hovers in the back of my mind every time I write, or think or speak about cemeteries.

While archaeological practice, analysis and interpretation has begun to embrace an increased reflexivity and awareness of its own subjectivity—mirroring developments across the other social sciences (see Hodder 1997; Chadwick 1998)—there is still an understanding that archaeologists will write themselves ‘out’ of their texts, in adherence to nebulous but powerful notions of what it is to be a ‘professional’. In writing about the “liminal space where archaeological practice touches on [the] personal experience of the excavator” (Finn 2007: 30), May’s notion that we are all “underpinned by private heritages” reveals that the stories archaeologists craft about the past may often have roots in their own personal histories and experiences. In sharing her story, May inspired other archaeologists to do the same: an example by Hedge (2016) sees him ‘confess’ how he has “never really enjoyed digging up the dead”, as well as revealing the profound impact that encountering human remains can have on an individual.
Despite these lacunae in archaeology, there are many other disciplines boldly examining their practitioners attitudes towards mortality and the human corpse, particularly amongst professionals with everyday contact with death, dying and the dead, such as medicine (see Segal 1988; Smith and Kleinman 1989; Pelletier-Hibbert 1998; Schulman-Green 2003; Shorter and Stayt 2009; Gerow et al. 2010; Zambrano and Barton 2011; Whitehead 2014; Muggleton et al. 2015), undertaking (see Bailey 2010), the emergency services (see Palmer 1983; Alexander 1993) and the care of the elderly (see Komaromy 2000). Some auto-ethnographic literature even focuses on the emotional impact of undertaking such research (see Woodthorpe 2009; Brennan and Letherby 2017; Burles 2017; Visser 2017): indeed, even within the field of history, academics have questioned whether they are capable of remaining ‘immune’ from emotional responses in regards to their research (see Vidor 2015), while the impact of working with disturbing secondary data has been examined by sociologists (see Fincham et al. 2009).

Furthermore, the production of personal memoirs by deathworkers—which often explore themes of secrecy and transparency in their respective professions—have become increasingly popular, with examples from crematorium operators (see Doughty 2015), embalmers (see Price Powell 2004), pathologists (see Garrett and Nott 2001; Melinek and Mitchell 2015); anatomical pathology and mortuary technicians (see Williams 2010; Valentine 2017), undertakers (see Lynch 1998; Albin-Dyer 2003; McKenzie and Harra 2014, 2018; Baker 2012) and forensic anthropologists (see Maples and Browning 1996; Bass and Jefferson 2004). A number of these memoirs derive from the sub-discipline of forensic archaeology which (despite being framed by scientific rigour, evidential basis and an objective approach, required for its application in legal contexts) have established a rich tradition of writing powerfully and potently about the affective aspects of their practice (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 8) and how they manage to work under circumstances that many of us would find distressing (see Brkic 2004; Cassia 2004; Koff 2004; Dawes 2007; Wagner 2008; Renshaw 2011; Jennings 2013; Ball 2015; Crossland and Joyce 2015; Rosenblatt 2015).
In her memoir *The Bone Woman*, Koff (2004) for example, recalls her work on mass grave investigations in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, describing how her reactions in the field earned her mockery from her colleagues, such was their discomfort at her inadvertent revelation of her personal feelings to ‘outsiders’. She writes that she “was capable both of scientific detachment and human empathy”, but that through the revelation of the latter, she was made to feel she had “revealed too much” (Koff 2004). Brkic (2004) also describes feeling a profound sense of connection with the dead she helped to excavate in her memoir *Stone Fields: Love and Death in the Balkans*, arising from her family history in the region, setting her— unlike her colleagues—both “with and apart” from the remains she encountered (Crossland 2015: 241). Accordingly, her text is a fascinating study into the perspective of someone “both inside and outside the world that is being unearthed” (ibid.), and the challenges of being emotionally invested in one’s work while attempting to remain sufficiently ‘detached’ to operate professionally (Dawes 2007: 3–4).

Together, these texts explore the “intimacy and distance, connection and alienation” that “generates a special psychic friction” within the world of forensic exhumation (ibid.), exploring the “ambivalences and ambiguities” of forensic archaeology practice which is “fraught with contradictions even for those who advocate for it” (Crossland 2015: 241). The popularity of such narratives and media coverage of forensic exhumation reflects a strong public interest in this type of work and an appetite for “accessible first-person accounts . . . and works of photojournalism and reportage” (Renshaw 2013: 783). It is therefore surprising that more mainstream archaeologists have been reluctant to engage with this appetite and that little data on their experiences exists to compare with those of their counterparts working with the recently deceased. Does the greater cultural and temporal distance between the living and the ancient dead necessarily preclude an emotive response, or is it indicative of reluctance on the part of archaeology professionals to disclose how they are affected by their work, perhaps reflecting a wider societal discomfort to broach the issue of mortality?
1.3.2. Archaeological writing and the affective dead

We might assume that achieving a level of professionalism and expertise means subjugating emotional engagement with the past, yet recent ethnographic research conducted by Tradii (2016) with laboratory-based archaeology practitioners in Italy, suggests that working with ancient human remains is no more emotionally charged than any other kind of archaeological evidence. Tradii posits that “death as such, with its emotional connotations, its association with grief, mourning and respect, simply did not exist” for the archaeologists she observed, and that human remains themselves were “understood to be ontologically more similar to pottery or any other artefact . . . than to a human being” (ibid: 127). Due to the lack of published accounts, however, it is currently difficult to say whether UK archaeologists would agree with this statement (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 7). Notable exceptions include papers by Kirk and Start (1999) recalling their personal fieldwork experiences; Anthony’s (2016a) account of excavating the recent dead at Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen; Davidson (2016) writing of her experiences as a curator of working with decayed textiles derived from 19th century burial grounds; a study by Leighton (2010) with archaeologists working in England and a themed issue of the *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*, edited by Holloway and Klevnäs (2007), that discusses emotion in relation to frightening or fascinating archaeological cases. Non-UK practitioners have also contributed a small number of papers, including studies with archaeologists in Italy by Rajala (2016), a moving account by Geller and Stockett Suri (2014) about ancient and contemporary death colliding on an archaeological site, as well as a study by Balachandran (2009: 199) that argues the “traditionally detached [and] technical role of the archaeological conservator may be inappropriate or inadequate when preserving both the tangible and intangible aspects of human remains”.

Yet, while Tarlow (2000: 722) argues that “there is little controversy now in proposing that archaeologists in the present are individuals who themselves respond differently and sometimes idiosyncratically to the archaeology they encounter”—part of the “critical awareness of the archaeologist as a situated subject is one aspect of the wider project of understanding the production of academic knowledge as a social and historical process”—and that they bring their own cultural understandings,
subjectivity, and experience to their work, the fact remains that there are few opportunities for them to do so and perhaps, a lingering fear that they would be compromising their respectability and their reputation were such admissions to enter into print. Tarlow (2000: 723) herself suggests that the exploration of emotion amongst mortuary archaeologists is “self-absorbed” and “narcissistic”, questioning whether “the late-20th-century passion for self-knowledge and self-analysis manifest in the psychotherapeutic culture” has a place in archaeology. Consequently, she argues that “emotional analysis, if limited to the self, is likely to be of little interest except to biographers, psychological historians, and the authors themselves”, with such introspection only holding value “if it nudges us towards something interesting about the past” (ibid.). Similarly, recalling the publication of the themed issue of the *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* which focused on practitioners who had worked with the material evidence of the ‘disturbing past’, Holloway (2016) recounted that:

> We did get a little criticism, mostly from people who felt that emotions and mental health are specialist stuff that archaeologists don’t have the standing to talk about, or people who felt that the volume was . . . let’s say off-topic for an archaeological journal.

Yet as Edgeworth (2006a: xiv) notes, in order to create knowledge about the past, we must first understand *how* that knowledge is constructed in the present. As a cultural practice (Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009: 66; Nilsson 2011: 28), what happens during an archaeological excavation is not the objective discovery of ‘facts’, “nor the social construction of an empirical reality”, rather, it is the “mutual constitution” of actors and archaeological knowledge (Van Reybrouck and Jacobs 2006: 37). The archaeological record is therefore not only the product of past societies, but it is also the product of “recurring and changing priorities, strategies, expectations, techniques and day-to-day activities of archaeologists” (Roveland 2006: 56). The creation of archaeological knowledge is thus influenced by a range of subjective factors, *including* the excavator’s own personal history, experience—both at the site and elsewhere—together with the discoveries and the daily occurrences that impact upon interpretation “at the trowel’s edge” (Roveland 2006: 57; Hodder 1997: 694).
While not advocating that such admissions should become a part of the ‘grey literature’, first-person accounts could, and perhaps should, become a conscious part of both archaeological publications and displays so that professionals “reveal how they are affected or transformed by their encounters” with human remains (Giles 2009: 30). As such, the recent edited volume by Williams and Giles (2016), *Archaeologists and the Dead*, is one of the first publications to address the multi-faceted relationships that may exist between excavators and the excavated. Together with the ‘confessinals’ shared by May and Hedges, as well as a number of others they have inspired, they have tapped into a mood that appears to reflect a desire on the part of professionals to write themselves back in to the archaeological narratives they produce. Yet, even as archaeologists are shaped by their professional culture so they are also members of British society: as much as they “may challenge or conflict with certain values or ideals about the body, human mortality, and the value of the dead . . . they are also historically constrained by them” (Giles and Williams 2016: 11). Accordingly, as archaeology professionals they are expected to maintain a position of passive detachment as befits our idea of Western professional behaviour, even as they are more personally conditioned by its attitudes towards death and the dead which may create a personal ambivalence, or even revulsion, about close engagement with human remains (ibid.).

1.3.3. ‘Triggered’: Archaeologists, the press, and ‘scary bones’

Really, though, if you’re an archaeology student specialising in 20th and 21st century conflicts and you can’t handle the psychological trauma caused by studying what happened in battles wouldn’t the most sensible thing to do be to change course: kitten studies, maybe; aromatherapy; dolphin watching; whale song composition; advanced nurturing and caringness – something like that, maybe (Delingpole 2016)?

Writing twenty years ago, Cox (1997: 179) argued that “for a few archaeologists, acceptance of the legitimacy of concepts” such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which may be brought about through contact with human remains, “is culturally abhorrent in much the same way as is their acceptance of health and safety protocols which protect physical well-being”. While this was undoubtedly a minority
view at the time, there still arguably exists a relic of ‘macho-archaeology’ within the profession which turns away from any discussion of the impact of working with the dead. These attitudes are not confined to the profession alone: similarly dismissive opinions regarding the impact of working with archaeological human remains on practitioners’ well-being are also expressed within the wider population.

In 2016, it was revealed that Dr Gabriel Moshenska, an archaeologist at University College London (UCL), was delivering a ‘trigger warning’—a statement given at the start of a piece of writing or a presentation alerting the reader or audience to the fact that it may contain potentially distressing material—to students ahead of his lectures on the MA Conflict Archaeology programme. Moshenska was subsequently lambasted by the Daily Mail in an article by Petre (2016) entitled Warning to archaeology pupils that ‘bones can be scary’ sparks fresh fears over cosseted generation of students, ‘triggering’ further articles from the rest of the right-wing press (Baker 2016; Bulman 2016; Delingpole 2016; Horne 2016; Narwan 2016; O’Neill 2016; Soave 2016). These commentators perceived the issuing of warnings to ‘Generation Snowflake’—the derisive term defined by the Collins English Dictionary as “the young adults of the 2010s, viewed as being less resilient” in emotional terms “and more prone to taking offence than previous generations”—as “health and safety going mad again”, as well as further evidence that we are living in an “overprotective nanny state”, thereby framing the usage of trigger warnings as an attack on academic freedom (Petre 2016):

For some time now, the British press has been looking aghast at the situation on university campuses in the US, where trigger warnings and safe spaces have become common place. Now that the trend has crossed the pond there is greater urgency and indignation that the dreaded “PC brigade” are being molly-coddled by left-leaning academics (Pollard 2016).

Yet the Daily Mail article failed to note that the student body of any university is highly diverse and that contained within the cohort may be any number of individuals who have “suffered domestic abuse, violent attack or [even] trauma in war” (ibid.), thereby rendering the use of trigger warnings part of the university’s commitment to pastoral care and a precaution against causing unnecessary harm. Furthermore, as Pollard (2016) notes, archaeology is “not just about old bones”: flesh,
hair, nails and fluids may also be involved, while the context of discovery or age of the remains may also provoke disquiet:

I think back to the mass graves of Australian soldiers buried by the Germans at Fromelles in 1916. My team and I located and evaluated them on behalf of the Australian government and although the remains were skeletal they were still upsetting, with many of them exhibiting the trauma caused by a machine gun burst or grenade blast. Even now when I lecture about the project, it’s hard not to get a little choked up about those young men who died such brutal deaths. This doesn’t make me or my students a wuss or mean that I need to man up – it makes me a human being and one sensitive enough to deal with the remains of the dead in a professional and respectful manner.

The article did, however, unintentionally touch on a number of issues that should, as Williams (2016b) notes, “perhaps merit further discussion”, including the challenges of teaching mortuary archaeology sensitively and appropriately. Wider research (Ellis 2015; Rocks-Macqueen 2016; BBC News 2017c; English Heritage 2017) suggests that engagement with archaeology may actually have a positive impact for those living with mental health issues. A study by Finnegan (2016) of military personnel taking part in an excavation of an Anglo-Saxon burial ground on Salisbury Plain as part of ‘Operation Nightingale’—an initiative that utilises the technical and social aspects of field archaeology in the recovery and skill development of soldiers injured by conflict, including those who have “sustained an operationally attributable mental health disorder” in Afghanistan and other war zones (ibid: 16, see Figure 6, Appendix 1: 384)—reveals that the social aspects of archaeological practice may have considerable therapeutic value. As one of the respondents, Andrew (Appendix 12: para. 20), featured in this study and associated with the project stated:

Well, we always say it’s a recovery thing, rather than rehabilitation, as it’s not actually a medical intervention and I’d get slapped on the wrists! I don’t know, I’m not a medical professional and there are people investigating this at the moment, but as you’ve seen from, just as a lay-person, if you look at things like, there’s all sorts of stuff like gardening, I don’t know, I would say the outdoors, in a group, you’ve got a nice fire, decent food, mates being able to chat about experiences, and a lot of them said they liked being back in a group of military and ex-military and they could do banter. It’s a strange phenomenon, but banter, it seems to outsiders that they’re being quite abusive to each other! [laughs] But they love it and it is a lot of fun and it’s a nice little group . . . and they all look out for each other and they go out socially now and many of them never knew each other beforehand, it’s all different regiments, but they’ve got this shared kind of interest, so I think it’s a lot about being outdoors, doing some mental stuff, physical stuff and just having fun with friends. And also there’s an element of pride in doing some pretty good work and producing a set of tangible results that are actually useful.
Graduates of the programme have subsequently elected to study archaeology at university, with at least one becoming a professional archaeologist (see Winterton 2014), while others have found employment in the civilian community or returned to the military (Rush 2012: 373). The furore generated by the media’s reaction to the use of trigger warnings within archaeological teaching should therefore be set within the beneficial use of archaeology as part of much wider and on-going political and social processes (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 9). Yet, the subsequent debate—shared by both professionals and non-archaeologists online—prompted a lively discussion as to whether those who choose to work with the dead should ‘know what they’re getting themselves into’:

If you are squeemish [sic] it’s simple, don’t dig where you know something horrible and fairly fresh is going to come up. If your [sic] just unlucky well tough, just dig it up, do the necessary paperwork and then go and dig something Neolithic (comment from the Council for British Archaeology Facebook page, see Screenshot 1, Appendix 2: 460).

Being an archaeologist doesn’t mean you have to like or even be comfortable with human remains and it certainly doesn’t mean you have to be blasé about recent graves (ibid.).

While individuals must share in the responsibility for their choice of career, we might also argue that this does not absolve the archaeology profession of its duty to protect the emotional health of its workforce, in as much the same way as it does their physical safety (Ward and McMurray 2016: 11). This is not because the practice of mortuary archaeology is “always and necessarily harmful or because those who undertake such work are incapable of taking care of themselves”, but because “we recognise people as human beings with feelings, because we value our connections to others and because we feel a sense of personal responsibility” for those who ultimately work for our benefit (ibid: 120). Yet, within the comments expressed online we can discern hidden hierarchies of value over which ‘kinds’ of human remains should merit an emotional response, with many commentators implying that ancient and/or ‘dry’ bones should not pose any cause for concern for practitioners. Nevertheless, as this study will argue, even these ‘dusty’ old remains may retain the potential to shock and startle even the most seasoned of professionals.
### 1.4. Research project overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Investigate the role of mortuary archaeology practitioners as a unique subculture in the world of professional deathworkers, together with the impact of this work upon them and the human remains they encounter.</th>
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| Objectives | - Critique the prevalence of ‘emotional detachment’ within deathwork professions and how this relates to the practice of mortuary archaeology  
- Explore how archaeological practices and processes facilitate or suppress personal connections with the remains of the dead through the objectification or (re)personalisation of human remains  
- Examine the range of emotional responses archaeology professionals encounter in their work and the particular affective characteristics of human remains that may engender such reactions  
- Identify and critique the techniques that archaeology practitioners may use in their encounters with human remains so as to facilitate either detachment or an attachment  
- Evaluate the impact of personal and professional attitudes on the practice of mortuary archaeology and the subsequent construction of archaeological knowledge |
| Methods | - Semi-structured interviews completed with 27 archaeology and museum professionals  
- Ethnographic fieldwork conducted during June and July 2014 at three research sites |
| Case study sites | - Yorkshire Archaeological Trust (YAT): a commercial archaeology unit  
- Poulton Project: an independent field school  
- Centre for Human Bioarchaeology (CHB) at the Museum of London (MoL): a human remains repository that also conducts osteological research and analysis |

**Table 1.1:** Overview of the research project.
1.4.1. Research objectives

The presence of the dead produces space for sentiment and spirit, as well as for science (Horsley 2008: 135).

This study casts an interrogative light on the role of mortuary archaeology practitioners as a unique subculture in the world of professional deathworkers—“investigating, analysing, interpreting, synthesising” and constructing narratives about death in the past for contemporary audiences (Williams 2015)—and the impact of this work upon them and the remains they encounter. Drawing widely on research conducted within the field of medical anthropology, it explores the prevalence of ‘emotional detachment’ within deathwork professions and how this relates to the practice of mortuary archaeology specifically. To this end, it examines how emotional detachment is facilitated through the archaeological process itself, critiquing the ways in which human remains may change “materially and visually” as they move through different categories of meaning, or “regimes of value”, according to the plethora of ‘gazes’ and disciplinary practices visited upon them by varying practitioners, all of whom have specific “roles and responsibilities in the collaborative process” of caring for archaeological human remains (Renshaw 2011: 28; Olson 2016a: 75).

Yet, in their varying states of preservation and decay, together with the degree to which the remains are recognisably human or dramatically altered by the circumstances of death and burial, the particular physical, temporal and even biographical qualities of human remains may actively shape the responses of those who come into contact with them, thereby undermining attempts to re-categorise them as archaeological material (Renshaw 2011: 27). This thesis will therefore analyse the range of responses that encounters with human remains may provoke, as well as the methods employed by archaeologists to both manage these interactions and to rationalise their activities, thereby allowing them to break the ‘taboo’ that surrounds the disturbance and desecration of the dead (CBA 1994 cited in Boyle 1999: 197). Finally, this study will evaluate how the impact of these interactions with the archaeological dead manifests itself in the practice of
mortuary archaeology, including the narratives that are constructed for public consumption and public access to both excavations and museum displays of human remains, while exploring if, as Nilsson Stutz (2011: 29) argues that archaeologists are what they excavate, whether their intimate relationship with human remains gifts them with a more nuanced understanding of mortality (Walter 2006: 23).

1.4.2. Research impact

Looking into the empty eye sockets of a long gone person, touching skeletal remains, gently laying them out on a table, is an emotional experience. Even when you don’t have a connection to the body you are touching or looking at, this aspect of archaeological practice changes you permanently. You cannot go back to who you were before. I know I was apprehensive about doing this. I know I felt uncomfortable, freaked out. I know that I considered not doing archaeology as a teenager as I was so unnerved by the prospect of dealing with human remains (Shipley 2016).

As Nilsson Stutz and Tarlow (2013: 7) observe, death “represents a particularly rich context for the potential identification and theorisation of the significance of emotion in archaeology”, with evidence of mortuary rituals and human remains carefully examined for insights into the “emotional values and beliefs surrounding death and bereavement in the past”. Yet, despite an increased reflexivity among archaeology practitioners and a widespread acceptance that it forms an “essential component of politically and socially aware archaeological practice”, few have questioned their own relationship with the material they uncover, even while academics such as Meredith (1990) have argued that all archaeologists respond emotionally to the material culture they encounter, lamenting the sanitised and intellectualised presentation of the past which denies its dialectical power with us (Tarlow 2000: 722). This study therefore addresses the lack of critical attention directed at the affective impact of mortuary archaeology practice and it is presented as a starting point for conversation and further research. Indeed, the enthusiasm expressed by participants in this project regarding the opportunity to articulate their thoughts, feelings and opinions in their own words suggests that practitioners would welcome greater discussion of this aspect of their work. Furthermore, I argue that open dialogue around engaging with human remains would undoubtedly benefit the training of the next generation of
archaeologists, particularly the messages students internalise about how to handle this 'material'.

This research project, however, not only makes a contribution towards our understanding of how archaeology creates its narratives about the past, but it also adds to the broader study of deathwork professions in what has been described as the ‘dark side’ of emotional labour (see Sanders 2004; Chiapetta-Swanson 2005; Bono and Vey 2005; Linstead et al. 2014; McMurray and Ward 2014, 2016): work that is deemed necessary for the “effective function of specific organisations and society at large” but which may, on occasion, be “emotionally disturbing, wearing, deeply upsetting, [and] stigmatising”, even while it inspires feelings of pride, satisfaction and enjoyment (Ward and McMurray 2016: 1–2). As such, by examining the responses of archaeologists towards the remains of the dead—which are often porous and ‘untidy’, sometimes incongruous and frequently neither fully formed nor conscious—and the ways in which these are mediated by the specific practices that underpin the practice of mortuary archaeology, this project reveals a number of enduring cultural beliefs that surround death and the dead in 21st century Britain. It is my hope, therefore, that this study will make a meaningful contribution to emerging discussions about the ways in which contemporary British society handles questions of mortality and the role(s) that mortuary archaeology may have to play in understanding our own death culture.

1.4.3. Research methodology

People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what they do does (Foucault: pers. comm. cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow 2013: 187).

To gain a more nuanced insight into the practices, performances and points-of-view that surround professional encounters with archaeological human remains, this research project employed a qualitative research strategy, with a mixed-method approach. This consisted of a series of semi-structured interviews with a cohort of professional figures drawn from the archaeology and museum professions, as well as
participant observation over a period of seven weeks during the summer of 2014 at three research sites: a commercial archaeology unit (York Archaeological Trust), an academic field school (Poulton Research Project) and a human remains repository/laboratory (Centre for Human Bioarchaeology at the Museum of London). Additionally, a small number of comments featured in this study have been pulled from archaeology-focused public Facebook groups, where practitioners commented on new stories or recent discoveries that pertained to my research objectives. While online or briefer surveys and questionnaires were initially considered as a research method for this project, these were later discounted due to concerns that they may result in respondents giving answers that lacked in specific detail. Ethnographic methods were therefore selected due to their suitability in ‘digging’ deeper and to reveal the “partial, situational, selective and often inconsistent aspects of perspective” (Grills 1998: 5).

1.4.3.1. Using case studies

This research project utilises a case study approach, an established research tool used for the purposes of theory building and to gain an in-depth understanding of specific situations. As suggested by Bryman (2004), it employs multiple case studies which were selected according to both practical constraints and for their suitability as contrasting but interrelated examples of the ways and contexts in which archaeologists interact with human remains. Fieldwork was conducted at the three primary sites, with data gathered through interviewing consenting individuals and participant observation. This was recorded using field notes, a digital recorder, and photography.

1.4.3.1.1. Site One: York Archaeological Trust (YAT)

The York Archaeological Trust (YAT) for excavation and research is an independent charity founded in 1972 to investigate the past for the benefit of “present communities, future generations and a range of commercial clients and partners”
In recent years, YAT has been involved in archaeological excavations at the site of the former Haymarket Hostel and car park on Peasholme Green, funded as part of the redevelopment of the area by the City of York Council (see Figure 7, Appendix 1: 385). The site contains the remnants of the ‘lost’ medieval church of All Saints’, which is thought to be of 11th or 12th century foundation and was in use until the 16th century, after which it was largely demolished (YAT 2012: 22).

The site has undergone several phases of excavation beginning in 1986-7, but in 2011 the City of York Council agreed to mapping of the human remains linked to the medieval cemetery—revealing an unexpectedly high density of burials—due to earmarking the site for redevelopment (Stead 2012). It was not until the former homeless hostel that had been occupying the site was demolished in 2012, however, that a five-month long programme of excavation could begin to uncover the main body of the church and remove part of the cemetery (YAT 2013: 4), with a second phase of excavation taking place during the summer of 2013, during which time I joined the team. With the first phase of works primarily concentrating on the excavation of structures, this subsequent phase related to the excavation of inhumations from the interior and graveyard of the church, as a result of the council’s decision to make the land more commercially attractive to potential developers through the removal of the majority of the human remains from the site.

YAT was selected for this study because the excavation of the site provided an opportunity to follow the progress of an archaeological excavation from beginning to end, as well as to witness how human remains are excavated within the context of commercial archaeology and to contrast this with my other case study sites. Working on site with the team also provided the opportunity to explore and observe the specific assumptions and practices that underpin the process of archaeology and the construction of archaeological knowledge, looking anew at that which is overlooked or taken to be self-evident (Edgeworth 2006b: 15).
1.4.3.1.2. Site Two: The Poulton Research Project

The Poulton Research Project is investigating a “multi-period archaeological landscape” in the Cheshire countryside, with attention currently focused on the excavation of a former chapel which is surrounded by a graveyard (Poulton Research Project: no date). Beginning as a joint venture between Chester Archaeology and the University of Liverpool in 1995 as a training site for undergraduate students, the Poulton Research Project is now run independently and while it continues to train archaeology students, it has evolved into a community-based programme that welcomes all those interested in archaeology (ibid.), with the site appearing in Meet the Ancestors in 1998, Time Team in 2006 and Grave Trade in 2013 (see Figure 8, Appendix 1: 386). The Poulton team do not have the resources to undertake full skeletal examinations on site, but they do produce basic skeletal reports containing information relating to age at death, sex, and height, before the skeletal material is transported to the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University for more detailed analysis (ibid.).

Due to the debates that surround the removal of the dead by non-specialists and the sensitivities that surround the disturbance of the dead more generally, field schools that specialise in the excavation of human remains are rare. The selection of the Poulton Research Project as a case study therefore provided scope to engage with students who were specifically interested in this aspect of archaeology and to analyse the practices and processes taught to them in terms of excavating archaeological human remains, as well as to discover what it means to participate in such an experience from their point of view.

1.4.3.1.3. Site Three: The Centre for Human Bioarchaeology at the Museum of London

The Museum of London opened in 1976 and holds the largest archaeological archive in Europe (Redfern and Bekvalac 2013: 87). In 2002, it established the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC), which holds the archives of archaeological fieldwork (including human remains) carried out in the City and the
Greater London area over the past 100 years: a figure in excess of 7500 excavations (ibid.). The majority of these holdings relate to ‘rescue’ archaeology carried out during the 1970s and 1980s, but with the growth of commercial archaeology from the 1990s onwards, the archives have been supplemented by excavations carried out by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) and other commercial units (ibid.). As a result, more than 17,000 human skeletal remains have been excavated in advance of construction or development work in the City and Greater London area over the past 30 years (Museum of London: 2011). These remains date from the Neolithic to the post-Medieval period and comprise the largest scientifically excavated and documented human bone assemblage from any city in the world, providing a unique insight into the history of London and its former residents (ibid.).

In 2003, the museum established the Centre for Human Bioarchaeology (CHB) with funding from the Wellcome Trust to curate and research the Museum of London’s extensive holdings of human remains, while promoting and supporting access to this vast collection (Museum of London: no date, see Figure 9, Appendix 1: 387). This work is facilitated, in part, by the Wellcome Osteological Research Database (WORD) which, located online, allows researchers across the globe remote access to information about the skeletal collection archived by the museum. As a result, a recent literature review by Roberts and May (2011) has revealed that it is the second most-used collection in Britain, after the Spitalfields crypt population curated by the Natural History Museum (ibid: 90; see Chapter 2.3). The CHB was selected as a case study for this research project because it offered the opportunity to analyse how the remains of the dead are re-categorised as archaeological evidence in order to facilitate their use by researchers, together with how this process may be subverted by the agency of the dead (Robb 2013: 443).

1.4.4. Interviews

Interviews were conducted both as a complementary part of the ethnographic element of this study and independently, resulting in a series of conversations with individuals
drawn from a cross-section of the archaeology and museum professions. This research method was selected for its suitability in exploring complex social and cultural phenomena, and participants were asked to reflect upon aspects of professional practice and legislation, as well as more personal thoughts and feelings that arise from their engagement with the archaeological study of death and the dead (Hay 2000). The purpose of these interviews was to uncover a range of personal viewpoints relating to underlying and overlooked assumptions and archaeological practices. Following standard qualitative research techniques, interviews were semi-structured and allowed for flexibility in the wording and sequence of questions once the interview had begun. Consequently, I had much greater freedom to explore specific areas of enquiry, as well as allowing new lines of investigation to emerge (Kitchin and Tate 2000: 214).

1.4.4.1. Recruiting participants

In total, 21 formal interviews were conducted with 27 archaeology and museum professionals between 2014 and 2015—supplemented by a small number of informal conversations in the field with practitioners, recorded in field notes—with the “character of qualitative interviews” meaning that their “number would always be relatively low” (Rajala 2016: 73). Individuals interviewed during fieldwork were initially approached by the site ‘gatekeeper’ and I then followed this up upon my arrival at the site. Interviews conducted outside of the case study sites were initially identified through a combination of purposive and ‘snowball’ sampling, whereby a researcher selects participants in a strategic manner so that they possess a relevant connection to the research question and are then sign-posted to other potential participants through this connection (Babbie 2010: 208). Those initially contacted regarding their participation in the project were professionals that I knew to have some experience of working with human remains—either personally or by reputation—and these individuals then helped me to establish connections with other suitable potential participants. Respondents in this study include field archaeologists,
academics, students, osteoarchaeologists, and museum curators, with a full list of individuals interviewed for this project located in Appendix 3.

Despite the willingness of forensic archaeologists to share their experiences about their work in print, I experienced difficulties in finding participants willing to be interviewed, perhaps due to concerns that they would no longer retain control over their narratives. As they are not the focus of this study, however, comments relating to work in this field are drawn from an extensive pre-existing body of literature. Nevertheless, participants in this study possessed a wide range of experience when it came to working with human remains: some hardly ever encountered them, while others did so almost on a daily basis, while the diversity of roles and specialisation included in the interview sample means that individuals had worked with almost all types of remains, from ‘recent’ cases—post-medieval to the forensic—to “early humans, fully fleshed mummies to fragmentary scraps of bone” (Leighton 2010: 81).

1.4.4.2. Conducting interviews

Interviews were conducted at a mutually convenient location—during the course of fieldwork, at conferences, at places of work and, in some instances, by the graveside—and were held in person, as well as via telephone and Skype. Furthermore, some interviews were conducted with just one individual, whereas others were completed in groups (at the request of participants). All these factors may have contributed towards, or indeed hindered, what individuals chose to divulge, as well as influencing the direction the interview took. While some of my interviewees urged me to include a statistical analysis alongside my findings, the way interviews unfolded precludes their use as a sample that can be interrogated in such a manner and such analysis ultimately falls outside the scope of ethnographic research. The majority of interviews were digitally recorded, but with a small number of respondents in the field I had to resort to making quick notes due to the lack of time to interview them one-on-one.

The same questions were not asked of every participant, as this would not have resulted in the kind of qualitative, experience-driven data that I sought to gather (see
Appendix 4 for interview questions). My interviewees were engaged in myriad roles within the world of archaeology and brought to these a wide range of experiences and viewpoints; as such, flexibility in the questions was essential so as to accommodate this diversity in encounters and expertise. Furthermore, as I became more confident in the interview methodology and themes I was looking to explore, I realised that interviewees generally needed far less prompting than I anticipated and, in turn, I became less concerned with following the interview schedule and preferred to allow the interviewees to guide the direction of the discussion, within the parameters of the research study remit. The interview schedule therefore augmented and probed further the issues revealed by my participants.

One of archaeology’s greatest strengths is its ability to tell stories and a number of my interviewees adopted the role of the story-teller in their interviews, recounting their experiences with passion, enthusiasm, wit and drama, with some even assuming several characters and re-enacting key scenes of their encounters through mime and gesture. I detected a great pleasure in the ability of these professionals in staging a ‘performance’ for me and being able to entertain through sharing humorous anecdotes. While the perceived tensions between personal and professional identities made some of my interviewees more hesitant to explore their own personal sentiments towards the relationship between archaeology and the remains of the dead—preferring instead to offer well-rehearsed theoretical debates and perspectives within the discipline—some participants entered into very frank discussions with me.

As Bradbury (1999: 43) notes, “women are very often perceived as being good listeners” and I ensured that I made the most of this. While those I know personally tended to provide the most candid interviews, I was surprised by how many of my interviewees were prepared to share highly personal and intimate details of their experiences with the dead with me, both archaeological and otherwise. As Bradbury (1999: 35) has observed, informants are usually pleased to be given the opportunity to ‘tell it like it is’, yet, on occasion, participants shared aspects of their experiences that they stated they did not want used in the thesis and while these typically occurred after the ‘official’ interview was over, some did seemingly forget about the presence of the digital recorder and asked immediately after their divulgence that I did not use
that specific example in my research. Whether requested or by the nature of the timing of such admissions, I have not included this material in the thesis, for these were ultimately not my stories to tell.

1.4.5. Analysis of the data

All digitally recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, with pseudonyms used in place of real names so as to protect participants’ confidentiality. The analysis of the data commenced with a review of observational field notes, interview transcripts, and photographs, with the aim of elucidating recurring themes. This data was then coded using QSR NVivo 10, following Boyatzis’ (1998) method of thematic analysis, grouping together different answers according to emerging themes, with specific examples used in this study to shed light on the variety of opinions. Each transcript was then analysed in-depth so that significant words, statements, and passages that directly pertained to the key research objectives could be extracted.

1.4.6. Research ethics

Every research project raises its own ethical concerns and the issues presented by this study are typical of those that affect many qualitative social research studies. They primarily surround the process of obtaining informed consent and protecting participants from intrusion, discomfort, and inconvenience. While full details of the ethical safeguards put in place for this project may be found in Appendix 5, this study was designed and conducted in accordance with the Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth (ASA 2011), together with the six core principles as set out by the Economic and Social Research Council’s Framework for Research Ethics (ESRC: no date), as ascribed to by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Statement of Ethical Practice produced by the British Sociological Association (BSA 2002). The latter advocates researchers to “anticipate, and to guard against,
consequences to research participants which can be predicted to be harmful [and] to consider carefully that the research experience might be a disturbing one”.

To this end, all participants in this study were supplied with project information sheets (see Appendix 6) and those who elected to be interviewed were required to sign a consent form (see Appendix 7). Those who were not interviewed but were present at the fieldwork sites were given the opportunity to exclude themselves from the study. All individuals who have taken part in this project are anonymous and are referred to by a pseudonym, including comments drawn from public Facebook pages, following guidance provided by the British Psychological Society (BSA 2017), Social Data Science Lab (no date) and NatCen Social Research (2014) regarding an individual’s expectation of privacy regarding posting to social media. Furthermore, any sensitive or identifying information revealed by interviewees during our conversations has been edited or removed from the transcripts altogether. In addition, as this project also utilised photography as both an aide-memoire and as a source of data in its own right, I observed the guidelines produced by The Visual Sociology Group (VSG 2006)—a study group of the British Sociological Association (BSA)—in taking photographs in the field and the ways in which they have subsequently been incorporated into this whilst protecting participants’ anonymity.

1.5. Thesis outline

The thesis is structured to explore the relationship between archaeology practitioners and human remains through eight chapters, focusing specifically on the affective and agentic qualities of human remains and the ways in which archaeologists seek to ‘tame’ the dead, together with the impact this makes on the way archaeologists implement archaeological procedures and their own perceptions of mortality. Chapter Two proceeds by placing the responses of archaeologists who participated in this study in their cultural and professional context, drawing on the ways in which we understand and experience death in 21st century Britain, together with the ways in which we conceive of the dead body. This introduces the ambiguous nature of human
remains, as both ‘people’ and ‘objects’ and this chapter therefore explores the controversies revolving around these two very different ways of conceiving of the dead body and the challenges they have posed to the authority of archaeology professionals.

Chapter Three explores the discipline’s close developmental ties with anatomical practice and how its reverence of detached objectivity and emotional neutrality has been replicated in encounters between practitioners of mortuary archaeology and human remains. Then, Chapter Four examines how the practices of mortuary archaeology seek to re-categorise the remains of the dead as archaeological material, with varying levels of success, for many carry a latent symbolism that may serve to undermine attempts to relate to human remains purely as archaeological artefacts.

Chapter Five thus probes the specific triggers within encounters between archaeology practitioners and human remains that may challenge their commitment to emotional detachment, revealing a number of powerful and enduring cultural beliefs and attitudes towards death and the dead (Tung 2014: 437).

This sets the stage for Chapter Six which examines how archaeologists manage their interactions with those remains that subvert the archaeological process and refuse to be easily re-codified as archaeological objects, drawing on emotional management techniques used by other deathwork professionals and, with reference to Terror Management Theory (TMT), how these mechanisms are deployed so as to protect the ‘ontological security’ of mortuary archaeology practitioners. Chapter Seven then examines how archaeologists shape professional practice through their own experiences with death and the dead, while revealing how human remains may, in turn, affect their own understanding of issues relating to mortality. Finally, the conclusions drawn from this research project are presented in Chapter Eight, together with a reflection upon the successes and difficulties encountered in bringing it to fruition, as well as identifying future avenues of research.
Chapter Two

Archaeologists, death, and dead bodies

British attitudes to dead bodies are ambivalent, contradictory and volatile (Parker-Pearson 1999: 183).

2.1. Introduction

While human remains, as the “past personified”, may constitute the defining image of archaeology (Sofaer 2006: 1), the excavation, analysis and display of the dead may also prove to be extremely contentious. As noted in the previous chapter, human remains occupy an uneasy and ambiguous position within British society, in which they exist as neither quite continued persons nor entirely as mere ‘things’ (Leighton 2010: 79). While archaeological bodies are therefore highly popular with museum-goers as objects and are a dominant presence in popular culture, as the remains of past people, they can also prove deeply unsettling and the retention of the dead may be strongly opposed by indigenous, religious or spiritual groups seeking repatriation and reburial (ibid: 78). Accordingly, over the past twenty years or more, British archaeology has faced a series of crises relating not only to the legislative context in which archaeologists are licenced to disturb human remains, but also pertaining to the longer term retention, curation and study of such discoveries (Sayer 2010a).
This chapter explores the emotional, political and cultural landscape in which mortuary archaeology takes place, as well as the challenges posed to its authority, so as to contextualise archaeologists’ responses to the human remains they encounter in the course of their practice. Beginning with a consideration of how death is viewed, experienced and managed in 21st century Britain, together with how this might affect attitudes towards death and the dead among archaeology practitioners, the chapter then examines how the issue of mortality is constructed and understood by the archaeological discipline specifically.

Following this, the chapter provides an account of the Spitalfields excavation in the 1980s that introduces the reader to the ethical and (meta)physical difficulties that may occur in encounters with archaeological human remains. The chapter then explores events in a Liverpool children’s hospital which, while seemingly unrelated to the practice of mortuary archaeology, were to have a profound impact on all areas of deathwork and laid bare the competing and contradictory feelings that death and the dead may provoke. This leads to a consideration of the way in which the human corpse may simultaneously constitute both ‘subject’ and ‘object’, together with how this has played out in professional archaeological practice through the debates that have surrounded the repatriation of human remains.

Next, the chapter analyses the discourse of ‘respect’ that has emerged around the remains of the dead and its role in the emergence of claims for the reburial of prehistoric remains from the British Isles, before critiquing how the unique ‘necropower’ of the dead has seen their remains emerge as the battleground for contemporary political concerns. Finally, the legislative challenges that have faced archaeologists in the course of excavating human remains—as embodied by the reinterpretation of the 1857 Burial Act—are discussed, with the chapter concluding with some final thoughts as to where this difficult period in the discipline’s history has left the practice of mortuary archaeology in Britain.
2.2. “Little by little, the dead cease to exist”: Death, dying, and the dead in Britain

This generation [of archaeologists] is the one that been exposed to the full . . . trivialisation of death and [has] actually showed great enjoyment in Halloween, horror and zombie films, video-gaming with the . . . dead, rape in porn etc. It should be the least sensitive [to death] (comment from The Times, October 2016).

Exposure to the materiality of death has become a rare occurrence in contemporary Western cultures and an experience which is increasingly reserved for professional deathworkers. While archaeologists may therefore have experienced the death of a loved one, many or most will not have seen someone die or participated in preparing the body of the deceased for a funeral: a routine occurrence in the not-so-distant past. Indeed, in The Storyteller, Walter Benjamin (1968: 94) writes that “there used to be no house, hardly a room, in which someone had not once died”: a claim that speaks to the familiarity of past societies with death, dying and, above all, the dead themselves. While we may have a tendency to romanticise a “golden age” of death awareness (Stone 2009: 30), it is true that up until the early years of the last century most individuals would die in their own homes and both adults and children alike were thus intimately acquainted with death, “its sounds and smells, the agony of it, and its peace” (Wilson 2012: 9).

Yet, as Baudrillard (1993: 126) observes, society has undergone an evolution in which “little by little, the dead cease to exist”: in the 21st century, it is now quite possible to live a long and full life without ever encountering a dead body (Taylor 2002: 49). We find ourselves in such an unprecedented position as a result of over 70 years of civilian peace and affluence which have rendered death an increasingly distant and unfamiliar phenomenon in the UK (Walter 2006), together with remarkable medical advances which have arguably created a belief that “all serious defects of the body” will one day be reparable, perhaps postponing death indefinitely (Fisher 2009: 7). At the same time, care of the dying and the dead has increasingly been relocated from domestic dwellings, with “hospital beds replacing the family home as the most likely site of death” (Horsley 2008: 134), from where “the deceased are transported to a chilled
space for safekeeping and preservation, out of sight while farewell rituals are prepared and disposal options are determined” (ibid.). All of this involves professional deathworkers whose role involves obscuring death’s imminence, its inevitability, and disposing of the corpse “as unobtrusively as possible” (Taylor 2002: 50). As a result, the materiality of death has become increasingly marginalised from ‘normal’ human experience (Fisher 2009: 7), leading some scholars to claim that death is ‘hidden’ within Western cultures, an argument originating in the works of Gorer (1955) and Ariès (1974), later termed the ‘denial of death’ thesis or the ‘death taboo’ by sociologists (see Kübler-Ross 1997; Kastenbaum 2001).

Archaeology itself has arguably played a role in the increasing professionalisation of caring for the dead: the guardianship of ancient human remains is its preserve, over which its practitioners have “authoritative, expert jurisdiction” (Olson 2016a: 83). This position has come under significant and sustained criticism in recent years as archaeologists have found themselves placed in a “position of disadvantage against (real or supposed) public condemnation” of their proprietorship of the dead (Powers et al. 2013: 126). We might even argue that the death taboo has re-shaped mortuary archaeology itself, for as Robb (2013: 449) argues, death is the “missing skeleton at the archaeological feast” in which, despite “a rich ethnography and sociology of death and dying, it has typically been treated by archaeologists as a simple biological event of little interest whose social implications we already know” (ibid: 441-2).

Paradoxically, therefore, and in spite of claims to the contrary, “we have not had an ‘archaeology of dying’ or even an ‘archaeology of death’; we have had an archaeology of already dead persons” (ibid: 441-2). This is not, he notes, an oversight, but derives from “our own ontological categories as enacted in archaeological practice” which serve to “institutionalise and reproduce often tacit categories of the living and the dead” (ibid.).

While as a concept the death taboo retained its popularity within academic writing until the 1980s and is still cited with some regularity, it is difficult to maintain a position that Western cultures reject death when the most successful exhibition in the world features the display of plastinated corpses and our television schedules are brimming with cadavers (see Foltyn 2008a; 2008b). Sociologists instead argue that
death has become ‘sequestered’ (Mellor 1993: 11), in which it is concealed behind medical and professional facades, even whilst we simultaneously consume ‘abnormal’ and ‘spectacular’ death on an unprecedented scale (see Stone 2012). Certainly, as the witnessed death of others has declined in the Western world, so there has been a corresponding increase in its mediated portrayals: was it ever as taboo or as estranged as was originally claimed (Zelizer 2010: 18; see Figure 10, Appendix 1: 388)?

McIlwain (2005) argues that this increasing public fascination with mortality may speak to a desire to remove death from the hands of professionals and return it to the community once more (Foltyn 2016: 259), wrought by our changing experience of death and dying. Indeed, now that it is possible to ‘attend’ a funeral online (see Rudgard 2017) and the dead continue to have a posthumous presence through social media (see Cann 2015; Meese et al. 2015), so we must find new ways of discussing and engaging with mortality (see Figure 11, Appendix 1: 389). In recent years, therefore, we have witnessed the establishment of ‘death cafés’ (see Morgan 2017), where strangers gather to discuss death over tea and cake (Death Café: no date), as well as individuals sharing varying experiences of death, dying, and loss online, such as the documentation of the progression of terminal illness by cancer patients (Carpenter 2016) and the live-blogging of traumatic experiences such as miscarriage (XOJane 2012).

This has been supplemented by a flurry of ‘pathographies’—“a genre of autobiographical literature describing an author’s experiences in facing or witnessing serious or terminal illness, or grieving for the loss of a love one” (Turley and O’Donohoe 2016: 198), as well as death focused exhibitions (Death: A self-portrait at the Wellcome Collection; Doctors, Dissection and Resurrection Men at the Museum of London; Death: The human experience at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery; Dying Matters: A community display at Leeds City Museum, see Figure 12, Appendix 1: 390) and the production of television documentaries which have focused on what happens to the body after death (Grave Trade, History 2013), body or organ donation (Mummifying Alan, Channel 4 2011; The Human Tissue Squad, BBC Three 2014; Body Donors, Channel 5 2015) and the debates surrounding the issue of assisted dying (How to Die: Simon’s Choice, BBC One 2016).
Furthermore, there has been a significant increase in opportunities for members of the public to access the ‘hidden’ worlds of professional deathworkers: after nearly 200 years, they are able to attend public anatomy workshops where, for a fee, individuals are introduced to “cadaveric material” (Usborne 2015), and there are now regular open days across the country at crematoriums, funeral parlours and hospital mortuaries (see Figure 13, Appendix 1: 391). Accordingly, Barts Pathology Museum in London—a space that has traditionally been “restricted and closed to everything but the scientific gaze”—now regularly opens to the public and, unlike many other similar institutions, allows its visitors to photograph ‘specimens’ in its collections as a means of increasing public access to, and knowledge of, human anatomy, as well as promoting ‘death positivity’ (Horsley 2008: 134). Yet despite these developments, and with fewer opportunities to engage with the corpse than may occur in other Western cultures (Sayer 2010b: 484), our average exposure to actual death in British culture remains limited and the tactile experience of dead matter and the handling of the dead is largely avoided.

Taylor (2002: 277) refers to this as “visceral insulation”, or a “recoil from corporeality”, in which the “necessary specialisation of the modern world screens or insulates people from ‘visceral’ things—bodies, blood, death, screams in childbirth, excessive grieving—all of which are compelling in their potential uncontrollability”. As a result, sociologists argue that fewer people are now emotionally prepared to manage the experience of death (Taylor 2002: 53), a situation that is arguably compounded by the growing secularisation of the UK, in which the decline of the Christian faith and the subsequent lack of a meaningful ritual structure have rendered the prospect of dying (and any kind of encounter with the dead, ancient or modern) more distressful (Ariès 1974, 1981; Mellor and Shilling 1993, Downes and Pollard 1999: xi-xii). Indeed, Cox (1997: 113) argues that archaeologists too are “products of an increasingly sceptical and secular society . . . in which death is depersonalised, pre-packaged and commercialised”, suggesting that this lack of familiarity with death and its “folk and religious traditions” inhibits its practitioners’ “ability to bring the human experience of death and mourning back into archaeology”.

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2.3. Disturbing the dead/the disturbing dead

As archaeologists we’re not really geared up for working with fully fleshed cadavers. That’s not for us. That’s for other people (Sidell 2016).

British archaeologists may thus have limited experiences to prepare themselves for encountering the remains of the dead when they first enter the profession, due to our physical and psychological estrangement from death (Hanson 2007: 76). This was perhaps most (in)famously demonstrated by the archaeological excavation at Christ Church with All Saints in Spitalfields, East London where, between 1984 and 1989, archaeologists undertook one of the largest and most important crypt excavations in advance of extensive restoration works (Boyle 1999: 189). As the first post-medieval burial vault to be comprehensively investigated using archaeological methods, Spitalfields produced almost 1000 skeletons buried between 1729 and 1859, of which 387 could be successfully identified through coffin plates and inscriptions (Reeve and Adams 1993: 1), together with wills, death certificates, and parish records (Redfern and Bekvalac 2017: 371). The excavation furthered our understanding of 18th and 19th century funerary practices, honed and revised osteological techniques, and established a unique named and provenanced sample of human remains for further research (Reeve and Adams 1993: 130). Cox (1997: 112) goes further still and credits the excavation—which, as described, drew on surviving documentary sources to ‘flesh’ out the biographies of named individuals—with (re)introducing “people and humanity back into an increasingly sterile archaeology”. Yet, the excavation has arguably acquired a reputation for an entirely different reason: the psychological impact wrought upon the project team members through disturbing the ‘recently’ dead.

Crypt excavations confront archaeologists with particularly unusual challenges, caused by both the environmental conditions found within such dark and dank spaces, as well as the potential risk of disease (Reeve and Adams 1993: 17). While project directors took precautions against the latter—spending a year in consultation with public health bodies (ibid.)—far more “insidious health risks” were unfortunately underestimated, including lead poisoning and the hazards imposed by little air movement, high dust levels, poor visibility, restricted working space and, perhaps
most importantly of all, the emotive nature of the archaeological ‘material’ itself (ibid.; see Figures 14 and 15, Appendix 1: 392). Accordingly, as the excavation continued apace, morale among the team members dwindled and the amount of time lost to staff experiencing “lingering colds, flu, depression, lethargy and minor infections” steadily increased (ibid.). It is notable that of the twelve long-term members of staff—the majority of which were female and who were selected for their ability to work well together, both professionally and socially, in the “unpleasant environment” (Reeve and Adams 1993: 18)—six terminated their contracts before time, while five others only worked short periods of between one and eleven weeks (ibid: 17-18). It was subsequently recognised that the health problems that dogged archaeologists throughout the excavation were not just minor niggling illnesses, but were in fact symptomatic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

As Boyle (2015: 44) has subsequently noted, it is easy in hindsight “to be highly critical” of the Spitalfields project, overlooking the ground-breaking nature of the excavation which laid the foundational framework for ‘crypt archaeology’ (Bell and Lee-Thorp 1998; Reeve 1998; White 1998; Cox 2001; see Figure 16, Appendix 1: 393). Yet, similar experiences have been recorded elsewhere in the archaeological literature, such as Kirk and Start’s account of the 1996 excavation of a former Quaker burial ground in Kingston upon Thames, where post-excavation work was unusually conducted at the fully-operational premises of an undertaker (1999: 207). Together with Bashford and Pollard (1998: 165), they experienced “surreal and disturbing dreams involving images and sensations which resulted in feelings of horror [and] persecution and the . . . sense of being trapped”, implying “subconscious thought processes” were at work in exploring the morality of their interventions (ibid: 164).

As noted in Chapter One, however, it remains a contentious issue as to whether the emotional difficulties experienced by some archaeologists in relation to encountering human remains can be diagnosed as PTSD. Classifications of the condition are often based on the fact that an individual has been “exposed to a catastrophic stressor that was outside the usual range of human experiences, such as war, earthquakes, factory explosions or aeroplane crashes”. Yet, the opening of lead coffins—as was conducted at Spitalfields and a practice that is no longer encouraged (see Elders et al. 2010: 5;
Mays 2017: 39)—together with the confrontation with the unpleasant reality of
death and decomposition inside (Reeve and Adams 1993: 17-8; see Figure 17, Appendix 1: 394), may arguably be said to fall within the range of ‘unusual human
experiences’ in 21st century Britain (ibid.).

As Brooks and Rumsey (2007: 343) note in their museological study, “boundaries of
the acceptable” are subject to change; indeed, Stirland (1986: 5) writes that “in the
past many archaeologists disliked being faced with human skeletal remains when
evacuating a site” and that “until recent, more enlightened times they were often
ignored or thrown away”, due to the way in which their presence may invoke
intrusive thoughts relating to mortality. Coffins are now typically reinterred intact
wherever possible and while this development in terms of best practice may be partly
tied to ideas of respecting the dead and their right to rest undisturbed—(Boyle (2015:
43), for example, labels the practice of opening coffins as “distasteful”)—it also
undoubtedly relates to a reluctance to confront well-preserved human material. Yet
the practice that perhaps created the greatest anxiety on site is still undertaken today:
the cremation of soft tissue remains that are considered a risk to public health.

At Christ Church, lead coffin-encased human tissue was incinerated due to a concern
over the possibility of extant viable smallpox spores and/or where the condition of the
remains was considered “too unpleasant” for anything more than superficial recording
(Reeve and Adams 1993: 93, see Figure 18, Appendix 1: 395). This decision was
subsequently criticised by Margaret Cox (2001: 8), a forensic anthropologist
employed on the Spitalfields project. Yet, her experience in forensics perhaps better
equipped her cognitively and practically to ‘face’ such remains than her
contemporaries working in traditional field archaeology. Nonetheless, Cox (2001: 8)
argued that the destruction of soft tissue “simply because . . . archaeologists [are] not
prepared to be exposed to [it]” was “unacceptable and unnecessary”, as well as a gross
waste of resources and a loss of potentially valuable taphonomic and histological data.

The destruction of this material, however, also undoubtedly demonstrates the
profound ways in which the attitudes of archaeology professionals towards death and
the dead can impact upon archaeological practice. Yet, while excavators may have
been spared from having to handle these perturbing remains, the separation and cremation of soft tissue undeniably caused concern among a number of the members of the project team, as recalled by Baxter (2003: 128) in her account of the fate of Spitalfields skeleton ‘No. 2287’:

The mummified tissue was autopsied and cremated along with an amount of other mummified tissue, while the bones were recovered and put with the rest of the skeleton for research purposes. This partition of an individual distressed some of the excavators, who were reassured by the local clergy that God would fit individual 2287 back together when necessary, and that there was more of 2287 surviving than, say, an atom blast victim, and they were not barred from the afterlife.

Pithily, Bahn (1984: 222) notes that “any archaeologist with a troubled conscience can turn only to the deliberations of moral philosophers or to the advice of the clergy”. The Spitalfields clergy thus assured the excavators that, contrary to popular (mis)understanding, bodily integrity is not a prerequisite for resurrection (Sidell 2011: 70). Since the earliest centuries, Christian theologians have espoused God’s ability to reconstitute the remains of the dead on the Day of Judgment (O’Sullivan 2013: 260-261) and, as a consequence, there is nothing in the Christian canon that “precludes reverential excavation” (Sidell 2011: 17). Indeed, archaeological investigations have revealed that the Church itself has often initiated the disturbance of burials in the past (Parry 2011), as at Spitalfields, where Church authorities sanctioned the clearance of the crypt in order to restore the building to its original design (Molleson et al. 1993: 1). It is not uncommon, therefore, to find graves and later structural additions cutting earlier burials or to find charnel pits where areas of cemeteries have been cleared or amalgamated (Swain 2007: 151).

Yet, the reactions of members of the excavation team reveal a lingering reluctance to disturb the dead: a fundamentally transgressive act, and where the dead more closely resemble the living, the more serious the breech (Moshenska 2006: 93). The well-preserved human remains at Christ Church not only looked more recognisably human than ‘dry’ bones, but both excavators and the excavated “nominally shared” a religion (Rahtz 1981: 117 cited in Boyle 1999: 195). With self-identified Christians still constituting around half of the British population (Dahlgreen 2016), there remains a widely held conviction that the final resting place of the dead should be
respected even if, “given the demands of the modern world, it may not be absolutely maintained in all cases” (Mays 2017: 5), as evidenced in recent debates over grave re-use (see Rugg and Holland 2017).

Baxter’s comments about Spitalfields skeleton No. 2287 arguably reflect a concern that not only is it possible for the living to cause physical harm to the human corpse—and perhaps the ‘soul’—but that we can also ‘wrong’ them, in moral terms, by removing them from the place they expected to rest in perpetuity. As Swain (2002: 95) argues, many of us ascribe to a “cultural pick-and-mix of borrowed ideas and half-forgotten taboos”, many of which have their roots in the “folk theology” of the early to mid-19th century and its mixture of “orthodox, obsolete, and ersatz Christianity and what can only be called quasi-pagan beliefs” (Richardson 2001: 7). The anxiety expressed by archaeologists over the division of the Spitalfields remains surely reflects some of these lingering ideas, exacerbated by the archaeological evidence of the lengths the Spitalfields dead took to protect their mortal remains and bodily integrity from the infamous ‘Resurrection Men’: nefarious body snatchers who stole human corpses from burial grounds to sell to anatomists for the purposes of dissection (see Richardson 2001, see Figure 19, Appendix 1: 396). While such efforts arguably jar with Christian eschatology, they reflect the importance placed on corporeal wholeness and non-disturbance after death common to vernacular religion in Britain at this time (Tarlow 2001b: 250):

In contemporary folk beliefs, the soul was thought to linger around the body after death, at least for a short time, while other mores held that the actions of friends and family could influence the soul’s final destination. There appears to have been a perception that treating the dead with due respect was a means of ensuring the fate of the soul of the deceased as well as the well-being of the bereaved. Dissection offended moral sensibilities by disrupting the usual conventions surrounding the corpse and its disposal while grave robbing violated the sanctity of the grave at a time when the body and its final resting place became an increasing focus for grief and mourning. The concept of bodily resurrection was fundamental to ideas about death and the afterlife in the 18th and 19th centuries and there was great concern that the fragmentation of the corpse would impact on the afterlife (Cherryson 2010: 145).

We might therefore presume that the individuals interred in the Spitalfields crypt would regard ‘disposing’ of the body by cremation with more than a degree of horror, due to both its destructive nature and by virtue of the fact that it was not a funerary
practice that was in use in Britain during this time. Indeed, it was not until 1944 that the Church of England formalised a more relaxed doctrinal view in respect of ‘completeness’ and the resurrection of the body, when they decreed that cremation poses no barrier to resurrection (Cox 1997: 124). As a result, the excavators own ‘resurrection’ work and the use of cremation would have been anathema to the Spitalfields dead, further intensifying the archaeologists’ feelings of guilt. Yet, while the practical, logistical and psychological difficulties encountered at Spitalfields may not be typical of archaeological excavation (Boyle 2015: 41), the inclusion of these issues in the published literature comprise an unusually candid admission that working with human remains can be a challenging experience for archaeologists on all fronts.

2.4. The children of Alder Hey

It didn’t seem right a heart belonging to my child could be part of a collection like butterflies, or insects, something to be visited and looked at (BBC News 2001a).

There is perhaps no starker example of just how physically detached we have become from the dead than in the scandal that arose at the Royal Liverpool Children’s Hospital (Alder Hey) after it became public knowledge that NHS hospitals were retaining the tissues of deceased patients without familial consent. As Taylor (2002: 277) notes, “it is extraordinary that a mother in modern Western society, unlike a mother in virtually any other human culture that has previously existed on the planet, would not know that her dead child’s brain had been removed”, with a “strategically placed hat” all that was required “to conceal the secret of a cranium as empty as a discarded eggshell”. Events at Alder Hey speak volumes about the ways in which the dead are subject to institutional control in 21st century Britain and the deference we accord to professionals in positions of authority (ibid: 276), while the revelations garnered widespread press coverage and laid bare hugely divergent attitudes towards the corpse, with “largely uncomprehending and often unrepentant
hospital doctors on the one hand and traumatised and shocked relatives on the other” (ibid: 277).

The roots of the scandal may be traced back to 1992 and the death of 11 month-old Samantha Rickard during open-heart surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary (BRI) (Boseley 2000). Four years after her death, her mother learned of allegations of excessive mortality rates for paediatric cardiac surgery at the BRI and demanded a copy of her daughter’s medical records from the hospital: inside was a letter confirming that Samantha’s heart had been retained without parental consent (Jones and Whitaker 2009: 50). Confronted with this evidence, the hospital returned the heart in 1997 but, in the meantime, serious concerns about failings in the department at the BRI led to the formation of a public enquiry. During the investigation a medical witness inadvertently revealed that a large collection of children’s organs—including hearts—could also be found at Alder Hey (Hinscliff and Browne 2001), for it was a “commonplace, even routine” practice that had been regarded as unremarkable “just a few decades earlier” (Morgan 2009: 233):

Despite justifications that research using this material had significantly reduced the mortality rate following surgery for a number of heart conditions, the story was picked up by the local and national press (see Seale 2006) where it was framed in the tradition of “body parts stories”, with medical professionals depicted as “macabre and ghoulish monsters” (Tarlow 2011: 102). A further enquiry (The Royal Liverpool Children’s Inquiry Summary and Recommendations 2001; Dewar and Boddington 2004: 463) and its report (The Royal Liverpool Children’s Enquiry Report, also known as the Redfern Report, 2001) brought the issue of unethical organ retention to widespread public attention for the first time and prompted a large scale public outcry. It subsequently emerged that Alder Hey had been systematically stripping the organs from every child who had a post-mortem, even in cases where parents had specifically stated that they did not want a full post-mortem to be performed (Whitaker and Jones 2009: 50):

Overall, the tissue collection at Alder Hey included 2,128 hearts, up to 4,020 foetuses . . . 13 post-natal hearts or parts thereof, 22 late premature/term foetus hearts, 188 eyes, one whole body of a child and a receptacle containing the head of an 11-year-old (Hoppe 2009: no pagination).
A lone pathologist, Professor van Velzen, was singled out for particular vilification when it was revealed he had “lied, fabricated post-mortem reports, abdicated his clinical duties, falsified statistics, and encouraged other staff” to do the same (Jones and Whitaker 2009: 50): deliberately misleading families into believing that they were burying their deceased children intact (Jones and Whitaker 2009: 50), with organs harvested for research into Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) languishing untouched in a basement laboratory (Carter 2001). As a consequence, the ensuing scandal had profound consequences for all those whose work brings them into close proximity with the dead, with an intense questioning erupting around collections of all human remains, irrespective of age.

Following the Alder Hey and Bristol scandals, the Chief Medical Officer (2001) conducted a census of retained organs throughout the UK, revealing the existence of an extensive collection of human ‘material’ across the NHS: “50,000 organs and body parts in museums or archived collections” retained prior to 1970, some “54,000 organs, body parts, stillbirths and foetuses in storage” retained since 1970, and a further “16,000 organs and body parts” stored illegally after coronial post-mortems (Jones and Whitaker 2009: 50-1). The figures speak to a long-standing and widespread practice for tissue to be retained without informed consent: a practice that the Redfern Report (Redfern 2001: 444) concluded “was bound to cause upset and distress when, inevitably, it came to light”. These figures are, however, believed to be a gross underestimation of NHS holdings, for during the time it took for the scandal to come to light, at least 27 hospitals incinerated an unknown number of stored organs as clinical waste after learning that an enquiry had begun (Hall et al. 2001).

This medical scandal sets the scene for a number of themes which will be drawn out of the archaeological case studies featured in this research, such as the particular value ascribed to infant remains, as well as the importance of organs or body parts which retain a symbolic and culturally specific importance in Western society: hearts, brains and heads may all be perceived as housing what may be referred to as the ‘essence’ or ‘soul’ of a person (Alberti 2010: 2; Rebay-Salisbury et al. 2010: 2; Miller and Truog 2012: 53). It also reveals the different ways in which bodies and body parts may be perceived and categorised between those who do, and do not,
engage with the dead body on a professional basis (Tomasini 2008: 442). The Redfern Report bitterly reflects this distinction, speaking of the parents' horror at the breaking up of their children's bodies, quoting emotive terms such as 'butchery', 'mutilation' and 'desecration'. It touches once more on the very real and keenly felt distaste for the fragmentation of the body seen at Christ Church, Spitalfields, which explains why some parents endured up to five separate funerals to achieve the reconstitution of their children's bodies and thus, full social identity:

In one case, the child's brain, heart and lungs were returned to its parents, many years after they had buried what they had thought to have been a whole dead child. A new ceremony was held in which the organs were interred next to the child's body. The surviving children of the couple put teddy bears in the grave as part of the ceremony. As a parent of young children I could feel the burning hurt that must have afflicted those parents. But equally I could find no reference points in established belief systems for what these parents were doing and why. For me this very sad story highlighted the complexity of beliefs with which we must struggle when we come to consider modern British attitudes to physical human remains after death (Swain 2002: 95).

With the last services only taking place in 2010, the ensuing press coverage has foregrounded the importance of foetal personhood, restoring importance to untimely deaths which are seldom talked about publically and all too often marginalised (Morgan 2009: 29, see Figure 20, Appendix 1: 397). Indeed, the exposure of “unethical and abhorrent” body disposal practices revealed in the recent “baby ashes scandal” (see BBC News 2017d)—in which crematoriums across the UK either did not return the ashes of babies to their parents believing it would be ‘too distressing’ for them, or cremated babies with unrelated adults and returned the mixed ashes to the relatives of the latter—reveal the continuing difficulties we face in our familiarity with the material consequences of death and our courage to discuss it openly.

These scandals have not only damaged the delicate relationship of trust between the public and deathworkers—both within and without the medical establishment—but have arguably contributed to an increased scepticism regarding all professional claims to privilege. Meanwhile, the 2004 reformation of The Human Tissue Act—replacing the deficiency of The Human Tissue Act 1961 that regulated the use of human material but which did not require explicit consent from family members for tissue retention—now closely regulates the retention, scientific study and display of human
remains less than 100 years old, with any institution holding material that falls under the remit of the HTA requiring a licence. While this legislation has not affected archaeology practitioners directly, it has significantly contributed to a heightened sensitivity throughout British society about the treatment of the dead and the trust we place in those who work with their remains.

2.5. Performing ‘ontological choreography’

The above controversies ultimately relate to the ambiguous status of the corpse and its dual existence as both an object of study and as the remains of a former living person, with the Alder Hey scandal revealing not so much a divide between these two different philosophical positions, but a painful clash. While the medical profession and, indeed, archaeology, may construe the dead body as material with “no particular emotional or spiritual significance”, this is not a view that is universally shared (Nilsson Stutz and Tarlow 2013: 8). Nevertheless, this dualism is deeply-entrenched within Western cultures and is associated particularly with Descartes and his “division of the reasoning human subject and the inert material object”, but with much deeper roots in ancient Greek philosophy and medieval Christianity’s division between “a divine soul and a worldly body of coarse matter” (Robb 2013: 442). As a result, we generally understand that a person is understood to be composed of two elements: a physical body and an intellectual mind or soul that, at the point of death, separate (ibid.), following which the body becomes an object devoid of any particular significance (Drayton 2013: 257).

This way of understanding the self/body has become historically and culturally associated with the medical profession (Chapter 3.3) and has proved fundamental to the development of anatomical dissection and clinical detachment (Richardson 2001). This preposition, however, also underpins the excavation, study and display of human remains (Franklin 2002: 180), in which the archaeological process itself carries out the separation of body matter from the more nebulous and unknowable ‘self’: enabling a dehumanisation and objectification of human remains which enable
practitioners to engage in what is essentially transgressive work (Prentice 2013: 34). This understanding of the object/subject divide is so deeply engrained in Western cultures that any contravention of these categorisations unsettle us deeply (Robb 2013: 443), yet they may also be exploited for their shock value, as with the success of Gunther von Hagens’ controversial Body Worlds exhibition (see Figure 21, Appendix 1: 398): the most successful touring exhibition in the world, in which human corpses are transformed into works of art through a process of anatomical dissection and plastination (see Whalley 2007), its success apparently riffing upon our conceptual confusion as to whether we should be filled with admiration or repulsion (Robb 2013: 443).

Yet, as discussed, even in traditional Christian belief this division is not so clear-cut, with arguments that “the body is a worthless material shell once the soul has departed” contradicted by alternative ecclesiastical discourse which regards “the presence of the physical body as necessary for the eventual heavenly resurrection of the dead” (Robb 2013: 443). In 21st century Britain we also see the dilemma that whilst the dead body may be regarded “medically as a broken and no longer functioning mechanism or spiritually as an empty vessel whose connection with the soul has been severed”, it is also fundamentally represents “a person to mourn” (ibid.). We therefore oscillate between regarding the corpse as a “purely material mechanism” and as a “person in its own right” (ibid: 442), in what may be referred to as a form of ‘ontological choreography’ (see Cussins 1996; Thompson 2007).

This situation is further complicated by our understanding of death which, together with what we should do with the dead, has changed radically in the last century (Haddow 2005: 94): medical advances such as organ donation, for example, have “placed a tremendous moral pressure on people to accept the idea that death is an event whose occurrence can be established with precision” (Robben 2004a: 5). Indeed, archaeology itself treats death as a “straightforward, self-evident biological fact of little interest . . . [save that it] creates a specific class of fixture we can dig up and study” (Robb 2013: 441). Furthermore, we are used to seeing funerary archaeology justified as a conduit for studying “past social organization, ethnic affiliation, cultural
relationships”, all the while ignoring the specificity of mortality itself (Nilsson Stutz and Tarlow 2013: 2).

Yet, as Koudounaris (2011: 11) observes, death may be defined as simply being the line of demarcation that separates the dead from the living, thus “within that axiomatic statement is an important implication: the line can be fluid” and it may vary considerably between cultures. While in Western societies we may therefore perceive of death as representing “an unequivocal, non-negotiable, and irreducible” boundary, in many others it is simply conceived “as a transition [where] a dialogue between the living and the dead forms a meaningful part of social discourse” (ibid.). As Graham (2009: 53) therefore argues, “as long as people remain alive whose sense of self depends upon on-going encounters and interactions with a person who is dead”, so too may the deceased remain ‘alive’ (Chapter 5.2.): personhood may thus continue to be actively constituted, “adjusted, negotiated and even contested after death” and may, in some instances, assume an even greater significance (ibid.).

2.6. The human remains ‘crisis’

What can be shown, what should not be shown—few issues arouse more public clamour (Sontag 2003:69).

2.6.1. Repatriating the dead

The gaze is never innocent, and to ignore the particular journeys that body parts take into . . . museums is to be complicit in acts of historical injustice (McCorristine 2015: 1).

Nowhere has this difference in view regarding the ontological status of the dead and the finality of death become clearer than in the ethical debates surrounding the curation and display of archaeological human remains (Riggs 2014: 203), in which the understanding that deaths marks the transition from person to object has perhaps, at times, “all too easily absolved” archaeologists from their ethical responsibility towards the dead (Ion 2016: 159). This is particularly pertinent in regards to the
process of repatriating human remains—together with their associated funerary artefacts—that were collected under the dubious circumstances of colonialism to their communities of origin in North America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand (Fforde, Hubert, and Turnbull 2002; Fforde 2004; Swain 2016: 172). Museum collections of these remains reflect the values and ideologies of this time, many of which are now deeply troubling to 21st century audiences and pose significant challenges for museum curators in today’s ‘post-colonial, post-industrial, globalising geopolitical climate’ (Gallagher 2010: 72, see Figure 22, Appendix 1: 399).

The passing of the Native Graves Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in the US in 1990—which “compelled the inventory of human remains and associated material from all federally-funded institutions and the transfer to lineal descendants and culturally affiliated groups” (Jenkins 2012: 2)—marked a radical move from the presumption that museums and academic institutions should hold human remains in perpetuity for the purposes of research, to a position that accepts that the excavation, retention, study and display of human remains as scientific objects can be interpreted by various groups as an affront to their spiritual and cultural beliefs (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 114). Many Native peoples possess very different methods of constructing knowledge and identity “that do not rest on the DNA analyses and radiocarbon dating procedures conducted in laboratories” found in Western cultures (ibid: 213), and thus wish to see the remains of their ancestors reburied. From their perspective, such remains embody the “intimate tie that exists among themselves, their ancestors and the land”, as well as evidencing the long history of atrocities they have endured under colonial powers (ibid.).

With its roots in the civil rights movements of the United States and Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, repatriation constitutes part of the broader framework of the politics of recognition and reparation (see Smith 2007), in which indigenous communities have fought to regain the right to define themselves, their histories, and their identities (Nilsson Stutz 2013: 2). Nonetheless, the restitution of these remains has not been without its detractors and it represents a divisive issue within mortuary archaeology (see Tsosie 1997; Thornton 2002; Turnbull 2002; Hubert and Fforde 2004; Fforde, Hubert and Turnbull 2004; Jenkins 2011; Sayer 2010a), with issue
most commonly taken around the perceived loss of research ‘material’ (see Nilsson Stutz 2013: 2). Indeed, critics argue that repatriation stands in “direct conflict with what museums are designed to do, which is to keep in trust world history for all to enjoy” (Harris 2015: 139). Nevertheless, as Giles and Williams (2016: 2) note, the process has resulted in “some richly rewarding conversations and engagements” between archaeologists and descendant communities that have encouraged the scientific investigation of human remains which might never have been studied were they not subject to claims for repatriation, complemented by different rewards for showing ‘respect’ for different beliefs and cultural values.

2.6.2. A crisis of cultural authority?

The “impetus for reappraising the place of human remains in British museums” arguably emerged slightly later than it did in the US (Swain 2016: 173; see Jenkins 2011), triggered by claims for repatriation from abroad by the later 1990s and exacerbated both by the furore provoked by Gunther von Hagens’ Body Worlds, as well as the high profile Alder Hey controversy. As one of the foremost opponents to repatriation, Jenkins (2011) argues that efforts by academics to draw attention to the ethics of displaying the dead and the return of human remains has little to do with righting the wrongs of the past and everything to do with an internal crisis of purpose within UK heritage institutions. She identifies this as the beginning of a ‘crisis of cultural authority’ in which the “problem from North America” was brought to the UK by key international academic figures, such as Fforde (2004), who drew explicit parallels between the retention of archaeological human remains collected under colonialism with the practice of retaining human organs without informed consent. Finding purchase within an ideologically-receptive heritage sector, this ‘problem’ was then advanced by “issue entrepreneurs”: individuals working within the museum profession itself who sought to expunge museums of their post-colonial guilt (Jenkins 2011: 13). Jenkins is not alone in this opinion; Swain (2002: 98-99) makes a similar case about the Museum of London’s exhibition London Bodies in 1999 which, while well-received by the public, caused some concern among his colleagues:
The exhibition’s aim was to bring scholarly study to maximum public awareness through innovative interpretation methods. This is surely the prime purpose of any museum, and the prime purpose of any archaeologist. This view is in conflict, however, with that which has recently been presented by a number of academics, one that I find disturbing. Recently I have found myself at a number of conferences defending the Museum’s approach for *London Bodies* against academics who feel that any display of human remains is unethical, and that the excavation and study of human remains in general should be curtailed. My impression is that some of these views originate from university archaeologists who have had experience of working in North America or Australia where the beliefs of native peoples do mean that the disturbance of the dead is unacceptable. However I would argue that it does not follow that this experience should lead us to a single set of standards for all remains (Swain 2002: 98-99).

Jenkins (2011: 10) argues that while museums have been sites of cultural authority since their foundation in the 18th and 19th centuries, she proposes that in recent years external pressures—market forces, disenchantment with Enlightenment thinking, post-modernism, post-colonialism and cultural relativism—have led to a critical self-evaluation by museum professionals who now question the traditional justification and remit of the museum, which she believes to be the “pursuit and dissemination of knowledge”. She argues this purpose has been all but forgotten in the haste to distance the museum from its colonial legacy and the context by which human remains were acquired in the past. In essence, she claims that facilitating repatriation has become a strategy by which museums seek to secure “new legitimacy”: reinventing the role of the museum in British society from a scholarly and scientific authority to an agent of social reform and change (ibid.).

Yet, the place and purpose of collections of human remains has both informed, and been informed by, recent developments in thinking about museum collections as a whole, in which the “importance of significance, access, ownership, interpretation and [the] tangible and intangible properties” of objects have been questioned and debated (Townley 2000: 25). Museums have undergone radical changes since the 1970s, with political and economic pressures forcing its professionals to shift their attention from the sanctity of their collections towards the needs of their visitors. A growing cultural diversity agenda in the UK has also sought to represent ethnic minorities and other marginal groups within heritage settings. The image of a once “exclusive and elitist” institution has therefore shifted towards a focus on community and identity, with museums acknowledging that as they are largely funded from the public purse, so
they have an obligation to engage with all their stakeholders and to serve the needs of an increasingly multicultural audience (Ross 2004: 84; see Figure 23, Appendix 1: 400). Museum professionals have thus seen their role transition from ‘keepers’ to ‘sharers’ (Jenkins 2011: 71), keen to create more socially-inclusive spaces and to acknowledge their authority over the past no longer exists beyond reproach.

2.6.3. The discourse of ‘respect’

Many of us sense that it [the excavation, study, storage, and exhibition of human remains] may not be quite right. We cannot identify or articulate exactly why, so we compromise. We do it, but “with due respect” (Swain 2002: 97).

As British culture entered an intense period of questioning as to whether all collections of human remains—regardless of age—were ethically problematic (see Figure 24, Appendix 1: 401), one concept came to define the discourse surrounding the fate of the corpse and its constituent parts: ‘respect’ (Scarre 2013: 667). The term is peppered throughout guidance documents produced for those who work brings them into contact with the dead. Whilst its usage for archaeologists predates the Alder Hey scandal (making its first notable appearance in the Vermillion Accord on Human Remains, adopted by the World Archaeological Congress in 1989), its importance arguably entered both the academic and public consciousness more forcefully after these events. As a consequence, more scrutiny is now paid to how professionals interact with human remains than ever before.

Tarlow (2001b: 245) thus argues that archaeology has lost its “innocence”, replaced by a “more critical self-awareness and self-regulation that has intersected with the growing professionalisation of the discipline”. This development, while largely positive, has created a level of anxiety amongst archaeologists that their interactions with human remains may land them, through no fault of their own, in an “ethical quagmire” (Zimmerman 2013: 98). Certainly, they have had to adhere to key publications such as the Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums (DCMS 2005) enshrining the need to treat the dead with the aforementioned respect. Yet actual definitions are rare and culturally contingent: such documents often
constitute little more than an “aspirant code of ethics” relying on the professionalism and proclivities of both individuals and institutions in their implementation (Redfern and Clegg 2013: 2; see Figure 25, Appendix 1: 402 and Figure 26, Appendix 1: 403).

‘Respect’ can mean very different things to different groups of people, both past and present (Tarlow 2001b: 249), and the recent treatment of the remains of King Richard III perhaps reveals just how heavily its application rests on our own cultural attitudes (see Figure 27, Appendix 1: 404). Despite the repeated challenges faced by archaeology practitioners (see Kilmister 2003; Carroll 2005; Cambridgeshire Archaeology 2006; Alberti et al. 2009; BDRC 2009; Manchester Museum 2011), the widespread practice of displaying human remains in British culture has retained its popularity. Nevertheless, there appeared to be no question of exhibiting the remains of the king, reflecting the deference we continue to accord the monarchy. Furthermore, all visual material surrounding the remains was tightly controlled and at the press conference in which the official identification of the skeleton was delivered to the media, all journalists were required to sign a declaration that they would make no attempt to photograph or record the remains (Kennedy 2013). In addition, they were required to remain silent as they “bore witness” to the skeleton, watched over by a security guard and two university chaplains (ibid.).

As a result, the remains did not make an appearance at an open day held at the University of Leicester in advance of the reburial ceremony, unlike that of “Skeleton 3” which was excavated from the Grey Friars site at the same time as that of Richard III. The remains of this non-royal individual were used to demonstrate to members of the public the ways in which osteoarchaeologists ‘read’ the human skeleton, yet their appearance at the event perhaps reflects social inequalities of respect derived from a preoccupation with class (see Cannadine 2000). Similarly, when the Church of England and English Heritage sought to standardise the treatment of excavated human remains from Christian burial grounds (see Mays 2005), the distinction in treatment between pagan and Christian human remains sowed the seeds of what was to become the “reburial issue” in Britain. Pagan and druidic groups (see Aburrow 2007)—who claim to share an affinity with ancient human remains of British origin—began to accuse archaeologists and museum curators of failing to treat
prehistoric remains with the same dignity and respect afforded to their Christian counterparts (Giles 2009: 79).

2.6.4. The reburial issue in Britain

Every day in Britain, sacred Druid sites are surveyed and excavated, with associated finds catalogued and stored for the archaeological record. Many of these sites include the sacred burials of our ancestors. Their places of rest are opened during the excavation, their bones removed and placed in museums for the voyeur to gaze upon, or stored in cardboard boxes in archaeological archives . . . I believe we, as Druids, should be saying 'Stop this now. These actions are disrespectful to our ancestors.' When archaeologists desecrate a site through excavation and steal our ancestors and their guardians . . . It is a theft . . . We should assert our authority as the physical guardians of esoteric lore. We should reclaim our past (Davies 1997: 12-3).

According to Jenkins (2011), the contestation surrounding human remains in museum collections, coupled with qualms over repatriation, created a perfect storm in which British neo-pagans could seize the opportunity to make their own claims on the ancient dead (Restall Orr and Bienkowski 2006; Randerson 2007; Smith and May 2007). The most high-profile of these occurred in June 2006, when English Heritage and the National Trust received a request from Paul Davies, Reburial Officer for the Council of British of Druid Orders (CoBDO) for the reburial of Neolithic human remains excavated between 1929 and 1935 at Windmill Hill and Kennet Avenue, now held by the Alexander Keiller Museum in Avebury (Thackray and Payne 2010: 2; see Figure 28, Appendix 1: 405).

As an area of great archaeological significance, the international importance of the prehistoric monument complex at Avebury is recognised by its World Heritage site status (ibid: 4), while the human remains—displayed for over 50 years—embody considerable research potential in furthering our knowledge and understanding of the past (ibid.). Nevertheless, the objections raised by Davies resulted in an extensive consultation over the fate of the remains, with the final report—published in April 2010—ultimately recommending their retention within the museum (Blain and Wallis 2012: 60).
Pagan grievances over the display of the dead primarily lay in the importance they place on the original place of burial, for they argue that the “process of decay in-situ is a vital way in which ancestral remains are returned to a broader cycle of life and regeneration” (Giles 2009: 79). As such, they often express distress at the way in which human remains are excavated and “exhibited to gawping spectators” in public settings with what they perceive as a lack of reverence (ibid: 79). Yet, while CoBDO is not representative of the diverse spectrum of beliefs found within British Paganism (Sayer 2011: 12), a number of pagan groups in favour of reburial have, like Paul Davies, adopted the language and tone of the repatriation debate in the post-colonial New World, thereby aligning pagans with Native American and other indigenous groups voicing similar concerns (Wallis and Blain 2006: 4).

These claims have been met with fierce criticism by a large number of academics, including Jenkins (2011: 4) and Sayer (2010a: 120), who argue pagans neither constitute an ethnic group, nor have they suffered from colonial or historical repression. Both Sayer and Jenkins argue that pagan demands are less about the remains of the dead than their own contemporary cultural legitimacy: seeking to be recognised by cultural organisations such as the Manchester Museum, whose relationship with Honouring the Ancient Dead (HAD) has, in the past, been heavily criticised. This former pagan group who initially campaigned for the reburial of prehistoric remains from the British Isles, but who now advocate respect for human remains and their associated funereal artefacts (HAD: no date), were deeply embedded in the temporary display of Lindow Man 2008-9, to mixed reviews and academic approbation (see Giles 2009, see Figure 29, Appendix 1: 406).

As Tarlow (2015: 10) notes, protests surrounding the excavation of human remains often represent “stress points for the eruption of existing tensions around other grievances or differences”, for human remains function as ‘symbolic vehicles’ which the living can manipulate to express specific messages. Such is their effectiveness in this capacity that the phenomenon is termed ‘dead body politics’ or ‘necropower’ (see Rose 1999; Verdery 1999; Davies 2002; Vukov 2003; Lyon-Johnson 2005; Jassal 2014), for while the remains of the dead have no meaning in and of themselves, “words can be put into their mouths”, thereby allowing those who claim the dead
most vociferously to make them ‘speak’ as they see fit. While the heritage profession therefore remains wary of minority beliefs dominating the human remains debate to the exclusion of other groups and points of view (Sayer 2009: 203), this period of contention has forced professionals to reflect on their own research agendas and personal motivations (Sayer 2011), as well as drawing attention to the importance of spiritual and emotional connections with the dead (Blain and Wallis 2012: 60): as Wheeler (1954 cited in Moshenska 2009: 819) mused, all “too often we dig up mere things, unrepentantly forgetful that our proper aim is to dig up people”.

2.6.5. Legislative difficulties: The Burial Act 1857

In recent years a new set of challenges has emerged for the archaeology profession, courtesy of the British government and its revised interpretation of 19th century burial legislation. Passed during the Victorian period, it was originally designed to protect the public from exposure to corpses, grave-robbing and the more unpleasant aspects of grave clearance, but is now also applied to contemporary excavations of archaeological human remains (Sayer 2010 35). In 2007, responsibility for issuing licences for the removal of human remains passed from the Home Office to the newly-formed Ministry of Justice (MoJ), but the transition of administrative duties was besieged by problems when the MoJ failed to consistently issue archaeological licences. In some cases they were refused altogether, while in others they were granted but with the legal requirement to rebury any remains within just two months: a rule which had previously applied only to commercial cemetery clearance companies “that have no scientific interest in the bodies they exhume” (Sayer 2010a: 47).

For many archaeologists, as Giles and Williams (2016: 4) note, “this seemed to play to the calls” of minority pagan groups within the UK. As such, the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), Council for British Archaeology (CBA), and English Heritage approached the MoJ to clarify the situation, which responded that it was concerned that the previous interpretation and application of Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 (governing the archaeological excavation of human remains) did not give the
government the power to grant licences for archaeological excavation and that it was therefore not possible, or necessary, to issue licences for any remains regardless of their date of interment, except in the case of extant burial grounds (Gallagher 2008: unpaginated). The effect was to remove statutory regulation of exhumation for many excavations of human remains by archaeologists and developers (ibid.), a situation that caused archaeologists a great deal of concern as it would leave them without statutory protection: excavations of the archaeological dead would be governed by common law, under which indignities to a corpse are an offence (ibid.).

Archaeologists thus mounted a campaign to be reintegrated into a system that had become “entrenched in professional practice” (Sayer 2011: 11). In essence, such licences were required to excavate human remains of all periods (Parker Pearson et al. 2011), requiring the nomination of an osteological expert, as well as the identification of a place of eventual deposition: either a place of reburial or a museum (ibid.). Furthermore, standard conditions, regardless of the age of the remains, “included consultation with a local public health official prior to excavation” and the screening of excavations from public view so as not to cause offence (ibid.; see Figure 30, Appendix 1: 407). Despite these anachronistic conditions—thousands of people watch the excavation of human remains on television every year and see them in museums, and yet are, confusingly, not permitted to watch human remains being excavated in-situ unless the dig applies for a special dispensation—the system functioned well (ibid.).

In early 2008, however, the MoJ changed its view again and, “without any published explanation or discussion of its reasons, stated that all human remains would have to be reburied after a two-year period of scientific analysis” (Parker Pearson et al 2011: 6). The profession thus entered a period in which ancient remains were treated in an “entirely dissimilar manner” to the way in which we treat the dead in the present (Sayer 2011: 11), for while cremations found in an archaeological context required a licence to excavate and were to be reburied after two years, it is ironically not a legal requirement to bury modern cremations (ibid.). Furthermore, the new licences no longer included the option of curation in a museum and archaeologists became concerned that not only would they be removed from public view, but the possibility
of long-term scientific curation and investigation would ultimately be destroyed (Parker Pearson et al. 2011: 5).

After a very public battle, in June 2012 the MoJ finally relented and granted archaeologists the authority to be able to choose whether human remains were retained for scientific study or reburied (Pitts 2012). It has subsequently acknowledged that the current burial legislation is not well suited to the needs of archaeologists, yet as Giles and Williams (2016: 4) note, “it is unlikely that the law will be reformed in the near future”. At the time of writing, therefore, it is still only possible to apply for extensions to the initial two-year period, although the MoJ has declared that there is room to apply the provisions with more flexibility. Nevertheless, the requirement to screen excavations of human remains from public view still stands (Antoine 2014: 5).

As Gallagher (2008) notes, it is curious that the MoJ took the decision to reinterpret the burial legislation in such a way that it exposed archaeologists excavating human remains to potential prosecution. Parker Pearson et al. (2011: 9) have raised concerns that the confusion caused by the MoJ reveals “faint echoes” of a “pernicious religiosity that seeks to curtail the practice of science”. It is of note that the 1857 Burial Act makes no reference to reburial (it focuses solely on the removal of remains, which it was designed to legislate); as such, they postulate that a religious influence may have underpinned the legal advice received by the MoJ and that it may have reached its position through one or more civil servants holding fundamentalist Christian beliefs about the resurrection of the body (ibid.). This possibility is indeed cause for concern. Yet it is not clear on what basis this assumption was made: Shelbourn (2015: 20) suggests that the campaigning archaeologists may have been “drawing analogies with restrictions on stem cell research in the United States imposed after pressure from fundamentalist Christians”. Whatever the specific cause, it arguably reveals the potential impact that can be made by the personal beliefs or attitudes of figures in positions of authority upon access to, and interpretation of, the material remains of the past—further sequestering the dead from view (Walter 2018: 10)—while the crisis itself shines a light on the complicated political and legislative landscape that archaeologists currently operate within.
2.7. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the multifaceted emotional, political, cultural and legal context in which the practice of mortuary takes place and, as a consequence, its recent fraught history, thereby revealing the complexity of views, beliefs, and attitudes that surround death and the dead in Britain. Perhaps the strongest themes to emerge are the tensions provoked by the ambiguity of the remains of the dead, as both ‘something’ and ‘someone’, which have elicited considerable debate over what may constitute appropriate treatment: an issue that is set to continue to incite consternation as archaeologists begin to broach new issues regarding the archaeological dead, such as their ability to assume new ‘afterlives’ in the digital world (see Meyers Emery and Killgrove 2015; Meyers and Killgrove 2014; Meyers and Williams 2014; Williams and Atkin 2015). As Aronson (2016: 9) observes, however, “controversies give us a window into what people care most about” and it is clear that the fate of the dead is of paramount importance to many individuals living in British society, irrespective of religious or spiritual belief.

Current mortuary archaeology practice has therefore been shaped both from within the discipline itself and by external events. As a consequence, archaeologists have arguably become more accustomed to “responding to arguments couched in the language of emotion and spirituality rather than science” (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 9). Yet, while for some practitioners emotional relationships with the dead are understood to be a valid form of interaction with the past and may even be included in the archaeological decision-making process, I would argue that the challenges that have besieged the discipline in recent years have contributed to a professional culture in which the exploration of the emotive impact of mortuary archaeology practice on archaeologists themselves has been marginalised and suppressed, due to the way in which such admissions may be viewed as destabilising the authority of its own practitioners.
Chapter Three

An attachment to emotional detachment

As archaeologists we are trained to distance ourselves from what we study — the alienation of our subject lies at the heart of archaeological methodology (Buchli and Lucas 2001: 10).

3.1. Introduction

It is said that “all professionals develop a perspective different from, and sometimes at odds with, that of the public” (Friedson 1970 cited in Smith and Kleinman 1989: 56) and this is perhaps particularly true of those who “dare to enter the realm of the forbidden and the taboo”: working with the dead (Hafferty 1991: 1). While the practice of mortuary archaeology may be considered as a form of deathwork, archaeologists may still experience feelings of disgust at encountering fleshed human remains or apprehension about removing the dead from their place of burial. As professionals, however, they are arguably expected to ‘override’ these reactions (Flatman and Rockman 2012: 21), even while contemporary British society may be characterised by the “almost unchallenged reign” of emotion (Dixon 2015: 2), as the infamous ‘stiff upper lip’—“the convention of not disclosing one’s feelings, even in the most extreme of circumstances”(Francis 2017)—has given way to a more “forthright era of emotional expression” (Dixon 2015: 2).
As such, while all of the participant interviews in this study revealed that they had been affected by working with human remains in one way or another, this was frequently downplayed or was not recognised as such by individuals themselves. Some were visibly taken aback by even being questioned about the affectivity of mortuary archaeology practice, while a number of them struggled to answer the question directly as to whether they had ever experienced an ‘emotional response’ in regards to their work, revealing this information instead through subsequent questions relating to archaeology and human remains. This chapter therefore explores where this ambivalence towards emotional expression stems from, beginning with what is arguably considered the professional “ideal” in terms of attitude and behaviour for those dealing with the dead: detachment.

Drawing on research conducted within medical anthropology regarding practitioners’ relationships with the human body and death, this chapter opens with an initial consideration of the origins of emotional detachment within scientific disciplines, tracing its roots to the birth of modern medicine, before considering the historic ties between archaeological and anatomical practice. Next, the chapter analyses the ‘irrationality’ and gendering of emotion, before considering the impact this has on practitioners of mortuary archaeology, particularly women and the ways in which they are perceived by their peers. This introduces dramaturgical theories concerning the roles of ‘feeling rules’ and ‘emotion work’ in constructing and maintaining a professional persona, which will be used to explore my participants’ perceptions of the importance of emotional detachment and in the development of an “archaeological mentality” among students of the discipline (Rajala 2016).

The chapter then explores the concept of ‘desensitisation’ towards death and the use of this term as a self-descriptor by a number of participants in this study, linking its usage to the ‘performance’ of professionalism. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of ‘scientific fascination’ and its prevalence among archaeologists as a response to human remains, arguing that while it undoubtedly acts as a form of emotional detachment from the remains of the dead, it might
also be understood as a form of *attachment*, albeit to a different set of values and feelings.

### 3.2. Understanding emotion

What is an emotion and how does it differ from, say, a feeling? Defining these terms continues to be an area of debate, yet for the purposes of this study we might settle on the definition provided by Shouse (2005), who argues that feelings are “*personal* and *biographical* [own emphasis] because every person has a distinct set of previous sensations from which to draw when interpreting and labelling their feelings”. Emotions, on the other hand, are *social* and constitute a projection or display of our feelings and thus “can be either genuine or feigned” (ibid.). Tarlow (2000: 713) explains how human emotion has often been considered in binary terms as either intrinsically biological and universal in nature, or as social and culturally relative. While it is, in essentialist terms, “a stimulus response associated with physiological changes to the human body that affect heart rate, blood pressure, hormones, and neurotransmitters” and such biological processes may be similar cross-culturally (Hill 2013: 597), *how* these are understood, experienced, and expressed may vary widely and ultimately reflect specific cultural norms and values (Turner 2005: 20), as Hill (2013: 597-8) describes:

> What elicits disgust and how that disgust is expressed behaviourally, for example, varies by culture. Proximity to a dead body provokes disgust among many people living in the post-industrial West where corpses tend to be whisked away and handled by professionals. Yet such a response would have been atypical among 18th-century Anglo-Americans accustomed to high infant mortality, the frequent death of women in childbirth, and the practice of preparing corpses for burial at home. Behavioural responses to feelings of disgust are similarly variable—whether one flinches, remains stoic, or cries out is the product of enculturation and reflects social factors such as age, sex, and social role.

As Hamilakis (2013: 30) observes, “bodies and beings are defined primarily by their capacity to affect and be affected”, a concept that has itself proved to be of intense scholarly interest in recent years, as attempts have been made to pin down an idea so abstract it “cannot be fully realised in language” (Shouse 2005). Affect might be best
understood as arising “in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon . . . Affect . . . is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing” (Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 1). This study therefore argues that it is the presence of the dead body—or the remains thereof—and its capacity to affect, together with the way in which people understand the human corpse, which “create the situation to which people respond and the range of appropriate responses” (Robb 2009: 101).

Yet, the corpse can be conceptualised in various ways—as a “threat to public health, as a sacred object, as an object of considerable political or metaphysical power, as an aesthetic medium, as a source of nutrients, [or] as a commodity” to name just a few (Olson 2016b: 327). Different groups will therefore use different ‘body concepts’ or ways of understanding to make sense of, and ultimately exercise authority over, the dead: no single body concept therefore serves “as the true and proper way of knowing the dead human body in all contexts or for all purposes” (ibid.). This idea that there are different ways of seeing, understanding and responding to the dead body is of critical importance in understanding how deathworkers—archaeologists included—manage their personal feelings in regards to their role as professionals, and nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the practice of medicine and in the arena of anatomical dissection in particular, to which the practice of archaeology is intimately linked.

### 3.3. Cultivating ‘a necessary inhumanity’: The origins of emotional detachment

A challenge for those working with the dead is to relinquish a preoccupation with the maintenance of distance and detachment as a condition for having privileged access to the dead and the authority to interpret their remains (Renshaw and Powers 2016: 171).

In an introductory lecture to his students, the 18th century surgeon and anatomist, William Hunter, remarked to his students: “Anatomy is the Basis of Surgery, it informs the Head, guides the hand, and familiarises the heart to a kind
of necessary Inhumanity” (Richardson 2001: 30-1). Then, as now, cadaver dissection was considered a crucial part of medical education and a transformative moment in the construction of a medical student’s professional identity (Jones and Whitaker 2009: 40, see Figure 31, Appendix 1: 408). As Montross (2007: 28–29) observes, “most of us, I think, harbour an ingrained, innate aversion to doing wilful harm to the body”, for it provokes an “inescapable feeling of wrong”. Dissection thus introduces students not only to the human cadaver and its nudity, anonymity, and the physical presence of mortality, but also to “the emotional intensity of destroying a human body” (Prentice 2013: 34).

The act of dissection requires an individual to work against “many ethical, legal, and religious traditions that prohibit doing damage to living and dead bodies” (ibid.). The first glimpse of a cadaver is often a highly emotional experience for neophyte medical students, with “the first cut, even more so” (Allen 2015). Indeed, a study by Finkelstein and Mathers (1990) revealed that student reactions to dissection “bore a striking resemblance to post-traumatic stress disorder”: a response to a transgressive experience that was, of course, shared by archaeology practitioners at Christ Church, Spitalfields (Chapter 2.3.). Yet, there exists an expectation—held by both medics and the lay public alike—that medical students will learn to ‘control’ any difficult feelings that may arise in the presence of the human body, dead or alive, and respond to its physicality with “reason and restrained emotionality” (Coombs and Goldman 1973: 342).

This is due to the belief that “efficiency should not be sullied by the irrationality of personal feelings”, especially where emotions affect the ability of physicians to think, communicate and act effectively (Hancock and Tyler 2001:130). Students learn this ‘professional stoicism’ through the “hidden curriculum” of medical education which is acquired through ‘socialisation’ (Piemonte 2015: 381): the process by which an individual learns how to interact with others and become a member of a specific group. Hafferty (1988: 345) argues that this occurs through observing and interacting with instructors and peers, as well as through practical training. Yet, as he also notes, this involves more than the mere acquisition of technical skills or knowledge, but instead the “internalisation of attitudes, values,
and outlooks with respect to such skills and knowledge” (ibid.). This process of enculturation is not unique to the medical subculture: it is incumbent on new entrants to any profession to assimilate its “unspoken rules, attitudes and lore” in order to be accepted as a member (Holtorf 2006: 83). A key part of the ‘hidden curriculum’ for deathwork professions, therefore, is learning how to manage and express one’s feelings in relation to the most ‘troublesome’ areas of one’s practice. Research by Fox (1988) indicates that for medical students the process of cadaver dissection plays an important role in this process and constitutes what she refers to as an “attitude learning sequence”—defined as an event that has a “strong emotional, symbolic, and rite-of-passage impact on students” (Fox 2011: 100)—ushering them into a new way of seeing, thinking and feeling.

It is in the anatomy laboratory that students learn to ‘embody’ Hunter’s “necessary inhumanity”: now more commonly referred to as ‘clinical detachment’, but perhaps more appropriately as ‘affective neutrality’ (Parsons 1951) or ‘detached concern’ (Fox 1979). Both of the latter terms better reflect the “tensions, ambiguities, and ambivalence” that surround anatomical dissection (Hafferty 1991: 14), but regardless of nomenclature, they all refer to the same cognitive protection afforded to professionals through the suppression of many of the otherwise expected “physical and emotional responses to the wilful mutilation of the body of another human being” (Richardson 2001: 30). Yet, in learning to suppress their feelings, Robbins et al. (2008: 189) argue that medical students are assimilated into a “peculiar style of coping with death and dying”. Indeed, so successful were some early medical practitioners in depersonalising the human corpse, that they were able to dissect the bodies of their own relatives (Richardson 2001: 31). William Harvey, for example, anatomised both his father and sister in the 16th century, and while this behaviour was, of course, highly unusual even for the time, it illustrates the extent to which some medical practitioners can mentally reframe their actions to as to enable them to complete a task that would otherwise be considered emotionally annihilating (ibid: 30-1).

In recent years, however, medical practitioners have found themselves repeatedly castigated for their distanced—and distancing—approach to patients (Howarth
1996: 75–76), with clinical detachment increasingly perceived as symbolising a range of social harms, including “authoritarianism and hierarchy, being out of touch, bureaucratic coldness and unresponsiveness, a lack of empathy, and passivity and inaction”, as typified by the Alder Hey scandal (Candea et al. 2015: 1, see Chapter 2.4). Many of these accusations have been similarly levelled at archaeologists, as calls for the repatriation and reburial of human remains have become more strident. As we thus move into a more emotionally expressive era, there is arguably a growing tension in the training of deathwork professionals, for whilst they have one foot in the ‘lay’ world, we still expect such individuals to be able to think, feel and act differently in regards to death and the dead (Hafferty 1991: 3-4). Despite its potential ramifications for practitioners’ mental health and emotional well-being, therefore, detachment remains the hallmark of professional behaviour and is seen as “functionally superior to the corresponding lay modes of looking, thinking, and feeling” (ibid: 3). As such, emotional detachment has come to be viewed as a ‘necessary prerequisite’ in all professions that deal with the dead and which call for their practitioners to break the taboos to be found in Western cultures surrounding the disturbance and destruction of the human corpse (Richardson 2001: 31).

3.3.1. ‘Dissecting the earth’: The relationship between archaeology and anatomy

Scientific archaeology does not deal in emotions (Daniell 1997: 126).

Developing in parallel—with some corpses “subject to the examination of doctors” and others “exhumed for study by antiquarians” (Crossland 2009: 102)—the practices of archaeology and anatomy are rooted in the same view of the body. This emerged from the empirical, ‘rational’ modes of thought of Enlightenment philosophy, in which the body was approached as something to be “dissected, analysed, and eventually mastered” (Crawford 2000: 220), with both disciplines viewing death as a moment of “the separation of the non-tangible
aspects of self from the body” and an ontological shift from subject to object (see Chapter 2.5, Haddow 2005: 97; see Figure 32, Appendix 1: 409).

Many of the attitudes and practices that underpin the ability of anatomists to take a body apart may also be found, therefore, within those who excavate, study and curate human remains (see Crossland 2009). Indeed, the act of excavation is often compared to autopsy (see Lucas 2004; Moshenska 2006; Demoule 2011) or described as the “careful archaeological dissection of the earth” (Brown III and Harris 1993: 10): both archaeology and anatomy represent “methodologically analogous and comparably irreproducible” forms of practice (Demoule 2011: 24), performed using specialised tools and recording methods, and carried out by professionals and academics in “officially sanctioned contexts” (Moshenska 2006: 93–94).

Yet, the archaeological investigation of death and burial also has its roots in tomb robbery, with human remains disturbed since the medieval period in order to answer “specific research questions” (Stout 2013: 7), such as determining the sanctity of holy bodies through their degree of preservation (Crossland 2009: 113). Antiquarians also took to ‘investigating’ church crypts, with these ‘proto-archaeologists’ opening lead coffins and “smelling, touching and even tasting the body liquor” found inside (Cherryson et al. 2012: 160): an act that Crossland (2009: 113) notes seems “grossly transgressive” today and which also stands in stark contrast to modern attitudes towards both risk and respect (Cherryson et al. 2012: 160).

Early curiosity cabinets were therefore filled with both medical ‘specimens’ and antiquities, while many antiquarians, such as Thomas Browne and William Stukeley, were also trained physicians (Crossland 2009: 112). By the 19th century, an interest in anatomy thus went “hand in hand with the study of the past”, and “medical men” routinely collected and analysed ancient human crania alongside more modern ‘specimens’ (Crossland 2009: 112). It was at this time that the remains of non-Christian indigenous people—plundered “with impunity so long as it was done with some semblance of scientific purpose” (Harries 2016: 2)—
began to enter museum collections. Classified “using a presumptive, racial and evolutionary taxonomy” (Harris 2015: 139), such collections were used to make observations and comparisons between ‘primitive’ and European bodies, as scholars looked for signs of “cultural evolution” and “national characteristics” in the “biological disparities” between sets of remains (Sofaer 2006: 14).

Mirroring the activities of William Harvey and his ability to treat the bodies of his own relatives as research materials, some “early scientists with close indigenous friends felt able to de-flesh their bones as soon as they died” and incorporated them into museum collections as artefacts (Crossland 2009: 102). As such, human dissection and display are “intimately involved in the emergence of archaeology and anthropology as disciplines”, establishing a deep “sense of detachment and alienation” at their heart (Hubert and Fforde 2004: 13). Thus, while archaeology is undoubtedly an interpretative endeavour, as Nilsson Stutz (2013: 807) notes “it still proceeds according to the premises of scientific inquiry” and this approach is arguably at its strongest when it is embodied as the ‘medical gaze’ and trained on the body as (re)constructed by osteoarchaeologists.

As part of the anatomical legacy of the 19th century (Sofaer 2012: 137), osteoarchaeology is most frequently identified as a science (Sofaer 2006: 9), with a “specialised and high-defined knowledge base” aligning its practitioners with the wider scientific community in a way that material-culture based archaeologists arguably do not typically experience (ibid.). It is therefore an area of expertise that is often characterised following Foucault (2003: xv) who, in The Birth of the Clinic, argues that medicine operates through the “sovereign power of the empirical gaze”, a particular way of seeing and ‘reading’ the body that is applied by medical professionals such that it serves to ‘separate’ the body of the patient from the person as an individual (Penfold-Mounce 2016: 24).

In effect, the ‘gaze’ redefines the body as a textbook which can be “read and comprehended by the rigors of science” and can therefore “be subjected to calculations, experimentations, and evaluation’ (Crawford 2000: 220). As Wagner (2017: 166) explains, however, “the word gaze should in this context be
interpreted not only as looking in the physical sense, but also as a way of gaining knowledge and applying a perspective, in accordance with the French word for gaze, *regard*. It not only plays a role in reconfiguring the body subjected to the gaze, therefore, but also the body of the practitioner. So powerful is this way of seeing that medical students have reported “walking along a street and finding themselves a body among other bodies, rather than a person amidst persons” (Good 1994: 73). Interestingly, one student at Poulton revealed a similar shift in their vision during their time on site, reporting that they had begun to ‘see’ living people as ‘walking skeletons’, an occurrence also reported in the forensic literature, with Brikic (2004: 255) describing how, after working to excavate mass graves, she too began to picture people in skeletal form:

People seemed distorted to me, as if I observed them through a lens. I was overly aware of people’s facial structure and of their dentition. A woman would pass, and I would turn to watch her go, observing her posture, hunched from the weight of the plastic grocery bags she carried in each hand. And I would wonder how her bones might appear in the ground, and what configuration they would make.

While both anatomy and osteoarchaeology may therefore maintain a tense “superstructure of reverence” for the dead (Sanner 1997: 185), they may also be said to share the same “dehumanising praxis” (Krpmotich et al. 2010: 380). This is perhaps because since the 1960s, when human skeletal remains began to play a more prominent role in archaeological interpretation, many British osteoarchaeologists, together with their teachers and mentors, have come to the study of archaeological human remains from a medical background (Mays 1997: 601), as Philip—an osteologist—recalled:

When I started out working for [redacted], a great many people who were human osteologists were kind of medics doing it in a more or less amateur basis and what this meant was that human osteological reports were a list of obscure diseases and there was no attempt to relate them to anything that archaeologists would be interested in (Appendix 8: para. 8).

Accordingly, he explained how he learned osteology ‘from scratch’:

I remember sitting with one of the lecturer’s wives with a copy of Brothwell’s *Digging Up Bones* and we sat in a room at the teaching hospital in [redacted] where they had some modern skeletons and we kind of literally looked at pictures and held up bones and said,
“Oh, I think this is a humerus or something”, so I started off from scratch really, like that, because there was no one in [redacted] that actually lectured or had any research interests in human remains (Appendix 8: para. 6).

It was not until the 1980s that specific training for students in palaeopathology and osteology became available in the UK (Roberts 2013: 80), with teaching moving from medical schools into archaeology departments during the 1990s (Sofaer 2012: 137). The medical background of early practitioners—including “doctors, dentists, and anatomists” (Roberts 2013: 80)—undoubtedly left a lasting influence on the specialism. Indeed, the University of Sheffield’s MSc Human Osteology program continues to offer dissection as a means of teaching students about human musculoskeletal anatomy (Mennear 2012). As a result, it is perhaps not surprising that we find archaeological human remains are also frequently ‘medicalised’ and subjected to the ‘clinical gaze’ which (while ostensibly undertaken as a means to extract as much data from them as possible) undoubtedly aids in their de-personalisation and objectification at the same time (Chapter 4.9.1).

3.4. The feminisation of deathwork

Imagine you’re in a doctor’s surgery, complaining of chest pressure and shortness of breath, which may be symptoms of a heart attack. If you’re a woman, you’re more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety and sent home, whereas a man is more likely to be diagnosed with heart disease and receive preventive treatment. As a result, women over 65 die more frequently from heart attacks than men do. The perceptions of doctors, nurses and the patients themselves are shaped by classical view beliefs, including that women are inherently more emotional—with fatal consequences (Barrett 2017).

As noted above, the prevalence of emotional detachment within deathwork professions arguably stems from the understanding that emotion is both “unbidden and uncontrollable” (Hochschild 1979: 551). Accordingly, it has long been considered obstructive to the practice of science and is believed to cloud a person’s judgement: a dangerous proposition in professions which quite literally deal with matters of life and death (Prentice 2013: 38). This reflects the predominant Western view that emotions are threatening “internal forces of
irrationality and disorder” (ibid: 37) and is consistent with a widespread faith in, and value placed upon, science, objectivity and rationality: arguably, however, this “faith was much stronger in the mid-20th century than it is at the beginning of the 21st” (Prentice 2013: 36). Scandals such as Alder Hey have publically revealed the damaging consequences that may be wrought by dehumanising the dead, while there is a growing cultural acceptance of displaying one’s emotional vulnerability publically (as first evidenced in the public response to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997; see Brennan 2008; Thomas 2008; Merrin 1999). Most recently we have witnessed the praise met by television reporters ‘breaking down’ on air (see Dubuis 2015; Perkins 2015), high court judges crying in court (see Bingham 2015), and members of the monarchy ‘speaking out’ about their experiences relating to bereavement and mental health difficulties (see Furness 2017).

The disdain with which emotion is more frequently treated in professional circles is allied to women’s long-term struggle to gain entry into scientific occupations, for while they are deemed to be ‘naturally’ more caring, sensitive and emotional than men, they are also perceived to be weaker, timid and more irrational (Bolton 2007: 195). As Lutz (1996: 152) argues, the “cultural construction of the idea of emotion itself is tied to womanhood in an essentialist fashion” and women are generally believed to feel emotion more frequently and intensely than men do (Hochschild 2003: 164). As a result, women have traditionally populated medical areas that require what Hochschild (2003) refers to as ‘emotional labour’—defined as the effort involved when employees “regulate their emotional display in an attempt to meet organisationally-based expectations specific to their roles” (Brotheridge and Lee 2003: 365)—such as nursing or midwifery (Ryan and Seymour 2013: 1).

Ironically, it is only in recent years that we have seen a reported increase in women entering deathwork professions, including the formerly male-dominated world of undertaking (see Murray 2011). Yet anecdotal evidence in archaeology suggests there has long been a preponderance of women working in the specialisms focused on death and the dead body. The Poulton field school (catering
specifically for mortuary archaeology training) was populated primarily by female students, and the majority of the individuals I contacted or interviewed for this study who were engaged in the fields of osteoarchaeology, bioarchaeology or forensic archaeology were predominantly female, though field archaeologists were almost exclusively men. It is also noteworthy that the majority of the emotive memoirs and interviews written about working with human remains, as discussed in Chapter Two, are also primarily written by women (see Doughty 2015; Valentine 2017).

While there is limited statistical evidence to draw upon, in 2008/9 the Higher Education Statistics Agency reported that women constituted 55 per cent of all archaeology students, while they represented 60 per cent of students in the specialisms of forensic and archaeological science. Keele University’s forensic and archaeological sciences programmes recorded an intake of 70 per cent female students which far outstripped any of their other STEM offerings, perhaps reflecting the popularity of forensic science television programming: the ‘CSI effect’ (Kruse 2010). In 2012/13, 46 per cent of UK archaeologists were female and 54 per cent male (a rise from 1997-98 where only 35 per cent of archaeologists were women). This figure is expected to steadily increase so that there will be “gender parity in archaeology by the next iteration of the survey” (in 2017-18), with some predictions that women will comprise the majority of the archaeological workforce by 2022–23 (Aitchison and Rocks-Macqueen 2013: 95, 97).

Yet, female involvement in mortuary fields is often perceived as breaking or subverting a gender stereotype, or explained through reductive stereotypes that revolve around women as the “more caring sex”. Women’s own ‘heightened’ sense of ‘bodilyness’ is often credited for their suitability for deathwork because they themselves are said to “belong to the realm of the body, its fluxes and wastes” (Twigg 2000: 407), although the infiltration of women into deathwork professions may actually constitute part of a broader cultural trend of women ‘reclaiming’ their historic role in death (Meyers Emery and Killgrove 2015).
Until the professionalisation of the funeral industry in the 19th century, women were the “caretakers of the deceased” and were known as ‘tidy women’, laying out and preparing the dead for burial (Bradbury 1999: 9). For some female deathworkers, therefore, their employment in the ‘world of the dead’ is perceived as a ‘feminist’ act of resistance, in which it becomes a way of “reclaiming our space, our bodies, our lives and ourselves” (Death and the Maiden: no date). It is certainly noteworthy that women have become particularly prominent in both the natural death movement—promoting “home dying, family organised funerals, natural burial and the overall idea that death is a natural rather than a medical event”—and the ‘death positivity’ movement (see Kelly 2017), which Walter (2018: 12) credits as constituting part of a gender revolution.

Yet the growing preponderance of women in deathwork occupations may reflect the way in which women are conditioned from childhood to act as “empathic monitors” and are “typically steered toward reflecting on and processing emotions”. Conversely, men and boys are perhaps more frequently encouraged to display anger, but to restrain other emotional expressions (Schrock and Knop 2014: 414). Research suggests, however, that men and women develop sympathy sentiments at approximately the same rate and level, it is just that they are not encouraged to express these in the same way (Turner 2005: 58):

In many Western countries, white middle-class socialisation traditionally expects males to repress their inner emotions. Men are supposed to view problems cognitively more than emotionally, recognize that people create their own problems, see that tender emotions are feminine, keep others from wallowing in self-pity, express their altruism in impersonal ways, delegate socioemotional work to women, and understand that some are not deserving of sympathy (Rowling 2001: 116).

As a result, women may bring “gendered emotional strategies into adulthood” (Schrock and Knop 2014: 414) that are thought to help them “manage expression and feeling not only better but more often than men do” (Wharton 2005: 201). This is perhaps why society relegates more emotion work—which now increasingly includes death and grief work—to them. Indeed, Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 10) noted that:
I think boys tend to be more affected by that sort of thing than girls do. I think girls approach it in a very matter-of-fact and systematic way whereas, at [redacted] the boys had to go for a little walk and that’s just a general observation, there’s no statistics there, no quality control on that observation. But it’s interesting. I don’t know why there are more girls in osteoarchaeology, but that might be part of it.

Importantly however, I did not detect an overt gendered difference in response between the professionals I observed at my three fieldwork sites, nor in the interviews I conducted; instead, there was considerable variation between individuals of both sexes as to how emotionally or imaginatively they chose to respond to my questions. This may reflect a greater reflexivity on the part of some individuals, “being more sensitive and attuned to this type of discourse and conversation” (Gibson 2008: 6), or perhaps a greater level of confidence in broaching these issues and making such admissions. My female interviewees, however, may have been hyper-aware of being characterised as ‘irrational’, thereby affecting the ways in which some of them chose to present themselves (Lutz 1996: 151). Until further research is conducted, therefore, it remains unclear as to what may be driving the ‘feminisation’ of deathwork more generally and within mortuary archaeology specifically (Meyers Emery and Killgrove 2015).

3.4.1. The irrationality of emotion (and ‘emotional’ women)

It’s always traumatic when someone you didn’t know dies 527 years ago (RT @Willandthat 2013).

When Philippa Langley—Secretary of the Scottish Branch of the Richard III Society and the initiator of the search for the king’s remains—was filmed becoming visibly distressed by her encounters with the remains of the royal skeleton as part of the Channel 4 documentary Richard III: The King in the Car Park, she was widely mocked across the internet:

Foremost among the intrepid archaeologists was Philippa Langley, an avowed ‘Ricardian’ whom by the level of emotion she had invested in every twist and turn, you could have mistaken for the dead king’s widow . . . Proof of Richard’s curved spine had her fleeing the lab room in tears, to the evident bewilderment of the forensic consultant. Once she’d wiped away the tears, she confided that ‘I don’t see bones . . . I see a living breathing human being’ (Marszal 2013).
Whilst Langley’s response was vilified, it is arguably in keeping with sentiments expressed in the debates surrounding repatriation and reburial: to see more than just bones, but a ‘person’. The apparent tensions this created between Langley and the project’s osteoarchaeologist, Jo Appleby, made for uncomfortable viewing at times: the latter conformed to the behavioural and attitudinal norms constructed by scientific disciplines, throwing into sharp relief competing understandings of the dead body, but also to ‘appropriate’ behaviour and responses towards the ancient dead (a demeanour perhaps constructed in part, relationally, to Langley’s response: the official re-interment itself was a notable model of performed emotive restraint). Furthermore, when David Starkey memorably called Langley a “loon” on live national television (McGlyn 2015), he made it quite clear that to shed tears over the long dead was not a valid or accepted part of our ‘emotion culture’. Indeed, this “emotional incontinence” (Dixon 2015: 4) was positively frowned upon by Philip (Appendix 8: para. 40) who expressed his dislike of programmes such as the BBC’s Who Do You Think You Are? in which celebrities exploring their family ancestry are often filmed shedding tears at surprising revelations relating to their deceased forebears:

I always dislike these television programmes where people look up their past and find their great-great-grandfather died of cholera and they start blubbing about it 200 years later. It always seems completely absurd to me. I mean, we have to be a bit sensible about this.

Philip’s objection to the lack of ‘authenticity’ he perceives in ‘blubbing’ over the long dead reveals the edges of unspoken ‘rules’ associated with the expression of emotion in British culture about whom, where, when and why it should be expressed. In relation to grief over the ancient dead, it is publically perceived as being insincere and absurd. This forms part of what Geertz (1973: 5) calls “webs of significance” and the ways in which we are indoctrinated by our specific culture as to what constitutes ‘proper’ or ‘respectful’ behaviour. Crucially, “our biases in this matter are inescapable” and “as much as we may fancy ourselves as open-minded”, we are still conditioned by our cultural beliefs (Doughty 2015: 68). In failing to meet these latent ‘rules’, Langley therefore inadvertently exposed herself to ridicule: her reaction seen not as a valid response to real events, but as
the product of being an innately ‘emotional’ woman (Hochschild 2003: 173). This perhaps explains why two of my female respondents repeatedly stressed in conversations and formal interview that they were not affected by the excavation of neonate or juvenile remains, frequently identified as a source of considerable unease by other respondents (Chapter 5.6): to reveal otherwise would be seen to undermine their credibility. Accordingly, Mary (Appendix 10: para. 46) stated that:

That doesn’t bother me. I don’t like children, so that doesn’t bother me! [laughs] I’m not a fan of babies and children, that’s why I haven’t got any, so digging them up doesn’t bother me any more than digging up a . . . an old age pensioner, a burial is a burial, I treat them all the same, really.

While I did believe that she was genuinely unaffected by the remains she encountered—her face would light up whenever she spoke about excavating human remains regardless of the age of the deceased—the regularity of these declarations was undoubtedly used to bolster her standing as a female archaeologist impervious to the affective qualities of the dead. Thus, while all archaeologists will practice detachment to varying degrees, Sinclair (1997: 195) argues that women in deathwork professions may arguably have to demonstrate even greater levels of objectivity in order to be fully accepted as rational professionals. Aware of these cultural expectations, the women on site were thus perhaps even less inclined to engage in emotive reflections: archaeological fieldwork has traditionally held strong gendered associations and is often perceived as a masculine practice which has, as discussed, affected both recruitment and professional specialisation (Holtorf 2006: 89). Even now, “women might occasionally feel pressure to act in more masculine ways on excavations, whereas feminine characteristics in men can be frowned upon” (ibid.). Indeed, I came to realise that I was engaging in this behaviour myself: after the incident recalled in the preface to this study, I had to exert considerable effort not to shed tears over my ‘mistake’ because I did not want to be seen as unable to cope with the work at hand. Furthermore, when I started fieldwork with YAT, all of the professionals on site were men and thus, when I was offered a mat for my knees to protect them while digging, I refused because I noted that
none of the others were using kneeling pads and I didn’t want to look ‘weak’ in comparison.

3.5. Controlling “emotional incontinence”: Feeling rules and emotion work

There is a considerable body of literature on this aspect of human emotional behaviour, building on Goffman’s (1959: 9) dramaturgical theory of ‘impression’ or ‘performance’ management which sees individuals modify their responses and outward behaviour according to accepted cultural conventions of feeling, even if this means suppressing “immediate heartfelt feelings” in order to ‘comply’ with societal norms. We all engage in this activity as part of what Goffman referred to as the “presentation of the self”: manipulating appearance and conduct in order to present a specific kind of self during social encounters. According to Goffman, within any culture there are rules governing how we ascribe meanings to situations (framing rules), with additional rules that specify the appropriateness of emotional behaviour in response to those situations (feeling and display rules). Such feeling and display rules constitute part of our ‘emotional culture’ and include ideologies about what vocabularies we should use, the ‘rules’ we have about what people feel, when they should feel it, and how those feelings should be expressed. We acquire knowledge of these ideologies through childhood socialisation, allowing us to manage social interactions effectively as adults (Seymour and Sandiford 2005: 51).

Behavioural responses are thus the product of enculturation and how a person feels, acts and thinks is culturally constructed, with stimuli experienced and understood in ways that reflect particular cultural norms and values. Feeling rules may therefore be defined as socially shared norms and reflect patterns of social membership that are culturally specific (Hochschild 1979: 566), with all cultures—professional or otherwise—governed by their own systems of “dispositions, practical beliefs and ways of doing things that are ‘unconscious’ in
the sense of being so ingrained and taken for granted as to appear spontaneous” (Redman 2008: 92). As such, the existence of these rules usually only becomes apparent when they are broken, usually in the context of social failure, particularly embarrassment and shame, as with Philippa Langley (ibid: 563). Learning and adhering to a particular profession’s feeling rules therefore constitutes an important part of developing and managing one’s professional identity. In doing so, not only do archaeology practitioners present themselves as ‘professional’, but they also strengthen what Goffman (1959: 82) refers to as the “team-performance”, as people bond by fulfilling the “emotive requirements” of any given situation (Hochschild 1979: 572). It is incumbent upon all members of the group, therefore, to maintain cohesiveness through adhering to the profession’s expectations of appropriate conduct. In order to comply, individuals may therefore engage in what Hochschild (1979: 561) describes as ‘emotion work’: the act of trying “to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling”. Hochschild (ibid: 562) describes four types of emotion work:

1. ‘Body work’: where people attempt to alter their physiological reactions to a situation in order to heighten or dampen a feeling, such as taking deep breathes when stressed to generate a sense of calm;
2. ‘Surface acting’: in which individuals manipulate their external expressive gestures in the hope that this performance will enable them to feel and experience the emotion that these gestures are supposed to signal;
3. ‘Deep acting’: whereby people try to arouse within themselves particular feelings that will allow them to viscerally experience the emotions that display rules require them to express overtly, and finally;
4. ‘Cognitive work’: whereby a person invokes the thoughts and ideas associated with a particular emotion in an effort to generate feelings along these lines, as detailed in my experience of cataloguing human remains recalled in the preface to this study.

Accordingly, while on site with YAT, I was asked to help Roy extricate a skull from the earth by working my trowel underneath it and lifting. Struck by how
bizarre this both looked and felt, I started laughing. Yet, as I remembered that we had visitors on site that day, I suddenly stopped myself, aware that the spectators might think I was being disrespectful: there is arguably an unspoken taboo—particularly prevalent within the specialism of forensic archaeology—regarding being seen by ‘outsiders’ to visibly enjoy working with the dead (Congram and Bruno 2007: 43). Thus, when ‘unacceptable’ emotional responses arise, archaeologists will—like their counterparts in other death work occupations—engage in emotion work to suppress these and, instead, return to following the appropriate behavioural ‘script’ we expect of professional deathworkers.

3.6. ‘Desensitised’ to death

Unlike other deathworkers, however, archaeologists most typically encounter the remains of people who died many centuries previously, facilitating what may be defined as ‘passive detachment’, arising from their lack of ‘humanness’ or known connection with living communities (discussed further in Chapter 5.2.). Yet the term most frequently used by participants themselves in this study was a clinical concept belonging to the field of neuropsychology: ‘desensitisation’. Referring to the “gradual reduction in responsiveness to an arousal-eliciting stimulus as a function of repeated exposure” (Krahé 2013: 365), participants implied they had previously experienced some kind of emotive reaction when encountering or handling the remains of the dead, but this had now been overcome. Sustained contact had, they suggested, inured them against becoming emotionally engaged and they experienced a diminished emotional response as a result, with Nina (Appendix 13: para. 32) reasoning that “If you see it [death or human remains] every day, it just becomes a part of your regular life.”

Behavioural therapists utilise ‘systematic desensitisation’ as a form of exposure therapy to help individuals manage their phobias by gradually increasing their contact with the source of their fears: over time, this is proven to reduce a patient’s anxiety (Lilienfeld et al. 2015: 750). Existing studies of individuals
engaged in deathwork professions suggests a similar trajectory, with repeated exposure to injury, death and the human corpse facilitating the development of detachment as a natural response (Hafferty 1991: 106; Sinclair 1997: 194; Timmermans 2006: 279). Jones and Whitaker (2009: 40) note in their research focusing on the training of medical students that “dissection can have a peculiarly hardening effect” on their reaction to the human corpse, with Hafferty (1991: 106) revealing that they conceive of their emotional adjustment to cadaveric dissection as a “process of calcification”. While students initially struggle with feelings of disgust in relation to the act of taking a body apart (Jones and Whitaker 2009: 42), research by Sinclair (1997: 194) suggests that this process of becoming ‘hardened’—re-conceptualising the human cadaver as a biological specimen—occurs surprisingly quickly and that “after two weeks everyone settles down, and becomes familiar with their body, leaning an elbow on the covered head when looking in to see the dissection of the thorax, for example” (ibid.).

Within my interviewees, it was the students based at the Poulton Project who most vociferously claimed to be immune to the affectivity of human remains, rather than the professional practitioners who handled human remains with greater frequency. Was this simply the bravado or inexperience of new recruits? The Poulton students—primarily consisting of archaeology undergraduates, but also local college students and adult learners—were largely excavating human remains for the first time. Schofield et al. (2011: 38) note that there has been “a steady decline in university research excavations and in amateur project work” in the UK; ergo field schools that specifically cater for those with interests in human osteology are even rarer still, not least because, as Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 6) explained, there exists a presumption against allowing students to excavate human remains:

[T]here’s this general conception that a number of people have told me, um, that you can’t run a training, field project with human skeletons, so I was like “Brilliant! I like this challenge”, so I thought we’d do that as a field project and train students to dig skeletons, um . . . because they don’t really get that opportunity and if you’re confronted with a skeleton in the first three months of your first commercial job, it’s going to be a terrifying experience.
As Chapter Two described, many students entering the field of archaeology might never have attended a funeral (Carter III 1997: 199), let alone been exposed to the materiality of death, particularly its tactile dimensions. I therefore expected these new entrants to the profession to have a more strongly pronounced emotional reaction than their more experienced counterparts, but this was not the case. Many of the professional archaeologists I spoke with recalled the excavation of their first skeleton with fondness and a nostalgic reverie, noting that it is privilege, such as Rob and Alan who stated that:

I mean, my first one—they say you never forget your first—was amazing really because, this sounds weird to say, but it was a really good burial, with a good skeleton, well-preserved, complete and um . . . undamaged (Rob, Appendix 11: para. 44).

I think my first one was probably a little baby, a Roman baby, just been dropped in a bit of a stoop . . . I was probably . . . I was 16 at the time. So we started excavating it, not really knowing what it was and eventually the director sort of worked out what it was and told me and it was kind of, um, a bit scary, really interesting, very strange. I’m pleased I didn’t know about what I was doing when I started off (Alan, Appendix 14: para. 10).

The younger Poulton students, however, often couched their human remains work primarily in reference to the acquisition of new skills (see Figure 33, Appendix 1: 410). They described the remains they were encountering as “awesome”, “amazing”, “cool” and “exciting”, although the adult learners amongst them were keen to stress that such feelings were not experienced “in a ghoulish way” (Appendix 15: para. 24). These more mature students were showing awareness of the ‘correct’ way to view and appreciate human remains: one which is constructed and maintained by the discipline in ways that may not always perfectly align with ‘lay’ audience views on the remains of the dead.

Danielle (Appendix 15: para. 7)—an undergraduate student from overseas who had limited opportunities to work with human remains in her home country due to it being “politically awkward”—related her enthusiasm about excavating human remains to her future plans to study archaeology at Masters level, saying “[I’m] excited. For my future. It’s funny because I’m building my future by digging up someone else’s past.” Thus, it was not that students did not feel anything towards the human remains they were excavating, but rather, these
tended to be phrased as positive expressions of privileged experience. Others were clearly self-censoring some of their feelings in relation to cultural taboos surrounding the enjoyment of working with the dead, with some students querying whether they would be thought of as “weird” for finding the experience gratifying.

Similarly, in a study of the emotive impact of cadaveric dissection on medical students, Fox (1979: 68) reports that they felt uneasy about the prospect of becoming “callous or blasé” in their attitude, with one student writing, “[W]e find ourselves not taking as personal an attitude [with the body]. For example, not thinking and feeling, ‘Here is a person who was living and is now dead’ to the extent that we once would have”. These new initiates to medical practice experience great tension as they wrestle with which values, attitudes, knowledge and emotions to leave behind and which new and different ones to assume (ibid.).

This perhaps explains why a number of students at Poulton expressed concern that in the course of their training and education they too felt that they were in danger of becoming hardened towards human remains. They questioned whether there was something ‘missing inside’—just as I had done as a student in 2009—that allowed them to work with human remains comfortably, while Jamie (Appendix 16: para. 38), pondered whether he was “heartless” because he was capable of excavating human remains without forming an emotional attachment, a sentiment echoed by Lauren (Appendix 17: para. 66) when I asked her whether any particular ‘kinds’ of human remains were more affective than others and she replied in the negative, explaining that “Emotionally . . . I’m just heartless.”

A number of students went further. Despite enthusing about the field school experience, some stated that they felt no differently about excavating human remains than they would any other archaeological artefact. Jamie (Appendix 16: para. 24) declared that “Maybe I’m just desensitised to it, I don’t know. Maybe I’m just weird!” while Lauren (Appendix 17: para. 18) also opined that she was “just kind of desensitised” to it. The use of the term is again fascinating given that desensitisation can classically only occur over a sustained period of time (see Carr
and McNulty 2016): “cultivated through institutional practices and training of the senses” (Das 2015: 108). While Jamie had previously excavated human remains and worked with skeletal collections as part of his studies, Lauren had no such experience.

How then are we to explain the students’ use of this concept? With feet in two cultures—professional and social—that both maintain feeling rules that prevent individuals from voicing or demonstrating their real emotions, we arguably learn early on in our lives that feelings are something that should remain private and students were arguably performing their acquisition of these ideologies. My wider work at Poulton revealed the undercurrent of this emotion work: despite being promoted as a site specialising in funerary archaeology training, at least one student did not want anything to do with the human remains after arriving, while another had to mull over whether they wanted to participate in the excavation of past people, their hesitation emanating from the fact that they were unsure that the dead would be ‘happy’ with being disturbed, a situation that bothered them:

Most of them [field school students] have specifically come to work with human remains, we’ve had other students on site who are not working on this trench, they’re working on other trenches, who . . . have been interested, but they’ve openly spoken about the fact that they’re not quite sure how they feel about it and another student really didn’t like working with either human or animal remains, they just preferred to stick with the ceramics and other things like that (Emily, Appendix 18: para. 26).

Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 8) had also experienced field school students having a change of heart about excavating human remains:

I think they’re terrified of it . . . the technicality of it, the fiddliness of it, um . . . and they all wanted to do it, but they didn’t know why. Actually, that’s not true, there were some people who didn’t want to do it and I wouldn’t make anyone do it, but there were one or two people who wanted to come on the project and there are other projects they could have gone on, but they came on our project, possibly because they liked the community element, but they didn’t actually want to be involved in the excavation of human remains, which is fine, I didn’t make anybody do that. So we definitely had one or two of those, but we’ve turned over, must be 150 students to do that project, and there’s only ever been one or two that didn’t want to do it and I assume that others, if they didn’t want to do it, they’d go somewhere else. So they know upfront what it is.

This discomfort is arguably compounded by the perceived value placed on objectivity and detachment within archaeological practice, leading some
practitioners—particularly students—to feel the ‘problem’ in dealing with the dead is theirs alone, rather than something to be shared with their peers or, indeed, with a researcher. Such feelings at Poulton were perhaps exacerbated by a lack of discussion about the issues wrought by working with human remains: students were mostly left to their own devices to have a breakthrough ‘moment’ where they realised the gravity of what they were doing:

[M]ost of the students who work on this trench, even though they’re comfortable with it and very interested, most of them have a particular moment or . . . a day where they sort of realise that the skeleton they are working on is an individual, so . . . although when they’re excavating they might be chatting about TV or . . . anything else non-archaeological related, there is usually a point in time where students start talking about it and how they feel about it and sometimes people say they feel a bit weird or . . . y’know, curious about the person (Emily, Appendix 18: para. 26).

In analogous fields, research by Ryan and Seymour (2013: 4) suggests that nurses like to perceive themselves as ‘coping’ and “consequently do not want to admit that they cannot deal with their feelings”. Similarly, medical students often fear that expressing their true emotions will render them unfit in the eyes of their peers to be physicians, a fear that exerts a considerable influence on their behaviour (see Hafferty 1991). Yet, research by Becker and Knudson (2003: 694) suggests that claims of desensitisation lie in the way in which archaeologists may engage with human remains as “metaphorical” people or an “amorphous experience of social person-ness, not an experienced biography” (Leighton 2010: 98). Finn (2007: 25) argues that archaeologists do not engage with human remains as people at all, but as “evidence, or data, or as an accessory to a grand idea or theory”, who merit respect because of “their association with historic persons, not because they are still persons with the rights, volition and powers we accord to living persons” (Robb 2013: 443). This, she argues, is a “cheat” and a distancing mechanism that, rather than constituting a meaningful engagement “with the past life of a human being”, represents a “selective poking into an ex-life” (ibid.). It is this, she suggests, that over the course of time promotes desensitisation towards human remains and which, in turn, “propagates a superficial response to the dead” (ibid.).
Such reasoning might arguably apply to those individuals with greater experience of excavating human remains who also occasionally referred to themselves as desensitised, but it still does not account for why students would use this terminology specifically. The answer may, perhaps, be located in Penfold-Mounce’s (2016) argument that as a society we have become ‘death-desensitised’. She argues that fictionalised death and dead bodies are marketed to us as dramatic entertainment, with popular culture representations of forensic science, in particular, providing a normalising and softening process towards mortality and the corpse that is stimulating “public morbidity”: that is to say, it is promulgating an interest in the “morbid, the macabre, death and corpses” (ibid.). These simulated corpses are often depicted in an “intimate state” (ibid: 32) and are imbued with shocking verisimilitude (Foltyn 2008b: 164). For the students at Poulton who have grown into adults immersed in a culture where gazing upon ‘corpses’ that have typically been the victim of extreme violence is both “ordinary and usual”, it is possible that exposure to the dry and depersonalised bones of archaeological skeletons may not have made such an immediate visceral or affective impact upon them (Penfold-Mounce 2016: 32).

Previous research on the relationship between age and death anxiety using self-report measures have produced conflicting findings, however, with some studies demonstrating negative attitudes to death and dying correlate with anxiety about one’s own aging and death (Schumaker et al. 1991; Rooda et al. 1999; Suhail and Akram 2002) and others finding no link at all (Thorson and Powell 1994). Nevertheless, I observed that the older adult learners on site at Poulton allowed themselves to more openly muse about the possible circumstances of death of an individual and the feelings this provoked within them about their own mortality. Similarly, Kirsty (Appendix 28: para. 32)—an academic archaeologist—described how she knew “some people who started out thinking it was really exciting [excavating human remains] and now they don’t really like doing it”. Echoing these sentiments, Craig (Appendix 20: para. 52)—who had worked in both research and commercial archaeology—explained that he was finding that the excavation of human remains was becoming increasingly emotionally potent,
stating that “[W]hen I was younger, like 20ish, I’d have said, ‘They’re dead, what’s the point, why care?’” He went on to poignantly observe:

I think you reach a certain age in your life and you become aware of your own mortality. You might as a younger person excavating a skeleton, depending on the inclination of the person, either less or more connection with mortality, depending on their point of view. But anybody over the age of … I can’t give an age, a certain age, you are aware that some point, you are going to die. It’s . . . I was going to say 17, different strokes for different folks, but because you know you are human and therefore mortal, um, it’s not something you think about, but you are aware of it all the time. You know at some point that you’re going to be old and that you’re going to die (Appendix 20: para. 96).

As such, when I asked Christopher (Appendix 19: para. 91), a Poulton student, whether he felt that excavating human remains had affected the way he thought about mortality, he replied “At one point I did think would I prefer to be buried or cremated, but then I thought ‘I don’t have to decide yet!’ so why decide?” The field school participants—younger in age than the professional archaeologists I spoke with—may have reported lower levels of affectivity because they have not yet dealt with the ‘problem’ of their own mortality or incorporated the inevitability of death into their worldviews, rather they have postponed any such thoughts to a future time or suppressed them altogether.

3.6.1. Performance, professionalism, and power

Maybe give me a couple more years and I’ll be desensitised and fine. Already I’ve noticed that it’s less and less . . . like the first couple of weeks it was “Oh, ok . . . this is, you know, an actual person” and now I’m like “Oh, another body”, you know, whatever (Amy, Appendix 17: para. 19).

Ultimately, I would argue that the answer lies with Amy who was one of two students who ‘admitted’ to encountering emotional difficulties in regards to excavating human remains—particularly those of neonates and juveniles—and spoke of her desire to be ‘desensitised’. This desire reflects the professionally-constructed notion that an emotional response in regards to human remains is anomalous to archaeological practice: something to be shed in order to be taken ‘seriously’ as an archaeologist. As argued above, these claims refer to (and
reproduce) what constitutes ‘appropriate’ professional behaviour, stemming from both informal occupational socialisation—‘picking up’ mannerisms on site from their teachers and peers—as much as educational experience (Bailey 2010: 214).

The field school may therefore be viewed as a form of apprenticeship: there arguably exists a perception among practitioners that those who do not undertake fieldwork may find themselves mocked as “armchair archaeologists” and it is therefore unsurprising that practical fieldwork is regarded as a crucial part of the identity of an archaeologist and of central importance in the training of students (Holtorf 2006: 82). As Van Reybrouck and Jacobs (2006: 33) assert, this is where individuals become “real” archaeologists and learn the “unspoken rules, attitudes and lore of their discipline” (Holtorf 2006: 83; Edgeworth 2006b: 9). Thus, aside from learning a set of principles and skills, it is here (in field and lab) that students learn to cultivate the values and dispositions of the discipline (Yarrow and Jones 2014: 265).

As discussed, achieving a level of detachment from the human corpse and it constituent parts is considered a ‘litmus test for professionalism’ in any death work occupation (Allen 2015), with emotion seen as an ‘uncontrollable’ hindrance in the pursuit of knowledge and a negative influence on objective decision-making: to have conquered one’s emotions, therefore, is a mark of professional achievement, and conveys expertise and authority. Nevertheless, for some practitioners, such as those working within forensic specialisms, it may certainly be psychologically beneficial for them to become emotionally detached from their work, even if there is no substantial evidence to support the widely held conviction that emotion interferes with a person’s judgement or turns them into “blubbing idiots” (Turner 2005: 21; Koff 2004):

The first anthropologist was quite affected by the discovery, and stepped aside for a few moments stating that ‘. . . when one stops being affected by this sort of thing, it’s time for them to leave the profession . . . ’ The second anthropologist firmly disagreed with this point of view, suggesting that ‘. . . when we aren’t affected by this sort of thing, we are better at our jobs’ (Congram and Bruno 2007: 46).
Nonetheless, forensic archaeology practitioners are still likely to publically adopt this stance due to the considerable pressure placed on them to perform professionally, as mistakes can lead to evidence being inadmissible in court. While the dead arguably cannot be harmed by their actions, the families of victims (and fate of their perpetrators) most certainly can. Yet, despite Amy’s wish to become desensitised towards the dead, such detachment may not be a desirable outcome. Research suggests that when professional deathworkers are no longer able to make any empathic connection between body and person, it is actually a symptom of ‘burn out’: a “maladaptive work-related condition characterized by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization” (Doolittle et al. 2012: 257).

Even so, the students at Poulton assimilated the rules surrounding the desirability of detachment quickly, not only because they were keen to prove themselves ‘worthy’ of entering the profession but because this image acts as a “cloak of competence”: a phenomenon commonly observed in medical students (Smith and Kleinman 1989: 57), behind which they may hide any feelings of discomfort, thereby aiding their performance of professionalism. This idea of archaeology as a performance is now well-established (see Tilley 1989; Shanks 1992; Coles 1999), with Fagan (2002: 254) noting that “whether we like it or not, [archaeologists] are performers on a public stage, in the full glare of an approving, and often disapproving, audience”. Thus, just as Appleby found herself framed as the unemotional persona in the Richard III coverage, so the Poulton students were perhaps inclined to ‘fake it, ‘til they make it’.

This idea of performativity helps explain why a number of professional archaeologists in this study commenced their reflections on working with human remains by asserting that the presence of the dead did not affect them psychologically or emotionally before they could permit themselves to ‘confess’ to being moved by their encounters. This façade, however, may often be breached. During my induction with YAT, I was taken on a site tour by Tom, an experienced digger who made a point of telling me, how he had become “utterly desensitised” to the excavation of human remains and that it no longer held any emotional resonance for him. On my first day with the team, he pointed to the
spoil heap and told me that it was full of fragmentary remains. When I raised an eyebrow, he replied that the team didn’t “really get upset about it” and are “pretty much immune to it”. Two days later, however, I observed him apologising to the remains of a child he was forced to hastily remove from the ground before the end of the working day:

Due to the poor preservation of the skull, Tom block-lifted this with a hand shovel. It was slightly uncomfortable watching him scoop up the remainders of a child’s skull in such a fashion, particularly when so much care had been taken to excavate it, but needs must: this has to come out before we finish for the day. He expressed some trepidation about lifting the skull in this way and assured me—perhaps concerned that I was judging him—that it was because of time pressures and it was better than leaving it out in the open all night. He told me that it was ‘perhaps best not to dwell on it’ and he apologised to the individual for what he was about to do. He then corrected himself and expressed how silly it was to be apologising to remains that have been buried for over 800 years, but I think we were all feeling a little uncomfortable at this point. The spine followed suit (entry from field notes with YAT).

While my presence during the lifting of this individual may have affected the way Tom reacted—at times, my fieldwork subjects forgot why I was there and at others they were extremely self-conscious and wary of saying something in my presence that they might later regret—caught up in the moment and under pressure to have the remains lifted in time, Tom’s response appeared heartfelt. Like most of the individuals working on this particular site, he had young children of his own. It would appear, therefore, that the removal of these juvenile remains resonated more deeply with him: it forged a closer connection with his own life experience and biography, thereby re-humanising them (Chapter 5.6.).

Yet, after this incident, Tom appeared a little embarrassed at this glimpse of his emotional vulnerability, with his contradictory behaviour appearing to appease his own discomfort at removing the remains in a rushed way *en masse* rather than through the enactment of the ‘ritual’ of carefully removing the bones one by one. Thus, while seasoned archaeologists may find that the excavation of the dead loses the immediate visceral impact that it once held at the beginning of their careers, they still retain the potential to be moved by certain remains that startlingly, or unexpectedly, bridge the gap between past and present, particularly when they forge a personal connection with the excavator’s own life story.
3.7. Scientific fascination

There are, as far as we know, no a priori reasons for supposing that scientists’ practice is any more rational than that of outsiders (Latour and Woolgar 1986: 29-30).

Aside from claiming to be desensitised, most research on deathworkers (see Lella and Pawluch 1988: 129; Timmermans 2006: 279) suggests that professionals will often emphasise the satisfaction presented by such challenging work or the fascination it holds for them on a scientific level, rather than foregrounding any other kind of overt emotional response. Research on cadaveric dissection by Robbins et al. (2008: 184), for example, stresses how apprehension on the part of medical practitioners is gradually replaced by scientific “awe and amazement”. This technique arguably represents a form of “intellectualisation” (Fox 1979: 65): objectifying the dead in such a manner that they are reconceptualised as ‘puzzles’ which require solving. Mary (Appendix 10: para. 6)—a field archaeologist with YAT who took a particular interest and enjoyment in excavating human remains—thus explained that “I like them [skeletons] because they’re intricate; I like them because you can play ‘spot that disease’.”

In this way, science itself becomes an emotion management strategy, supported by its cultural legitimacy and privileged status within our society (Sofaer 2006: 9). Transforming human remains into an analytic event, however, does not merely rid practitioners of their uncomfortable feelings but helps them construct positive ones in their place. This perhaps explains why one of my respondents—an osteologist with a background in science—took affront to me asking him about the affectivity of his work and whether he could recount any particularly memorable moments that had occurred in his career. He replied that:

> It doesn’t really work like that, does it? I mean, it’s not kind of . . . the satisfaction of researching is finding out about the past and finding out interesting and unexpected things, um, so it doesn’t really tend to consist of memorable moments. It’s an accumulation of knowledge, so it doesn’t really work like that (Philip, Appendix 8: para. 36).

In contrast, this was a question that typically drew lively or poignant anecdotes from other respondents, particularly field archaeologists who were perhaps
encouraged by the creative story-telling potential of being in the field itself. It is notable that Philip chose to focus instead on insights into wider past populations not individuals, and his own emotions were framed solely in terms of the satisfaction his work holds for him:

It makes me interested in people’s lives, it makes me think about what things were like in the past and the kind of, the general texture of what life was like in the past, so it kind of, it kind of, it enriches the knowledge of the past, I think that’s the best way of doing it and that is, you’re learning more about the way things really were and also you’re learning, by and large, about people who aren’t recorded in documents, you know, you’re not learning about the taxation of rich people or inheritances, that kind of thing, you’re actually looking at day-to-day life of ordinary people, so that is a kind of satisfaction for me, I suppose (Philip, Appendix 8: para. 38).

Philip’s answers reveal a strong attachment to the scientific process in which his work is valued as a generalist, making a contribution to a wider ‘body’ of knowledge. Yet, his response is perhaps surprising because he initially stated that he was drawn to the study of human remains out of empathy. In her research, Rajala (2016: 69) writes that there exists an “archaeological mentality” shared by members of the profession, which may be defined as “the collective underlying norms and unconscious attitudes that can be used to describe the intellectual climate of the day”. She suggests that subscribing to different archaeological schools could potentially affect an individual’s ‘mentality’, for different paradigms of processual, postprocessual and similar archaeological schools are based on different philosophical stands: the processual paradigm, for example, emphasised scientific thinking and universal theories, while post-processualists favour more “idealistic tendencies and endorsed the importance of interpretation and relativism” (ibid: 71).

As such, we might anticipate the tendency to personify and humanise the remains of the dead will be most apparent among non-osteologists “who are more likely to have been affected by recent postprocessual archaeology and its non-objective thinking” (ibid.). The bulk of the individuals who participated within this study would fall within the school of postprocessual archaeology, or at least have been exposed to it intellectually. Thus, whilst I had initially expected emotional detachment to be a particular trait of post-ex specialists facilitated by a laboratory setting, the bioarchaeologists and osteoarchaeologists featured in this study often
defied the “stereotype of emotionally aloof scientists who treat skeletons as inanimate artefacts, no different than clay shards or stone tablets” (Strauss 2016).

I would therefore suggest that Philip’s response may lie in the timing of his training in the early years of the development of osteology as a specialism of archaeology: governed more by former medical practitioners who saw detachment as a necessary requirement for working with the remains of the dead. Yet his answers also perhaps reveal a different form of attachment, albeit one related to a different way of seeing and feeling. Attachment is, of course, a connection or bond that associates two or more elements by holding them together, as Redman (2008: 6) explains:

Things or persons that are attached to each other thus form a network, in the sense that they are articulated together. This suggests two further issues. First elements attached in this manner are affected by each other. In other words, to exist as they are they strongly need each other: they are entangled, and this entanglement characterises them as beings. Furthermore, we can also say that attachment refers to the means by which people and objects are brought emotionally to life and become personally meaningful. In other words, understood sociologically, attachment can also be said to refer to a sense of emotional investment.

While viewing human remains as scientifically intriguing arguably acts as a distancing mechanism (obscuring or minimising ‘harmful’ responses such as sadness, guilt, horror or shock, thereby encouraging further emotional detachment) it also, as Redman’s quote suggests, represents a kind of emotional investment, but one which does not ‘threaten’ the professional identity of a practitioner of mortuary archaeology: the authority of the archaeological specialist derives not only from “their perceived personal experience with a body of material accumulated over time”, but also “from the authority given to science as both a paradigm and produced outcome of the investigation of that data” (Sofaer 2006: 9). I would argue, therefore, that Philip’s responses are expressed using a different “value system” which, ultimately, constitute little more than “ideas pervaded by emotion” that play a key role in defining our sense of self and place in the world (2016).
3.8. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the origins of emotional detachment within deathwork professions and the practice of mortuary archaeology specifically. It has examined the close ties between anatomy and archaeology that, due to their roots in the same Enlightenment paradigm, have shaped the two areas of expertise into striking similarities in professional attitude and practitioner experience. Accordingly, like other areas of deathwork, the practice of mortuary archaeology is underpinned by the belief that emotion represents an irrational and uncontrollable hindrance. As a consequence, the discipline both values and cultivates emotional passivity: a quality that practitioners arguably acquire through a complex interplay of exposure, experience and praxis.

We might consider this as a form of developmental socialisation in which a new and countervailing identity must be reconciled with a pre-existing sense of self. Through this process, archaeology practitioners arguably acquire a new way of ‘seeing’ and relating to the body that reconstitutes the bones of the dead as archaeological. Nevertheless, there may still be occasions in which this passivity is challenged, necessitating practitioners to engage in ‘emotion work’ so as to sustain the performance of professionalism. The chapter has argued this is a task that female practitioners may arguably have to work more overtly upon, if they are to dispute negative cultural stereotypes that frame them as ‘overly emotional’.

The importance of being seen to comply with such ‘feeling rules’, prevalent within mortuary archaeology practice, explains why a number of respondents in this study spoke of either being ‘desensitised’ to the remains of the dead or related to them as a source of scientific fascination. Both of these responses represent a performance of professional identity: the first, typically used by students, points to how quickly they internalise the message that to experience an emotional response in relation to the remains of the dead is undesirable, while the second arguably represents a form of attachment to human remains that does not interfere with an individual’s projection of their professional identity.
Chapter Four

The transformation of the dead

[1]t would feel wrong to just go in and dig them out with a spade, just because, you know, just because you wanted to get at the bones. Um . . . so I guess the process is a way of making that ok to do . . . on a number of levels, partly just for . . . our own feeling about doing it (Rob, Appendix 11: para. 38).

4.1 Introduction

They are not simply already other, but are inscribed as other, or sustained as other, because of archaeological methodology (Buchli and Lucas 2001: 10).

Archaeology may be counted among the many professions that manage and handle death and the human corpse in Western societies. As a consequence, it possesses its own suite of practices that arguably serve to estrange the remains of the dead from the bodies of the living (Crossland and Joyce 2015: 424), transforming a person, or the remains thereof, into emotionally inert ‘matter’ through scientific discourse and the active deconstruction of personhood (Robb 2013: 448). As with many forms of deathwork, this process of ‘dehumanisation’ is considered necessary within archaeological practice because without it, the disturbance of the dead and their subjugation to the scientific process would almost certainly be perceived as a gross infraction. As discussed previously, this process of transformation assists practitioners of mortuary archaeology in overcoming any reservations they may have, transforming their work from an act of questionable morbidity to one of scientific endeavour (Tradii 2016: 125).
Yet, growing anthropological, sociological, medical, and museological literature suggests that the remains of the dead may confound simple categorisation and will, in fact, slip between the designations we construct around ‘people’ and ‘objects’, making discussions regarding what constitutes appropriate and respectful treatment both “uncomfortable and contentious” (Balachandran 2009: 200). As such, even when construed as mere “material”, the ontological volatility of human remains may maintain the capacity to trouble the subject-object divide, and the ‘person’ embodied by the remains may, on occasion, re-emerge (Robb 2013: 443). More than this, even minimal and mundane archaeological practices can take on “invasive qualities or new ritual significance”, eliciting an empathy for, and emotional response towards, human remains (Balachandran 2009: 199).

This chapter begins with an exploration of how respondents in this study conceived of human remains—as people, objects, or ‘something’ in-between—before examining the ways in which they are reconfigured conceptually, physically and socially as objects of study, following them through a selection of the procedures that comprise the archaeological process. As Robb (2013: 442) observes, there is an intimate “connection between one’s underlying ontological beliefs about the nature of dying and the dead body, and the ways in which the physical remains of the body are handled, processed and treated”. This chapter also probes the latent symbolism that underpins many of mortuary archaeology’s practices which “articulate cultural values” and attitudes that surround death and the dead body in Britain today, prompting archaeologists to engage with human remains as something more than inanimate bones (Schwartz 2015: 2; Holloway 2016).

4.2. Person, object, or …?

I must be heartless, I respect the fact that it was human but now [it’s] just a pile of calcium (Holloway 2016).

[Working with human remains] creeps me out, but not for the reasons you’d think . . . it creeps me out and not because I find it creepy, more because I find it disturbing because they’re human beings and they had loves and lives and histories (Peter, Appendix 21: para. 10).
The premise of excavating human remains is underpinned by the understanding that “the dead become the material culture of the living” (Renshaw 2013: 786), with the passage of time serving to facilitate this transition (Chapter 5.2.). Yet, curiously, as Leighton (2010: 84) notes:

Human remains will rarely be defined as either artefacts or material culture, terms that refer to ‘culture’ as the object of human manufacture. But neither do they count as ecofacts alongside of ‘natural’ objects like seeds and soil . . . the division of objects into separate categories of ceramics, bone, lithics and botanics has its own institutional history and logic. Objects are grouped according to material, as opposed to form or use . . . The only exception is the division of animal and human bone into zooarchaeology and osteoarchaeology. The logic by which objects are classed according to material does not hold for bone: a profound difference is perceived to exist between human and animal remains that is not reliant on the physical materiality of the object.

This is because, as discussed in Chapter Two, human remains occupy an ambiguous position within Western cultures: “not quite people”, but not entirely reducible to the status of mere ‘objects’ either (ibid.). In Leighton’s study of twenty-seven archaeologists living in England, the majority considered the remains of the archaeological dead as, first and foremost human, while a quarter of them perceived human remains as objects. Notably, however, only two gave their answers without hesitation and a number of those who agreed subsequently problematised their response, adding that they ought to consider them as human. In contrast, none of the respondents featured in this research study referred to human remains as solely objects, with practitioners almost equally split in referring to them as people or as a ‘hybrid’ of person and object. Accordingly, Alan (Appendix 14: para. 28)—who was slightly taken aback at being asked whether human remains constitute people or objects—stated that “God, they’re people! They’re not an object, like a piece of manky old pot.” Similarly, Craig (Appendix 20: para. 70) explained how they’re “always people, I think. They’ve always been someone, you know?” while Julie (Appendix 22: para. 10) was also of the opinion that human remains constitute people and described her discomfort at working within a different cultural context in which, legally, the dead are defined as artefacts:

[I]t’s really interesting having worked in Ireland, where under law they are artefacts, um . . . that was something that I felt very uncomfortable about, though the Irish have a wonderfully different attitude towards human remains compared with us, where they’re
quite bold, I think and quite culturally in tune with the power of human remains, even fragments of them in a way that perhaps we’re not.

Yet, while the rest of my participants described how they perceived human remains as constituting ‘something’ that falls in-between the categorisations of people and objects, like Leighton’s respondents they were keen to stress that they recognised the former humanity of the person now ‘embodied’ by the remains:

I think . . . to be rational about it, I just see them as bones in the ground, so on one hand, they're no different to any other artefact that we find, it’s all just organic material in the ground, um, but what it represents is a person, so they’re no longer a person, to my mind, they’re dead and gone, but . . . those remains are . . . they signify a person to us, still, so there is that, there is always going to be that connection, you know, I couldn’t stamp up and down on one, you know what I mean? Because it . . . it’s just . . . it would feel wrong, so there’s always going to be that connection, because when you look at it, it’s still represents a human being, so . . . yeah. I don’t know if I can answer that either way, really, because it's kind of . . . I can see it as both things (Rob, Appendix 11: para. 36).

It’s a mix of the two because it was a person, but now it’s kind of . . . it’s a bit blurred (Heather, Appendix 19: para. 96).

It switches back and forth. I feel like most of the time, it’s kind of an object, a thing that you’re like working on and then every once in a while, like I said, there’s this moment where you’re like ‘Oh, there’s a hand, whoa, this is a person!’ kind of thing (Amy, Appendix 17: para. 26).

This reluctance to categorise human remains as solely objects is curious, with Rajala (2016) suggesting that this view may be ascribed to the timing of individuals’ training in a discipline that has been shaped by developments in post-processual theory and its emphasis on “non-objective thinking”. Only Nina (Appendix 13: para. 44), an archaeologist with YAT, came close to stating that she regarded human remains as objects, but again, chose to emphasise their connection to a former person. Yet, she was the only participant who explicitly noted that while human remains may have achieved a privileged status within the discipline, they are still frequently treated as objects (see Figure 34, Appendix 1: 411):

I think more a combination of both, is more how I deal with it on a day-to-day basis. Like, I know it was once a person, but I think I now see it as more as, well what I find interesting about it is the information archive it also is and I think in that idea you handle it as an object almost. There is always that idea next to it, I think, that once this was a person attached to it.
I would therefore suggest that the emphasis given to the innate ‘humanness’ of human remains by respondents in this study might reflect a pressure felt by archaeologists to give an ‘ethically correct’ answer. As described in Chapter Two, the practice of mortuary archaeology has witnessed a number of challenges to its authority in recent years and sustained criticism of the way in which it handles the dead. This in turn has led to an intense questioning as to the distinctions it makes between people and objects; indeed as Sofaer (2006: 63) observes, the greater proportion of academic attention has, in recent years, been focused on establishing “how like people objects can be”, with relatively little theorisation in return about how like objects people can be, despite the fact that bodies are material, just like any other ‘thing’. Yet when the body is discussed as an object by archaeologists, “this is understood to be real, rather than metaphorical” and is consequently classed as a disturbing attitude, uncomfortably close to the mentality exposed in the Alder Hey scandal and philosophically open to accusations of essentialism (ibid.). Thus archaeology maintains a “basic distinction between people as sentient beings and inanimate objects”: the prevalence of this distinction within my respondents’ answers suggests practitioners have embodied these wider cultural concerns and are able to perform this ethical shift within the discipline (ibid.).

4.2.1. “Always the bridesmaid, never the bride”: Cremated and fragmented remains

Cremated and other fragmentary human remains are often regarded in contemporary society as both less ‘evidential’ and less ‘abject’ . . . Alongside other categories of disarticulated and fragmentary human remains in museums, cremains are often implicitly perceived to be second-rate data and second-rate ancestors, more intractable as objects of scientific scrutiny, less knowable, less human, and less individual as persons (Williams 2016c: 295).

In line with Williams (2016), respondents’ attitudes regarding the personhood of human remains altered according to the state of ‘completeness’ in which they were found, with Craig (Appendix 20: para. 70), for example, stating:
They’ve always been someone, you know? Um, so no, they’re not objects. The occasional bone you find . . . if you find a skull, that’s an object, if you find a femur, that’s an object, if you find a complete or almost complete recognisable skeleton, then it’s definitely a person. I don’t know whether that’s because you anthropomorphise it, something that’s recognisable in the shape of a human rather than a part of a human. Full, nearly full, recognisable, or even half, the top half, you can see that as a person or an ex-person. You give it human characteristics.

This distinction in understanding between ‘body parts’ and ‘bodies whole’ is reflected in wider culture, with both Kristeva (1982) in her work on abjection, and Benthien (2002), in her study of the cultural history of skin, arguing that the epidermis has come to define our understanding of selfhood and the loss of identity that its dissolution may imply. As a consequence, the body unbounded by skin “falls out of the category of personhood and the categorisations placed on bodies” (Quested and Rudge 2003: 558), with the result that skeletal remains may more easily be conceived as objects, particularly when they are disarticulated. Such attitudes are manifest within the practices of recording, analysis and curation, with articulated and disarticulated remains being treated in very different ways. Accordingly, while on site with YAT I observed that disarticulated remains were removed and transported back to the warehouse in uncovered buckets (see Figure 35, Appendix 1: 412), whereas articulated skeletons were transported in closed cardboard boxes (see Figure 36, Appendix 1: 413). This arguably reflects an understanding that disarticulated remains constitute “context-free finds” that do not “immediately resemble dead persons” (Anthony 2016a: 27). As such, whilst every effort is made during an excavation to remove articulated skeletons with painstaking care and attention, and to maintaining their discrete corporeality, disarticulated or poorly-preserved remains may not be so fortunate, as Rob (Appendix 11: para. 18) explained:

[S]ome people will sit and tinker away and be really, really careful and in some senses that’s great, because they’ll be less damage to the bones from the trowel and lifting more carefully, they’re less likely to be broken, but then . . . sometimes, you have to take a view on the actual individual burial, if it’s one that’s so badly degraded anyway that we’re not going to gain a great deal of information from it, in . . . the context of this big excavation, we may be less . . . inclined to be that careful with it because at the end of the day, it’s a matter of, in a way then it becomes a case of removing the burial for the ethical reasons of removing it and making it safe, so it’s not trashed by the builder coming in with the machine, more than it is for research value, because . . . we are not going to be able to afford to do analysis on all of the skeletons, we will have to select ones that are, you know, of a certain level of preservation.
Indeed, the ubiquity of degraded and disarticulated remains on site often led to limited recording, principally because of the imperative to gain “the maximum results or interpretations from restricted resources” (Anthony 2015: 174). Not only is disinterred, disarticulated, and/or commingled “material” regarded as possessing little scientific value (Mays 2017: 10), but it is also expensive to excavate, analyse and curate (Crangle 2015: 9). A notable distinction is made, however, between disarticulated material from prehistoric versus Christian burial sites, due to the former having been “deliberately deposited in a disarticulated state in antiquity” (English Heritage 2004: 5). As Joyce (2015) notes, this reflects the ways in which we privilege certain kinds of remains and forms of ‘disposal’ over others, in which “assumptions about what kinds of human being merit recognition” align some human remains with ‘people’ and others “somewhat uneasily” with the position of ‘object’. Yet, as Anthony (2015: 174) notes, “although they may no longer form an intact and in situ human body”, disarticulated remains “still represent part of somebody who was once human”, a sentiment echoed by Dan (Appendix 23: para. 28):

“[B]ut what about stray bones? Why doesn’t that . . . see what I mean? Why is it not seen as a person? So, I don’t know, maybe for me, it’s a bit of both, full burial: person, disarticulated . . . but I still think it’s more about the information we can get from them, ’cause I think if it’s a full burial then it’s likely to be in-situ, whereas if you’re seeing jumbled up, disinterred remains, it’s likely to be disturbed, so it’s probably out of context, but then, they’re still human remains at the end of the day, so they’ve got to be, y’know, I was about to say disposed of [laughs], but that’s not the right word, but you know what I mean? Like reinterred or whatever goes on afterwards, treated with respect.

Nevertheless, both academic and wider British culture tend to regard disarticulated human remains as less ‘worthy’ of time and attention, as well as less valuable for archaeological research (Williams 2016: 295). As a consequence, disarticulated remains may often be used as teaching material, sacrificing these remains to the damage caused by repeated handling since the bodily integrity of the deceased has already been compromised:

“We’re very lucky with our teaching collection because it’s all the disarticulated, unstratified material that was excavated, now that doesn’t get deposited, so the opportunity to create a collection like that is pretty remote, so we’re incredibly lucky. So we have our research collection, like the ones they’re working on and then the teaching collection is separate, so it can take a bit more rough and tumble, so we can use it for public outreach and things” (Marie, Appendix 24: para. 36).
David (Appendix 25: para. 18) referred to this preoccupation with ‘wholeness’ as the “curse of the skeleton” in which disarticulated and cremated remains are overlooked by “popular syntheses on mortuary archaeology” (Williams 2016: 295), due to an “intellectual ambivalence to past mortuary practices that involve the dissolution of transformation of the cadaver” (ibid: 295). The greater proportion of mortuary literature is therefore focused on ‘whole’ bodies, whether fleshed or skeletal (Swain 2002, 2006, 2007a; Curtis 2003; Goodnow 2006a; Giles 2009; Hall 2013; Brooks and Rumsey 2007; Sanders 2009; Jenkins 2011; Sayer 2010a), a bias also reflected in museum displays (Williams 2016: 296). Speaking about the ‘rivalry’ between archaeology and Egyptology, Daniel (Appendix 26: para. 10) thus commented that:

We have [a number of] complete mummies, by which I mean complete human bodies which are either wrapped or unwrapped, but are fleshed, you might say. There are a small number of skeletal remains and then part of mummies, like heads, and hands and hair, sections of hair, um, it’s not like archaeology, where I think without exception, that’s all skeletal remains, but then that gets into another debate about Egyptology and how Egyptology feels quite privileged and kind of patronises archaeology because we’ve got mummies and they’ve got flesh and it’s much better, but I mean, there is a competitive . . . there is a competitive edge there, you know, you go to a museum and what’s on display? ‘Oh, it’s just a skeleton’, it’s not a mummy, you feel a bit short-changed.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, all of the respondents in this study chose to almost exclusively reflect on working with skeletons in a more complete state of ‘wholeness’, with cremated remains receiving little more than a passing mention. The only participant to discuss working on cremated remains in any depth used an example in which (in a case of mistaken identity) a cremation ‘urn’ disappointingly turned out to be an ordinary pot (see Section 4.3.). As Anthony (2016b: 69) argues, the distinction between persons and things may become “especially blurred in the ambiguous materiality” of cremated remains, which may be much more difficult to relate to a person and are “often perceived, and indeed remembered, as lacking a human identity” (see Figure 37, Appendix 1: 414). This paucity of attention undoubtedly reflects what Joyce (2015) describes as a disciplinary unease with “how we think of the completeness or incompleteness of sets of human remains”, rooted in the “long-standing ambivalence in Western tradition towards the disarticulation and fragmentation of the corpse” (Williams 2016c: 294).
McKinley (2015: vii) also describes the status of cremated remains within archaeology as suffering from being “always the bridesmaid never the bride”, arousing little interest or enthusiasm amongst archaeologists, with cremated remains discarded on some sites until as recently as the 1960s. Similarly, speaking in regards to the collection she assists in curating, Marie (Appendix 24: para. 196) commented it consisted of “predominantly all inhumations” and that during her time in post, only one person had come to study the cremated remains. Yet, as cremation is now the dominant form of body disposal in the UK, according for 75 per cent of all funerals (The Cremation Society of Great Britain: no date), perhaps this reticence relates also to a personal anxiety regarding our ultimate fate.

4.2.2. Bones and bodies: Speaking about the dead

To say it’s a dead person is probably not right, is it? ‘Cause it’s not a dead person. It’s a dead person’s human, physical remains (Dan, Appendix 23: para. 103).

Despite assertions that archaeological human remains constitute people, they ways in which archaeologists speak about the dead may arguably serve to begin the process of objectification long before they begin excavating. While many of my respondents spoke in terms of human remains as ‘bodies’, it is notable that this term is rarely used within the academic literature: the term is instead replaced with ‘human remains’. Those that have lost their soft tissue and ‘bodily solidity’—dry bones and ashes—are most frequently described as such, but the term may be used to cover “any stage of decomposition”, suggesting “a vague belonging to human nature while not suggesting a direct relationship with ourselves as onlookers” (Córdova 2006: 71). The term arguably serves to distance practitioners from the deceased, for “dead bodies” conjures “an image of completeness and integrity” that is all too frequently challenged by the reality of encounters with the archaeological dead (ibid.). Furthermore, the usage of ‘human remains’, particularly in its pluralisation, perhaps evokes and allows for, the potential partibility of a human being, supporting the ways in which it is both physically and analytically deconstructed by archaeology professionals.
Perhaps the closest archaeology comes to referring to the dead as ‘people’ is through referring to assemblages of bones as ‘individuals’. While according to Cassman et al. (2007) this terminology reflects a level of recognition regarding the humanity of the deceased—becoming almost a synonym of ‘person’—the word ‘individual’ is the standard technical term used to define “what we would simply call a skeleton” (Tradii 2016: 199). The importance of language in the ways in which practitioners may relate to human remains was strongly evidenced in the process of socialisation observed at Poulton, where students began to develop the vocabulary of archaeologists. While the majority of them arrived on site with a pre-existing interest in osteology, they were not necessarily au fait with the technical terminology of the human skeleton. Yet, they quickly picked up on there being a specific lexicon within a couple of days, both from their more experienced peers and site staff, as well as from a manual of guidelines issued to all students (Appendix 29). Similar to medical students, this arguably marked the beginning of their ‘initiation’ into the culture of archaeological practice (Prentice 2013: 61), with fingers becoming phalanges, burials becoming inhumations, and so forth (Prentice 2013: 42; see Figure 38, Appendix 1: 415).

Robbins et al. (2008: 186) argues that within medical practice such terminology fills up the “existential nothingness of death” with anatomical terms for body parts and “their mechanical relationships to one another”, yet it is also “crucial in (re)constructing the medical body and for developing competence within the profession” (Prentice 2013: 42), with students frequently comparing it to the process of learning a foreign language (Good 1994: 73, see Figure 39, Appendix 1: 416). While the acculturation of archaeology students is not as all-encompassing as that of their medical counterparts, they do arguably learn a new way of seeing and thinking about the human body through this process of socialisation that reframes remains (and their work upon them) as distinctly ‘archaeological’ (Good 1994: 42).

As Crawford (2000: 220) notes, the language, narratives and questions that are directed towards the corpse will ultimately determine what sort of body is perceived. While referring to human remains in terms that define them as objects rather than as the vestiges of former living people might appear cold and clinical,
the use of such language is crucial in both constructing the idea of the archaeological ‘body’ and in facilitating the work of mortuary archaeology practitioners. Individuals engaged in deathwork will therefore often couch their activities in technical, scientific, or anatomical language, and archaeology practitioners share in this practice, recasting the dead as objects of study (Prentice 2013: 42).

The bandying around and everyday use of anatomical and subject-specific terminology by the Poulton students not only lent them an air of authority and professionalism, but can also be viewed as a ‘distancing mechanism’ (Coombs and Goldman 1973: 348; see Chapter Six). This language—“complex, esoteric and devoid of personal meanings” (ibid.)—assists in estranging practitioners from the personhood of the dead (Coombs and Goldman 1973: 348), while reinforcing their new status as objects of study by shifting them into a scientific context (Prentice 2013: 42). Furthermore, this language arguably recalibrates the act of excavating and handling the remains of the dead as unexceptional by constructing and maintaining “a discourse of norms and normality” (Pylypa 1998: 21), reframing and legitimising archaeological excavation as something very different to, say, grave-robbing (Prentice 2013: 42).

4.3. Undoing the ‘natural order’ of things

[Archaeology is a process of destruction: once we’ve gone in, trampled around and dug everything up, we have, you know, sort of destroyed it. We can’t put it back (Marie, Appendix 24: para. 184).

This process of reframing and quelling any feelings of unease is crucial, due to the ambivalent feelings that the act of excavation may provoke. Deriving from the Latin *excavare*: ex—‘out’ and cavare—‘to make or become hollow’, this sensation of ‘hollowing out’ the earth is perhaps why the “uneasy feeling that one is undoing the ‘natural order of things’” often accompanies the disturbance and removal of human remains (Koff quoted in Dawes 2007: 212-3), for the process is, as Yarrow (2003: 69)
has observed, inherently “destructive and irreversible”. These feelings may be intensified by the very nature of excavation itself which might be understood as the “ghostly repetition” of an act in reverse: an awareness of which that was compounded on site with YAT where the excavation of medieval burials was often accompanied by the tolling of a nearby church bell, which created an atmosphere redolent of death and mourning (Lucas 2001: 42). Similarly, Rachel, a student at Poulton, ‘confessed’ that she personally disliked excavating skeletons where a clearly delineated grave cut was visible, as it was a reminder, she explained, that it was purposefully dug for a person “just like me”. This link between the past and the present unsettled her, and prompted her to question whether she had the ‘right’ to disassemble another person’s burial for the purposes of archaeological study and analysis (Balachandran 2009: 208).

Feelings of guilt may not only reflect ethical concerns over the right of the dead to rest in peace, however, but also the transformation of human remains themselves from one state to another through excavation. Disinterment irrecoverably alters the ‘wholeness’ of a burial: from a physical perspective, “it cannot help but leave something of the body behind” (McClelland and Cerezo-Román 2016: 44), whether disarticulated bone fragments or the separation of the skeletal remains from those portions of the body that have “decomposed and been transformed into sediment” (ibid.). Their removal from the earth marks the beginning of a new posthumous life as archaeological evidence, as skeletal remains are separated from “the contexts which they created and which created them” (Robb 2013: 443). Indeed, in some cases, all that might be left of a body is this ambiguous ‘material’ (the sand ‘bodies’ of Sutton Hoo, for example) for preservation, even between burials on the same site, may vary a great deal.

Yet, the discovery of ‘nothing’ may prompt feelings “of lack” and emptiness in practitioners of mortuary archaeology (Lucas 2010: 37): for forensic specialists, excavations which reveal little in the way of human remains or which cannot distinguish the human from the inhuman assumes “overtones of the tragic” (Wallace 2004: 131), as the “search for something which might suggest that we
are more than dust and dirt takes on an extra desperate urge” and the “preciously human is threatened by the sheer weight and indifference of the earth” (ibid: 130). Wallace (ibid.) writes that:

It is perhaps hard to retain a sense of the worth of human life when faced with withered fragments of bone and tooth and hair in the grave. And it becomes worse when those remains are mingled with the dust, perhaps even indistinguishable from the dirt around them.

This lack of physical remains can be disquieting, with David (Appendix 35: para. 50)—an academic—stating that “absence is sometimes as eerie as the presence of human remains” and may be accompanied by “this sense of disappointment” at not recovering any tangible evidence of a “dead person”. Feelings of lack and absence are, within the field of forensic archaeology, arguably used to drive forward the quest for justice for victims of violence and conflict, whereas for more conventional archaeology, it is “articulated into the more dispassionate . . . goal” of getting at “the Indian behind the artefact” (Lucas 2010: 30). The unsettling realisation that the body may leave little to no trace behind after decomposition perhaps explains why two of my YAT respondents drew my attention on site to patches of discoloured earth, informing me that they represented the decomposition of a body and the leaching of organic matter into the soil, highlighting the affective power of absence (see Hetherington 2004). While this was undoubtedly a demonstration of the knowledge acquired through many years of professional practice, it might also be argued that they were insinuating a certain level of discomfort with this ambiguous ‘material’, particularly as unlike the skeletal remains this soil would inevitably be discarded. Thus, reactions to it and its fate may problematise our understanding of what constitutes ‘human remains’ and what is considered worthy of saving in research terms, for the materiality of the body and its limits may become particularly nebulous after death (McClelland and Cerezo-Román 2016: 43), as revealed by Julie’s comments (Appendix 22: para. 24):

There was one that was a bit fleshy and that was, um, at a chapel in [redacted] . . . the deposits were quite wet and the burial I was excavating—which was during the last solar eclipse, so it was a very dramatic day to be on site excavating this body—had um, the major veins along the arm bones, there was a little bit of squidgy fleshy stuff around the body, but then the veins were still preserved along the arm bones, so you know, when you look at these ones [points to arm] and they were like thin ribbons of red and initially, because I'd
found little pearl buttons, mismatched, so one was a repair, one was a pearl button and the other was a tortoiseshell button, mismatched buttons on the shirt-cuffs, um, and I thought they were, again, textile remnants or something and when I realised what they were, I did feel a bit queasy, ‘Oh my god, that’s their veins’, but the thing that really puzzled me was what do I do with this stuff, do I scrape it off? Do I try and put it all in a bag together? It’s not going to survive, it’s just going to be scrubbed off when they wash the bones, but what do you do with the fleshy bits of the body . . . I think it’s that in-between state where you might have partial flesh substances that actually as an archaeologist, you know, you’re used to the clean bone and the stuff in-between leaves you in a quandary as to what to do with it quite and you know, er . . . and obviously, generally, it’s of no use for analysis, but it does create a bit of an issue when you’re excavating it and either cleaning it off or incorporating it within the stuff.

When prompted as to what happened to the periosteum—the dense layer of vascular connective tissue that envelopes bone (Boyle and Keevill 1997: 91)—Julie (Appendix 22: para. 24) replied:

Well, I . . . when I lifted them, it kind of broke apart, I mean it was all articulated across the wrist bones, but then as I lifted the arm bones it all kind of fragmented and fell apart and basically, I think I just shoved the bones in a bag and then didn’t think any more about it, um, you know, but realised that it couldn’t be kept in any kind of integral fashion. We took photographs because it was important to record the state of preservation but, um, yeah, effectively that fleshy ephemera was lost along the way.

Julie’s comments reveal a sense of conflict over the fate of the “fleshy ephemera” and the way in which it is both categorised and treated as something ‘less than’ human within archaeological practice, with limited research value. Nevertheless, it constitutes a part of the remains’ former post-depositional environment and an integral part of their taphonomic history. Yet, the value of the ‘residues’ of past people may change in perceived worth over time; indeed, until recently, dental calculus—the mineralised plaque or tartar that forms on teeth—was “often scraped off archaeological skeletons and discarded in order to thoroughly characterize dental stress markers . . . or dental wear” (Mackie et al. 2017: 75). Within the last decade, this calculus has emerged as one of the “richest biomolecular sources yet identified in the archaeological record” (Warriner et al. 2014: 343), with the “preserved organic microscopic debris and biomolecules sequentially deposited throughout a human’s lifetime” providing an insight into the health and diets of both individuals and populations (Mackie et al. 2017: 75). The sampling of dental calculus is, by its very nature, a destructive process but, perhaps conveniently for archaeologists, it is not considered to constitute human tissue, but is instead categorised as an “ectopic growth” (ibid.: 74). It is therefore
perceived as a viable alternative to the destructive analysis of human skeletal remains and a sustainable avenue of bioarchaeological research (ibid.).

In addition, Julie’s comment about how she initially thought the remains were textile fragments reveals how human remains might not appear automatically as such to practitioners. It was only upon realising that they were veins that she experienced feelings of “queasiness”, demonstrating that our attitudes towards the materiality of death are culturally-contingent. As Leighton (2010: 81) observes, human remains may be found in diverse contexts and in varying states of completeness and fragmentation: “as a single scrap of bone in a ditch, as an articulated skeleton laid out in a grave or coffin, as the shrunken fragments of a cremation sealed in a vessel or mixed up in a scatter of lithics and ceramic shards under a monument”. As a result, archaeologists learn to recognise that certain ‘things’ are human remains with the accumulation of training and experience, in the same way they recognise other ‘things’ as, say, pottery sherds (ibid). Indeed, at Peasholme, the trowelled soil took on a bone-like appearance when it dried in the sun and, thus, it is paradoxical that the work of an archaeologist may become more emotionally difficult the more skilled they become, as Julie’s (Appendix 22: para. 16) further comments reveal, in which she speaks of feelings of guilt at not recognising the remains of a late miscarriage or neonate for what they were:

[W]e had found, um, well, it was a little settlement really and so we weren’t expecting to encounter any human remains and we were working in this very broad verge alongside a road and we encountered a . . . well, some little pits, initially and . . . um, in the bottom of one was a cluster of very delicate bones and I thought it was a bird. They were so light and so fragile, um, I thought it was a bird and so I decided not to excavate in the field, but to just save the whole of the fill as a sample and excavate when we, you know, excavate it in the lab. And so I didn’t really pay a lot of attention to it in the field, we just bagged it up and took it back to the lab. But when we washed it and laid it out, it was an infant and . . . I think the osteologist, it’s formed part of [redacted] teaching collection and I think it is probably around about the time of birth, so whether it was a very late miscarriage or whether it’s a neonate, it’s uncertain, but you know all the little skull plates were separate and tiny little clavicles and things and, um, and so . . . I think I felt really guilty about that because I’d mistaken human remains for animal remains and although I think, you know, conceptually maybe there shouldn’t be such a big divide in the way in which we treat them, I felt guilty for not having recognised it for what it was. And I don’t know whether that would of . . . it probably wouldn’t have changed how I dealt with it because I think the best thing was to kind of save it all, short of sieving, which can damage those bones, the best thing was just to scoop the whole thing out and then we could just very delicately wash it in the lab, but I think it was that lack of recognition that I felt a bit of guilt about and I don’t know whether, I didn’t even question the fact that I laid it all out and I individually
marked every bone with the site code, as you’re supposed to do and somebody said to me [redacted] ‘Why are you . . . you’re trying to mark an infant’s clavicle!’ [laughs] ‘It’s like 2cm in diameter!’ And later on it struck me as really bizarre that I’d done that, but I think it was my way of trying to make reparation for kind of not having done justice to it in the field in some way.

Mary (Appendix 10: para. 44) also noted how difficult it could be to immediately identify human remains, particularly those of the very young, describing that the remains of neonates in particular “may not even look like a human being, it may just look like a rat or a bit of . . . rabbit or a bit of cat”. Similarly, Dan (Appendix 23: para. 56)—a community archaeologist—recalled working with what eventually turned out to be ‘just’ a medieval pot, but which for a short time caused provoked a number of disquieting feelings, as he suspected that it might contain cremated human remains:

We did actually find, on a dig this last summer, um, we found a load of medieval pottery, but then there was a big, what looked like a full intact bowl . . . um, y’know, purposefully buried within this pit we were digging and it had a bone sticking out of it and because it was quite fragile and we didn’t know what it was, we sort of did the [indecipherable] of digging around it and digging the soil out to excavate. Back in the lab, which is in my house, but . . . [laughs] . . . as I started to, sort of, y’know, just dig it out really carefully, out of the ground sort of thing, I then thought is this . . . is this a cremation burial? Is this a pot? Because that’s what it looked like, y’know? A pot, ok, and with a cremation, as you probably know, I’m sure, it’s only in modern times that a cremation is a proper cremation, turned into ash, dust, whatever. Prehistoric cremations, you can’t get the temperatures to get the bones to disintegrate completely, so you’ve still got, y’know, large chunks in there and sometimes big bones as well and that’s what I wondered, was it a cremation pot? And that gave me an uneasy feeling, y’know? I’m sort of . . . I wouldn’t say used to it, as I haven’t done that many, but I have worked on sites where we’re digging up cremations, burials and whatever else. It can’t . . . even now, it can’t still prepare you, the fact that I’m then thinking this could be like someone’s human remains and I’m digging it up, is a bit weird.

Becoming an archaeologist is undoubtedly therefore a process of acquiring what Grasseni (2004) refers to as “skilled vision”. Thus, at Poulton, there was a running competition between students on site as to who could find the most auditory ossicles: the bones of the ear and the smallest skeletal element of the human body. While they are among the most resistant bones in our skeletons, due to their small size—and compounded by a “lack of care and ignorance of their existence during work with skeletal material”—they may often not be recovered with the rest of the skeleton (Qvist and Grøntved 2000: 82-3). Students took particular
pride in finding and identifying these skeletal elements and welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of human anatomy, with Christopher (Appendix 19: para. 75) stating that “I like finding ear bones. I’ve only found one, which compared to what some other people have found, is actually quite good”. In this way, students objectified the remains of the dead, reducing the skeleton to its constituent parts: a necessary step in allowing them to recognise and identify parts of the human skeleton and acquire the particular ‘eyes’ required for archaeological practice.

4.4. “Rationalising, reconstructing, and categorising”: Recording human remains

These eyes are disciplined through the process of recording, in which prescribed sheets guide excavators as to the ways in which they begin to construct archaeological knowledge. As part of this process, skeletons will be assigned a number, rather than a personal name—although this may happen informally (Chapter 6.8.1.)—which immediately “imposes a regime of depersonalisation” upon the remains of the dead (Robb 2009: 104-5). At the same time, however, human remains are treated in such a way that distinguishes them from other archaeological finds, as they are recorded separately (Sofaer 2006: 12, see Figure 40, Appendix 1: 417). This recording practice has its roots in development-led archaeology and the need to record large numbers of burials quickly and in sufficient detail, for as my respondents working in commercial archaeology noted, their presence on site is regarded as a “hindrance” by developers (Dan, Appendix 23: para. 46). Philip (Appendix 8: para. 30) explained that “they want the archaeologists to get in and finish the job as quickly as possible” and thus archaeologists will use human remains recording sheets to standardise work across a site, allowing for comparisons to be made in the post-excavation stage of the archaeological process.
These sheets call for the use of standard terminology—complemented by a site thesaurus—as well as particular writing conventions and a visual short-hand specific to archaeological practice, which together serve as a way of “rationalising, reconstructing and categorising” the discoveries made on site (Latour and Woolgar 1986: 36; see Figure 41, Appendix 1: 418). In this way, the recording of information is highly prescribed, with any thoughts on more interpretive matters kept separate “from the basic record of its disposition as found” (Roskams 2001: 203). As Lucas (2001: 9) notes, however, the recording sheets “control not only the record but also the bodies who produce it”, thus the process of excavation is therefore “transformative of both people and things”, for archaeologists “are shaped by the sites and artefacts they encounter as well as the other way round” (Edgeworth 2012: 77). As Yarrow (2003: 71) therefore observes, while archaeologists excavating a site will begin the transformation of their discoveries into archaeological objects through the process of recording, the archaeological process will also simultaneously “make the people who discover them into archaeologists”. Yet, in the course of this process what inevitably gets lost is the “humanity . . . and the highly speculative nature of this process”, which, as discussed in the opening chapter to this study, is seldom translated into the final report or publication (ibid; see Figure 42, Appendix 1: 419).

### 4.4.1. Photographing the dead

Following written and sketched records, photographs will then be taken of the human remains in-situ. There has been considerable recent debate within archaeological practice as to whether burials are best recorded by plans or rectified photographs, with the majority of practitioners, including those at YAT, now favouring the latter, not least because of the time saved, but also because it avoids the need to leave human remains exposed on site overnight (Roskams 2001: 201). Accordingly, photorectification is a well-established method that can be used to produce scaled drawings from photographs (ibid., see Figure 43, Appendix 1: 420), yet despite being a discipline that deals in dirt, the production of photographs involves a considerable degree of ‘primping and preening’: cleaning away loose spoil and debris, clearing the
area around the skeleton of equipment, brushing any loose and dry soil from the bones, and cleaning the edges of the grave cut and ‘tidying’ them up. As Lucas (2001: 43) observes, while we can link this practice to a need for site tidiness, it also encourages a perception of “order or control”, both over the excavation and the remains of the dead; alternatively it could also be seen as surrogate ‘tidy-women’s’ work (Chapter 3.4.).

Inevitably this leads to the dissemination of ‘beautiful’ images that perhaps do not convey the reality of archaeological excavation. A new practitioner with YAT, Claire, thus stated that she had expected to come to the site with “nice fully articulated skeletons” in a good state of preservation, “like you see in magazines, journal articles, and TV shows”, a sentiment that was shared by Amy at Poulton, who stated that “there’s bits of bone sticking out of the path . . . I wasn’t expecting that”. Thus, individuals are not always prepared for the reality of excavating human remains when they first enter the profession, particularly in an urban context where they have been repeatedly disturbed and truncated by subsequent activity on site through both the historic inter-cutting of graves and more recent building work. The ‘staging’ of photographs also, of course, raises questions about how archaeology is presented to the public, in which they will often only see the ‘best’ images. Indeed, the site supervisor with YAT expressed concerns about the taking of images of human remains for the purposes of this study, initially stating that I could only photograph the remains of intact individuals. While this condition was relaxed during my time on site with the team, his initial reluctance arguably reflects a level of anxiety about the reality of archaeological investigation reaching the public domain and the negative impact this could provoke both for the Trust and the practice of archaeology more generally.

4.5. Lifting bones

Well you have to dehumanise ‘em a bit, don’t you? Otherwise shoving them in up to 10 separate bags seems a bit mean (Facebook comment, Screenshot 2, Appendix 2: 461).
As an activity that provokes feelings of working against the ‘natural order of things’, feelings of ‘undoing’ during the process of excavation are perhaps most strongly experienced during the lifting of human remains, particularly as bones may fall apart as they are lifted from the soil. As Finn (2007: 30) notes, the removal of each bone can seem, in turn, to remove the “very essence” of the deceased individual, “leaving the grave an empty container” (Balachandran 2009: 211), a feeling that is arguably exacerbated further through the separation of skeletal elements which are then individually bagged and labelled (Anderson 1993: 2; see Figure 44, Appendix 1: 421). The separation of hands, feet and ribs into ‘sides’—left and right—is particularly important and is undertaken primarily to save time and, therefore, money in post-ex (ibid.). The resulting bags are then fastened with two labels inside and marked on the outside with the site code, context number and skeletal element, with everything then placed into a box large enough hold the entire skeleton (ibid.).

This process of extricating bones from the earth is a delicate undertaking that involves learning a number of techniques and learning to ‘feel’—both physically and intuitively—the right amount of pressure to exert on bones to release them without causing damage. Yet, while lifting requires considerable care, this can often be accompanied by a feeling of pressure, particularly in the context of commercial archaeology. Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 8) thus explained that excavating human remains can be a stressful experience in comparison with other kinds of archaeology:

>[A] skeleton certainly isn’t therapeutic in that way, it’s a bit more stressful, especially with that 12 hour turn-around time, but we were very lucky and were camping on site, so we were able to work quite late. So they definitely . . . I think because of that, there was a sort of stress with the skeletons that wasn’t experienced with other things.

At YAT it was expected that each practitioner would be able to excavate, record and lift one burial a day, with Mary (Appendix 10: para. 8) proudly stating that “My record’s four in a day, I think” (see Figure 45, Appendix 1: 422). On research-led excavations, however, the lifting ‘rule’ is often more flexible, as Craig (Appendix 19: para. 88) explained:

>It kind of depends. On a commercial dig, yeah, you try and get them out as quickly as possible. Depends on how many and how complicated, but if it’s just a single inhumation, yeah, you can do that in a day. And also, it depends on other factors, such as the weather.
You don’t want it getting too wet, but if you’ve got a tent, you can do it over a couple of days, three days perhaps. If the weather’s fine, then yeah, you can leave it and cover it, yeah and then come back to it the next day.

Accordingly, respondents working within commercial archaeology, such as Rob (Appendix 11: para. 28), reflected on how the process of excavating human remains “becomes very much a case of just recording the bare minimum and getting them out of the ground, so that they can be assessed and analysed afterwards”. They therefore expressed a sense of envy about the time available to archaeologists working in academia to excavate human remains, with Mark (Appendix 27: para. 24), stating that:

[I]f it’s an academic one, then usually, everybody’s quite happy for you to take days, if not a week to excavate a single individual. That comes down to half days and hours for commercial sites and to me, that is the biggest challenge to excavating a human body . . . not necessarily the act of excavating itself, but the considerations and questions you can get from external forces, such as the contractor, even your site supervisor . . . clients, because in the wonderful world of archaeology, we’re usually, let’s say at a tertiary level at best.

The impetus behind the quick removal of human remains rather than leaving them exposed overnight is the threat of theft: many of my respondents shared a deep concern regarding the security of human remains left overnight, especially by the archaeologists at YAT who had previously experienced human remains being ‘stolen’ from sites they had worked on in the past (Stirland 1986: 13):

Well, to be frank, I don’t think you should take more than a day because we have had problems on one of the sites we dug where people were coming in and stealing the skulls for nefarious purposes, um . . . so my personal feeling is start it, dig it and get it out on the same day and then it’s not in any danger from the weather, thieves, people standing on it, you know, the builders coming in whacking a machine through the middle of it or whatever, so we try and always get them dug on the same day that they’re started, if at all humanly possible (Mary 9: para. 12).

Contributing to practitioners concerns regarding the safety of remains left on site is the growth of the lucrative ‘red market’ (Carney 2011)—the global trade in human ‘products’ such as “blood, organs, skin, hair [and] bones” (Killgrove 2016)—of which human remains, particularly ‘specimens’ from archaeological or ethnographic contexts, form a part. With both licit and illicit dimensions (Huffer and Chappell 2014: 148), the “ancient and exotic dead” are highly prized by collectors and attract
large sums of money (Killgrove 2016), with human skulls retailing on British websites for anywhere between £500 and £1500. Indeed, Anthony’s (Appendix 9: para. 2) comments about an experience he had on a commercial excavation reveal the ways in which human remains may be viewed as ‘trophies’ by non-archaeologists:

One of my favourite days, it was a Wednesday, so I was working the second shift . . . and it was my favourite arrival on site ever because I got there and my supervisor turned around and said ‘Right. I’m just having this conversation with one of the clearance company’—they always found it very difficult to employ people, so their entire workforce was Albanian— they’d just caught this Albanian selling a longbone from one of the graves to one of the engineers who was trying to buy it and mount it on a piece of wood to give it as leaving present to his colleague at his retirement dinner that night. Because the cemetery [excavation project] had been such a crisis, he thought this would be quite funny and obviously we had to stop that quite quickly and explain to this guy that if he did, that he would pretty much jeopardise the entire project because we’d be in breach of the licence that we’d jointly held with the clearance company and he’d probably get fired and he just didn’t really understand, but eventually got the idea and asked us not to tell his boss and we didn’t, so that was really weird and interesting, but I think it shows you a little bit, certainly the engineers’ attitudes towards what was going on, almost as a problem.

As Rob therefore duly noted while we were digging, for many archaeologists “human remains will be the most valuable artefacts we ever dig up” and with this in mind, many practitioners framed the act of lifting as one of care and guardianship, as Julie’s (Appendix 22: para. 16) comments demonstrate:

I felt absolutely that we couldn’t leave her in the ground overnight, so we excavated the burial by car headlight and I drew my car up on the verge and we had the headlights on and this little crack team of students stayed with me to lift her and that was a really amazing experience because I think it was that notion that I’d asked for volunteers to stay with me who were up for it. I think we finished at half past 8, 9 at night and when we got back, you know, we were all knackered and cold and tired but we, again, we’d done the right thing by her. Um . . . so I think compared with other kinds of excavation, I think maybe for a fabulous find that’s a similar kind of experience that you’d . . . you must get it out, you must look after it, you must care for it, but for me, the difference between human remains and other kinds of bits of archaeology is that normally they can wait until the next day, but I feel that there is this need to, you know, get them out in a day and that creates a sense of care about them, that just creates a different kind of atmosphere on site.

The remains of the dead therefore possess a uniquely peculiar status within archaeology in that, legally, they cannot be owned, yet they possess a considerable monetary value in the global marketplace; we believe that human remains should be treated with respect, yet they’re also characterised as a ‘contaminant’ in the development process (Lucas 2001: 38). Indeed, at the Peasholme site, human remains were required to be removed because they lowered the value and desirability of the
land in terms of its redevelopment potential and were viewed by YAT’s clients as time consuming and expensive to excavate:

But you see, by removing them it makes the land more valuable. A developer will pay more for a clear site, than they will for a site with problems, it’s like contamination. If you have a site that’s got contaminated ground, you get that professionally cleared and you’ll get more for the land. You’ll get a much worse rate if you say, ‘Oh yeah, sorry this land is contaminated with arsenic’ or something, they’d be like, ‘Right, ok’ (Rob, Appendix 11: para. 54).

In this light, rather than being the remains of people, they may be more readily conceived of as ‘necro-waste’ (Olson 2016b): a concept that connotes “something that is abject or disposable, but in different ways” (Troyer 2016: 61). While as Olson (2016b: 327) argues it may seem “improper to think of dead human bodies as waste” and it may prove difficult to conceive of a single intact corpse as such, upon disintegration “the pieces become more explicitly necro-waste as . . . ‘identity’ is stripped away from the original owner” (ibid.), which is arguably why the archaeological process does not place the same value on disarticulated and disassociated remains as it does articulated and in-situ burials.

4.6. Separating ‘people’ and ‘objects’

If somebody in the past was buried with a ceramic jar, for example, perhaps for use in an afterlife, it might legitimately be asked, what right do we have to take it away (Nilsson Stutz and Tarlow 2013: 9)?

Feelings of conflict over ‘undoing’ the process of burial may be exacerbated further still through post-excavation work and the curation of skeletal assemblages, in which human remains will be separated from any associated artefacts that accompanied them into the grave. Balachandran (2009: 211) writes of how these remaining objects—awaiting their turn to be removed—serve “to anchor and maintain the sense of a continued human presence in the space” after its exhumation, and that, as a result, she found it impossible to think of them as separate objects, distinct from the deceased. Writing about the conflict she experiences as a conservator, working to stabilise human remains and their accompanying material culture for storage and
display, she describes how the removal of personal effects from the remains of the deceased feels “insensitive and cruel” and poses an important question for mortuary archaeology practitioners:

Do our goals of advancing scientific and historical questions, and preserving the physical evidence that answers these questions, justify disassembling intact burials and disturbing the powerful personal, spiritual or religious relationships that may have existed between the human bodies and their burial artefacts (Balachandran 2009: 212)?

The distinction between bodies and objects is deeply entrenched in the legal structures of the United Kingdom, in which institutions and individuals “may possess but not own bodies in their natural state”, but may hold “legal title to any objects such as a coffin or grave goods associated with the same remains” (Balachandran 2009: 202). Yet, the separation of remains into ‘bodies’ and ‘objects’ is to dismiss the “deep interconnectedness of these different elements in a grave, and violates the sanctity, original intent, and conceptual integrity of the burial” (see Curtis 2003; Ayau 2005; Goodnow 2006b). Indeed, it is fundamentally impossible to disentangle human remains and their associated artefacts from their original context of discovery without fundamentally altering their meaning, for objects and human remains arguably share an interconnectedness that goes beyond the mere spatial relationship imposed by their shared mortuary context (McClelland and Cerezo-Román 2016: 44). Dan’s (Appendix 23: para. 74) comments thus reveal the ways in which people and objects may become enmeshed with one another when he queried “Why is it just the bones? Is it not the thing that the bones were in? So should the coffin not be respected, if it’s still there?”

Objects may be interred with the deceased for many reasons: for talismanic purposes, as belongings that served them in life, or were perhaps regarded as necessary for the afterlife (Balachandran 2009: 208). As such, they may be considered as extensions of the body and essential to the “completeness of the integrity of the person” (Sadongei and Cash 2007: 100; see Chapter 5.5.). While in most industrialised countries, old and broken objects usually end up being discarded as rubbish, some cultures—such as the Japanese—may see fit to end their ‘lives’ with mortuary rituals, due to a perceived sense of animacy (Kretschmer 2000: 379, see Griffin 2015). Accordingly,
Balachandran has queried whether grave assemblages should be maintained intact or whether it is enough “to document them in photographs and published reports of the excavation”. Nevertheless, the separation of human remains from other artefacts, including grave goods, is ostensibly undertaken as a conservation measure—different archaeological materials require “specific environmental conditions . . . and curators with specific skills, to ensure their physical integrity” (Mays 2017: 10)—as Marie (Appendix 24: para. 171–6) discussed:

Marie: But that’s another thing that’s quite interesting sometimes, when individuals are found is, we look after their skeletal remains but because of the nature of some their artefacts that might be found with them, they can’t then be in the same box because they need different conditions, so the artefacts that are buried with them, they may be retained potentially somewhere like [redacted] because they might need to have different conditions if they’re metal or textile or leather, so you’ve separated them from those things that they either had themselves or felt were important to them or someone else put with them that was important to them, in that sense. At least if it’s an archive we’ve got them, what is sad though sometimes is that the individuals may be reburied, but the artefacts aren’t and they are then retained because they are of interest.

The structure and organisation of archaeological practice means that human remains and other artefacts become the focus of different specialists, including the curator of the collection, conservators, and practitioners trained in the care of collections (Redfern and Bekvalac 2017: 373), ensuring that the disparate components of the original burial are unlikely ever to be permanently reunited, unless it holds particular significance—as determined by the values of the discipline—and is reconstructed within a museum setting for interpretive purposes. Although few will ever feature in such surrogate ‘reburials’ in a grave-like surrounding, such fully contextual displays can be seen as an attempt to ‘atone’ for the destruction of the original burial context (Balachandran 2009: 208; Nordström 2016: 207; see Figure 46, Appendix 1: 423). The remembrance of the wholeness of the burial will therefore exist only in “photographs and written documentation, and in the memories of those who witnessed it in situ” (Balachandran 2009: 212). Indeed, cremated remains will often be removed from their containers, even though archaeological research indicates that such pots may have been a constituent part of the deceased’s personhood (see Rebay-Salisbury 2010), which may lead to sense of regret, as seen in Marie and Christina’s (Appendix 24: para. 181-3) comments:
Marie: Like, I feel quite sorry for cremated people.

Christina: Yeah, they get taken out of the pot!

Marie: Yeah, they get taken out the pot, I mean I understand why, but it’s just . . .

According to the Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England (Mays 2017: 3), “three of every four skeletons excavated on archaeological sites in England come from Christian burial grounds” dating to the 7th century AD or later. As Christian burial practice does not generally include the provision of grave goods, there is no theological position on the long-term fate of these artefacts, as Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 10) discovered:

[W]e were digging and we got to the bottom of a stack of coffins and sometimes they dig little tiny cuts at the bottom and put a little baby's coffin in and I got to the bottom and there was a little cut at the bottom and a little baby's coffin, excavated it, lifted the wood, the lid up and there were no bones in it, because they'd decomposed or maybe they were never there, who knows? And it suddenly made me feel quite sad because that baby wasn't going to be reburied with or become part of the collection with the other skeletons, whereas if it had sort of been there, so I got a little bit emotional and I bagged up the coffin and put a little label in it saying 'Please rebury this coffin with the skeletons'. I think they chucked it away! [laughs] But that made me a little bit sad.

Formal guidance acknowledges that it is desirable to treat the clothing and personal possessions deliberately buried with an individual differently from aspects of grave or coffin structure, despite the fact this mortuary material may have important sentimental or symbolic associations. Yet, is does note that decisions regarding the retention or re-interment of this ancillary funerary material should be made carefully: balancing the personal associations of the object against their educational, scientific and archaeological significance (Mays 2017: 10). As the 'personal associations' of such objects are essentially unknowable, we might argue that the decision is somewhat conveniently weighted in favour of retention, even when the remains of the deceased are themselves reburied. The process of separation thus constructs a new interpretive framework by which mortuary archaeology practitioners tear asunder the personhood of the deceased, for the separation of the dead from the earth and the artefacts associated with them arguably acts as a mode of depersonalisation (McClelland and Cerezo-Román 2016: 44).
Disinterment also severs social relations and removes evidence of social networks, replacing them with bags, boxes, and layers of tissue paper, thereby suppressing the subjectivity of the dead and re-codifying them as scientific material (ibid.). Regardless of the absolution offered by Mays, the ethical implications of separation appeared to weigh heavily on Rob’s mind in regards to another post-mortem practice that is imposed on the dead: the separation of presumed family groups. At Peasholme, excavations were taking place in what was believed to be the eastern end of the former church of All Saints’, where the burials were described by the site director as being “a bit weird” and consisted primarily of juveniles, sub-adults and neonates, some of which were double inhumations: infants and their presumed mothers:

[T]he grave that had the two children in it, there’s a bit of me that kind of feels like, maybe it’s just me being sentimental, but they ought to be kept together, because they were buried together and it would be nice to keep those groups together because there was a reason why they were grouped, we don’t yet know quite why—we may never know—but there’s a reason why those two were put in the same grave and I’m assuming it’s because they were siblings . . . so in a way, it would be nice to put them in a siblings box, rather than a . . . you know what I mean? That sounds a bit crazy, maybe, but I think again, it that sort of level of respect, um, maybe, being an atheist, maybe it doesn’t mean anything to me, necessarily, on that level and to those children . . . as far as I’m concerned they’re dead and gone, so it doesn’t really matter, but that would probably matter to them if they were alive, so that makes it seem significant (Rob, Appendix 11: para. 38).

Whilst asserting he was an atheist and so did not ascribe to being able to spiritually ‘injure’ human remains through the interventions of archaeology, Rob went on to contradict himself and expressed his discomfort about the separation of the two presumed siblings into two skeleton boxes. As Scarre (2013: 666) observes, “people who hold that death marks the end of the personal subject usually believe as firmly as those who maintain the reality of an afterlife that it would be wrong to flout a deceased person’s testamentary wishes”. There is a propensity, therefore, to treat the corpse or remains thereof “as if the significance of the living person were still dwelling in it in some way: most people think that they should respect or honour it and believe that desecrating it would be cruel, immoral and criminal” (Breeur and Burms 2008: 138). Indeed, Rugg and Holland (2017: 9) in their research relating to the controversy surrounding the issue of grave re-use suggest that such solicitous behaviour is rooted in the “ontological insecurity visited on the living as they contemplate this threat” to their own or their loved one’s corpse. As such, the “best
protection that we can afford our own dead self is the protection that we display to the . . . dead” (ibid.).

Rob mentioned during the excavation of these particular remains that he felt that archaeologists have a duty to consider and respect the wishes of the deceased as much as is practically and realistically possible, explaining that he felt that keeping human remains in a warehouse on unconsecrated ground is almost certainly contravening Christian wishes. Yet, as Robb (2013: 443) notes, archaeological practice does not usually give much thought to the afterlives of human remains collections and the eradication of “identities and relationships”, nor the separation of families and the placing of “strangers and enemies from different sites . . . side by side on the laboratory shelves” (see Figure 47, Appendix 1: 424). Similarly, Marie (Appendix 24: para. 162) commented that:

Well, the things that we see, someone perpetrated that on them, so they may well be someone that we’ve looked at and that’s another thing, you know, we’ve got people in the same box or on top of boxes and I’m there going ‘Well, I bet they didn’t really like one another in real life and they’ll be complaining now that they’re having to share a box or that they’re on top or with high status people’. We’ve got people who are very, very wealthy and then those from much poorer backgrounds who might be sharing the same shelf and you can imagine them being like ‘I’m not having that! I was buried in [redacted]!’ Yeah, we have those things running through our head.

Tarlow (2011: 108) observes, “there is no theological reason why a person’s body should be laid close to those of their dead forebears”, but emotional proximity in life is often extended and symbolically reproduced by spatial proximity in death, and this desire appears to extend into some practitioners’ feelings around curation (ibid: 109). Yet, it is important to note that at this stage of the excavation there was no way of being certain whether there was any relationship between the two individuals: as Roskams (2001: 203) notes, the position of human remains in the ground may be “a function of how the burial was laid out originally or the result of later decay or disturbance”. Nevertheless, with a young family of his own, it would appear that Rob was projecting his own feelings relating to respect and his desire to keep families united, even in death, on to the remains in his care.
4.6.1. Storing human remains

The separation of human remains from other archaeological material thus continues in the ways in which they are stored. Traditionally, the remains of the dead have been housed in boxes on shelves amongst other objects, yet attitudes and behaviours have changed significantly in relation to the treatment of collections of human remains, as Swain (2013: 26) observes:

In the early 1980s, I worked as an excavator and supervisor on several cemetery assemblages. On the whole, the human remains were treated as scientific samples. Skeletons were stored in the same way and often among other general finds (pottery, animal bones) and were regularly packed off to specialists, working from home or universities, sometimes never to return. As with much other archaeological material at the time, there was an implicit understanding that there were owned by and at the disposal of the specialists who were studying them or the site director who had overseen their excavation and who owned the results of his (in those days directors were always male) site. The site directors and scientists were free to do with the remains as they decided: use them as teaching collections, undertake destructive sampling, loan them to museums for display or leave them forgotten in unsuitable stores.

Best practice now dictates that collections of human remains should ideally be given their own dedicated storage area where they may be kept in optimal conditions to “ensure their physical integrity”, with access restricted to “bona fide researchers in good standing with the holding institution” (Mays 2017: 9). Thus, even spatially, human remains are defined as something very different to any other category of archaeological evidence, a practice that can cause feelings of conflict among practitioners, as Julie (Appendix 22: para. 10) notes:

I think it's important as an archaeologist not to then excise them from the material world, that they were a part of . . . so, I'm not in favour of storing them in a special human remains store away from objects, because then you've ripped them out of the very context that they were interred with and actually it might be that some of those objects might be more important to the people who buried them than the person . . . yes, by all means store them in an appropriate box where they're not going to get squashed, but no, you don't need to have a separate mortuary arena for them, um, they are a part of the past material world, but they are people.

Yet, as Marie’s (Appendix 24: para. 95) comments suggest, the treatment of human remains and a practitioner’s ability to treat them with the respect demanded by the guidance documents is dependent on a variety of factors:
[W]e're very lucky because our store . . . it wasn’t designed by any means for us or to be a store, but it just works really well because it stays at a constant temperature, so it’s not really, really hot, so they [human remains] don’t get really brittle, it’s quite cool, it does occasionally get wet because unfortunately we’ve got every pipe it seems in the museum whizzing around, but it isn’t damp, you know, it’s not . . . they wanted to consider at one point putting our entire collection into the crypt of a church because they wanted to re-use a church that was no longer in use because it was consecrated ground, but of course if you go into those crypts, they are pretty grim and damp, so the [store] is great because it does not have that, so inherently you’ve just got that nice constant temperature and so once they’re then in the box and the bags, it stays a nice relative temperature and then they’re just moving in and out.

While the ideal would be to store these remains in a church archive, Marie reveals that this would arguably have been the less respectful option, due to the adverse conservation effect it would have on the remains themselves. I would therefore argue that there may be instances in which collections of human remains are inadvertently treated like objects as a result of factors outside of individual archaeologists’ control, such as funding and the level of expertise to be found within individual institutions. Similarly, respondents working in commercial archaeology expressed their frustration with the ways in which the development process in the UK forced them to treat human remains in ways that made them feel conflicted, with Rob (Appendix 11: para. 14) stating that “Yeah. It’s not the right the way things are done, but in a way, that’s the system that we have to work within at the moment”, before commenting “I think there’s often a pressure to try and remove a certain number within a day on commercial excavations, which I think can be detrimental to the preservation of the body and y’know, the quality of your excavation and recording.”

4.7. Washing the dead

Once lifted, human remains are washed or brushed to remove dirt and debris prior to analysis (Roskams 2001: 206). Undertaken as a “preliminary act” to restore the shape of the bones—“the one before any post-depositional process happened to them”—cleaning ensures that traces of trauma or pathology, for example, are not obstructed by soil or other natural sediments (Ion 2011: 26; see Figure 48, Appendix 1: 425). As Julie’s earlier comments reveal, however, this process is highly selective, for whilst
some ‘interesting residues’ will be retained—such as dental calculus—others, such as the ‘fleshy ephemera’ she encountered, will be discarded according to archaeological categorisations of value. Nevertheless, guidance for best practice stresses that this cleaning process should be completed without causing damage to the remains, leaving no discernible trace of the activity behind (ibid.27). Yet, by virtue of cleaning human remains they are undoubtedly fundamentally changed, eliminating all traces of their former environment and, arguably, parts of their biography (ibid. 26).

During our lifetime, our bones are “wrapped in tissue” and after death they become “part of a body undergoing a decomposition process” (ibid.). As such, the cleaning process arguably constructs “an artificial moment in the biography of an individual” in which human bones take on an appearance they never had in life and only now possess due to the interventions of archaeologists (ibid.). In striving to reveal the ‘true’ nature of human remains, therefore, the process of washing is a transformative event that marks their movement from the remains of people to their new re-categorisation as scientific material for osteological analysis. Accordingly, the washing of human bones represents more than just a utilitarian act performed ahead of them becoming subject to the expert ‘gaze’, with a rich vein of symbolic associations surrounding the dead and the act of washing which may, perhaps, find parallels in the cleaning of archaeological human remains (Richardson 2000: 18).

Balachandran (2009: 201) notes that “even the most familiar and routine of . . . tasks [can take] on a different ritual significance because of our heightened responsibility and emotional response to human remains”. Washing forms part of traditional grieving rituals in Western societies (Cann 2014: 1), but as Richardson (2001: 18) notes, it also designates “the corpse and all who handle or approach it unclean” and as a consequence, ritual washing may be viewed as a way of removing the polluting taint of death (see Douglas 1966; Kristeva 1982). Both corpse-washing and bone-washing may therefore be understood as a form of apotropaic action or protective ritual on a latent level for mourners, human remains, and deathwork practitioners alike (Wolf 1988: 62). Indeed, as part of the Last Offices as conducted within nursing—the care given to a deceased patient which focuses on fulfilling religious and cultural beliefs, as well as health and safety and legal requirements (Higgins 2008)—
nurses will prepare the deceased for viewing by relatives through washing and dressing, both as a way of maintaining the deceased’s personhood and because, culturally, it is considered respectful to present a corpse in as clean and odourless state as is possible (Hadders 2007: 207).

The importance of cleanliness even extends into the practice of medical students in the anatomy laboratory, where they will use fresh sheets, towels, and keep their work areas clean during cadaveric dissection, while pathologists will use clean—but not sterilised—instruments during autopsies, even though there is, of course, no risk of the dead catching an infection (Carla Valentine, pers. comm.). This commitment to cleanliness may therefore be understood as a form of care, for the act of washing undoubtedly possesses an underlying intimacy that creates a bond with the living. As Rosenblatt (2015: 173) observes in his study of forensic archaeologists, “you cannot care for dead bodies (as opposed to caring about dead people and their memories) without touching them”. Perhaps as a result of the different registers of meaning attached to this washing regime, there was disagreement amongst staff on site at YAT about whether it was appropriate to listen to music whilst performing this task.

Janet (Appendix 13: para. 21)—a former nurse and current volunteer with YAT—stated that the site director “couldn’t understand why we have the radio on and we’re chatting away”. She credited the use of music during the washing of human remains as a way of “distancing yourself from it, coping with it”, an aspect of archaeological practice that will be discussed further in Chapter Six. Yet the site director felt strongly that human remains should be regarded as people and treated accordingly; ergo, he felt that listening to music was not respectful or appropriate behaviour. Balachandran (2009: 220) recalls a similar quandary during her experience of performing conservation work on an Egyptian mummy, struggling “with whether it was appropriate to listen to music or the radio as a way of dealing with both the tediousness of the conservation work and the disturbing experience of sitting alone with a dead woman for several hours a day”, eventually settling on listening to National Public Radio—an American media organisation that covers national and world news—which was “ultimately deemed suitably reverent, distracting, and separate in time and space from the mummy” (ibid.).
4.8. Containing and constraining human remains

After drying, human remains may be marked with a unique identifier, indicating the site code and the context number of the skeleton, although this usually depends on the size of the collection (Redfern and Bekvalac 2013: 90). They are then bagged according to anatomical region and side in clear, re-sealable 500 gauge polythene bags, with each bag containing two labels detailing the site code, context number and contents (ibid.). Ventilation holes are punched into the bags “to prevent deterioration of fragile skeletal material” (BAJR 2004), as bone—contrary to appearances and its association with death—is not an inert substance, but expands upon being exposed to air. Bone is in some sense, therefore, still ‘alive’. The bags are then placed into a conservation-grade cardboard box, lined with inert foam (BABAO 2010; Filippucci et al. 2012: 17-18)—perhaps cushioned by ‘pillows’ of acid-free tissue paper—in a specific order so as to limit damage (Redfern and Bekvalac 2013: 90; see Figure 49, Appendix 1: 426).

Wherever possible, one complete skeleton will be stored in an individual box, although for ‘sub-adult’ skeletons (<18 years old) or disarticulated remains, this is typically considered impractical and multiple individuals may be stored together (Redfern and Bekvalac 2013: 90). Where more than one individual is stored in a box, these are typically separated from each other through the use of bags or cardboard trays. While this decision is usually based on a combination of pragmatism and the best use of what are often limited resources, the distinction arguably confers implicit categories of personhood upon the remains. These bags and boxes are then marked with the same identifying information, but while reading the site name and year of discovery will make sense to an ‘outsider’, “in order to further understand the code you need to be familiarized with the ‘translation’ of this language” (Ion 2011: 19). The label both serves to identify the remains and locate them within “a moment of the history of the site” (ibid.) and inscribes, in a Foucauldian sense, a new identity on the bones and confirms their new status as scientific objects.

The packing of human remains serves a practical purpose in preserving their integrity and protecting against “unnecessary breakage” (Roskams 2001: 206).
The use of clear plastic bags means that the bones inside can be observed without having to remove them; the perforations allow for dispersion of water or condensation, while the box is strong enough to avoid collapse and allows remains to be securely stacked in museum stores (Redfern and Bekvalac 2017: 375). Yet Schwartz (2015: 28) observes that many contemporary practices surrounding deathwork are designed to “create a non-permeable border between the living and the dead” and this is evident within the practice of mortuary archaeology with the “embracing and swaddling” of human remains through the packing process (Quested and Rudge 2003: 559).

In a pragmatic sense, encasing remains holds them together safely and securely, as well as defining them as objects of archaeological investigation, yet the act also arguably possesses coffin-like associations, and literally and symbolically mitigates leakage and contagion (Balachandran 2009: 206). The practice also serves to camouflage and ‘homogenise’ what might otherwise be a discomfitting sight: confronted with seemingly endless rows of metal shelves housing hundreds of identical-looking boxes of human remains in the stores at both YAT and the CHB, I often found it difficult to conceive that these held the remains of former living people. Stored in this way, human remains arguably become the ‘undifferentiated’ dead, only brought into being through the interventions of osteoarchaeologists and the biographical details they reveal through their skeletal analyses.

4.8.1. Practice and empathy

The ‘art’ of packing does not, however, come naturally to all people—according to two of my respondents at least, Marie and Christina (Appendix 24: para. 150-3). Interestingly, these respondents linked this inability to excavate, handle and pack remains with a lack of ‘natural empathy’ or instinct:

Marie: [T]hat’s another thing as well that we find strange, we wouldn’t just hoik things out, you know and sort of throw things out, you are careful and that’s what we find strange, is that some people just don’t seem to have that natural empathy or instinct, it’s like my grandmother would know that if you’re packing a skeleton that you wouldn’t put ribs at
the bottom and you wouldn't put . . . you wouldn't do certain things . . . it's like you
wouldn't have to teach her.

Christina: They wouldn't do it for a vase.

Marie: No, but there are some people, yeah, that's it, and that's the strange thing, some
people just don't seem to have that.

Christina: Or as I've had, let's pack all the skeletons at the bottom and then all the
important rocks on top, because they seem to think that you can stick them back together,
I mean, yeah, you can stick a pot back together and it's strange . . . that sort of mix or what
you can or can't do or what you can or can't get. It puzzles you sometimes.

It is interesting that ‘some people’ not only neglect to treat human remains with
the same care as say, a pot, but actively pack remains in such a way that they will
become damaged, suggesting perhaps that they perceive human remains in terms
of lower value than objects or alternatively, over-estimate the abilities of
conservators to piece the dead back together. I thus observed considerable
differences in ‘natural empathy’ between students at Poulton, with some taking
time and care to ensure that human remains were excavated meticulously, and
others—perhaps due to excitement—rushing the process and making mistakes.
With just one supervisor overseeing the area of the excavation that contained
human remains, it was impossible to keep an eye on all neophyte diggers
simultaneously, and it often fell to students themselves to pick one another up on
their ‘mistakes’ and enforce good ‘excavation etiquette’. When a female student
repeatedly placed her feet or knees in the grave cut, thereby dislodging bones and,
in one case, fracturing a tibia, it led to considerable disgruntlement from her
fellow diggers. This was exacerbated by her propensity for ‘pedestalling’ human
remains—over-excavating the soil around them, so that bones were left
precariously balancing on a ‘pedestal’ of earth—or leaving bones behind when
lifting; common errors made when learning how to excavate human remains for
the first time, as noted by Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 6):

[T]hey first off start to go ‘Ooh, bones!’ and they start to mine bones, so they’re digging the
soil out and out the middle and going “Come on, there’s some bones here!” and you’re like
‘No, no no, no! Stop, stop, stop! All the soil needs to come down simultaneously,
otherwise you’ll lose all the little finger bones and toes bones and the artefacts and stuff as
well’, so ok, fine, and then what happens is they start to dig the edges, so they go to the
edge of the grave and that goes down and they don’t go back into the skeleton again, and
you go ‘Oh no, you can’t do that, no, no, no, no! Be simultaneous!’ So you have to sort
of manage that process quite carefully as a field director. It’s quite nice actually, you can see
it happening, every single time. It’s amazing and there are bits they’re nervous about, so how the skull sits in the grave, um, well, if you’re going to take a photograph of it, you don’t want to have it surrounded by soil and it’s also not good archaeological practice, so you’ve got to then encourage them to take the soil right the way to the skull and then excavate all underneath without dislodging it and they’re terrified of this, it’s not going to go anywhere, but eventually they get it.

Despite the gentle reminders issued by the site osteoarchaeologist and her fellow excavators, she unfortunately continued to treat the remains with what was interpreted as a lack of respect by the other members of the group, leading to a degree of tension. One student (unenthusiastically recruited to the dig by his parents, but swift to develop his skills) thus consequently rebuked his colleague for the way she was treating the remains, drawing on his own newly acquired knowledge.

4.9. Analysing human remains

While the work of osteologists may begin on site with the excavation of human remains, the bulk of their activities will occur in the ‘lab’—or, as McKinley (2013: 148) notes, the bench-top, for “laboratory” is perhaps “slightly too clinical a word for the environment in which osteoarchaeologists” most commonly work. Here, an assessment of the completeness of the skeleton will constitute the first stage of analysis (see Figure 50, Appendix 1: 427). The human skeleton constitutes 206 separate bones, more in juvenile and neonate skeletons where the bones have not yet fused (Bowron 2003: 97), and following decay, “these are no longer held together by ligaments or muscles and can either be removed or reunited with other bones from the same individual” (Sofaer 2012: 138). As Sofaer (ibid.) observes, “skeletons are not therefore sealed or joined wholes, but are divisible, frequently fragmented and often comingled”. As such, the osteological assessment will separate comingled remains and identify the minimum number of individuals present in the assemblage, while delineating their completeness.

At the same time, however, “this sets the parameters of the inferences that can be made regarding these human bones”, for the reconstruction of an individual’s
biography is dependent on their level of preservation with ‘value’ in archaeological terms centred on how much information can be extracted from the remains (Ion 2011: 29). In order to assess the skeleton, the bones may be positioned anatomically, “as if to restore the body to something like its original burial context” through the “literal assembly” and (re)organisation of the deceased’s disparate skeletal parts (McClelland and Cerezo-Román 2016; Krmpotich et al. 2010; see Figure 51, Appendix 1: 428). Nevertheless, despite reassembling the skeleton into a ‘person’, “it is the singular parts that reveal information about the individual as a whole” (Tradii 2016: 119), as measurements are taken and the bones are described, measured and quantified, turning them into data. Remote online collections databases, in which researchers can access data about skeletal assemblages without having to visit and handle them, can further this distance from the dead. Yet at this point, the ‘person’ may be brought back into unexpectedly sharp view, as one of my respondents—a graduate student in osteoarchaeology—noted:

They’re probably a mixture of both. I think in-situ, in an excavation, they’re an individual, in the lab, when they’re laid out and I’m doing an assessment, they’re an individual, but when I’m doing the actual assessment and applying a method to a specific part of that individual, like applying an ageing method to the pelvis or something, it then becomes an object because I’m looking at it and doing the assessment because I’m looking for specific features and I’m not thinking about it as this particular individual’s pelvis, but rather a pelvis and how does it appear compared to other ones and then when I put everything together at the end, it becomes an individual again, I think (Emily, Appendix 18: para. 30).

Similarly, Amy (Appendix 17: para. 15), a Poulton field school student, stated:

Like I dealt with a lot of bones, human bones, in the labs and stuff before, but I’ve never actually had the chance to actually excavate anything and it’s quite a different experience. It’s a lot . . . I don’t know . . . like I thought I would be a lot better . . . not better with it . . . like I had no problems with it when I was in the lab, I’d just . . . but there’s been a couple of times when I’ve been like ‘Oh, this is really kind of upsetting’ in a way, which I wasn’t expecting because I’d been so fine with it when it was in the lab, maybe it’s the just different setting or whatever, so I guess I learned that aspect of it as well, maybe they became more human or something.

While Amy explained that her comfort in working with human remains was increasing with the passing weeks, it was only through their objectification that she was able to achieve this, forsaking her initial reaction to the remains as people.

Indeed, excavating human remains within the confines of the original burial context
is undoubtedly a very different experience to handling human bones in the “neutral environment” of the laboratory (Balachandran 2009: 210). While both field archaeology and the lab analysis of human remains are highly tactile endeavours, the former perhaps has a different, more encompassing embodied quality, as archaeologists find themselves brought within inches of the remains of the dead, hunched or crouched over the burial (ibid.: 211). In addition, Edgeworth (2010: 60) argues that at the archaeological site itself, “the relationships between persons and things are not so highly mediated by intervening technology”, for despite being a scientific enterprise, the material practice of archaeological excavation employs “a fairly basic technology” of tools, including “spades, picks, trowels, hand shovels, buckets, [and] wheelbarrows” that are used to bring evidence to light (Edgeworth 2014: 41), many of which are distinctly non-archaeological, such as spoons and paintbrushes (see Figure 52. Appendix 1: 429).

Conversely, the laboratory is a “place where a specific ordering of the world takes place” (Ion 2011: 28, see Latour and Woolgar 1986; Ophir and Shapin 1991; Knorr Cetina 1992; Livingston 2003), where interactions with the remains of the dead are conducted within “a highly artefactual environment, characterised by complex arrays of apparatus which mediate transactions between scientists and the materials being worked upon” (Edgeworth 2010: 59; see Figure 53, Appendix 1: 430). As such, human remains may lose their association with a former person, by taking on the identity of a specimen that can be analysed, manipulated and reconfigured as data (Ion 2011: 2). Indeed, osteological analysis proceeds from a “general model of the human body as adhering to an anatomical standard” to which each skeleton is compared. Yet, as Ion (ibid.: 30) notes, “the problem with comparing remains to an anatomical model . . . is that by employing such standards of understanding the human body, one also takes on the connotations and implications associated with the concept”, with the skeleton arguably being understood “as a standard mechanism, with functional proprieties”, when each has its “own identity and particularities”.

Yet, while osteologists may often be perceived as “dry technicians”, analysing the human skeleton according to a “prescribed ‘recipe’ book of ideas and methods’ (Sofaer 2006: 33), it is also a highly intimate and tactile area of expertise. Despite a
proliferation of illustrated manuals and textbooks, each human body is unique, and learning the shapes and textures of human bones—what is part of a normal range of variation and what is different—is a training that relies upon the accumulation of sensory knowledge (Sofaer 2012: 143). Students at Poulton were therefore encouraged to visualise and palpate their own bones in order to understand how these individual skeletal elements related to their own bodies, as well as to hold bones against them to assist with identification and siding (ibid.; see Figure 54, Appendix 1: 431), an activity that also served to bridge the gap between the living and the dead.

4.9.1. Medicalising human remains

Is it not absurd to make a diagnosis of someone who’s been dead for centuries (Wieczorkiewicz 2005: 63)?

As part of the analysis of human remains, they may also be subjected to a battery of tests and procedures that may be described in terms of ‘medicalising’ the dead: a term derived from the way in which physicians may view patients only in terms of their medical status or as their diagnosis (Schulman-Green 2003: 256). While Philip (Appendix 8: para. 20) stated that he referred to human remains as people and conceived of them as something different to other categories of archaeological evidence, including animal bones, he still had a tendency, much like medical practitioners, to define them as interesting examples of specific pathologies:

[Human remains are] very much people. You tend to sort of, I mean, I’ve been working on a medieval collection almost since I started at [redacted] and there’s nearly 700 burials, but you know, if I think of a number, think of a particular burial, I think of ‘Oh, yeah, that’s the chap with DISH [Diffuse Idiopathic Skeletal Hyperostosis is calcification of ligaments in areas where they attach to the spine] and a broken leg’ or something like that, so they kind of individualise themselves because each of them is different and so there are some that you kind of know straight away: ‘Oh yeah, that’s the lady with syphilis’ or ‘It’s a man with DISH’. So yeah, I mean, they definitely are people rather than objects. I don’t feel the same when I go through animal bone collections at all.

While these pathologies helped to differentiate individuals in his mind, the practice arguably creates a distance between the living and the dead by reducing a (former) person to a collection of symptoms and diseases. Wieczorkiewicz (2005: 63)
observes that there are “two modes of dealing with the problem of death” within archaeology that become immediately visible upon a visit to any UK museum with a human remains collection. The first entails “folklorising” mortality in other cultures and societies in order to detach “their death-related behaviours from our world”, while the second mode involves a strategy of “pathologising” human remains and medicalising their modern condition, “translating past narratives into the language of contemporary culture” (ibid.). We might link this preoccupation with diagnosing death to the ways in which Western cultures handle the problem of mortality where, as Bauman (1992: 138) observes, death has been substituted “by the problem of health” which seeks to identify the cause of a disease:

All deaths have causes, each death has a cause, each particular death has its particular cause . . . We do not hear of people dying of mortality. They die only of individual causes, they die because there was an individual cause. No post-mortem examination is considered complete until the individual cause has been revealed.

While determining the cause of death is vital within forensics, this strategy has increasingly come to be applied to the ways in which we make sense of ancient death. Palaeopathology—the study of ancient disease (Mays 1997: 601; Roberts 2013: 79)—has become a particularly strong area of expertise within human osteology, with the early years of this specialism dominated by the production of “diagnosis orientated case studies analogous to the case histories of living patients” (Sofaer 2012: 137). As Renshaw and Powers (2016: 164) note, this approach is often compounded by media representations of funerary archaeology which often “exhibit a fascination with the dead as unique individuals possessed of biographical narratives that are open to reconstruction and reflection”. Yet, while the reconstruction of the past lives of particular individuals may be understood as producing a more ‘humanised’ and perhaps emotive, view of the past, it has also been critiqued for responding to “narcissistic discourses about the self”, as well as risking “a voyeuristic intrusion into past lives” (ibid: 165).

Amongst the community of the dead, Egyptian mummies have arguably become subject to this ‘intrusive’ approach and the glare of the medical gaze most
frequently: their cultural and temporal distance from the present is understood to have severed all social and genealogical connections with living people, thereby facilitating the perception of them as objects. Wieczorkiewicz (2005: 63) observes that “detailed descriptions of the course of diseases, viruses and bacteria” often make their way into museum displays of ancient Egyptians, even though these are “mostly irrelevant to knowledge about the culture” under study. Egyptian mummies may also find themselves subject to the ‘gaze’ of medical imaging technologies, the application of which has become increasingly commonplace in contemporary Egyptology (see Wagner 2017). Indeed, Daniel (Appendix 26: para. 20) spoke of the strangeness of the experience of taking an ancient mummy for a CT scan at his local hospital:

It does [feel strange]! Especially when the scanner says ‘Hold your breath . . . breathe away!’ that never seemed to get old. Um, that has its own problems, because we use a scanner in [redacted] and although we use it after hours, you go through, in through the Accident and Emergency ward, so you, you turn up with a gurney with a crate on it that looks suspiciously like a coffin and you know, you say ‘Oh, I’m just bringing in some equipment’, that is a little odd and it elicits a lot of interest in the hospital. Medical professionals come in and even on their time off they’ll come in and watch a mummy scan, but I mean you could do a study just in the presentation of mummies and CT scanning because it’s kind of thought of as a magic wand to kind of wave and then suddenly it becomes quite clear what’s inside the wrappings, a lot of the time it is, a lot of the time it’s not, um, you can’t easily tell how mummies, how the individuals that have been mummified died. You know? It’s not like, it’s not like an autopsy. You can’t say with certainty because often the flesh that would preserve the evidence of the cause of death is not preserved to a good enough degree, unless as has happened on a couple of occasions to my knowledge, there’s a cracking great injury on the head and you can say for sure, this is how someone died. But no, we always refer to them by name, if it’s known, um, and try and be as respectful as possible and it’s very interesting in a hospital setting, the staff there are almost more careful with mummies than they are with living patients because, just because living patients, we are flesh, we can get jiggled around on a trolley a bit, but a mummy doesn’t have the give, as it were, so you have to be extra careful.

It is notable that Daniel refers to human remains by name wherever possible, perhaps as a means to mitigate the dehumanising aspects of medicalising the dead. Wagner (2016: 166-167) argues that such imaging technologies are a consequence of the medical gaze, as well as implicated in its reproduction, and are utilised due to the prestige and credibility associated with medical science and its ability to deliver the ‘objective’ truth, as Riggs (2014: 211) comments:
Techniques developed for other purposes, such as radiography and scanning, bring the prestige of medical science to the interpretation of the archaeological material, yielding results that are presumed to convey objectivity and truth in a way that humanities and the social sciences fail to do.

These medical imaging technologies are valued, above all, for their non-invasive and non-destructive qualities, in the sense that they leave the subject of the imaging intact after examination. The benefits of these techniques are thus often framed in terms of preserving the integrity of “a finite and irreplaceable resource that must be preserved for future study”, with little attention directed at the ethics of subjecting the ancient dead to such a practice, again reaffirming their new status as scientific objects (Lambert-Zazulak et al. 2003: 224; see Figure 55, Appendix 1: 432).

Nonetheless, the use of technology may be viewed as an invasion of ‘privacy’—particularly for ancient Egyptians, as they reveal that which was “only, if ever, meant to be revealed under conditions of purity and ritual control” (Riggs 2014: 209)—for such tests are undertaken without considering issues of consent or invasiveness which contextualise such procedures in the living (Robb 2009: 104-105). Yet, while such technologies are deployed to reconstruct a past person’s biography, as Wagner (2016: 171) argues, “paradoxically, the more intimate a picture is” in the sense of showing the interior of the body—as produced by, say, CT scanning—the more anonymous and, perhaps, objectified, the body becomes.

Indeed, medical imaging technologies arguably place an overwhelming focus on the body itself, rather than say, mummy wrappings which, Riggs (2014: 23) explains, were “as important [to ancient Egyptians] as what was being wrapped”. These new technologies may thus be understood as a contemporary manifestation of an old “desire for visually penetrating the protecting layers” of mummies that began with public mummy unwrappings in the 19th century (Wagner 2017: 168). Thus, the act of exploring the insides of a mummy “with the aid of a CT scan [may] nonetheless [feel] like trespassing, for these bodies were not designed to be seen” (Pilger 2014 cited in Wagner 2016). Robb (2013: 443) observes that:
We normally do not consider whether the dead would want to be studied, gazed upon, or disclosed; while personal information about the living is carefully guarded in medical practice, no such precautions are needed for the archaeological dead.

The remains of the ancient dead are often, therefore, considered to be ‘open access’ and, accordingly, “one might argue that our ability to accommodate the wishes of the deceased are limited by their inability to make them known” (Robb 2013: 443). Indeed, “most archaeologists would consider applying a notion such as privacy or volition to a skeleton nonsensical” (ibid.), reflecting the ways in which archaeological practice reconfigures the remains of the dead as objects of science, rather than as continued social persons: biomedical Egyptology researchers, for example, thus frequently speak in terms of ‘specimens’ and ‘resources’. While much of this re-categorisation of the dead takes place tacitly, the redefinition of human remains as objects arguably serves again to facilitate a level of emotional detachment between archaeologists and the human remains they encounter.

4.9.2. “Oracles of identity”: Human remains and destructive sampling

Yet, beyond osteological analysis lies a world of analysis that as Mackie et al. (2017: 74) observe, “is becoming increasingly ‘molecular’”. In recent years archaeology has benefitted from the introduction of a number of new techniques, such as stable isotope analysis, as well as the amplification of ancient DNA. Often hailed as an “oracle of identity”, DNA is frequently perceived as holding the essence of our personhood (Robb 2009: 105), and as such, DNA technology is regularly used in the forensic investigation of mass graves, as seen in Srebrenica (see Wagner 2008) and at Fromelles (see Loe et al. 2014). While DNA matching might be construed as an act of post-mortem care as it seeks to identify the dead and reconcile them with their families or descendants (see Scully 2014), such research also raises significant questions regarding ethics, consent and privacy, as Marie and Christina (Appendix 24: para. 126-9) discussed in their dealings with “evil geneticists”:
Christina: I think, with the work I’ve been doing recently, um, working with the evil geneticists [laughs] where they’re getting things like hair, skin and eye colour for me, stuff that I never imagined we would ever really be—

Marie: That was always something in the fantasy realm, wasn’t it?

Christina: Yeah, so, kind of in a way, you get to know this person even more, even more detailed—

Marie: Yeah, you’re sort of, you are really sort of rebuilding and I suppose the reason why they have that distance and call things a specimen is because what they see is always such a small part, like a, it’s . . . to us even though we might see a tooth, I think because we’ve our training and what we do is very different in that we are seeing them as people and what we want to find out is about them as individuals and then as much about other aspects, so even if we’ve only got little parts we would still see that as a person, whereas I think the field that they’re in, is that they only ever see that little part, they never see the whole person, so their focus is very different and what they want to take out from it is very different, so I think that’s again, a sense of it being a specimen or a resource as opposed to us seeing that person as being so valuable because of what they can tell us..

While these techniques undoubtedly help to re-humanise the dead by furnishing practitioners with details about an individual’s appearance, at the same time they are physically destructive of the remains of the very individual they seek to ‘re-embodi’ (Rosenblatt 2015: 194). As such, they may appear—especially to an outsider—as an act of mutilation, especially where samples of bone are removed by saw (Rosenblatt 2015: 189). This perhaps explains why Christina (Appendix 24: para. 10) sought the return of a collagen sample taken from a skeleton in her care, as means of re-instating what was missing and reconstituting the ‘wholeness’ of the individual (as well as adhering to curatorial sampling ethics). Due to its transgressive nature, the application of destructive methods creates an inevitable dilemma for practitioners, torn between their duty to preserve a body’s integrity, and the “microscopic and molecular technologies [which] can provide unprecedented details about the life history of biological remains” (Mackie et al. 2017: 74). Redfern and Bekvalac (2013: 91) report that demand for the destructive sampling of museum collections is rising and this is leading to institutions experiencing a change in the way they view their collections, increasingly viewed as ‘biobanks’ which require new ways of being managed (Redfern and Bekvalac 2017: 376). As Marie and Christina (Appendix 24: para. 53-8) discussed:
Christina: I think more increasingly now, their value is, in terms of scientific value, is seen in [indecipherable] and stable isotopes, so people are more interested in them as a resource almost for looking at how diseases have changed over time and that kind of thing.

Marie: So yeah, the kind of sampling, the chemical analysis of them, so we’ve sort of . . . we would probably emphasise more on our macroscopic, ’cause our analysis would all be on what we can see, physically, what we can actually record, then now, like [redacted] said, it’s sort of gone to a different level because science then has developed the application of what we can do, in that sense.

Christina: And that then impacts on how we manage our collections, so we have really, I would say, over the past five years, changed fundamentally how we manage our collections in those terms.

Marie: Yeah, and also the sort of requests that we would get have changed in terms of what then people would be looking for . . . now recently, it’s much more about wanting to sample from them, knowing that they’re maybe from a particular time period or a particular group, they’re a particular age, they’ve got a particular disease, it’s then what you can extract, chemically really—

Christina: Because they’re not like, interested in if it is, like the work I’ve been doing on [redacted] children, they’re not really interested in that [redacted] child’s experience or anything, or the funerary context, they’re just interested in the genomic information contained in that skeleton.

These developments, however, raise new ethical issues that have yet to be fully explored by curating institutions (Appendix 24: para. 113-23):

Marie: But yeah, suddenly that’s taking us into a very different realm, and that’s a challenge for us, because that’s not our field and also the have different rules and regulations, so for them if they do any research they have to make their data freely available for every other geneticist that might want it, but they can mine that data and then they might find something that they’re looking for or they might find something else, but that could potentially be data relating to all of our people, so it takes us out to this wider sphere—

Christina: So we have to, in a way, act in . . . because . . . they’re not recently dead, because they have no family and it isn’t actually an issue of consent, so—

Marie: And we couldn’t get it anyway! [laughs]

Christina: So we have that ethical concern, whereby we almost have to act as . . . as giving privy consent on their behalf, thinking about these things, whereas actually legally, we . . . it doesn’t exist, but we have created this . . . it’s for us, it’s part of our collection management and respecting them as an individual and ensuring that they … that their physical integrity is maintained as much as possible, but because they’ve been dead for so long, actually none of these considerations are pertinent, so when I talk to bioethicists about it, they find it really strange that I’m really concerned about someone who died 2000 years ago [laughs] But I go, ‘Yeah, but they’re all of our ancestors’, because we’re all genetically related to them, they’re in our care and we’re giving consent for something and in another sense, we have no idea how down the line that’s going to be used. And also, the fact is that we have to accept that we can control through copyright and through agreements with different researchers how their data is used and managed, but once it gets put in these genetic databases—
Marie: Yeah, you don’t have any control over it; it has a life, literally, all of its own.

Christina: So yeah, if they discovered that one of the people in our collection had like, a gene that enabled them to be able to be resistant to the flu and it went in this genetic database and it was mined, that data was then mined by a health care company, is that we have no connection with that to control how that data is used.

Marie: Yeah, it’s sort of become devoid from us and it’s also then become devoid from that person, so it’s probably more us . . . more our construct of thinking of these as people—

Christina: It’s our ethical dilemma we’ve created! [laughs]

Marie: Yeah, and it’s our attachment to them, because you do get attached, so you feel responsible for them and then the individuals you record, as well, particularly, you have an even greater attachment to because you’ve really sort of got to know them because you’ve looked at them so closely, so you begin to get that sort of relationship with them and when you do know some of the names, like some of the people we know the names for, I know more about them than I do my own family! [laughs] Because you spend time with them, so yeah, it’s more our connection with them, as to how we feel with all of these other sorts of scientific developments charging on, you know, but I think it’s good that we are . . . that we raise those concerns because otherwise, as [redacted] was saying, people won’t see them as the people that they are, they will just see them as some sort of resource that you can just keep taking a little bit here and a little bit there and then we’re left with no integrity.

Christina: Because that’s how they view it, as a resource to be mined, rather than respected.

Marie: Yeah, and it’s sort of like, also one of the questions we would always ask is to what end do you hope to get a result and what is that result really going to tell you? Is there no other way we can do it? And is that really so terribly sort of vital because if something, we’re interested obviously in things like health and diseases and change of disease through time and hopefully some of those things might help research now in the future, but there might be some things that it’s just somebody wanting to test something, not necessarily to get something that we can then utilise as a bigger pictorial framework, It’s just that, well, you’ve got the teeth, you’ve got the bones, we just want to have that, so again, it’s trying to be a bit more stringent about why . . . what is the reason really behind why you want to do this project and destroy, you know, a tooth or an element of a person, so yeah, you get . . . you do get involved with them [laughs] Because, you know, although it’s classed as your job, you are caring for them in that sense, you care about them much more, because we said if we ever had to leave for any reason, we’d have to have some sort of counselling because we’d have separation anxiety [laughs] ’Cause you know, we see them every day, we’re part of them, yeah, just sort of get to know them, although they’ve all got lovely site codes and context numbers, they’re all sort of people you’ve got to know [laughs].

Evident in this discussion is the affinity Marie and Christina (Appendix 24: para. 106-8) have developed with the remains in their care. Indeed, while osteoarchaeologists and forensic anthropologists are often perceived as being more objective and detached from the dead than their counterparts working in other areas of the discipline due to the medical roots of their specialism, they explained that they viewed human remains very much as people:
Christina: It’s interesting because they [geneticists] tend to call them specimens, whereas we would never, ever refer to them as specimens, they’re people—

Katherine: You call them people?

Christina: Yeah, so they’re never specimens for us.

Yet, unless re-assembled for display purposes or selected for reburial, human remains will rarely be physically reconstituted as such, and thus they assume a new archaeological afterlife and dual existence as both subject and object.

4.10. Reburial

While many of the ‘warehoused dead people’ that archaeologists have excavated and studied may spend the rest of their archaeological afterlives in a state of limbo, suspended between life and death as both subjects and objects (Robb 2013: 441), a number will find themselves reconstituted as people once more through the process of reburial. While there is a vast literature regarding the issue of the re-interment of archaeological human remains—in which practitioners are divided over whether it represents “an abrogation” of the discipline’s “duty of stewardship to preserve knowledge for the benefit of present and future society” (Moshenska 2009: 818)—there is a relative paucity concerning the conduct of such ceremonies. Cantwell (1993: 199) argues that the lack of attention devoted to the character or content of reburial rituals almost certainly reflects “the popular view that burial marks the end of the body’s movements across time and space, as well as the common belief that the dead no longer hold an important place in the world of the living”. Yet, exhumation and reburial—whether archaeological or otherwise—should perhaps be understood as a stage in the completion of mortuary ritual, rather than being divorced from it (Crossland 2009: 104). As such, archaeologists may find themselves attending such a ceremony as actors in a modern re-interpretation of the very burial process they took part in ‘undoing’. In this way, they are “no longer simply students of past social constructions, but now are active participants in the creation of new ones” (Cantwell 1993: 199). Accordingly, Cantwell (ibid: 214) states:
It is important to remember that the bones from the burials described here were introduced into the modern world, and were then blessed and re-buried, by strangers. Grieving spouses, parents, children or friends present at the original interments are themselves now long dead and buried. This is the second burial for these bones, which have outlasted their own flesh, their own memorials, and their own mourners. The consequences of these reburials for today's participants are obviously quite different from those for the mourners at the primary interments. They relate to modern issues of social identity and social justice, as well as spiritual and ethical concerns. Participants at any given reburial may not necessarily be there for the same reasons and, in fact, may achieve dissimilar although not necessarily contradictory goals. For many, these ceremonies, like all burials, are occasions to simulate a desired world, be it in the past, the present, or the future.

Mays (2017: 50) advises that the reburial process should proceed with skeletons being “bagged separately and placed in the pit(s) as individuals rather than intermingled”. The use of the term ‘pit’, however, instead of grave implies that despite the attempt to reconstitute these remains as ‘individuals’ and to provide a set of rites, there is a certain utility to such an undertaking which perhaps does not always easily align with our efforts to restore personhood and reconcile the deceased with their forebears (Robben 2004b: 145). As Svestad (2013: 214) notes, such arrangements can “appear as a kind of pragmatic ‘cover up’” and are intended to “neutralize the irreparable and accommodate ordinances and political and religious concerns of present authorities”. Yet, as Powers et al. (2013: 130) observe, there is often considerable discrepancy as to how reburials are conducted, dependent on the particular proclivities of the living individuals organising the ceremony. Thus, while some remains may be reinterred as commingled or unidentifiable ‘objects’, with multiple individuals in a single container—usually in biodegradable bags—others will be reburied as individuals in separate labelled boxes or cardboard coffins, with the remains of particularly high-profile individuals receiving highly orchestrated ceremonies and considerable public attention, as most recently witnessed in the reburial of Richard III (ibid.; see Figure 56, Appendix 1: 433). Christina and Marie (Appendix 24: para. 71–4) thus stated:

Christina: And when they do rebury them, it isn’t as if there’s a set process that’s consistent between samples, we’ve found that it’s very, very varied from multiple people, being kept as an individual, to multiple contexts being put into one—

Marie: Into one great big sort of pit, really.

Christina: Yeah, without any sort of identifiers, so if you did need to go and find them for any reason, it would be quite—

Marie: Yeah, you wouldn’t be able to find that one person.
Where burials are to be disturbed on land which falls under the jurisdiction of the Church of England, the Church usually requires that remains are reburied as close to their original resting places as possible (ibid.). Yet, this is often not practicable and in the case of the remains excavated from Poulton, a number were reburied in Leicestershire, despite being originally interred in Cheshire. Arguably this confirms their status as archaeological objects, with no need to take into account the presumed wishes of the deceased. Accordingly, Marie and Christina (Appendix 24: para. 168-9) discussed the feelings that ‘defying’ the burial wishes of the dead provoked in them, again revealing their understanding of human remains as people:

Marie: So you come out, so a lot of people again, they paid a lot of money to be in some of those places, but you know, inherent snob in me, unfortunately, I can’t have the people in [redacted] buried in [redacted] cemetery, they just won’t, they’ll object, you know?

Christina: Also, the thing that I find is when people have expressly wished for the church, to be buried within the church, so they obviously wouldn’t want be moved, or within the crypts because they wanted to stay there, but then the church, they’re all out in a big pit somewhere.

Powers et al. (2013: 127-30) note that more than a third of remains from post-medieval sites included on the Historic England database had been, or were destined, for reburial, compared to five per cent of burials overall. Alan (Appendix 14: para. 42) thus noted that it is “distant human remains, like prehistoric ones, [that] tend often to end up in storage”. Yet, while Pagans might interpret this as evidence of the remains of prehistoric people being treated with less respect, their retention by archaeologists implies that they possess a greater value in research terms than the ‘common-or-garden’ post-medieval dead who may, in turn, be viewed as taking up valuable storage space within archaeological archives that could be put to better use. Ultimately, then, decisions to rebury or curate remains for the long-term may often be contingent on space and funding—or a lack thereof—once again revealing that circumstances outside of archaeology practitioners’ control may often affect the treatment of human remains and their ultimate reconstitution as ‘people’.
4.11. Conclusion

I think in a way, the processes of recording and removing the burials is kind of faintly ritualistic in its own right and makes us feel like we’re doing it . . . doing it respectfully and doing that burial justice, um . . . because it’s kind of the trade-off for getting that kind of information from them as well and that extends through to the whole cleaning, drying and packaging process. Everything is done very carefully and with an emphasis on making sure that they are all kept together (Rob, Appendix 11: para. 38).

This chapter has explored the journey human remains may take from excavation to reburial, a process in which they will be subjected to a raft of practices that tacitly serve to re-categorise them as archaeological evidence (Robb 2013: 443). This process is arguably designed so as to ameliorate any ambiguity surrounding their ontological status, yet both the practices enacted on the dead, as well as the remains themselves, may hold a multiplicity of meanings. As such, human remains may retain a “mobile hybridity and agency and are both quasi-people and quasi-objects, existing as neither and both at the same time”, but one will come to the fore more strongly as different kinds of identities are laid upon the bones by different practitioners, and as they are encountered in different contexts and are subjected to different practices and procedures (Jones and Whitaker 2009: 42). Archaeologists thus learn to switch between “treating the body-as-object and activating the whole person” (Prentice 2013: 67-8), and yet the process by which human remains transition to the status of archaeological ‘objects’ and assume a new identity may also be viewed as a continuation of the trajectory of death and dying, which calls for the care of the dead body and the enactment of cultural rituals (Quested and Rudge 2003: 559). In this way, the practice of mortuary archaeology represents both a form of post-mortem care and a means of managing the emotional ramifications of disturbing the dead, or as Nilsson (2011: 28) argues, perhaps “more of a ritual than a scientific or a rescue operation”.

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Chapter Five

Challenges to emotional detachment

There is something odd about bones, otherwise people wouldn’t be studying [them], the whole “we are just meat-covered skeletons powered by ghosts” aspect is to be honest part of the fascination of archaeology (I won’t ever forget my first and so far only experience of watching a burial being uncovered, even though it was of an infant who died over two thousand years ago; I certainly won’t forget eating dinner with the digging team in the barn where we were staying that night with those tiny, crumbly little bones carefully stowed in a plastic biscuit box on a nearby table). And there is particularly something odd about recent bones (Mortimer 2016).

5.1. Introduction

Many practices of mortuary archaeology seek to impose some kind of ‘order’ on the remains of the dead by subjecting them to a process of tacit objectification: recategorising them as archaeological material which thereby assists practitioners in their efforts to remain emotionally passive. This chapter, however, confronts instances where the ‘oddness’ of human remains may make detachment impossible to sustain. Thompson (1997: 197) observes that any number of “psychological impacts or adjustments” are likely to occur when the living engage with the physical remains of the dead, thus while professionals might be able to argue that they are ‘just’ handling flesh and bone, there are “many stimuli which are likely to engender sympathetic responses and speculations”. This chapter seeks to understand what factors and characteristics of the remains themselves most frequently prompt these reactions,
uncovering a number of powerful and enduring cultural beliefs towards death and the
dead in 21st century British society (Tung 2014: 437).

Beginning with the issue of identification and how this can result in the categorisation
of human remains as either ‘people’ or ‘objects’, the chapter then explores the impact
of working with ‘abject’ and ‘uncanny’ remains that possess the power to “both
fascinate and appal” due to their unsettling lifelike qualities (Giles 2013: 490). Next,
the chapter considers the affective power of the material culture associated with the
dead: how its discovery may prove more disconcerting than the presence of human
remains themselves and the ways in which grave goods and personal possessions may
buffer, bridge or breech interactions between the living and the dead. Then, the
chapter turns its attention to the effect wrought by apparently ‘difficult deaths’,
particularly the most “emotionally unacceptable” of all: those of children (Strange
2005: 261). It argues that practitioners’ responses to past child mortality are shaped
by current understandings of life expectancy in British society. The chapter concludes
with an analysis of the discomfort provoked by the destruction of human remains,
linking this anxiety over disarticulation and disassociation to existential fears
surrounding the dissolution of the body.

5.2. ‘Feelings of knowing’: The provocation of
identification

So there was one, y’know, you could literally get down and you were, like, face-to-face with
an Iron Age person’s face. And you could see his, like, eyebrows and his stubble and . . . it
was just weird then, because I was just thinking, ‘This is a dead body’, you know what I
mean? Whereas as I look at an infinite amount of cremation pots and bones and whatever
else in museums and never think that I’m looking at a dead person (Dan, Appendix 23:
para. 18).

The remains of the dead may become the purview of archaeologists when they are at
least a century old (see Human Tissue Act 2004; Human Tissue Act (Scotland)
2006), although the “comfort horizon” in Britain appears to be “between one and two
centuries before the present”, with “somewhere in the nineteenth century” marking
the point where it is deemed acceptable to study them archaeologically (Robb 2009: 106). Nonetheless, situations “do quite regularly arise” where human remains less than 100 years old are encountered by archaeology professionals and where the subsequent disturbance of the ‘recent’ dead may provoke protest among the local community (Boyle 2015: 51), such as at the former Unitarian Chapel and burial ground at Swinton, Greater Manchester (see BBC 2012; Evans 2013), where plans to build a supermarket on a former burial ground were met with fierce opposition.

This general consensus as to when the dead ‘become’ archaeological conveniently “encodes an entire ontology” that revolves around the potential “threatening familiarity” of the body (Robb 2009: 106, Brooks and Rumsey 2007: 346) and “the emotional distortion that time gives us (or that we create)” (Congram and Bruno 2007: 42). Accordingly, as personhood is so strongly tied to the body in Western cultures, we generally understand that with the passing of time, so the dead become less socially relevant to the living as individuated persons in their own right (Robb 2009: 106). In this way, they are not only biologically dead, but also ‘socially’ deceased, thereby facilitating their transition to a new ‘life’ as archaeological evidence. Referring to the ways in which “someone is treated as if they were dead or non-existent” whilst still alive—as in the case of individuals living with diagnoses of dementia or terminal illness (Borgstrom 2016: 5)—‘social death’ represents a very different kind of death to that experienced by the physical body and, for this reason, it “may extend either side of the grave” (Mulkay 1993: 33). Indeed, repatriation requests (Chapter 2.6.1.) often argue for the continued agency of the ancient dead who, through their ongoing participation in social relations, remind us they are “enmeshed in a different sense of time” (Robb 2009: 106).

In conventional Western thinking, however, the passing of time is equated with the loss of “an individual biological existence” (Leighton 2010: 98), with death perceived as destroying “the social being grafted upon the individual” (Hertz 1960:77). As Craig (Appendix 20: para. 100) therefore commented: “I think recent remains you would really struggle to separate yourself [from]. Um . . . prehistoric remains, not so much.” At its most extreme, this lack of connection may appear so insurmountable that human remains may be more easily conceived of as ‘Other’, becoming part of
“nobody’s dead”, as is arguably the fate of collections of Egyptian mummies (Córdova 2006: 71). Rarely presented in terms of cultural links to present-day Egyptians and with few calls for their repatriation, their ‘otherness’ can be exploited by museum displays where their anonymity “protects both us and them”, whilst provoking “awe and reverence” due to the degree of recognisable humanness afforded by the mummification process (Jones and Whitaker 2009: 150, see Figure 57, Appendix 1: 434). This lingering ‘humanness’ can prompt what is often described as ‘instinctive identification’: defined within the psychological literature as the “cognitive process of emotional involvement by which we see other people as being like or similar to ourselves” (Ursano and Fullerton 1990: 1769–1770). This ability to identify with the dead is important to the living: even in Western societies we expend great effort on refashioning corpses “into a visual likeness of its previous living form” through the services of undertakers and embalmers, in which they may ‘stage’ the dead body in an “approximation of embodied life” so that it will appear recognisable to surviving relatives (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 132). As such, ‘feelings of knowing’ may stimulate positive emotions of comfort or connection, as Andrew’s (Appendix 12: para. 28) comments reveal:

This was the discovery of an Australian soldier in the First World War at um, a place called [indecipherable] just out on the Messines Ridge . . . so we found him in 2008, um and eventually identified him in 2010. It was a lot of work, but we got him in the end. He was a chap called Private Alan James Mather, 37 years old from [indecipherable], Serial No. 1983, um and he was part of the Third Australian Division, 33rd Battalion and Infantry, and um, the curiosity for me in excavating that one, excavating Alan, was that my grandfather was also Third Australian Division. They would have trained together on Salisbury Plain because they all trained for this particular engagement on Salisbury Plain, um, the both of them fought their first battle at the Battle of Messines in which Alan was killed and my grandfather got through it, so there’s an outside chance that I . . . that Alan Mather would have met my grandfather or certainly would have seen him or encountered him, but they were all there at the same time and had this shared experience and I never met my grandfather, he was dead before I was born, so it’s quite peculiar, excavating archaeologically something, a person, who may well have known one of your relatives. That was a curiosity: it was a dynamic that you don’t ever get with the prehistoric burials.

Yet, for those who engage professionally with the dead, the elimination of their “unfamiliar and . . . unknown qualities” can also prove to be problematic (Ursano and McCarroll 1990: 398). As Montross (2007: 13) notes in her study of medical practice, “the most alarming moments” of anatomical dissection are “not the bizarre, the unknown. They are the familiar”, such as the presence of tattoos or painted
fingernails on a cadaver (ibid. 24). Such tell-tale signs of humanity can prompt deathwork professionals to make comparisons with their own family and friends, as well as their own bodies (Hafferty 1991: 60), impinging on their feelings of safety, security and emotional wellbeing (Giddens 1991: 36; Mellor 1993: 12). Indeed, the “folkloric stories” that circulate amongst new medical school entrants play upon this fear, through the urban myth of a first-year anatomy class student who pulls back the shroud covering their cadaver to reveal, to their horror, the corpse of their grandparent (Carter III: 1997: 21). Similarly, Howarth (1996: 82) notes that some funeral home workers avoid organising funerals of friends or family, lest it may prove too challenging for them to remain emotionally detached.

Archaeological human remains may retain this same capacity to stimulate a connection between the living and the dead, both through the evidential vestiges of a former life, but also their symbolic association as corporeal memento mori. The strongest affective power of the dead arguably lies in this self-referential nature. Key moments of cadaver dissection which may prove unnerving for medical students typically include taking a scalpel to the head, hands and sexual organs: body parts that comprise potent reminders of the cadaver’s former personhood (Lella and Pawluch 1988: 132). Ergo, they will typically cover these parts as they dissect them, a ritual that not only aids them psychologically in breaking the taboos that surround causing damage to the dead body, but which also marks the transition of the deceased from person to corpse (Mol 2002: 126). We can see the same concerns within archaeological excavation in Mark’s memory of accidental damage caused to a skull (Appendix 27: para. 32):

I suppose, at an emotional level, if you’re going to kind of kibosh human remains, the one element you don’t really want to muck around with or hit is . . . if you want to say the soul is contained within the consciousness and the consciousness resides in the head, then you know, by all levels of Greek philosophy, Judaic philosophy, Buddhism, Islam, you know, it’s desecrating, it’s desecrating the place of the soul, I suppose. Even though . . . but you know, I am quite happily atheist, you know? I think it’s more of that empathic thing, really. I don’t really relish the thought of me lying in the ground and having my face taken off by a shovel, that’s probably what it comes down to, whereas I’m quite happy to be totally and utterly excavated nicely and stuck in a box and maybe polished and put on a museum shelf, that’s totally fine with me, um . . . and maybe that does inform how I approach these things.
This incident continued to ‘haunt’ Mark, who equated this most human element of the skeleton with the head and the face of a person, albeit an absent one. As Harries (2016: 6) observes, the skull often provokes a “primordial and uncanny feeling” that arises from its former existence in which it was “enfolded into the being” of another individual and may therefore be perceived as retaining “something of their lively being even as this lively being has been withdrawn from the possibility of encounter”. Both “conceptually [and] psychologically”, therefore, the face is perceived as “being at the forefront of human interactions and emotional practices” (Downes and Trigg 2017: 3-4): it houses the seat of our identity and, perhaps, as Mark notes, the place of the soul. To cause damage to it, even unintentionally, represents an act of harm which causes him anxiety despite his espoused beliefs (see Figure 58, Appendix 1: 435). This sentiment reflects not just the legacy of legislation which prevents “defamation of the corpse” but broader British attitudes in which—despite the waning of Christian belief—there remains the “nebulous hope of future reunification and a profound repugnance towards physical interference or mutilation after death” (Richardson 2006: 163). The act of literal defacement therefore bridged time for Mark, empathetically connecting him to his own future death and burial, and his fear of having his ‘face taken off’ (Buchli and Lucas 2001: 10). A subconscious undercurrent in his account, however, is the notion that the dead retain the ability to feel and experience pain, leading to a sense of guilt and regret at his unintended ‘harm’.

5.3. “Squidgy bits are a no-no”: The ‘abject’ dead

My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—cadere [to fall], cadaver (Kristeva 1982: 3).

As the Spitalfields example (Chapter 2.3.) discussed, well-preserved remains that retain “empathic indicators of identity” (Hanson 2007: 76), such as hair, flesh or nails, typically prompt the strongest feelings of recognition (Leighton 2010: 87). In contrast, bare skeletonised remains are often regarded as lacking the necessary
corporeality to permit richer “attribution[s] of social activity and role” (Exell 2014: 152). Post-medieval cemeteries where human remains are not ‘clean’ but partially fleshed and may be identifiable through historic detail or biography can be particularly troubling reminders of our own mortality (Leighton 2010: 90), prompting an affective connection with human remains as more of a ‘person’ than a ‘thing’ (ibid).

Such well-preserved remains are more likely to “provoke feelings of loss, sorrow, [and] sympathy . . . and to be either subjected to full forensic identification or reburied without study”, quite unlike their skeletal counterparts (Robb 2009: 106). Robb situates this cultural reaction within Western notions of the intact and bounded body as the container of the self—an understanding that permeates the “modern relationship to dead bodies”—such that these remains cannot be so successfully divorced from their ‘humanness’ (Robb 2009: 103). He goes on to argue they are thus able to provoke greater revulsion, particularly when in a ‘wet’ state: Rosenblatt (2005: xvii-xviii) duly observes, “most of us possess neither the skills nor the stomachs to sort through decaying flesh and bones to find names, evidence and stories”. Such remains are archaeologically rare and tend to fall within the expertise of forensic archaeologists (Leighton 2010: 80), but the increase in late 18th to mid-19th century crypts and burial grounds excavations have brought more field archaeologists into encounter with this kind of ‘material’ (Davidson 2016: 228), vividly described by Mark (Appendix 27: para. 36) as having a “kind of cottage-cheese” consistency.

Whilst crypt environments might be expected to produce a higher number of ‘wet’ or partially decomposed remains, the factors that permit the preservation of soft tissue—including ambient temperature, ventilation, moisture, the pH of the soil, and the use of a coffin—are more unpredictable and can “keep a body fleshed for over a thousand years or skeletonise it in days” (Congram and Bruno 2007: 42). Such preservation can range from dry mummification to remains with the superficial appearance of a freshly interred body. Conversely, archaeologists may be confronted by remains covered with ‘adipocere’, a “brownish-white, soap-like material”, formed by anaerobic bacterial hydrolysis—decay in wet and lox-oxygen environments (Petrović-Šteger 2008: 57)—
as well as liquefaction in the form of viscid fluid in coffins, as Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 2) had experienced:

We ended up working at the face front, at the coffin front, hands-on excavating and clearing coffins. I mean, it’s not really excavating, because . . . you sort of take off the clay with a digger, you find a coffin lid and then you remove the coffin lid and it’s full of water and bones. And you’ve got your rubber gloves on and you fish around and get all the bits and put it in a bag and label the bag and send it off to the Museum of London for skeletal analysis.

While the majority of my respondents were not concerned about the prospect of working with ‘dry’ remains, experiences of excavating fleshed bodies—or even just the idea of encountering them—provoked one of the greatest responses of unease, with Craig stating that he would not be able to participate in such work because “I’m just not a fan of putrescence” (Appendix 20: para. 40). Sociologists (Elias 1978; Giddens 1991; Mellor and Shilling 1993) have noted that illness, death and decay are particularly problematic aspects of the human experience for Western societies that typically “celebrate the healthy, beautiful, living body”, resulting in either terror of, or “morbid fascination” with, the corpse (Green 2010: 200). This is because while we are aware that our bodies are a “mixture of flesh, liquids, and harder skeletal material; it is mostly hidden from us in life, barring a cut finger or similar accident” (Anthony 2016a: 31). This undoubtedly accounts for why many of our mortuary practices aim to transform human remains from “an unstable or wet state to a stable or dry one” (Beit-Hallahmi 2012: 326). Touching the decomposing remains of the dead may stimulate intense feelings of disgust, for it “traumatically reminds us of our own materiality; we see ourselves in the dead body—decayed, ruined and corrupted” (Sørensen 2009: 126). Accordingly, dwelling on the tactile qualities of “squidgy” remains and the smell of decomposing tissue, Jamie (Appendix 16: para. 34)—a student at Poulton—stated that “squidgy bits are a no-no”, before elaborating:

I just don’t like squishy, it’s weird, it smells . . . it’s squishy! I’ve done some forensics research, but I wouldn’t want to do it all the time. I’ve seen the different stages of decomposition of the human body and I wouldn’t want to deal with that. You’d be stinking of it for weeks (Appendix 16: para. 36).

However, he went on to state that:
But if it’s sort of like . . . desiccated or something then that would be really interesting. Like there was a crypt, I think it was St Mary Spital, er . . . they had a crypt there and they were all, like, they’d all been desiccated and sort of slightly mummified and it was Victorian and they all still had, like, their clothes on. Fascinating. That would be cool. But not squishy (Appendix 16: para. 34).

His comments, like Anthony’s, encapsulate this opposition between the acceptable “old and dry” remains of Egyptian mummies and the objectionable “recent and still moist” remains encountered within, for example, post-medieval coffins (Leighton 2010: 90). As Twigg (2000: 395) argues, feelings of disgust are “rooted in the organic” and above all in the body: “disgusting things are slimy, oozing, slithering, moist, clinging; not dry, cold or hard”. As Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 2) articulates, this “perception of goopiness associated with 19th century cemeteries” may be responsible for why “very traditional and conservative field archaeologists don’t consider it to be proper archaeology”, more akin (as Tarlow ruefully puts it) to “morbid voyeurism” (2015: 11). Historic funerary archaeology can thus be denounced as “distasteful and immoral” (Powers et al. 2013: 135), necessitating such archaeologists to justify the value of their work to other areas of the discipline. Yet developer-funded excavation of post-medieval burial grounds is increasing (Mays et al. 2015) with sites “disturbed on an almost daily basis” (Tarlow 2015: 11), and as Davidson puts it “the period for digging up history’s dead comes to us now nearer and nearer” (2016: 232). From the above interviews, I would therefore suggest that it is the unsettling ‘recentness’ of such remains and the “fear of getting too close to the present” (Lucas 2004: 115), in conjunction with their ‘goopiness’, that causes concern, as Rob’s (Appendix 10: para. 46) comments indicate:

I’ve seen one or two that have had remains of hair and clothing, but nothing that made me feel like ‘Eww’, um . . . I suppose it’s that sort of proximity in terms of how old they are, so in terms of some the more recent ones I dealt with at [redacted] were more difficult because I knew that they were more like a 100, 150 years old, rather than 500 years and again, that makes you think, well, why does that really matter? Um . . . the older they are, does that make them seem less . . . real, in a way? Or make you feel like you’re less connected to them?

While archaeologists may therefore state that they are accustomed to the excavation and analysis of skeletal remains (even if it is not always entirely true), post-medieval burials can pose a distinct set of problems which educational and training
programmes might better seek to understand and address. For example, disgust in relation to the abject is also powerfully rooted in the fear of contamination and Jamie’s comments, in particular, reflect a common cultural perception of the decomposing dead body as a source of pollution, as evidenced in his fears of being tainted by the scent of death which, as it “intrudes and seeps into others’ spaces”, may be understood as extending the body’s corporeality in a boundary-transgressing way (Twigg 2000: 397). Indeed, female forensic archaeologists have written about the necessity of disposing of their underwear after working to exhume mass graves, due to the way in which the smell of decomposing flesh infiltrates the fibres of their clothes:

I used to own only a couple of bras: one to wear while the other one was washed, and maybe another one for exercising. I took three to Rwanda, and even that didn’t cut it. One was for wearing to work—my “grave bra,” which I had to keep in its own plastic bag because even after I soaked it in Woolite soap, it stank. Then I had to have one bra to wear after work in the early days when we couldn’t get a proper shower. That left one bra that was sacred, to be used only after a hot shower with full, exfoliating, scented scrub-down. This bra-rationing was so rigid that I soon made a mental note that if I ever went on another mission, I would take plenty of bras. Indeed, on later trips, I packed not just several work and ‘down-time’ bras, but also day-off bras, going-to-civilisation-for-the-weekend-bras, relaxing-in-my-room-by-myself-don’t-need-as-much-support bras and so on (Koff 2004).

The dead therefore possess the capacity to render impure (both literally and metaphorically) those who handle or interact with them (see Bataille 1986; Douglas 1969; Durkheim 1979; Kristeva 1982). In this light, as Davies (2002: 39) observes, “a corpse is not only dead, but deadly”, a fear of which is arguably reflected in the recent difficulties of finding undertakers willing to handle the bodies of Ian Brady (see Traynor and Butler 2017), one of the notorious ‘Moors Murderers’, and Salman Abedi, the perpetrator of the terrorist attack on Manchester Arena in May 2017 (Horton 2017). At the time of writing, some two months after the deaths of both individuals, media reports state that the remains of Brady and Abedi are still being held in the same unnamed mortuary, as local authorities, undertakers, cemeteries and crematoria have refused to handle their corpses, reflecting their reluctance to be tainted by the ‘toxic’ nature of the ‘dangerous dead’ (Evans 2017).

While archaeologists may therefore ostensibly wear gloves during the excavation and handling of human remains in order to ‘protect’ them from damage caused by the oils
and sweat on their skin, as well as from DNA cross-contamination (Riggs 2014: 196–197), we might also understand that they serve a symbolic purpose in shielding practitioners from the ‘polluting’ qualities of the dead. Gloves arguably “bear a symbolic charge”, evoking a sense that whatever is being handled is contaminated in some way (Twigg 2000: 404, see Figure 59, Appendix 1: 436). Kirk and Start (1999: 203) thus recall in their work with post-medieval human remains that:

> We quickly realised that wearing the safety clothing was helping to protect our emotional peace of mind as much as our physical health. The act of putting the clothing on was part of our mental preparation for an unpleasant situation. In other words we were attempting to distance ourselves from the unpleasantness and reality of what we were doing.

Concerns over hygiene and disease control within Western cultures are often cited as the reason why burial or cremation is expected to take place swiftly after death and before decomposition begins (Gibson 2008: 155). This practice, however, reflects a still-prevalent view that the corpse is “a thing of horror to be contained and avoided” (ibid.). This understanding of the corpse as a source of biological danger arose in Britain during the 19th century, as disposal of the dead began to be discussed in “secular, utilitarian terms as a sanitation problem” (Beit-Hallahmi 2012: 324), with the corpse often characterised (albeit erroneously, see Morgan 2004), as a source of pathogens (Boyer 2001: 246). Yet, as Gibson (2008: 155–156) notes, these disease and medical models may simply be a modern incarnation of the “ancient fear of the dead”. Indeed, the practice of nailing down the lid of the coffin continues to this day, demonstrating an “atavistic fear” of the deceased coming back to menace the living (ibid.). Similar strategies of containment occur in archaeological practice, including the ritualistic process of ‘boxing up’ the dead (Chapter 4.8.), the screening of excavations of human remains from the public gaze (Chapter 7.3.1.), and the display of the dead in ‘hermetically sealed’ glass cases.

Yet, the wearing of gloves or safety clothing not only ‘protects’ the living from the ‘harmful’ qualities of the dead, but also from the “full intimacy” of directly engaging with human remains (Riggs 2014: 196–197). Such fears are rooted, in symbolic terms, in the role of the corpse as both a boundary marker between life and death, but “also the vehicle through which the living individual now moves into the realm of the
afterlife” (Davies 2002: 39). At this “dynamic point of change” it becomes ‘abject’: a concept proposed by Kristeva (1982) referring to the human response to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of distinction between subject and object or between self and other. The corpse may therefore be understood as sharing “in the attributes of many liminal moments that are viewed as potentially dangerous” (Davies 2002: 39).

Liminality, derived from the Latin limen, meaning ‘threshold’, refers to the middle phase in van Gennep’s (1909) three-stage model of rites of passage: separation, transition and reincorporation. Archaeology arguably negotiates this ambiguous state of being: “betwixt and between” life and death (Turner 1965: 5). As Douglas (1966) argues, when boundaries between culturally-constructed categories are unclear, contradictory, or are breached altogether, the source of this “category confusion” is perceived as “marginal, neither here nor there, and hence polluting and potentially dangerous, requiring containment strategies” (Murphy and Philpin 2010: 539). I would argue this is why we have developed a number of ways of distancing and disguising the disturbing materiality of the corpse in order to quash such “distressing thoughts of death and decomposition”: strategies range from embalming—a popular option in the US that transforms the corpse “into an aesthetic object for viewing, [with] all signs of decay and smell chemically removed” (Walter 2004: 483)—to its total destruction through cremation (Beit-Hallahmi 2012: 326). Yet, while abjection may serve as a source of horror, it is equally “capable of drawing us in; it captivates as much as it revolts” (Perron and Rudge 2016: 44). Accordingly, two participants in this study expressed no particular aversion to working with abject remains, with Mark (Appendix 27: para. 36) stating that:

[I]t didn’t bother me too much, I think because I’d come at it from . . . by that point, I’d done a fair few. I’d been excavating in the commercial sector for a couple of years, so . . . not necessarily desensitised, I think it would have probably affected more if I were slightly younger.

Whilst Mark credited his age and experience as preparing him for the experience of dealing with the abject dead, Mary (Appendix 10: para. 38) had always found such remains intriguing: “I’ve dug up one [skeleton] that had a lead coffin and it had its
fingernails and its hair, which was fabulous.” She explained that “It was fascinating, because I’d never seen one like that before and it was amazing to see it. It didn’t bother me; it didn’t worry me at all” (Appendix 10: para. 48). While it could be argued that her words could be interpreted as a form of professional ‘bluster’—particularly due to the negative stereotypes that surround women in Western cultures and the ways in which they must work harder to suppress their emotional responses in order to be taken seriously as professionals (Chapter 3.4.1.)—Mary did appear to genuinely enjoy encountering remains in various states of preservation. Indeed, as Congram and Bruno (2007: 43) note, “fingernails and desiccated soft tissues can be a bit disagreeable [but] they constitute only a minor unpleasantness” of what is more often than not a fascinating job. However, when I asked her whether archaeology had affected the way she personally thought about death, she stated that she was uncomfortable with the idea of being buried herself:

I think it's a very unhygienic way of disposing of bodies, actually, I think it's more hygienic to cremate them. It's not that I object to being dug up, I think it's um, a very unhygienic thing to do, have bodies rotting around the place, really. (Appendix 10: para. 56).

Mary stated that her reluctance to be buried had nothing to do with a fear of future exhumation, adding instead that whilst she did not ascribe to any specific religious beliefs herself, she was “brought up in quite a religious household” and that her mother was “appalled” by the fact she excavates human remains, although “she doesn’t mind if they’re Romans, because they’re not Christian, but er, when I’ve dug Christian ones up, she’s not, um, a hundred per cent happy” (Appendix 10, para. 60). Underneath this explanation however, perhaps lurk some lingering qualms derived from her own encounters with decomposing remains and an anxiety about experiencing a similar fate of becoming ‘abject’ herself.

5.3.1 Archaeology’s ‘skeleton stories’

There were, however, two practitioners who regaled me with tales about working with abject remains that inarguably constituted displays of ‘bravado’: the equivalent of medical anthropology’s “cadaver stories”. Coined by Hafferty (1991: 55), the term
refers to the “apocryphal narratives” that form part of the oral tradition of medicine which tend to be “quite graphic, manifestly gross, and often sexist in content”. These consist of tales relating to performances or pranks involving cadavers or body parts and are designed to shock both novices and ‘outsiders’, as well as to derive humour from any ensuing distress they may cause (ibid: 56). They tend to circulate most frequently among “medical student aspirants and initiates” and are usually told as true accounts of real events (Hafferty 1988: 344). As a largely male province (ibid: 353), men are most frequently depicted as “the emotionally transcendent and detached perpetrators”, while women are cast in the role of the “emotionally vulnerable victim” (ibid: 352). Thus, Alan (Appendix 14: para. 70), one of my older male participants and a former commercial archaeologist, recounted a story in which he had shocked two new female colleagues who joined his unit with a demonstration of how unaffected he was by handling the abject dead:

I can remember at [redacted] one season, I had two new diggers either side of me going down through more recent Victorian burials, so I pushed ahead and I was just cleaning up the skull and I know it’s not flesh, but I came around the top of the skull between the headboard and the coffin and pulled out a bit of hair and then proceeded to show these young ladies this and asked them if they knew what it was and neither of them did and when I told them it was hair, um, they were quite alarmed really. Terrible! Terrible, isn’t it really?

Another male participant at one of my case study sites told me a similar story, explaining how he had worked on a crypt excavation some years previously with “sloppy” bodies and had taken great delight in throwing a fragment of preserved scalp and hair at a younger female colleague as a “joke”. Kirk and Start (1999: 206) recall how during post-excavation work—conducted at the premises of a funeral home—their hosts “seemed to take pleasure in attempting to shock us with horror stories, and were showing off about how hardened they were to death”. Ward and McMurray (2016: 70) argue that deathworkers are known to “revel in their fortitude” when it comes to dealing with the materiality of mortality (see McMurray 2012). The sharing of these stories by participants with me (a younger female researcher) may be understood as falling into this trope of initiation and a performance of machismo, as well as a demonstration of pride at being able to handle the disturbing dead and
remain ‘objectively detached’, setting them apart from others (Simpson et al. 2014: 9).

Interestingly, unlike their counterparts in medicine, these stories were not told by younger entrants to the profession, but ‘seasoned’ practitioners. Rahtz (1985: 74) notes that this hardness of character is a quality that archaeologists may develop over a prolonged period of time working under difficult conditions, such as large cemetery sites with large amounts of well-preserved remains, for “only the toughest professionals can take this sort of thing and at the same time keep up efficient recording”. These kinds of tales, however, are told with that the expectation that they will be viewed as a source of humour (Hafferty 1988: 344) and therefore almost certainly relate to Goffman’s (1959) theory of the external presentation of self-image. For deathworkers, the maintenance of this facade of “exterior calm and nonchalance” is a vital aspect of their professional identity (Charman 2013: 155).

More than this, however, such tales play a role in the socialisation of new recruits to the archaeology profession and undoubtedly transmit a ‘feeling rule’ regarding the expectation that practitioners will remain ‘stoic’, even in the face of distressing discoveries. As such, these stories help to create “a world of outsiders and insiders, of unsophisticated lay persons and students, and emotionally tough practitioners” (Hafferty 1991: 60), marking both these differentiations and “one’s progress from one camp to the other” (Hafferty 1988: 345). In this way, cadaver or ‘skeleton stories’ provide storytellers and their audience with an opportunity to “demonstrate an awareness of, and commitment to, the underlying norms” of their professional culture, through sharing in humour (ibid: 345): “failure to laugh off” such tales may be viewed as “symbolic of a deeper inadequacy [and] of not being up to the job” (Montross 2007: 149).
5.3.2. Working with “matter out of place”

We had bizarre ones on Jewbury where the graves there were very deep and they were cut into solid clay, so of course when it floods, there’s nowhere for the water to go, it just kind of sits within the coffin and they all had, you know, very sturdy wooden coffins, so what had happened was seasonally, they’d flood and then recede and then flood and then recede and as the body was rotting away merrily inside the coffin, what would happen is the whole of the leg would detach and then roll upside down, so quite often you would get them with the top half the right way up and the legs upside down, which was rather bizarre (Mary, Appendix 10: para. 44).

It is not just the ‘squidgy’ remains of the dead that pose problems for archaeologists; even conventional skeletal remains can be rendered ‘abject’ by constituting what Douglas (1966) refers to as “matter out of place”. In Purity and Danger, she examines the culturally contingent and symbolic categorisation of dirt which, she argues, is rooted in perceptions of dirt and pollution as matter out of place which, in turn, may be understood as the violation or corruption of cultural norms (ibid.). Douglas (ibid: 45) argues that our ideas of dirt as impurity are an expression of symbolic systems in which dirt, by definition, “offends against order”. Cleanliness and dirt are therefore not simply material matters, but are “imbued with a social and moral significance”: it is not ‘dirt’ in itself that offends but our perception of what constitutes ‘dirtiness’ (Simpson et al. 2016: 46). As practitioners who quite literally “traffic in dirt” and regularly handle “matter out of time” (Voss 2010: 182), archaeologists will not usually consider human remains as ‘matter out of place’, rather, they are understood to fall within the normalised experience of archaeological practice (Simpson et al. 2014: 197). It is only when this ‘norm’ is transgressed in some way that human remains may be considered as ‘dirt’, not in a derogatory sense, but as a form of disorder (see Figure 60, Appendix 1: 437). This can be seen in Alan’s account of an unexpected mortuary discovery (Appendix 14: para. 46):

When you get burials in weird places, like we, I don’t know, in [redacted] there was a foetus buried under the wall line of a, um, medieval house in a little village, a deserted village and if I remember rightly, it had something like a [indecipherable] with it, this is dating back to ‘89 or so, I’m sure. And again, that was just weird, it was sort of strange. You have a community that has a church just down the road, literally just a few hundred yards away and you have a weird burial, the baby just tucked away under the wall, with a little bit of food.
Discovered in an unexpected location, the burial of the foetus arguably disturbed Alan as ‘matter out of place’, for it did not ‘belong’ in this context according to his ideas of what constitutes a ‘decent’ burial. Placed outside of conventional and consecrated space and instead within the domestic realm, the character of the burial might suggest that death took place before baptism could be performed—“the defining moment when the child, and the soul, was brought into the society of the church and the community” (Daniell 1997: 127)—thereby precluding the possibility of a Christian inhumation. Alternatively, the burial—notably situated in a ‘liminal’ location—may have been a ‘secret’ interment or perhaps reflected a spatial manifestation of close bonds between family and home (Gilchrist 2011: 167). While the burial of the child with an offering of food suggests that this was an act conducted with thought and care, nevertheless it may still be perceived as an unsettling find; jarring with 21st century expectations of respect.

5.4. “Betwixt and between”: The uncanny dead

The uncanny, like charity, begins at home (Haughton 2003: xlii).

Linked to the abject is the concept of the ‘uncanny’ or the unheimlich: a Freudian term referring to the ‘unhomely’ (Freud 2003: 124). Due to its association with what is frightening (that which “arouses dread and creeping horror”, ibid: 219), it is also frequently used in its more “quotidien sense as a synonym for ‘spooky’ or ‘creepy’” (Moshenska 2012: 1198). Yet, as Moshenska (ibid.) observes, what distinguishes the uncanny from the “merely frightening is the unusual interplay of the familiar/safe and the unfamiliar/frightening that it embodies”. Indeed, Freud (1995: 126, 142) theorises that the unheimlich is “everything that ought to have remained secret . . . but has come to light” and that “this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it”. The uncanny may perhaps be best understood therefore as the “disconcerting effect of familiar things encountered in alien forms or contexts” (Moshenska 2012: 1198).
Drawing on the work of Vidler (1992: 48)—who has explored the relationship between the uncanny and archaeological practice, arguing that “archaeology and the archaeological act is by definition . . . ‘uncanny’ and reveals that which should have remained hidden”—Moshenska (2012: 1198-1199) thus locates the uncanny not in the material remains of the past themselves, but in the process of excavation and revelation. As Filippucci et al. (2012: 197) note, archaeologists are “in the business of uncovering and bringing into visibility that which is hidden, obscured, or unarticulated”, yet while many people are intrigued and fascinated by the process of archaeological excavation, the unearthing of objects in contexts of burial and decay—strongly associated in Western culture with images of death and the subconscious (Holtorf 2005: 16-24)—may be deeply unsettling (Moshenska 2006: 93). Indeed, Freud (2003: 149) notes that for many people “the acme of the uncanny is represented by anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts”, and as such, human remains are perhaps the most powerful catalyst of uncanny encounters in mortuary archaeology, constituting archaeological ‘revenants’ or “threshold people” (Turner 1969: 95).

Appearing simultaneously like us and not, familiar and yet ‘Other’ (Moshenska 2006: 93), human remains (particularly those that retain abject elements, such as soft tissue or what Kwint (1999: 9) refers to as the “dead margins of the self”) may trigger affective reactions. Their power lies in revealing that certain burial conditions can ‘miraculously’ intervene in the ordinary and expected course of decomposition (Wallace 2004: 55), thereby ‘cheating’ death and creating an unsettling impression of “a past that it still partly ‘alive’, active, not quite finished” (Filippucci 2010: 71). In this way, the uncanny dead are—like their abject counterparts—ambivalent and ‘liminal’, evoking a past that “haunts like a phantom and therefore cannot be controlled” (Domanska 2005: 405). Particular skeletal elements, however, may be perceived as being more uncanny than others, with Kirk and Start (1999: 202) observing that the excavation of teeth may cause practitioners particular concern. Thus, Amy (Appendix 17: para. 35), speaking about the teeth she had encountered with the Poulton skeletons, expressed her strong dislike at having to engage with them in any capacity:
Teeth. I hate teeth. I don’t want to touch the teeth. They’re just so gross [laughter].

She elaborated that:

I’m not like a huge teeth person, like I could never be a dentist or anything anyways, even when they’re in like a normal living person, it’s just kind of ‘Ewww’, but yeah, I think, it’s just strange because they look real and some of them look kind of nasty and they’ve got cavities and stuff in there and it’s like ‘Eurgghhh’. Gross. I will deal with it if I have to, I just don’t really want to. It’s gross (Appendix 17: para. 37).

Teeth tend to survive well in the archaeological record because of their high mineral content (Redfern and Bekvalac 2017: 369) and thus their similitude to our own dentition evokes Freud’s (2003) concept of ‘uncanny doubleness’, provoking feelings of the “nearness of past lives” and, simultaneously, of absence (Filippucci et al. 2012: 199). They stand in “stark contrast to the instabilities of the fleshy body”, obstinately enduring (quite literally) in the face of death; making mortality a physical and tangible reality in a culture that holds death at a distance (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 136). It is interesting, however, that Amy explains her aversion to excavating teeth in terms of what she perceives as their abject nature, even though the medieval site of Poulton (with low rates of sugar consumption and thus dental caries) tends to preserve them in an excellent condition (DeWitte and Bekvalac 2010: 348, see Figure 61, Appendix 1: 438). I would therefore suggest that the roots of Amy’s repulsion lie in her description of the teeth as looking ‘real’: it is their uncanny quality which causes disquiet, frozen in a liminal state of non-decay, of halted transition which threatens the kind of visceral pollution discussed above, urging her to seek a ‘safe’ level of distance (Douglas 1966: 119-20). The uncanniness of these teeth was undoubtedly exacerbated by conducting the kind of caring activities reminiscent of our own dental regimes, brushing them ready for analysis: a task that is performed using repurposed toothbrushes. In a similar vein, Daniel (Appendix 26: para. 36), a museum curator, recalled his discomfort at extracting a tooth from an ancient Egyptian skeleton in order to facilitate the pursuit of scientific research:

We had to remove a tooth from one of the skeletons [redacted] and the teeth were loose, but a dental colleague, someone who’s very trained in this had to perform this operation and you know, I don’t like the idea of living people’s teeth being pulled and that was . . . I definitely had an emotional reaction to that. Um, which was quite besides the fact that we were getting scientific information from it, um, and it was a clinical procedure being
carried out using the highest grade conservation techniques, just the idea of it did register somewhere on my emotional scale. I couldn’t tell you what the emotion was, but it was concern, concern for the mummy. Beyond knowing that the mummy, the skeleton itself was not damaged *per se*, but it depends on what your interpretation of damage is.

As an activity that, again, creates a compelling link between the living and the dead, Daniel was able to empathise with the skeleton’s ‘plight’ due to his own anxieties. In speaking about this ‘operation’ and equating it to experiences undergone by the living, his account again evokes a real or imagined sense of ongoing sentience or feeling amongst the dead. His discomfort is additionally culturally constituted and framed by a predominantly “non-touching culture” (Lawler 1991: 137), strictly bound by ideas of privacy and appropriateness. Indeed, “even in professional settings where touching necessarily takes place, such as in medical consultations, consent (implicit or explicit) is required” (Sofaer 2012: 141). Whilst archaeologists are not, of course, “constrained by the same issues of permission”, consent, touching and manipulating human remains can still be an uncomfortable experience, for the “freedom to gaze and to touch another’s body is normally reserved for the very closest and most intimate of relationships” because of the “familiarity it creates with the body of another” (Tarlow 2016: 224).

This discomfort may become more pronounced in skeletal analysis, due to the “lack of a singular physical boundary in the way that skin acts to create the boundary of living bodies”, rendering it an “inside out” body (Benthien 2002: 28) and resulting in an even greater feeling of transgression (McGibbon et al. 2010: 1369). This is perhaps why Rachel, a student at Poulton, felt conflicted whilst micro-excavating skulls: drawn to their recognisable humanity and the intricacy of the work—which helped transform them into objects of analysis by removing dirt and debris—it also left her feeling “freaked out”. She disliked putting her hands “inside where the brain once was”, saying that “it’s what makes a person, a person”.

While it could be argued that the lack of preserved brain tissue should have facilitated her ability to handle the skulls, its very absence ironically caused her discomfort. Delving inside this interior space—the unseen cavity which is conceptualised as housing thoughts, experiences and personality (Brooks and Rumsey 2007: 345)—
may be both an intriguing and unsettling experience (Good 1990: 72). Through our own visceral connection it elicits “a literal inter-corporeality” through the “intermingling of bodies and body parts” as we “intervene within the body of another” (Sofaer 2012: 141–142).

5.5. “Lingerings of the lost self”: Objects and the dead

It is not just the remains of the dead themselves that may provoke a response from the living. Personal possessions, grave goods, grave furniture and monuments associated with the dead may also prove “evocative in a different way than . . . bones” (Koff 2004). Tarlow (1999: 21) describes being deeply affected during fieldwork involving the recording of inscriptions of gravestones, which evoked a “personal and empathetic sorrow”, an experience shared by David (Appendix 25: para. 50):

I’ve recorded loads of gravestones and dealt with groups of students recording gravestones, rarely do I read them, “read” read. My students spend a lot of time reading them, I read them, but I don’t think about them, you know? You’re in a mode of recording, recording, recording and then suddenly something BAM! Something hits you, but that’s not human remains, but . . . a story can hit you or just thinking through the implications of the ages or the relationships and then suddenly that gets you, it’s not about human remains, but that can suddenly just strike you. I can’t think of any single example, but . . . it can, and incomplete gravestones where there’s not a name of the partner or whatever, or seeing the number of different levels added on and seeing that they’re all dying young and realising ‘crikey’.

Grave monuments are typically inscribed with the evidence of social relationships that transcend anonymity, confronting researchers with the direct and “often explicit evidence of somebody else’s sentiment” (Tarlow 1999: 20). Such traces of past emotions are usually inaccessible to archaeologists, but not here. Indeed, this work not only brings its practitioners into contact with the evidence of past deathways but also contemporary practices. The current custom of “surreptitiously depositing cremated remains in public places” has seen archaeological sites themselves become foci for contemporary mourning rituals (see Mullins 2014; Arbor Low Environments Project: no date). Thus, recalling a poignant tale about fieldwork that had brought
him into direct contact with the evidence of recent loss, David (Appendix 25: para. 72) stated that:

[We were doing a] Graveyard survey, coming across a 20th century grave and finding a wedding ring on the surface and this was, we were surveying 15th February, so the day after Valentine’s Day and finding a wedding ring or . . . I’d say an engagement ring or wedding ring on the surface, just beneath a few leaves and stuff on a gravestone, no accidental loss this, modern deposition . . . for whom on that gravestone. It’s for three people on the gravestone, this is their mother’s ring, this is . . . what is the bloody story here? You know? And what do you do with this now that we’ve found it? So we just . . . we told the churchwardens, so we left it there. And they can make the decision and we ceded the decision to them whether they want to retrieve that and keep it in the church or what they want to do, but I said it’s there, we found it, interesting questions it raises. So the reason I tell you that one is . . . unexpected, nothing to do with burial, nothing to do with human remains, yet powerfully emotional, personal, ethical, what the hell do you do? We informed the churchwardens that we found this and this is where it was. Perhaps we shouldn’t even have done that, I don’t know. But it was a very difficult thinking through of what to do with that discovery of an artefact that’s very recent, probably a day old, you know? So . . . maybe it’s there because they hated the person and they didn’t know what to do with it and they didn’t want it anymore or was it because they loved the relative or was it someone who offered them marriage? You never know.

While the story behind the ring remains a mystery, bereavement research (Gibson 2008; Hallam and Hockey 2001; Lupton 1998; Valentine 2008) reveals that emotional and social relationships with the deceased may be actively maintained by mourners through the material objects that were closely associated with them in life, such as jewellery or clothing. Indeed, as a “substitute fleshliness” (Davidson 2016: 227), archaeological textiles may offer a particularly powerful link to a past person, not least because the decomposition of the body ‘fuses’ clothing and flesh (ibid: 239). Objects may therefore become deeply connected and intertwined with humans—literally so—through extensive or repetitive use, carrying the “stamp of individuality and everyday experience of their owner, and [moving] more towards the ontological state of ‘self’ (subject) than of ‘other’ (object)” (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 43). They may therefore be conceived as material extensions of the body and of the deceased’s personhood and social agency (Williams 2004: 266). As a consequence of this entanglement, when a loved one dies these objects may be understood as containing “lingerings of the lost self” (Lutz 2015: 32). Anthropologically, this is referred to as ‘distributed personhood’ (Gell 1998), while Gibson (2008: 153) describes these as “post-death remainders” that mitigate total loss and annihilation, and Hallam and Hockey (2001: 109) as “boundary beings” that are “possessed of a residue of ‘life’”,

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carrying a ‘charge’ that is “almost magical”. Recalling a past excavation in the commercial sector, Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 2) explained that:

I knew that the person that run [redacted], a guy called [redacted], but he had some kind of crisis, partly associated with that time in his life and also with excavating that site. I think it did drive him slightly mad and I’ve actually spoken to him since and he’s said that he never wants to dig one again and I think there was this sort of moment that triggered a lot of his later crises, when he was excavating this coffin and he found the nameplate and it . . . had the same birthday and age as him, and he was like ‘Eurgh’ and I think that sort of caused some kind of internal crisis, but there were all sorts of other things going on as well . . . so clearly, his life was in chaos and it just triggered some sort of reaction.

Whether the coffin plate was the trigger for the subsequent ‘crisis’ experienced by this individual is a matter of conjecture: it may simply have been a coincidence of timing, or perhaps he did perceive the discovery as ominously foreshadowing his own death (Beit-Hallahmi 2012: 330). The dig team, however, clearly ascribed some agency to this material culture and the way the dead might be perceived to ‘act’ through its affect upon them. Apposite to this case is Verdery’s insight (1999: 33) that “because all people have bodies, any manipulation of a corpse directly enables one’s identification with it through one’s own body, thereby tapping into one’s reservoirs of feeling”. As a result, “such manipulations may mobilise pre-existing affect by evoking one’s own personal issues or one’s identification with specific aspects of a dead person’s biography” (ibid.). Indeed, she argues that while every deceased person “possesses their own résumé or curriculum vitae”, they also “lend themselves to analogy with other people’s résumés”, that is, they encourage identification with their own life story and may even result in the evocation of “one’s own personal losses” (ibid: 29). As every archaeologist will bring their own unique experiences to their encounters with human remains, “digging up” the dead may thus involve “re-excavating their own personal grief” (Anthony 2016a: 30).

Objects, as parts of people, arguably achieve their greatest potency when they attain a “structural congruence” by incorporating corporeal matter, allowing the dead to retain a physical presence among the living “through the powerful evocation of the person to whom it once belonged”, evoking the “whole” from which it is derived (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 136). Hair is perhaps particularly evocative in this regard (see Pointon 1999): as a substance considered as ‘dead’ while a person is alive, it is
transformed into a ‘living’ substance through death, in the sense that it is “reanimated as a possession capable of sustaining the deceased in close proximity to the bereaved” (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 136), hence its extensive usage in mourning jewellery in Northern Europe from the 17th to the 19th century (see Luthi 1998; Lutz 2015). Archaeological artefacts cannot possibly evoke direct memories of the person to whom they once belonged, but such discoveries often stand out starkly in practitioners’ memories, serving to differentiate the dead, as Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 2) attested:

The discovery of [redacted] was one of the things that people remember quite clearly. It’s amazing how many people found him now, anyway, he had these little gold springs that held his teeth together, he had these false teeth, so the first porcelain paste teeth, they’re now in a dental museum in London, they had this little gold spring on one side that held them together.

It is not just memory at work here. In the case of contemporary neonatal mortality, Hallam et al. (1999: 75) argue that parental care such as dressing and naming derive from an imagined future rather than a remembered past. Mortuary material culture can have an anticipatory dimension which we might do well to consider in regards to the archaeological dead. As Lutz (2015: 51) explains, “the scraps of a once-breathing body” when complemented by the presence of objects may act as a “doorway to the whole of a past life”—albeit an imagined one—by making it “material, tangible, able to be held and represented”. Accordingly, Andrew (Appendix 12: para. 18)—an archaeologist who had worked with Operation Nightingale—recounted how the living formed a powerful relationship with the dead through biographical connections evoked by objects interred with them:

[O]ne of the Saxons had a spear and shield boss and [redacted] he had a couple of really nice lines, first of all, he thought that these Saxons with the shields, many of them were in the ditch of the barrow and he interpreted that as being a shield wall protecting the other burials, which is really quite nice, but his other line was, ‘Well, these burials are going to get exhumed by badgers anyway, bones chucked out disrespectfully’ and he thought that the individuals in the graves would far rather be recovered with respect than chucked out by a badger and as he also saw it, the chaps with spears and shields, he interpreted as being warriors and, um, a warrior being recovered with respect by a modern warrior is probably a very good thing.

Brown (2016: 117) has explored the ‘tribal’ culture of the British Armed Forces in which “whether serving or retired, living or dead”, each individual remains a member
of the ‘tribe’. As such, it is clear that this idea of kinship was extended by the participants in Operation Nightingale towards the archaeological remains they were excavating, as Andrew (Appendix 12: para. 16) corroborated:

[I]t’s a very sort of tribal thing, the military, in certain ways, and so, if it’s one of your own, I would imagine not being military myself, but I would imagine that you could make a direct connection with your predecessor, as you see it, and therefore it’s not a huge leap to start thinking about what happened on your own tours.

For Craig (Appendix 20: para. 34), the survival of brooches, for example, “in the position on the body where a cloak would have been pinned” painted an evocative picture of the preparation of the corpse. The thrill of being able hold something associated with a past person was expressed by many participants in this study, perhaps as part of the “materialistic attraction” in “revealing ‘hidden treasure’” that forms part of the “archaeo-appeal” of the discipline for practitioners and the public alike (see Holtorf 2005). Respondents such as Mary (Appendix 10: para. 38) thus spoke with enthusiasm of finding a ‘double-whammy’: a well-preserved burial that also contains a range of interesting grave goods:

[The site] had never, ever been built on, even though it was smack bang in the middle of London, so the preservation was freakishly good, it was literally as the Romans had left it and every single grave had something with it. Necklaces, hobnail boots, glasses, bottles, entire suites of dinner services, mirrors, knives, swords, anything you can think of, we found it on that cemetery. It was absolutely gobsmacking and probably the most beautiful thing I found was a glass bottle in the shape of a swan, a scent bottle in one piece and all these things were in one piece and you’ll know yourself as an archaeologist, you very rarely find an entire bowl, or entire glass bottle or an entire anything, you find all the bits that have been thrown away when it broke, and on this site we just got these things out by the dozen. Literally by the dozen. I have never, ever dug up so many fabulous objects in my entire life, so every day on that site was just a joy because you never knew what you were going to find. It was just stunning.

This hope of finding something memorable and, perhaps, career-defining, and its corollary of continued disappointment had led to one of YAT’s archaeologists, Claire, leaving the field for a period of time, noting that she had never found “anything good” and was “always working next to the person who did”. A similar sentiment was reiterated by Rob (Appendix 11: para. 12) who rued a lost opportunity early in his career to excavate a Roman skeleton with grave goods, after being moved on to a medieval burial that contained none:
At that point, I’d never dug one [a skeleton]. I’d been digging for two or three years, I think, and wanted to have a go, we knew that there would be some, so I said to the guy in charge of the site, ’If one comes up that I can dig, would you put me on it?’ and that’s what they did, they moved me over on to it and I was digging a medieval skeleton. Unfortunately, the trench that I was in at the time that I was moved away from, if I’d been in there for another 20 minutes or so, I would have found a Roman skeleton with all kinds of grave goods.

Grave goods are only rarely associated with Christian burials, although those at the top of the ecclesiastical “Christian hierarchy” were often interred with chalices, patens and other items (Daniell 1997: 153). From the later medieval period onwards, there was understood to be no Christian theological need to take everyday objects with you for use in the ‘hereafter’. Nevertheless, grave goods were still occasionally included, “just in case belongings might be needed in that ‘other place’” (Lutz 2015: 70), as Alan (Appendix 14: para. 12) noted:

Even Christian burials, you can find some really weird and wonderful things, so you have that immediate touch with the past, you’re often touching a sort of moment, if that makes sense. You’re seeing part of a burial ceremony, part of somebody’s life, you know? That’s really . . . that’s really interesting and immediate.

The range of artefacts that may be found within Christian burials is therefore limited and more often reflects “personal and sentimental markings of the passage of death, rather than religious beliefs” (O’Sullivan 2013: 264-265). In addition, “apotropaic items . . . were placed with the corpse when the body was washed and shrouded, such as coins or stones in the mouth, crosses placed on the chest or in the hand and padlocks placed near the pelvis” (Gilchrist 2011: 163). Such objects appear to have been perceived to possess “occult powers”, serving “to heal or transform the corpse, to ensure its reanimation on judgement day, and to protect the dead on their perilous journey through purgatory” (Gilchrist 2008: 153). It is such special mortuary objects which can lead to the emotional conflict discussed in Chapter 4.6., regarding their separation from the deceased during post-excavation or curation. Mary (Appendix 10: para. 16), who very much enjoyed the excavation of human remains—“I haven’t dug a skeleton for quite a few years now . . . so it’s nice to get back to doing them”—recalled finding a papal bullae, a lead seal from a papal document and “an example of a consecrated object placed in graves in direct physical contact with the corpse” (Gilchrist 2008: 130), with a skeleton on YAT’s previous dig at Peasholme (see
Rogers 2015). Her return to the site therefore constituted an opportunity to take a ‘trip down memory lane’ and she was hopeful of making more interesting discoveries:

I dug up the church 20 years ago and it’s like the Cemetery Mark Two for me! Um, it was a lovely . . . it was a lovely little church excavation and we had some very unusual burials, we had two with papal bullae, which is extremely . . . I’ve never found one on any other site and we had two, which was quite extraordinary (Appendix 10: para. 16).

Discovering a papal bullae—“attached to indulgences, which would have acted as ‘vouchers’ for remittance of penance” (O’Sullivan 2013: 263) or included as an amulet within the shroud, placed on the chest, or sometimes held in the hand of the corpse (Gilchrist 2008: 130)—was a source of great professional pride, earning Mary a level of esteem and respect from her colleagues. Furthermore, it was clearly these objects which shaped her memories of the burial rather than the biological remains themselves. In consumer cultures such as Britain, objects continue to play an important role in mediating our relationship with death and the dead, perhaps helping to explain why vivid excavation memories were shaped so strongly by grave goods (see Harper 2012: 44–45).

Indeed, the YAT team did not think of the Peasholme Green excavation as particularly notable, due to the lack of “good stuff” associated with the graves; an approach symptomatic of the discipline, where (post)medieval archaeology struggles to achieve the parity of attention and credibility afforded to more ‘traditional’ areas of archaeological enquiry, such as prehistoric furnished burials. The existence of documentary evidence describing burial customs in these periods can tempt historians to render the investigation of the material evidence unnecessary, while the unvaried burial treatment of individuals may lead to the perception that they do not “warrant investigation” (Anthony 2016a: 32).

Accordingly, while prehistoric and Roman skeletons may “fire the imagination and generate huge interest” (Sidell 2011: 16), until fairly recently the study of medieval mortuary archaeology was side-lined with the exception of elite or royal burials with highly elaborate coffins, memorials or mortuary artefacts (Anthony 2016a: 32). These later burials were thus often routinely removed to access earlier archaeology (Gilchrist and Sloane 2005: 1). Even now, as Rob (Appendix 11: para. 14) stated, there are
varying ‘levels’ of attention afforded to skeletal remains that relates to their perceived value and significance:

[I]n a way it’s a shame that there are different levels, because we may spend longer on certain types of burial because they’re deemed to be more important or special [or] because they’re unusual, whereas a site like this, we’ve got hundreds, literally, six or seven hundred medieval burials and a very tight time frame and budget to remove them. So, you know, it would be nice to spend a few days over each one, but we just can’t do it.

Continuing to speak about the medieval burials under excavation by YAT, Rob (Appendix 11: para. 28) thus commented that:

[I]f these were, um, Roman burials with grave goods, we’d have to take a bit more time to record where the grave goods are in relation to the burials, but these are Christian medieval burials, so there don’t tend to be any grave goods at all and mostly, there’s no coffins or coffin nails, if we do get them — and we have had a few over there where they’ve had the coffin stain and some nails and bits of iron that are probably handles or whatever — then obviously that takes longer and you have to take your time over recording those things, so because these are mostly shroud burials and just . . . it’s a poor parish, a medieval graveyard, they tend to be the most basic type of burial, really, they tend to be all in the same sorts of positions, mostly, you know, either the hands on the chest or . . . crossed over, or down the sides or over the hips.

Yet, the presence of funerary objects not only affects the ways in which human remains may be treated, but for fieldworkers such as Roy, they are crucial in building a connection with the dead. He could only become enthused about working with Christian remains under two circumstances, with the first being the presence of associated artefacts because it served to differentiate them in his mind and made them more interesting to excavate. He told me that he found working with human remains “like these” — medieval or later — “boring” and preferred working with prehistoric burials because “they have stuff with ‘em”. Without such unique ancillary identifiers, the remains were too ‘Other’ to provoke an emotional engagement: a feeling that may have been exacerbated by the sheer number of very similar burials being excavated. In the absence of objects, therefore, the second way by which Roy appeared to ‘warm’ to skeletons was if they displayed interesting pathologies, which he noted were much “better” to work on than a “bog-standard boring one”, a view shared by his colleague Mark (Appendix 27: para. 14):
[This is] a good site, it’s not a great site, it’s a good site. For quality and for, you know, interesting individuals, you come on to some sites and you do find some pretty kind of amusing skeletons that just . . . are amusing, you know? ‘Subject B said he’d found some pretty amusing skeletons!’ I mean interesting, in the sense, you know, hyper-robust, massive individuals, or people who have had particular kinds of ailments, not . . . not particularly rare considering the age of the cemetery, being kind of ‘ish’ medieval, having kind of what we assume are female burials and neonate burials, of which we’ve had one so far, but then we’ve had a whole kind of range of early juvenile and early infant burials which, you know, just kind of feeds into the growing demographic information of high infant mortality within the medieval period, so it is interesting in that respect, but er, yeah, no, no amputees yet, or anything . . . you know sometimes you get, sometimes you get stuff like that.

Roy, Mark and Rob’s comments reveal that while all skeletons may be treated with care and respect on site, even in death we are not all equal, with the remains of some individuals generating far more interest and excitement than the “undifferentiated dead”. As Redfern and Bekvalac (2017: 378) observe, it is collections with named individuals that are “frequently used to generate methods [and] which have the most pressure put upon them”, while Giles and Williams (2016: 6) note, “a single charismatic individual, material-rich, or curious burial is often chosen to act as an effective ‘public ambassador’ for a wider suite of burials or set of archaeological features”. Furthermore, Wilson et al. (2013: 150) suggest that there is “some evidence of darker practices emerging”, with academic institutions being encouraged to bid against one another for the research rights to the most interesting and research-worthy assemblages.

Yet, as Bashford and Pollard (1998: 165) have noted, the presence of grave goods can often draw attention away from human remains and may act as a “cushion” or buffer between archaeologists and human remains. Accordingly, when these are absent, professionals may be forced to acknowledge their feelings about disturbing the dead. Thus, it might be argued that Roy’s assertion that human remains did not emotionally affect him were due a reluctance to confront the nature of the work we were undertaking. As a veteran practitioner, however, I would be more inclined to see this as the world-weary response of having participated in digging hundreds of very similar burials that were simply not accorded any particularly special place in his memories. As Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 10) explained:
I have now dug or been responsible for thousands of skeletons, we excavated 1200 odd skeletons and at we excavated 111 and we’ve done 90 or so at and I’ve done various other ones here and there, so yeah, I must have dug dozens and dozens myself.

Yet, objects are capable of more than just buffering or bridging connections between archaeologists and human remains: they can profoundly undermine an individual’s attempt to remain emotionally detached. This is perhaps felt most keenly by forensic practitioners whose encounters with personal items can be deeply unsettling, leading to “speculation about the life of the deceased individual” (Szkl 2012). Craig (Appendix 20: para. 38) recalled what has now become something of a cautionary folktale within the profession (albeit one rooted in a modern atrocity) to explain why he could not leave traditional field archaeology to work in modern forensics:

I know a guy who . . . you know during the Bosnian conflict, you know, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, um, they were basically mass-murdering people and chucking them into graves. They employed archaeologists to come and re-excavate them because they had a forensic way of doing it, you know? They weren’t fully-forensic, but forensic enough that evidence could be kept with these bodies and find out who was who. And this guy said that when they were digging them up, their watches were still ticking and the bodies were runny and he said he stuck it for a week and then he came home. I couldn’t do that. It’s . . . no . . . nasty.

It is notable that merely the idea of encountering both the abject nature of such remains and the survival of personal possessions—the material juxtaposition of “an everyday object among the detritus of violence” (Filippucci et al. 2012: 199)—caused him concern. Such a discovery may evoke feelings of being in “direct confrontation with the recently deceased rather than an objective archaeological excavation” and creates a compelling link between the past and the present, as well as the living and the dead, who are recognised as “human beings with lives, experiences and feelings not dissimilar to our own” (Bashford and Pollard 1998: 165). Thus, a watch, while an ordinary object, may be rendered both extraordinary and disturbingly uncanny through the context in which it is found (Moshenska 2006: 93)—provoking a “sinister and melancholic effect” (Mills 2015: 36), together with a profound feeling of strangeness as a result of the realisation that “things have outlived persons” (Gibson 2008: 1)—and may be transformed into something ‘Other’ through its association with a site of mass death.
A personal possession no longer, such an object becomes “material evidence of a devastating collective experience” and while linked to a single death, may carry the weight of many thousands of losses (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 124). Such objects may not only reveal evidential clues about an individual’s life: its commonplace nature, particularly when “scarred, marked or otherwise metamorphosed” through violent death (ibid: 126), stands as testament to a life cut, unexpectedly and abruptly, short, thereby heightening its disturbing “auratic power” (Seaton 2009: 85). In the case of Craig’s metaphoric watch, this is made more unsettling by the fact that it continues to function, thereby drawing attention to a “split temporality” (Lucas 2010: 37), simultaneously marking both “congealed time” and its continuity (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 136).

5.6. ‘Difficult’ deaths: Working with “little‘uns”

On the emotional side, I know one or two people who won’t do it. I, myself, become very introspective when I’m digging a body, particularly . . . I don’t mind so much adult inhumations, they’re fine, you sort of talk to them or I do, but maybe I’m strange and um, you know they’ve had a life. But I find child burials quite difficult from an emotional point of view, I get . . . don’t get me wrong, I don’t weep or anything like that, but um, yeah, I get very reverential and try to be really careful and um . . . I kind of almost apologise because it seems the right thing to do (Craig, Appendix 20: para. 62).

Archaeologists may encounter evidence of a wide range of ‘difficult’ deaths during their careers, especially among those who practice forensic archaeology. Yet, it was the deaths of children that were repeatedly described in this study as being more emotionally challenging to encounter, with Rob (Appendix 11: para. 44) describing the excavation of “little ‘uns” as “always hard”. Child death is regarded as a particularly sensitive issue in British culture and is overwhelmingly perceived as an “unquestionable tragedy” (Sørensen 2011: 161). It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that such attitudes also appear to be reflected in archaeological practice: Klevnäs (2016: 54–55) argues that the deaths of children and infants, along with women in childbirth, are often “considered too intimate, almost certainly too feminine, fields for inquiry”, while museum curators may choose to refrain from displaying the remains of juveniles to the public (Wilson 2015: 23). Indeed, Tatham (2016: 198) writes
about the decision taken by staff at English Heritage in the 2007 *Buried Lives* exhibition at St Peter’s, Barton-upon-Humber to exclude “immature skeletons” from the display, although a child’s coffin was included.

In a 2001 survey in Britain, respondents were asked which types of human remains they would least like to encounter in a museum, with two of the most common responses being “a baby’s skeleton” and “a medically preserved baby” (Brooks and Rumsey 2008: 283). These answers may well have been coloured by the timing of the survey, shortly after the exposure of the Alder Hey scandal (Chapter 2.4.), yet such remains also undoubtedly fascinate visitors. Gunther von Hagens’ travelling exhibition of plastinated, dissected and posed cadavers, *Body Worlds*, included a section of prenatal remains: despite some controversy that resulted in the placement of the foetal plastinates in a curtained-off area of the display, these ‘specimens’ proved to be popular and elicited mostly positive visitor comments (Moore and Brown 2007: 234–235). Nevertheless, the remains of children were singled out by respondents in this study as being the most challenging to work with, both practically and emotionally: a finding replicated across all deathwork professions, from nurses who struggle with the loss of child patients around the same age as their own offspring (McGibbon et al. 2010: 1373), to crematorium operators who are unsettled by disposing of the remains of the very young (Doughty 2015: 96). Yet they also elicited some of the most fondly and vividly recalled experiences amongst my respondents, as Craig (Appendix 20: para. 82) testifies:

> I’ve got to say, those three Bronze Age children, well, they were infant burials; they stick particularly in the mind. It was a closing deposit in a ditch and they were spaced equally, so they must have died within a few days of each other, probably, which leads you to believe that there was some sort of epidemic or something that targeted the young, but yeah, that was . . . it’s actually a very precious memory to be honest. I don’t . . . I don’t have any self-recrimination about it at all, I . . . it was done properly and I was content with the way it was handled and the way the remains were looked after, and um, I think it was done with all respect, really, so yeah, I was quite happy with that. It’s a very powerful memory.

Similarly, Amy (Appendix 17: para. 11, see Figure 62, Appendix 1: 439) commented that:
My favourite bit was the two juveniles that we dug up over there. I don’t know . . . it was also the creepiest part and the most . . . I think it was the most realistic part, but it was also my favourite for some reason, maybe because . . . like some of the things you dig up it’s hard to associate that that was actually human, but those seemed really real to me, maybe because they were so complete and everything, I don’t know.

Ebenstein (cited in Asma 2012) argues that ‘things’ “that flicker on the edges of death and beauty—or any other categories that seem to be in binary opposition—create a certain frisson, an ontological confusion”. For some of us, “this confusion and flicker creates pleasure, for others anxiety, and for some, an enjoyable mixture of the two” (ibid.). This is undoubtedly what Burke (1757) describes as the “sublime”—events and experiences that inspire “horror and astonishment” (Wilson 2012: 63). Crucially, for the sublime to take effect, a level of distance is required—as provided by encounters with archaeological human remains—together with the assurance that our own well-being is not in any immediate danger (ibid: 64). This distance is crucial: “too far away from a sublime event, the tingle subsides; overly near, and the fright is too much. In the middle ground thrives the sublime, the morbid aesthetic” (ibid.), and is arguably what is described by Amy in her experience of excavating juveniles on site at Poulton.

5.6.1. Framing child death in the UK

There was a time when a friend of mine lost her son and he was only 6 weeks old and I went to his funeral and then after that I was just like “I can’t”, for about a month afterwards, I just couldn’t do it, I just couldn’t do it [work with human remains] (Christina, Appendix 24: para. 157).

Yet, the distress experienced by some archaeologists in regards to encountering or handling the remains of children is undoubtedly framed by 21st century British life expectancies, as well as attitudes towards death and dying in the young (Vanderstraeten 2014: 464). In Western cultures, the human life course has an “inscribed trajectory” or set of expectations regarding what constitutes a ‘full’ life, barring some catastrophic turn of events. Death of old age is thus considered as “expected and inevitable, the conclusion of a natural process”, whereas sudden death at a young age disrupts this “normative timetable” (Finch and Wallis 1992: 57), due
to its flagrant transgression of the “natural order of things” (Jorgensen-Earp and Lanzilotti 1998: 151, see Figures 63 and 64, Appendix 1: 440). This belief is reflected in current campaigns to offer bereaved parents free burials or cremations for the c. 5,000 children that die each year in the UK (Mudie 2017).

Yet, for much of human history (and in the developing world), the pattern of the life course was much more varied and precarious, especially for women and children in the postnatal period (Brennan 2014: 20). Parkes (2002: 368) thus argues, “it was sometimes said that you were not a woman until you had lost your first child”. The decline in juvenile mortality over the last century is impressive: “in 1915, there were 89,380 deaths of children aged under one, compared with just 2,721 in 2015, while the number of deaths of one-to four-year-olds was 55,607 in 1915, while it was 460 in 2015” (ONS Digital 2017).

Perinatal death was thus a particularly “commonplace event that occurred with regularity” (Brennan 2014: 20), leading to a popular and lingering cultural view that it represented the loss of only a ‘quasi-person’. As a consequence, the disposal of embryonic and foetal remains has become a contentious issue (Morgan 2002: 248): foetuses in the UK that do not reach 24 weeks gestation are not regarded as possessing “legal personality” and are “not subject to the provision relating to cremation”, but “fall within those relating to incineration” and the disposal of clinical waste (Pocklington 2015), despite wider calls to socially acknowledge such losses more fulsomely (Mulkay 1993: 43).

Indeed, the response to the recent discovery of a mass grave containing children aged from 35 weeks to three years old at the former Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, County Galway, exposes now unpalatable ontological models of child identity (Grierson 2017). The find “confirms decades of suspicions that the vast majority of children who died at the home were interred on the site in unmarked graves”: a common practice at Catholic-run facilities amid high child mortality rates in early 20th century Ireland (ibid.). Accordingly, the Irish government has promised that the children’s surviving families will be consulted on “providing proper burials and other memorials” (ibid.).
Yet even archaeological practice participates, to some extent, in conferring a lesser value upon the remains of the very young: tiny bones may be overlooked in hurried excavations where sieving is not possible (Lewis 2006: 33-34) and one of the most popular terms used by osteologists to describe children in the archaeological record is the potentially pejorative ‘sub-adult’, with some practitioners preferring to use the term ‘non-adult’ instead (ibid: 2). There has also, perhaps, been a tendency to “project an indifference to the death of children onto parents in eras before our own” (Jordan 2012: 11)—even if, as Wilson (2015: 22) argues, “many mothers experienced long periods of apprehension and anxiety about the health of their young children” and “experienced their deaths intensely”—which Julie (Appendix 22: para. 18) in particular, a mother herself, wished to address through her own research:

[S]o there’ve been a couple of burials I wrote about from [redacted] of mothers who died in childbirth and that to me was a really . . . it’s really important to tell their stories well and to really bring them out to the fore of the different case studies, as a very traumatic set of experiences that these women had undergone that was dealt with appropriately by their community and so I suppose I looked for those stories in a way to tell, because I felt that was a really important thing to write back into prehistory. You know, we say glibly, ‘Oh well, lots of infants died’ and that’s a very dry statistical thing to say without trying to attend to the archaeology that actually evidences that, so I suppose that has been part of my agenda.

5.6.2. Constructing a hierarchy of grief

It was not until the latter half of the 19th century, with improvements in public health, hygiene and mass vaccination programmes that children born in the UK stood any significant chance of reaching old age (Vanderstraeten 2014: 464). As a result, the experience of losing a child is now rare and often accompanied by profound shock due to it infrequency, as well as unrealistic expectations regarding the power of medical technology to save lives at all costs (Brennan 2014: 345), as most recently witnessed in the legal dispute between the parents of Charlie Gard—an infant with mitochondrial DNA depletion syndrome—and Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital over his continued treatment (see Boseley 2017). This set of expectations can be seen in my research participants’ sense of being struck by the ‘unfairness’ or ‘injustice’ of juvenile or infant death and the sense of a life ‘cut short’. As Craig
(Appendix 20: para. 66) explained: “It just seems tragic somehow because, you know, somebody wanted this child and the child never had a chance.” He went on to state that:

They’re just so bloody innocent, aren’t they, children? I know child mortality in the past was shockingly high, but um, we found one . . . one child, well, it was an infant and it was in the palisade ditch at Stonehenge and it was buried with a bowl, a small chalk figurine and a dog. It had the dog’s skeleton with it and er, it honestly meant enough to somebody, it wasn’t just . . . you know, like, spitting them out like pips, ‘Oh, another one’s died, chuck it in’, ‘cause you know, like, in the Roman period, they used to, at some point, I think it was like the 4th century, they had a tax on babies, so that a lot of new-borns were smothered and thrown in the well. And you find quite a lot of wells with numerous infant skeletons at the bottom . . . why you’d do that to your own drinking water is beyond me, but um, they obviously meant something to somebody to . . . [sighs]. We have, as civilised human beings, we have a nasty tendency to look on past peoples as barbaric and simple and it’s not true. We have not changed in the slightest. Ok, we have more material wealth, we have material goods, we have so much material goods that we have to have garages to put it in. We have so much shit that we don’t know what to do with most of it … and there’s, yeah, we haven’t changed as emotional and rational and thinking and feeling creatures for thousands and thousands of years and a new-born baby is a new-born baby and when that new-born baby dies, somebody, somewhere is wrenched by that (Appendix 20: para. 64).

Similarly, Julie (Appendix 22: para. 18) commented:

I don’t think it’s just being a mother that brings that home. I think it’s the sense of a life cut short in a very untimely way and . . . and therefore, the kind of sense of an unfulfilled life, but also, you know, in emotion terms, you can’t help, or I can’t help imagine the grief around the loss of a child and it’s that old adage that there is a normal order to things and you don’t expect your children to die before you and it’s that notion of loss and I know in the past that it must have been much more frequent than in the current world, but . . . but that loss is really . . . it’s something that I feel must stretch across time.

Such attitudes reflect what may be described as the ‘potential principle’ in which the death of children is perceived as being more deserving of sympathy than those who have realised their potential (the elderly). Both Walter (2017) and Blauner (1966) argue that we can observe very different responses to their deaths, with the chronically sick, disabled or elderly receiving “lower quality care while they are dying”, causing “less urgent life-saving efforts at the moment of death” and creating “less of a stir when dead” (Bradbury 1999: 53, see Figure 65, Appendix 1: 441). In a society that undeniably worships youth and which “pitches it, packages it, and sells it so relentlessly” ultimately “in the vain hope that we can fool ourselves, our bodies and the clock” (Overall 2014), the “socially valuable members of society are the young
and reproductively active” (Bradbury 1999: 53). As Craig (Appendix 20: para. 100) thus commented:

I mean, clearly, some things do move you, they are emotionally . . . I suppose tweaking, really, of course you can become a little introspective and you dwell upon the fact . . . you’re not dwelling on the death, you dwell upon the fact, particularly with the infant burials, you’re not dwelling on the fact they died, you’re dwelling on the fact that they didn’t have a life, which is an entirely different thing. I know it’s just a question of semantics, but it’s how you view things. You don’t sit there going ‘Ah, he died as an infant, that’s terrible’, that’s not the terrible bit; the terrible bit is that they didn’t live and I think that’s what you dwell on. It’s slightly removed from the issue of death, I think (Craig, Appendix 20: para. 100).

The ‘potential principle’ is therefore linked to what has been described as a ‘hierarchy of grief’ or ‘typology of death’ in contemporary Western cultures (see Robson and Walter 2013), in which the value of human lives are differentially remembered and mourned—publically at least—leading to the creation of social norms relating to “who, when, where, how, how long, and for whom people should grieve” (Doka 1989: 4):

Yes, we have like flashing moments where if you’ve got a young person or a child because if you’ve got children of your own, you form a picture in your mind of that child because they haven’t had a . . . they’ve died suddenly and they haven’t had a life, so you get those feelings, but if it’s an older person, you don’t have them feelings because they’ve lived a life. But a younger person or a child, you just can’t . . . but then you pass it, you pass it off (Janet, Appendix 13: para. 45).

Accordingly, during excavations with YAT, the remains of children frequently received more attention and ‘sympathy’ than those of their adult counterparts (see Figure 66, Appendix 1: 442). There were frequent expressions of sadness which did not occur with adult burials, whose deaths was more easily reconciled as they had enjoyed a ‘good innings’ (Scott 2007: 358). Indeed, while Mark and I were excavating juvenile remains, he argued that while people in the past may have only lived until their mid-30s—a ‘young’ death by our standards today—“for them that was a long life, so there is no need for us to feel sorry for them”. Given the average age of the digging team (likewise in their thirties and forties, including Mark) this comment might seem strange, but his application of this ‘potential principle’ helped neutralise any disturbing implications of adult deaths. In this way he used what Timmermans (2005: 993) refers to as “death brokering”, in which death is rendered both culturally
meaningful and manageable, reframing what would otherwise be considered a ‘bad death’ as acceptable.

5.6.3. The role of biography and age

While it is often construed as a fixed trait, empathy expands and contracts with life events and, perhaps unsurprisingly, those who felt strongest about working with the remains of the very young typically had children of their own (Zaki 2015), as Rob (Appendix 11: para. 44) commented:

[T]he one that [redacted] had that was . . . in utero foetus and the neonate next to his mother’s leg and the twins or the siblings that we had in that grave, and we’ve had, I think, three or four pairs in graves like that and you think, ‘Aww’ and it’s partly because, you know, I’ve got young children of about that age and you . . . I have to say, it’s made me more sensitive to things like that because you look at them and you think that must have been awful for the parents and the kids as well, and you wonder what they died of and you realise what a shame it is because today, it probably wouldn’t have happened, you know? You can bet your life that it was something that’s totally curable today, you know, like the woman who’s obviously died in childbirth, um, the chances are that she’d have been perfectly fine these days and you realise . . . it makes you realise how brutal things must have been back then.

Similarly, Alan (Appendix 14: para. 62) described how, after becoming a father himself, the remains of children created an uncomfortable connection with the present: “Shortly after my first daughter was born. Yeah, I uncovered a very young child, probably about a year-ish or so old and that was kind of, nah, I couldn’t cope. At that point, no way.” He further explained that this discomfort arises from a connection, “the story or something between the two of you” (Appendix 14: para. 64):

Ask any of your friends who have children and ask them whether listening to the news changed after they children. I would bet that most of them say that when they had children, all of a sudden all of the stories about children being burnt in fires or abducted or . . . damaged in any way, on the news, it becomes a difficult news story to them. More and more so than before they had those children. It’s that same connection. All of a sudden you’ve got this vulnerable person that is yours and that you love dearly, and you have that connection with that news story and it becomes real. And I think it’s exactly the same and just occasionally, it will trigger that feeling (Appendix 14: para. 66).
As Letherby (2015: 33) notes, our life experiences and identity are “present at some level in all that we do”, as Julie’s (Appendix 22: para. 16) comments attest:

I think I was probably 19 at the time and I was doing quite a lot of childcare in the evenings for the children on the dig and, you know, carrying a three year old around on my hip and although I wasn’t a mother at that stage, just the physical feeling of handling a child of about the same age as the remains I was excavating was very, you know, as I lifted the skull from the ground, I could almost feel the weight of the child’s head as I could with the children I was caring for in the evenings and that really moved me, because it connected me.

In some cases, personal experiences of loss and tragedy can play a role in how archaeology practitioners interpret the archaeological record and Julie (Appendix 22: para. 22) recalled speaking with an archaeologist who had produced a powerful piece of research on the burials of women where they had died in childbirth, which had impressed her with its unique perspective:

I said I thought that [her] insight was remarkable and really thoughtful . . . it was a great piece of analysis and she became very emotional about that because at the time she was analysing those burials . . . she was losing children, she was having miscarriages and she felt that in her analysis she wanted to attend once more, she was connecting up the very personal with the academic and even within the confines of a piece of academic text, found a way to express intimacy.

Yet, while personal experience of loss can inspire academic insight, connections between the past and the present do not always provoke such benevolent results, as Alan (Appendix 14: para. 46) recalled:

[W]e were excavating on the south side of the tower, this would be the late 70s, early 80s, as you go on the south side they get really dense, just bodies on top of each other in layers, so we’d just take things down in spits. So because things were fairly open to the public, what we tended to do was ensure that we excavated things and lifted them pretty quickly, they weren’t left around, so it was unusual for a body to be excavated and exposed for any more than a day, if that. And a friend of mine, his girlfriend was having their first baby and she went into labour and he went off to hospital and he came back a few days later and he was full of everything that had happened and he noticed where he’d been working was covered in [indecipherable], well I pulled it back and showed him this skeleton [indecipherable] and we couldn’t decide whether the foetus had been born after death or it was an in-labour death, they couldn’t tell and this poor guy, he went slightly pale and passed out. The connection between his experience with his girlfriend who had apparently had a long and quite terrible labour and the skeleton and the story there and it was just too close. It wasn’t, um, it was a real connection. So you get little things like that. I know a lot of people get quite, they don’t mind digging adults, but children . . . and sometimes, you’ll just see just a skeleton and sometimes something that’s much more human. That can be quite chilling sometimes.
Three of the archaeologists I worked with at YAT were fathers of young children and while they all stressed that excavating juvenile remains didn’t make them uncomfortable or particularly trouble them in any way, it did make them pause for thought (see Figure 67, Appendix 1: 443). Contrasting with Poulton (where the remains of children were generally regarded as being no different to those of adults), at YAT the excavation of child burials were moments when everyone was ‘permitted’, perhaps even expected, to be more reflective and colleagues walking past such remains under excavation would stop for a moment. Yet, even participants in this study without children expressed that they found working with such remains more emotionally difficult: a discomfort that increased with time. Peter thus stated:

I know my personal feelings are weird, but . . . it’s at times when I see children in graves, I don’t see a skeleton, I see a child and that’s something . . . and I do know these people are lost to history and that’s fair enough, but I dwell on it.

He added:

But the two children holding hands [found at Poulton] . . . it seems to be getting worse for me as I get older and it gets worse when it’s children (Peter, Appendix 21: para.).

This is a similar result to what Doughty (2015: 96) was warned would happen while working in a crematorium: writing in her memoir, she recounts how she was told by an experienced operator that “when you get older your own mortality starts to creep in on you. Watch out, children are going to bother you the older you get.” This correlation between growing older and the salience of mortality, as discussed in Chapter 3.6, has been observed within archaeological research conducted by Fletcher (no date) at the Chapel House Wood excavations, Yorkshire Dales National Park, which examined field and post-excavation responses towards handling human foetal and perinatal remains within a wide range of student age groups and backgrounds.

While all the students reported a strong feeling of satisfaction at the end of the project, it was notable that both females and males over 25 years of age expressed concern about dealing with human ‘material’ (ibid.), with students—particularly those with children of their own—expressing a level of distress, as well as some “extreme emotional responses”, such as crying, particularly during washing of the
remains (ibid.). These reactions were not generally encountered in younger participants. A similar pattern was noted at Poulton, where the question as to whether there was any difference in excavating child and adult remains was generally met with bemusement by younger participants.

Their young age perhaps meant that they were unlikely to have acquired the life experiences that could make such finds particularly unsettling and, with death perceived as an event so far in the future, may make them less susceptible to dwelling on issues of mortality. Instead, while younger students acknowledged that the death of a child was sad because they had died prematurely, their comments lacked the depth that older participants offered. This degree of ‘lip service’ observed by younger diggers might be seen as following a ‘feeling rule’ allied with the socio-cultural ‘grieving rules’ for particular deaths (Doka and Martin 2002: 338). Where this relates to “the misfortune or death of others”, this might be acknowledged cognitively or discursively “even if one does not actually reach emotional empathy”—suggesting these students were already aware “it will be necessary to engage in impression management” to display the “appropriate emotional demeanour” (Turner and Stets 2005: 60).

In more unguarded moments, however, such younger students saw child burials more in terms of their potential to hone one’s excavation skills, with the site directors facilitating rotations on neonate burials due to the rarity of working with such small and fragile remains (see Figure 68, Appendix 1: 444). This work stimulated a competitive element amongst students: a quality noted by Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 8) in his experience of running field schools “[I]t’s a much easier project to run when there are no graves, because they get a little competitive and jealous”. When the remains were fully exposed, cleaned up and recorded, everyone was invited to take a last look and a photograph as a ‘memento’—if they so wanted—although the sharing of such images on social media was embargoed. A number seized this opportunity, but spent little time in the vicinity of the burial; thus, if students did experience feelings of sadness they were not openly expressed as they were by older counterparts at YAT.
Yet, just because students did not expunge at great length about their feelings did not mean that they were impervious to the affectivity of the remains of the dead. Unlike at the Chapel House Wood excavations, little attention was drawn to the ethical issues of excavating human remains at Poulton and when questioned, the project leaders felt that it was unnecessary to burden students with this information at such an early stage. As described in Chapter Three, staff on site allowed these insights or reflections to arise naturally and sought to avoid drawing unnecessary attention to them, perhaps fearful of creating problems where they perceived none existed. Simply not mentioning a problem does not preclude it from happening, however, and while students may not have cried or made ‘extreme’ emotional displays—the use of the descriptor by Fletcher arguably revealing a level of judgement about what constitutes an appropriate response and thereby indicating that it flouts the feeling rules to be found in archaeological practice—other less extreme forms may be significant (Hafferty 1991: 135). Accordingly, Amy (Appendix 16: para. 67) was one of the few students who reflected openly in any depth about the impact of excavating the remains of children, stating:

> The kids I found a little weird, but then again, maybe I’ll be fine now. It was just kinda like the first time and I was like, ‘Oh, they’re so tiny, they’re so little, they didn’t get to live their life’ kind of thing.

At the time of the interview, she was working with her excavation ‘buddy’ on the remains of a neonate which may have provoked this more intense moment of reflection. Yet she was shocked that the excavation had caused her to feel uneasy, after being lulled into a sense of emotional complacency through working with human remains in a university laboratory setting. Rachel, who had also worked on these remains (see Figure 69, Appendix 1: 445) also ‘confessed’ to the project osteologist in a private moment that she had found the work emotionally difficult. Similar observations have been made in the arena of anatomical dissection. Hafferty (1991: 129) argues that neophyte medical students are so eager to prove themselves ‘worthy’ of entering the profession that they are only likely to disclose feelings of unease or conflict away from the lab and, crucially, in private. Both labs and dig sites are public places “where one’s mistakes and successes, strengths and weaknesses, are constantly
on stage” (ibid.). This may additionally explain levels of greater public suppression on digs where burial archaeology is offered as a specific training experience: keeping feelings hidden, “aware of the existence of a norm prohibiting a confession” and “mimicking the messages they have received from others” about internally controlling one’s emotions—or at least their external manifestation—within the professional culture of archaeology (ibid: 67).

5.7. “What do I do with these bits?” Fragmentation and destruction

I had a few minutes to myself to take in the surroundings of the excavation. Looking into the trench, I could see a few exposed bones but I was a little shocked at just how jumbled and displaced the remains were, as I had imagined rows of well-preserved and intact skeletons and it hammered home that this is the reality of urban archaeological excavation. I could see that one skull had been cleaved in half, presumably as a result of a mechanical digger going through it. Bending down and peering into the trench, the soil revealed itself to be riddled with fragments of bone poking through the surface. It was everywhere. When I was finally allowed down into the trench itself, I felt distinctly uneasy about where I was placing my feet, not helped by one of the archaeologists telling me that the soil here, which is clay, dries hard in the sun and makes a cracking sound when you walk over it, just like human bone (entry from first day of field notes with YAT).

For archaeologists, fragments are “the normal order of things” (Burström 2013: 311), for it is inarguably “a story-telling discipline that extrapolates conjectured narratives from the fragments of the past it unearths” (Davidson 2016: 23). Yet wider Western culture is “haunted by anxieties about bodily fragmentation or disintegration, and fascinated by a pervasive, impossible ideal of bodily wholeness; an idea that is everywhere challenged” (Ross 2010)—from saintly relics to organ donation—but to which we cling regardless (Sappol 2002; Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant 2002; Bogard 2008; Weiss 2008, Foltyn 2008). Even forensic archaeology practitioners, Hanson argues (2007: 76), may find a body broken into fragments through accident, violence, or decomposition “more disturbing than an intact and identifiable murder victim”.
As Rebay-Salisbury et al. (2010: 4) observes, the 21st century has “witnessed some dramatic changes in how the human body is broken down and reassembled”, challenging our most deep-seated beliefs about identity and “where the boundaries between bodies are located”. Indeed, the considerable advances that have been made in using DNA as a means of identifying the dead have arisen largely as a result of the forensic work conducted in Bosnia by the International Committee for Missing Persons (ICMP) (see Wagner 2008; Jennings 2013), with the science and protocols used to identify genocide victims subsequently deployed in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks in 2001 (BBC News 2001b).

These advances have, however, “produced a fractal notion of personhood whereby each ‘individual’ can be reduced to a single cell which contains all their data”, meaning that disaster victims can now be identified from infinitesimally small traces of ‘biological matter’ rather than fingerprints or dental records, thereby ensuring that any part of the human body is now sufficient to identify the whole (Rebay-Salisbury, Stig Sørensen and Hughes 2010: 4). Yet, “this paradigmatic shift in how the ‘individual’ human body is broken down” and relates to others may induce a degree of anxiety about the retention of personal identity (ibid: 4). As discussed in Chapter Two, the long-established ambivalence in Western tradition towards the disarticulation and fragmentation of the corpse reflects a deep-seated belief that identity and personhood is dependent on an intact and bounded body, an understanding that continues to permeate our relationship with the dead (Robb 2009: 103). The strength of this connection is said to explain why we find the “sensually repellent decay” of the body and “its transformation to a place of stink and maggots” particularly traumatic (Nilsson Stutz and Tarlow 2013: 6).

In principle, fragmentation should aid psychological ‘distancing’ from human remains: disarticulated and disassociated remains make poor human referents, facilitating objectification and the rationalisation of removal or destruction. For many of my research participants, however, corporeal fragmentation (whether caused through the efforts of archaeology itself, land re-use, or the process of decomposition) caused feelings of unease. Alan (Appendix 14: para. 22) repeatedly insisted that practitioners should “try and [collect] all of that person” during the process of
excavating human remains, emphasising that this was the ‘right way’ to do things (see Figure 70, Appendix 1: 446):

I mean there’s a bad way, which is just to go in there and start digging around and hoik it out, um . . . and there’s the other way and that’s to do, that’s to try and preserve the bodies as intact as possible and make sure they’re buried in an appropriate way at some point later, you know?

His comments reflect an obligation of respect, translated as protection for, and care of, the whole body: a recurring characteristic of popular British death customs (Sque et al. 2006: 126). This desire to retain as much of the body as possible, even while its structural integrity is being compromised by the activities of the living, is reflected in the practice of anatomical dissection:

Beneath each of the dissecting tables in our lab hangs a shiny stainless-steel bucket into which skin, bits of fat, and other unneeded pieces from the body are discarded. The buckets are never emptied over the course of the semester, and we are told to scrupulously place into them anything we remove from the cadaver. The theory is that when a body is cremated at the semester’s end, it will be cremated in its entirety. Perhaps the idea comforts potential donors and their families. To us, however, the buckets are haunting. The collection of contents is macabre, and though we try diligently to place all “scraps” in the bucket, we cannot always do so (Montross 2007: 69).

Sanner (2006: 140) credits this preoccupation with ‘wholeness’ to the connection between the corpse and the “illusion of lingering life and symbolic survival”. Treating the corpse respectfully seems to “take on the symbolic meaning of showing respect for the individual who once was” (ibid.), whilst its converse (desecrating the corpses of criminals through anatomical dissection) is an appropriate punishment (see Richardson 2001). Alan was joined in these sentiments by Rob (Appendix 11: para. 36), who made a concerted effort to collect as much charnel as possible—terminology perhaps deliberately chosen on his part to recodify the remains as something ‘other’—during the course of the excavation with YAT:

I have to accept the fact that we cannot collect all of the charnel, it’s impossible, there’s so much of it and whilst they’re machining out there, if I walk across the site and I happen to see a piece of something on the ground then I pick it up and put it with the other pile that we’ve got and it gets bagged and brought in, but um . . . there is really is just so much of it on the spoil heap, that it’s all over the place. I kind of feel uneasy about that because I would like to be able to remove all of that, just so it gets put aside and reburied with the rest.
Archaeologists—especially those working in urban centres—may often be faced with burial grounds that contain many hundreds, if not thousands, of burials, “often heavily disturbed and intercut with lots of partial, disarticulated and re-deposited remains” (Boyle 2015: 40). Speaking about the site being excavated by YAT, Mark (Appendix 27: para. 12) stated that:

I suppose because a lot of the cemetery sites I’ve dealt with have been on the edges of urban development, this is probably one of the more urban sites, so therefore the quality of the some of the upper burials—and by that I mean, you know, how they’ve survived modern intrusions is a lot less because you know we have, first and foremost the ambulance foundations which do kind of barrel their way through a vast corner of it and then you have all the services as well, so they’re kind of, by their nature, kind of knocking things in half, so that, we had a couple of examples where, you know, you had the service trench, you had a head up this end and a pair of legs on the other side of the trench.

Disarticulated remains may provoke an intense sense of discomfort, perhaps even “existential fear” (Sørensen 2009: 125) which may be as acute for archaeologists (whose moral objective is to be able to reconstitute an individual, McClelland and Cerezo-Román 2016: 37) as for practitioners of forensic archaeology, seeking justice on behalf of the dead (Wagner 2015: 119). As Harries (2016: 1) observes, such remains were “once articulated but now have become disarticulated and so, in a sense, inarticulate”. Furthermore, in Western cultures the commingling of disparate remains reveals that personal identity is vulnerable to complete dissolution and that we may be reduced to an “anonymous materiality” (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 89, 108). This is, according to Cavell (1999: 418-419), the classic definition of horror: the name given to the perception of “the precariousness of human identity, to the perception that it may be lost or invaded, that we may be or may become, something other than what we are, or take ourselves for”.

This is clearly a deep-rooted source of anxiety in British culture. Even before Alder Hey, the UK had one of the highest family refusal rates for post-mortems in Europe (Owen 2013; Connolly 2013) and one of the lowest organ donation rates (Siddique and Morris 2016). While 66 per cent of people declare themselves in favour of organ donation in the UK (Dyer 2007), only half of these are signed up to the organ donation register, suggesting a large “discrepancy between attitude and behaviour” (Nizza et al. 2016: 651). This obsession with post-mortem corporeal integrity,
combined with the fear of defaming the corpse, once again attributes to human remains a responsive and agentic power. Indeed, some museums have taken the step of removing fragments of human remains from display, as at the Manchester Museum, where the head of Worsley Man—an Iron Age bog body—was removed from public view. While the museum stated that the decision was taken as a result of conservation concerns and because the space the head was exhibited in was “not large enough to create a respectful encounter”, we might additionally argue it reflects a cultural distaste for displaying body fragments (Giles 2009: 93).

Rob therefore sought to collect as much of the charnel as he possibly could, not in a futile effort to restore anatomical order, but as an attempt to address the loss of life and identity, alongside that of physical, corporeal integrity (Wagner 2015: 121). His desire may be also understood in terms of dealing with disarticulated remains as a “peculiar kind of waste” (Harries 2016: 2, see Chapter 4.5.): now “unmoored [and] adrift” (Harries 2016: 2), such remains may be perceived as ‘matter out of place’. Yet, while their research value is severely diminished, they still resist categorisation as that which “is irrelevant, dirty and must be disposed of” due to their human origin (Edensor 2005: 315). As such, Rob felt a degree of anxiety at the prospect of their inappropriate disposal, even if the reality of excavation means that much of this disarticulated “material” had to be left in-situ and was ultimately destroyed by the subsequent development work on the site after the archaeologists left (see Figure 71, Appendix 1: 447). He thus attempted to rationalise the treatment of these disarticulated fragments by comparing it to the natural process of decomposition:

But then you also have to accept that with those people [the people interred in the burial ground under excavation], they would have understood that their bones would decay and become part of the earth again and that’s all part of that process. At the end of the day, what’s left there has been dislocated from all the rest, it’s disarticulated bone and it’s been mixed up and it will continue to degrade and disappear eventually, one day (Appendix 11: para. 36).

It is not surprising that practitioners resort to reframing the destruction wrought on human remains as part of the natural cycle of death and decay. Indeed, official guidance from the Advisory Panel on the Archaeological Burials of England (Mays 2017: 33) seeks to minimise any concerns on this subject by arguing that the degree
of inter-cutting of graves in medieval churchyards—often “taken as proof of a general callousness and indifference towards the buried dead by the living” and performed by gravediggers who cut through burials and intermingled remains seemingly without compunction (Crangle 2015: 10, see Figure 72, Appendix 1: 448)—means that many burials, to a greater or lesser extent, are truncated with “missing elements being scattered to different parts of the site” as the soil is “dug and re-dug over the centuries”. The impossibility of being able to reconstitute disarticulated remains as one person, or to even to complete an articulated but partial burial, is thus re-framed both personally and officially as in keeping with medieval rites: nothing to be overly concerned about, causing no post-mortem harm to the dead. Yet as Rob (Appendix 11: para. 36) stated:

I find that uneasy [leaving disarticulated remains in the ground], because I guess that you still feel that you should still treat that with the same respect that you would a burial that’s still intact, but um . . . again, for practical reasons, I just can’t do that. I’d need a team of two to walk around on site constantly, just picking bits of bone up, poking around for it! It becomes very much . . . you know, you accept it, as you’re trowelling, there’ll be bits here and bits there, you know, there’s a tooth, there’s a rib, and you’re like ‘What do I do with these bits?!’

His reflections on the pressures of pace and funding in commercial archaeology led him to further articulate what Jameton (1984) has identified as “moral distress”: the “disturbing emotional response which arises when one is required to act in a manner which violates personal beliefs and values about right and wrong” as a result of institutional constraints (Fenton 1988: 8). In the field of developer-funded archaeology, the personal values and beliefs of practitioners may often be challenged or compromised by both commercial constraints and the work that needs to be done (McGibbon et al. 2010: 1355). This personal and moral conflict is only exacerbated when dealing with spaces such as burial grounds that are considered ‘sacred’ (Howarth 2007: 219):

In terms of actually removing the bodies, I don’t . . . I don’t personally have a big problem with doing it, um . . . it seems a shame, I suppose, in a way, because to my mind, the best thing to have done with that area would be to return it back to being a square and make it a public space and leave the graveyard where it is, but the costs . . . the value of the land and the potential for development means that was unlikely to have ever happened, um . . . but they could easily have left that as a square and built round it on the old line of the where the old buildings used to be and had a really nice space. But yeah, in terms of removing the
bodies, I can see why it’s the sensible thing to do; it just seems a shame to disturb all those burials when we could work around them (Rob, Appendix 11: para. 24).

As his professional, personal, and emotional agendas therefore collided, Rob was caught between what Stronach et al. (2002: 198) identify as “a complicated nexus between . . . ideology and practice”, as he attended to a variety of needs and desires, including those of the developer, the client, YAT itself and, of course, the deceased. Ironically, as Koudounaris (2011: 14) argues, death and decomposition were once among the “acts of bodily drama” that were played out on a more public stage. Yet despite being natural and universal processes, they are now all but hidden from view and glimpsing them is considered “invasive, repulsive or crass”. To modern eyes, then, charnel is not only a violation of the bodily canon, “it undermines our fundamental concept of individuality” (ibid, see Figure 73 and 74, Appendix 1: 449). Rob’s collection of charnel sought to spare it this “invasion’ of privacy” and to accord it the same level of care and attention that articulated remains receive.

In conclusion, this particular reaction to fragmented bodies can be seen as an existential or ontological crisis for those who conceptualise life as a bounded, inseparable and indissoluble whole: we are our bodies (Sanner 2006: 140) and our social identity is enacted through them (Králová 2015: 242). Even archaeologists confronted with complete corporeal dissolution and amalgamation into amorphous collectives find it challenging, as it “raises the spectre of impermanence” (Tobin and Goggin 2013: 2). Moreover, as agents of corporeal fragmentation, archaeology can trigger a visceral reaction, especially where unintended damage is caused by a practitioner’s own hands. Lifting a skull, for example, only for it to fall apart in your hands, can be a strange sensation, as Janet explained while she was washing bones: “Yeah, ’cause it’s held together by soil isn’t it? And when you get into the water and it all just comes apart . . . yeah, it is a bit disconcerting, isn’t it?” As Robb (Appendix 11: para. 42) noted, however, these feelings were something that practitioners had to come to terms with:
[I]t’s part of the process of . . . in a way of decomposition of that skeleton, that archaeology is inherently destructive to an extent and even if we’re . . . no matter how careful we are, by exposing them and removing them they will suffer some damage and sometimes when we’re lifting them, the bones crumble, or we’ll try and undermine the bone first and then lift it with the trowels, but sometimes they just snap and it’s unavoidable.

Yet, whilst such unintended dissolution comes with the territory of excavation, practitioners still sought to avoid causing it themselves wherever possible, as Nina (Appendix 13: para. 57) explained:

I really don’t like it when it breaks. You don’t want it to happen! [laughs] And sometimes you really can’t help it, because it’s already broken and it’s just mud covering it up, but I noticed in myself that I don’t want it to.

The students at Poulton were particularly concerned about causing damage to human remains. Due to their relative inexperience, they had not yet acquired the knowledge or ‘feel’ for knowing how fast they could work without detriment to the skeleton or how much pressure to exert upon individual bones while lifting. As Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 6) noted “I would always be there, working on stuff and helping them to go a bit faster because they’re terrified of these things [skeletons], they don’t want to break them, they don’t want to stick their trowel through them”. Amy (Appendix 17: para. 50) saw this avoidance of harm as her biggest challenge as she didn’t “want to be destructive”:

I don’t want to damage it any further and a lot of them are kind of in, not the greatest condition, like the baby right now, I feel like I’m going to break more of the bones and for me, that’s kind of upsetting.

Similarly, Mark (Appendix 27: para. 18) stated that:

I don’t know how you feel, but even after two decades of dealing with human remains, I still get irked when I’m excavating human remains and I go too hard and I take off . . . or you break it or something. You break a long bone, or you break something.

Speaking of the experience in which he damaged a human skull, Mark (Appendix 27: para. 30) commented that:

Years and years ago, I did, um, I did another site in er, East Anglia, another Anglo-Saxon burial site, actually, um, and er, it was the third phase of this kind of development. The previous two developments had this kind of great massive doughnut cluster of Anglo-Saxon burials, a couple of hundred, around these really large central splodges, no idea how I
managed to actually dig this central thing, I think it was just right time, right place, and I just showed an enthusiasm, like 'Yeah, I’ve just come out of a degree in osteology, I know what I’m doing!' Um... so I actually spent two weeks taking down this 2m by 1.5m sized feature, just taking out alternate quadrants and recording the section and then you kind of end up with a section as you go down and, er, it was kind of a Thursday before... or was it Wednesday? No, I think it was Thursday, actually, before an Easter holiday, so... you know, it was Good Friday and we were finishing that day, and [laughs] I was told by the supervisor, you know, found nothing, probably about a metre down, found absolutely nothing, said 'Oh no, we’ve got to get this out, we haven’t really got the time to faff around with it anymore'. So this is one of my experiences that leads into my belief now about being forced to do things, so he said ‘Just whack it out with a spade, just whack it out with a spade’ and literally, the first shovel of the spade, I went in and basically took off this individual’s... I think I clipped it just below the nose, so I took off the maxilla, took through the head, took through the nose and took off the front of the skull as well, so, you could just see this... this... so apparently, there was this... somebody... the people at the far end of the site heard this ‘Bugger!’, as I hit this kind of thing as I’m down this metre hole and it’s just, ‘Argh!’ So that’s memorable for perhaps the wrong reasons! [laughs]. So that was a bit annoying, so yeah, two perfectly preserved individuals, but one of them lacked a face. I think that’s my most memorable, but it’s kind of experiences like that do lead into... you know, you’re never, ever going to push me again into excavating a human burial quickly and, you know, I’m going to try my damndest to keep it intact.

For Mark (Appendix 27: para. 18), breakage was a failure to apply his knowledge and skills correctly because he felt that he “should have the ability to know when to put a bit more force into removing the dirt” and that he “should know where this bone ends or doesn’t end”. Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, archaeology is inherently destructive: Rosenblatt (2015: 190) notes many of its practices may appear “uncaring and even quite violent” to those situated outside the profession and a number of respondents in this study had a tale to tell about accidentally mattocking a skeleton that ‘shouldn’t’ have been there. To this end, I had been warned by YAT’s staff when beginning fieldwork with them that I might be shocked by the treatment of human remains on site which, they were careful to stress, was not reflective of an attitude of disrespect on their part, but was dictated by the time constraints in place on commercial excavations.

### 5.7.1. ‘Chasing’ burials

While working with YAT, therefore, I was left feeling conflicted when watching Roy take a shovel to the ‘legs’ of a skeleton that lay partially beyond the limits of the excavation trench, cutting them off at the ‘knees’ (see Figures 75 and 76, Appendix 1:
He appeared to enjoy my perturbed reaction, but explained that there was nothing else that could be done. Where such remains extend beyond the planned trench or licensed excavation zone, the remainder is often left in situ (Mays 2017: 32). There are two primary reasons why ‘chasing’ burials, as it is referred to, under excavation baulks is considered problematic: firstly, extending trenches in urban Christian cemetery settings inevitably only reveals yet more remains from dense intercutting interments (ibid.). Many burials close to the trench edge will thus inevitably be incomplete (ibid.). Secondly, burrowing under the baulk to chase a particular burial without exposing others can cause health and safety issues: destabilising the baulk (ibid.).

Burials are thus only chased in instances where they are deemed to be “osteologically or archaeologically important”: definitions which refer back to the unspoken ‘hierarchies’ of value relating to the archaeological dead (ibid., see Section 5.5.). Yet, speaking with the site director after the incident with the shovel, I watched him recoil in horror as I explained to him what I had seen, despite its compliance with Mays’ guidance (2017) and evident common occurrence elsewhere. Indeed, Redfern and Bekvalac (2017: 375) write of working with remains that had been “chopped in two using a spade so that it could be more easily removed by a crane, and lifted over . . . buildings facing the foreshore”. Nevertheless, concerned with how I would interpret the incident, Rob (Appendix 11: para. 40) stated:

Usually what we would try and do is . . . dig into the section and try and remove the whole bone, but it’s not always possible. Um . . . yeah, again it’s one of those things, if you dig a graveyard, you’ll see that’s essentially what a grave-digger will do, they will just chop through—chop chop—so you find bones that have just been hacked straight through, it’s very . . . it happens occasionally, but we only ever do it if we have to and in a way, it’s better than trying to snap them off because that feels even worse, so if you can’t leave part of the bone in and you don’t want to leave . . . you don’t want to dig a massive hole in the section, but to be honest, if I’d known he was going to do that, I might have said, ‘Let’s just hack a bit more of the section out and see if we can get the rest’. But you have to accept that there will sometimes be parts that are outside of your excavation, but yeah, it’s something that I’ve had to do in the past as well and I’ve watched workmen do it on sites and again, I don’t know really if there’s any . . . I’ve not seen any guidance on that sort of thing, um . . . but yeah, I remember, one I did in town, a watching brief, where . . . they’d reduced the size of the graveyard and they’d built the graveyard wall over a body and it was directly on top of the vertebrae and when the workmen got the machine and went [makes machine noise] along the edge, they basically stripped out one half of this skeleton, so underneath the wall, there was just like section through the middle of all the vertebrae and the skull and everything . . . which looked amazing, but it just made you think, ‘Ohhh, this is just wrong’, but . . . there’s nothing you can do about it, it was . . . a watching brief and
it happened before . . . before, you know, anybody could stop them and when I got up there, there was just bones everywhere and we stopped them and it’s just one of those things. Um, but yeah, it’s unusual in archaeological practice, let’s put it that way. Um, but occasionally, it’s necessary.

Mays (2017: 33) counsels that some people, such as myself, “may feel a little uncomfortable with the notion of splitting a skeleton asunder in this manner, leaving part in the soil where it lay and another to be placed in a museum or to be reburied is some other place”. As previously discussed, this sense of ‘undoing’ and leaving parts of a ‘person’ behind can be profoundly unsettling and undoubtedly links to the belief that because the remains continue to “occupy space/time” so they continue “to suffer in space/time” (Cantor 2010: 32). Again, this refers us back to the notion that the corpse has an ability to feel: Cantor recalls that fledging medical students often find themselves “surprised when the body does not flinch or cry out when cut” (ibid: 33). He observes students placing a hand on their cadaver’s arm and reassuring the prone body that “the incisions will hurt only for a while” (ibid.). Yet, perhaps what is most disturbing and difficult to comprehend is (as Montross (2007: 201) notes) “that no matter what is done to the body, it has absolutely no effect on the person who once inhabited it. The horror is not what is present and cut apart but what has so completely and irreversibly gone”.

Rob’s rationalisation of this extreme act of truncation was justified by comparing it to the efforts of grave-diggers, before reframing the incident as a positive outcome which was preferential to leaving these particular human remains on site. In this light, we might understand Roy’s actions as a form of radical ‘care’—particularly as he devoted a great deal of time and attention to excavating the remains—for if the entire skeleton had been left behind it would almost certainly have been destroyed by the developer’s bulldozers after they moved in. Nevertheless, to an ‘outsider’, such actions can appear brutal and prompt a visceral reaction. My response was undoubtedly coloured by the fact that I have not previously worked in commercial archaeology: my former training in museology frames the breaking of bones as anathema. Building on other outcomes from this research, these observations once more reinforce the point that ideas and practices relating to the valuing and treatment of human remains will shift according to not just the biography but sub-disciplinary expertise of different practitioners.
5.8. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the affective characteristics of human remains and associated objects that most frequently prompt archaeologists to experience an emotional response in relation to the dead. Linked by their ability to trigger ‘identification’ and thereby undermine practitioners’ objectification attempts, such complications typically arise when the dead refuse to be easily categorised and their agency cannot be contained. Key factors identified by my interviewees are those remains which are not ‘clean’ bone, but which retain a strong sense of being like ‘us’, as well as those that have names or uncanny resonances with our own lives or experiences, and particularly “evident links to our own social world, such as a recent date or material culture like ours” (Robb 2013: 444-445). Archaeologists should be aware that these factors can create an unsettling connection between past and present, as this chapter has demonstrated that such remains not only act as corporeal memento mori—challenging our ability to remain emotionally detached and perform the appropriate ‘professional’ persona—but they retain a powerful degree of agency, to move us, the living, as we react to the presence of death and the materiality of their remains (Hallam et al. 1999: 125).

Within the encounters discussed in this chapter, we can also see the powerful capacity of both cultural beliefs and more personal life histories to shape archaeologists’ attitudes towards the dead, particularly in regards to the way in which child death is perceived and managed. We should not diminish the undercurrent of fear witnessed in many of the interviews; not only of the dead themselves—and their capacity to both physically and symbolically pollute the living—but also in regards to how we may harm them, through invasions of bodily privacy, further fragmentation, damage and dissolution. These existential anxieties appear to reflect a concern that the dead retain the capacity to feel and, perhaps, act in response. We are not so far from the fear of the revenant as we might suppose. Yet for most, this was phrased more ethically as a desire for respectful ‘care’, not just because this is the ‘right’ thing to do in terms of best practice, but as a means of making reparation for disturbing the dead by conceiving of them as continued social persons. In this way, the treatment of
human remains by archaeology practitioners destabilises the binary distinctions that we construct around mortality in 21st century Britain, calling us to question our very understanding of “life and death, of being and nothingness” (Strauss 2012: 5).
Chapter Six

Managing encounters with human remains

As an archaeologist, I occasionally have to excavate human remains, and it can be vivid and unsettling. I sometimes wonder if the ethical professionalism surrounding me on site (not to mention the unruly, gallows humour in the site hut) is also an attempt to insulate our modern sensibilities from what would otherwise be a truly frightening experience—to face the dead and, by reflection, our own mortality (Digging the Dirt 2012).

6.1. Introduction

It is said that the death of the body constitutes a moment of crisis in late modernity, making the confrontation with mortality particularly challenging and a focus for strategies of avoidance and mitigation by us all, from outright denial of its inevitability—as witnessed in attempts by the ‘transhumanist’ movement to extend life, with a view to ultimately achieving immortality through technologies such as cryonics (Bernstein 2015: 767)—to ‘preventative’ diet, exercise, and beauty regimes to stave off ill health, the ageing process and, by association, death (see Bauman 1992; Shilling 1993). The use of such strategies of “avoidance and mitigation” in dealing with death is, however, perhaps particularly vital for those individuals who are exposed to the materiality of mortality on a professional basis and work in a world where “the onus rests on holding yourself apart while holding yourself together” (Crowder 2015: 97).
As one of the many strands that constitute deathwork, the practice of mortuary archaeology represents unusual and demanding work in 21st century Britain, challenging archaeologists physically, intellectually and, at times, emotionally. As discussed in the last chapter, the self-referential and liminal qualities of human remains may often transgress the normative boundaries we construct between past and present, self and other, life and death. Such transgressions may provoke any number of potent and conflicting emotions among archaeologists; thus while archaeological practice arguably attempts to effect some form of containment and control over what we might understand as the ‘agency’ of the dead, their remains may nevertheless continue to destabilise the binary distinctions between these cultural categorisations (Horsley 2008: 134).

As Beit-Hallahmi (2012: 322) observes, however, “humans react to the presence of death by transforming the dead, physically and psychologically”, as they work to ‘tame’ death and the “potentially polluting body” (Scott 2007: 360). Drawing on existing literature that focuses on the use of “accounting and neutralising tactics” used by deathworkers and body handlers (see Coombs and Goldman 1973; Hancock, Williams, and Taylor 1998; Clohessy and Ehlers 1999; Schulman-Green 2003; Booth-Butterfield and Wanzer 2007; Horsley 2008; Bailey 2010; Drayton 2013; Zambrano, Chur-Hansen and Crawford 2014; Granek et al. 2016), this chapter examines how archaeologists manage their interactions with what we might describe as the ‘difficult’ dead: those remains that subvert the ‘archaeological gaze’ and refuse to be easily objectified by the archaeological process.

It begins with exploring why archaeology practitioners engage in strategies that manage their responses to human remains, drawing on Terror Management Theory (TMT) and the protection of one’s ‘ontological security’, as well as the perception of archaeology as ‘dirty work’. Following this, the chapter critiques a number of the strategies used by respondents in this study, including the suppression of thoughts of mortality, escaping into work through focused intensity and ‘busyness’, reframing the activities of mortuary archaeologists in a more positive light, and the use of humour. These techniques facilitate a level of emotional detachment from human remains, yet as archaeologists, the remains they encounter most frequently will typically belong to
the ancient and anonymous dead. As such, and quite unlike their colleagues working in other areas of deathwork where the ‘us-ness’ of the dead may prove to be emotionally problematic, it is the ‘otherness’ of archaeological human remains that may prove to be unsettling. This chapter therefore considers how archaeologists may engage in a process of “tactical objectification”, in which they “objectify the body or call forth the person as needed” (Prentice 2013: 35). To achieve the latter, archaeologists may seek to ‘re-humanise’ the dead by ‘re-attaching’ personhood through the use of techniques of anthropomorphisation and, accordingly, this chapter concludes with an exploration of the prevalence of both naming and conversing with the dead in archaeological practice.

6.2. Managing existential dread and ontological insecurity

The confrontation with death—one’s own or that of others—is widely understood to provoke feelings of existential dread and anxiety in individuals living in Western cultures because it interferes with our efforts to maintain the illusion of immortality. While we acknowledge that all humans must die, “social systems must, to a certain extent, deny death to allow people to go on in day-to-day life with some sense of commitment” (Mellor 1993: 13). A brush with mortality can therefore cause us to call into question “the taken-for-granted ‘business-as-usual’ attitude in which one exists in everyday life” (Berger 1990: 43), as well as the “meaningfulness and reality of the social frameworks” in which we participate (Mellor 1993: 13). The existential terror that may be provoked by the thought of, or the encounter with, death forms the basis of Terror Management Theory (TMT)—derived from the work of cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker (1973)—which is “rooted in a long tradition of thought regarding human awareness of death and its role in psychological functioning” (Greenberg and Arndt 2012: 398).

Developed in the 1980s by researchers Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski, and Sheldon Solomon (1986), TMT posits that ‘death anxiety’ is a key driving force in understanding human behaviour (Brennan 2014: 410). To manage this anxiety,
TMT proposes that we must maintain “faith in worldviews” that “provide a sense that [we] are significant beings in an enduring, meaningful world rather than mere material animals fated only to obliteration upon death” (ibid.). To this end, human cultures create “symbolic superstructures” which attempt to deal with the physiological process of death by “covering, reconceptualising and substituting it with its own meanings” (Bloch 1982: 227 cited in Beit-Hallahmi 2012: 330). In addition, we might draw on “conscious and/or unconscious strategies” that serve to bolster our “sense of self-worth and significance in face of the threat that . . . [our] existence may lack ultimate meaning” (Robbins 2012: 131), most often described as “psychological defence mechanisms” (Brennan 2014: 410):

Psychological defence mechanisms (of denial and displacement) aimed at warding off the fear of death through the establishment of immortality ideologies designed to ensure that our lives are experienced as meaningful and secure. These ideologies are wide ranging and include cultural and religious beliefs about the afterlife and immortality of the soul; scientific assertions about the projected mastery and defeat of human mortality (including cryogenics and some aspects of medical science); as well as attempts at political and economic domination witnessed during colonialism, and more recently, the Cold War (ibid.).

It could be argued that the practice of archaeology itself acts as a means of reconciling death, for in Western societies, “dying and bereavement are [often] difficult things to contemplate and it comes as no surprise that it is slightly easier when we create a sense of distance” (Bradbury 1999: 7). The exploration of issues of mortality through the lens of other eras and cultures “can be interesting rather than threatening” (Bradbury 1999: 7), while the ability to ‘control’ the archaeological dead—as well as “create meaning from destruction, or order from chaos” through exploration of the archaeological record (Renshaw 2007: 243)—may be “a modern consolation in the face of uncertainty and disempowerment concerning our own mortality” (Taylor 2002: 54-5). In this way, archaeology becomes, as Schnapp et al. (2004: 12) observe, a way of “making good the loss” (see Figure 77, Appendix 1: 451). More than this, however, as death forces us to think about ideas of impermanence and dissolution (Tobin and Goggin 2013: 2), the excavation of human remains may be seen to represent survival “against total loss and annihilation” (Gibson 2008: 153), seemingly presenting us with a corporeal form of immortality (Tobin and Goggin 2013: 2). Accordingly, speaking about the survival of Egyptian mummies, Daniel (Appendix
Failure to engage in the use of psychological defence mechanisms may therefore shatter what Giddens (1991) refers to as our ‘ontological security’—an existentialist term that refers to our ability to come to terms with the “finitude of being” and the feeling of safety that is derived from the sense of continuity in regard to the events in our lives and our ability to find meaning in them (Parker Pearson 1999: 45). These feelings of safety and assurance may be easily breached by any number of “anxieties associated with late modernity” (Van Marle and Maruna 2010: 8); as result, we ‘bracket’ sources of ontological ‘danger’ that may impinge upon our sense of well-being from our daily lives, albeit with varying degrees of success. Death, however, arguably represents the ultimate threat to our ontological security, particularly in Western cultures in which we highly prize the young and healthy body, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Yet, for professional deathworkers particularly, protecting this sense of self and security is a matter of necessity. As Thompson (1997: 197) argues, while the majority
of us maintain an optimistic bias that assumes we will remain healthy and “will not suffer accidents or serious illness”, this is not a helpful or practical stance for deathworkers to take. Such a position would, invariably, be regularly and “severely questioned” by having to deal with death and the dead, especially when “it is clear that the dead were ordinary people and no different in terms of their life chances from the person who is handling the body” (ibid.).

Deathworkers will therefore draw on a range of mechanisms that work to manage both their mortality salience and ‘control’ the affective power of the dead. This is often referred to as ‘coping’ within the psychological literature, yet following Szkil (2012), I prefer to use the phrase ‘management of emotional responses’ or similar in this study, as this is perhaps a descriptor more appropriate to my respondents’ experiences of working with human remains. Unlike their counterparts in other areas of deathwork, they are not typically dealing with traumatic situations or the recently dead/bereaved on a daily basis, while the passage of time arguably affords archaeologists a further degree of insulation from the affective qualities of the dead.

Despite this, however, there may still be instances where they need to utilise specific techniques to facilitate their work with the dead, due to the propensity of certain situations and specific ‘types’ of human remains to evoke an emotional response (see Brewer 2016). As a form of “intellectual clothing” (Fox 1979: 35), these strategies for managing emotion are used by all deathworkers to “prevent or diminish threat, harm, and loss, or to reduce associated distress” relating to death and the dead (Carver and Connor-Smith 2010: 685) and represent the kind of ‘emotional labour’ discussed in Chapter Three. These techniques can be divided into two broad categories that may be defined as avoidance (or disengagement) management and approach (or engagement) management (Boyraz et al. 2016: 48).

While dealing with a very different kind of dead ‘body’ compared to other deathworkers, the techniques used by archaeologists are strikingly similar in nature to those deployed by paramedics, funeral directors, and crematorium operators, amongst others (see Coombs and Goldman 1973; Palmer 1983; Smith and Kleinman 1989; McCarroll et al. 1993; Thompson 1997; Clohessy and Ehlers 1999; Schulman-Green
2003; Bailey 2010; Kessler et al. 2012; Szkil 2012). These largely fall into the category of avoidance, suggesting that the occupational ‘norm’ within the culture of mortuary archaeology, as in other areas of deathwork, is to keep the dead at arm’s distance—metaphorically speaking—with these strategies enabling its practitioners to interact intimately with the materiality of death, yet remain emotionally detached (Komaromy 2000: 304). Yet, quite unlike other deathwork professionals, archaeologists may also utilise methods that fall into the second categorisation of managing emotion and which work to create a form of engagement between practitioners and human remains. Protected to a degree by the cultural and temporal distance between themselves and the remains they typically encounter, archaeologists therefore arguably possess the ‘luxury’, if they so choose, of deliberately forging a connection with the dead.

6.3. Doing ‘dirty work’

The use of emotion management is particularly prevalent in those professions which constitute what may be categorised as ‘dirty work’, in which the use of cognitive, affective and behavioural strategies are used to manage the ‘stigma’ or ‘taint’ associated with such work (Ashforth et al. 2007: 149). Deathwork represents perhaps the ‘dirtiest’ work of all, a term coined by Hughes (1958: 122) to describe occupations or tasks that are considered “degrading or disgusting in some way”—physically, socially, morally or emotionally (Grandy, Mavin and Simpson 2014)—such as refuse collectors, funeral directors, exotic dancers and debt collectors (Stanley and Mackenzie-Davey 2012: 53). Due to a cultural aversion to dirt—a social construction, as discussed in the previous chapter, rather than necessarily inherent in the work itself—occupations that involve significant amounts of ‘dirty work’ are typically delegated to groups at the lower end of the social hierarchy (Dick 2005; Hughes 1958; Skeggs 2004). In this way, these groups are then ‘stigmatised’, creating further distance and isolation from dirt, which permits our culture to establish, police, and maintain “boundaries between purity and impurity” (Stanley et al. 2014: 271).
Yet, Ashforth and Kreiner (1999: 415), as well as Kreiner et al. (2006), suggest that all occupations may be considered ‘dirty’ to some extent, based upon the depth and breadth of stigma associated with their specific occupational activities. While dirty work is therefore typically seen as low-status and deleterious work “undertaken by those with few alternatives”, in some cases dirty work may be an integral part of the very activity which gives an occupation its appeal and charisma (Hughes 1971: 344), evoking an “aura of mystery, of grisly fascination and intrigue, of taboo and pollution” (Horsley 2012: 543). Thus, as Hughes (ibid.) notes, it is possible to “conceive of a classification of occupations involving dirty work into those in which it is knit into some satisfying and prestige-giving definition of role and those in which it is not”.

As such, we might place the practice of archaeology within this sub-category of ‘dirty work’, for while it is dirty in the most literal sense of the word—though this dirt was considered a natural and benign aspect of archaeological practice on the part of my respondents: they were happy, for instance, to leave work in clothes bearing the evidence of having spent the day digging— it generally enjoys a high level of respect within British culture due to the way in which it is positively framed as unearthing stories about our shared past for the benefit of humankind. Yet, a single occupation may be associated with more than one taint and by virtue of its association with death and the disturbance of the dead, the practice of mortuary archaeology is perhaps not only physically tainted, but also morally. As Thompson (1997: 198) argues, while there are many valid reasons for the practice of mortuary archaeology and the study of human remains “it is unlikely to be seen as heroic as saving lives”, a sentiment shared by Lauren, who implied that she experienced a degree of guilt in relation to excavating human remains solely in pursuit of knowledge about the past (Appendix 17: para. 41):

> It’s great [archaeologically excavating human remains] because we can learn about these people and the way they lived and stuff but . . . it’s not necessary. Like, I’m really fascinated by it, so I want to learn about it, but I don’t know if that’s helping our society to be a better society or anything like that.
There is, undoubtedly, a perception among some quarters in society that archaeologists disturb the dead “out of ghoulish prurience and without respect” (Tarlow 2015: 5). Accordingly, while my respondents largely spoke with enthusiasm about their work, field archaeologists in the commercial sector seemed particularly preoccupied with how they were perceived by the general public. These practitioners may therefore experience a “simultaneous push and pull” in which they may feel pride in their work, yet troubled by some of its more “morally questionable aspects” (Rivera and Tracy 2014: 212). Practitioners may therefore draw on a range of strategies to help them overcome this, a number of which have already been discussed in this study, so tightly and unconsciously are they interwoven into the practice of mortuary archaeology. These include the use of educational desensitisation in which archaeologists become accustomed to a new way of seeing and relating to human remains; language alteration as a form of “intellectualisation” (Scott 2007: 361), and constructing a typology or hierarchy of mortality incidence which may also be considered as a means of interpreting and managing the constant presence of death (Howarth 1996: 72).

6.4. “You block it out and do it”: Suppressing emotional connections

The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity—designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny of man (Becker 1973).

As perhaps the most obvious method of coping with death, suppression or ‘denial’ is an approach that may be adopted by all deathworkers engaged in dirty work (Howarth 1996: 72), and refers to a way of perceiving the corpse, or the remains thereof, that “does not at any time explicitly acknowledge the body as that of a person who was once alive” (Robbins et al. 2008: 186. In their research, Powell et al. (2011: 16) reveal that gravediggers may achieve “a sense of cognitive detachment from the emotional aspects of death and bereavement by thinking in terms of burying anonymous boxes”, rather than human corpses. This is a strategy of “self-
preservation”, with suppression and the subsequent social distance that this creates used by deathworkers to present a competent and calm professional persona, based on the belief that the display of emotion is a potential impediment to objectively carrying out their duties, as discussed in Chapter Three (Frewin et al. 2006: 252).

Accordingly, Nina (Appendix 13: para. 77) stated that “Yeah, I don’t have many sadness connotations to it myself, but that’s more because I separate myself from it,” while Janet (Appendix 13: para. 30) a volunteer with YAT, described how working with the remains of the dead would be impossible if “you thought about it” so “you block it out and do it”. In addition, she drew on the trope of the body as an ‘empty shell’—a sentiment shared by Lauren (Appendix 17: para. 44) who stated that “I’m part of the mind-set that’s just like ‘They’re dead’ and that’s their shell”—that is of no further use to the deceased:

[The way] I look at it, it’s just a shell, whatever was there has gone. It is still a human being, because I said that to [redacted] didn’t I? And I don’t think he liked that, when I said that. He said it’s still a human being. But if we started to think about it, you could get really strange. You couldn’t do it, if you started to think about these things in your mind.

When asked whether she thought of human remains as people or objects, Janet replied “Well, they’re still people. They’re somebody’s family, somebody’s . . . yeah, still people. But I look at it as . . . it’s still a person, but the important part, the inner self, has gone” (Appendix 13: para. 43). The use of this metaphor, in which the body is compared to a shell, is a technique frequently utilised by deathworkers: funeral home employees, for example, may similarly dehumanise the dead (see Howarth 1996: 73). The use of this metaphor constitutes “an appeal to the quasi-metaphysical assertion” that the body is merely a home for the “immaterial soul which has now in death been released to an afterlife” (Robbins et al. 2008: 185). Indeed, the same point is reiterated in professional guidance (Mays 2017: 26): human remains are special because while “a corpse has no more eternal significance than an empty shell”, it still possesses “meaning as the visible manifestation of one with whom we lived, laughed and conversed”. I would therefore argue that it is used by archaeologists in order to circumvent the ethical issues surrounding the disturbance of the dead, ensuring that the “violation” of their resting place does not equate with the violation of the deceased person (Robbins et al. 2008: 185).
Interestingly, Janet—a former nurse—was the only respondent in this study who actively acknowledged that she used emotion management techniques in both her previous occupation and in her capacity as a volunteer to facilitate her work with human remains. She was also the only individual who spoke of suppressing thoughts about handling the dead altogether, with other respondents ‘dampening down’ the affective qualities of human remains by emphasising their expertise or professional approach in such matters, thereby deflecting any potential taint. The lack of recognition as to the use of emotion management techniques on the part of mortuary archaeology practitioners may arguably reflect the passive objectification of archaeological human remains which has already occurred through their transformation to dry skeletal material, thus meaning that archaeologists do not arguably have to work so hard to detach themselves emotionally from the remains of the dead. For forensic practitioners, however, active suppression may be a more prevalent technique and Koff (2004), for example, writes of how emotional detachment allows her to carry out her work, stating:

I need distance from the bodies themselves to learn about their lives, or I can’t restrain my own sadness, fear, empathy, and despair enough to do the bodies justice. And doing the bodies justice is my job, my duty.

I would also argue, however, that the majority of archaeologists do wish to feel a connection with past people—it constitutes a powerful part of what draws them to the discipline—thus suppression, in terms of denying the former humanity of the remains of the dead altogether, would be counter-productive and it was not, therefore, a prevalent technique among my respondents. Yet, while practitioners might not claim to actively suppress emotional connections with the dead, some did arguably engage in performances of what may be referred to as “emotional neutrality” (Smith and Kleinman 1989; Ward and McMurray 2011): a technique used to “suppress emotions through displaying unemotional behaviour, wherein the suppression of the emotion is the performance itself and is intended to evoke a sense of calm or acceptance in others” (Ward and McMurray 2011: 1585).

Emotional neutrality as a management technique is often overlooked in studies of deathworkers, as by its very nature it is perceived to lack any kind of emotional
content (ibid.). Emotions are not, however, absent in these ‘performances’, but are instead hidden, as deathworkers “labour to conceal what they really feel” (Ward and McMurray 2016: 36). As such, when asked if he had ever experienced an ‘emotional response’ in relation to his work, Philip (Appendix 8: para. 40) replied:

I suppose . . . I don’t know. There’s emotion there, of course, when you imagine people’s lives, you empathise, don’t you? And yeah, whenever you’re looking at the bones of a particular person, you do empathise a bit, um, but I mean, you don’t kind of feel upset about anything that’s gone on in the past . . . If I came across the case I did recently—a group of people who seem to have been dismembered and murdered—yeah, it’s a tragic event, but you know, 600 years ago, it’s . . . it’s sufficiently far removed for you not to feel the emotional impact as if it were something that happened in your hometown yesterday.

As an osteologist, I had anticipated that Philip would speak about his work primarily in terms of the scientific fascination it held for him, as many respondents chose to do, as described in Chapter 3.7. Yet, while he explained that he has “always viewed matters in a scientific way”, his comments reflect none of the overt passion with which other respondents expressed their feelings. Instead, Philip presented a rational and neutral face that conveyed “dispassionate authority and status” (Morris and Feldman 1996: 991) and which, as Ward and McMurray (2016: 52) argue, speaks to the triumph of “rational authority and bureaucratic control as feelings are masked and emotions performed in the service of organisational aims through Foucauldian practices of self-surveillance”. While such performances may not be recognised by participants themselves as a means of suppressing emotional connections with human remains, they undoubtedly constitute a means of managing emotion and play into the powerful cultural tropes surrounding the importance of remaining objective and emotionally detached in professional deathwork, in which practitioners derive their authority not only from the institutions that employ them and the monopoly of expert knowledge and skills, “but also from the performance of a particular persona” (Leighton 2010: 79).
6.5. “Outside of time”: Focused intensity and busyness

While suppression was not a prevalent technique of managing encounters with human remains adopted by respondents in this study, a level of detachment was undoubtedly achieved through the nature of archaeological practice itself. The use of activity to restrict reflection upon thoughts of mortality is a technique adopted by many deathwork professionals because it enables them to keep intrusive thoughts and feelings to a minimum, thereby facilitating their ability to remain emotionally unaffected while working in close proximity to the remains of the dead (Coombs and Goldman 1973: 347). As such, Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 10) noted that he advised his field school students to “turn their brains off”, so as to enable them to ‘perform’ better:

One of the things I encourage my students to do a little bit is to turn your brain off, which is weird because in every aspect of archaeology you want them to be thinking all the time, thinking all the time. If you overthink excavating a grave, you’re trying to guess where the body’s going, the legs are going to go there, da-da-da-da, I’ll just start digging here and then you get it wrong. It turns out the leg goes over there, it turns out to be crouched rather than supine, so it’s almost important just to let it happen and go with the flow which can be quite nice actually, just let it be what it is. There’s something very relaxing about just letting it be what it is. So I quite like that.

While Anthony advised that students shouldn’t overthink what they were doing so as to avoid making mistakes, it also offers a degree of protection from intrusive thoughts about the nature of disturbing an individual’s resting place. Existing literature, however, suggests that “escaping into work” may occur as a natural response for deathwork professionals, purely as a result of lack of time to reflect on their activities (Sadala and Mendes 2000: 792–793) or, as Craig’s (Appendix 20: para. 86) comments reveal, because they become engrossed in the task at hand:

[F]or me, it’s slightly like an out of body experience, where you are removed from the rest of the world for a short period of time, because you’ve got people digging away in various bits of the site and they’re all having a laugh and joking . . . But when you’re excavating a body, you’re in a little bubble of kind of . . . a little bubble of your own thoughts and awareness and you are removed from everything else that’s going on in the trench. You don’t notice it. You’re focused completely on ‘I’m doing this body’ and . . . all your thoughts and care, you’re outside of time, really. And . . . you just . . . get on with it, in your own way and in your own manner, slow and steady, whilst the world moves on around you and you don’t really re-join the world until either someone taps you on the shoulder and tells you it’s brew time or you’ve finished. Once you’ve started excavating human remains, you can’t leave a job half-done and let someone else do it, that’s anathema.
to an archaeologist, I don’t know why, looked at objectively, it’s just the mortal remains of some deceased person, but because you’re aware of its identity and its past and you’ve humanised it, you take it upon yourself to make sure that it’s all done the same way, in the same sort of manner, I think.

Within the field of commercial archaeology particularly, the frenetic pace of activity on site arguably does not provide lengthy opportunities to muse on ideas of death, for as discussed in Chapter Four, best practice calls for human remains to be excavated, recorded and lifted in the same day (see Figure 78, Appendix 1: 452). This can be challenging even under the best of circumstances, but is made even more so under extreme time pressure, thus practitioners tend to concentrate on the practical aspects of getting the job done in time and to the best of their ability. Mary (Appendix 10: para. 6) thus spoke of the ‘challenge’ of excavating human remains in the context of a commercial excavation, explaining that “I just really like it and it’s a nice self-contained thing, you know, one burial is half a day to a day’s work, it’s nice and easy to get them out and dig them . . . it’s just a nice challenge, really.” Throughout their day-to-day activities, commercial archaeologists are often working with human remains that are in a less than ideal state of preservation: disarticulated, fragmented, comingled and badly degraded. Excavating these as quickly and carefully as possible as part of a dynamic excavation can therefore pose a number of problems and problem-solving constitutes a key aspect of their daily activities:

Quite often you will have very strict time limits on trying to get the burials out and . . . certainly with medieval, your typically medieval parish church in an urban setting, which most of the ones in York are, most of the ones I’ve dug up are, there are just so many burials and they are so heavily intercut, it’s quite a slow process, because you’ve got to find one, dig it out, record it, find the next one, dig it out, record it. Doing that in heavily intercut burials is quite a challenge and doing it with the developer breathing down your neck is difficult (Mary, Appendix 10: para. 34).

Thus, these informants did not appear to have deliberately utilised ‘escaping into work’ as a means of remaining detached from human remains, rather, it was a natural outcome of their daily activities. This was arguably the case for respondents working across all areas of the profession, with the all-encompassing nature of what they were doing often serving to buffer any negative thoughts about mortality or problematic aspects of archaeological practice.
6.6. Rationalising, reframing, and refocusing

We dig these things up because not only do we need to find out about the past, but increasingly we excavate them because they will be destroyed, shredded, damaged as part of the development process and quite frankly, I would rather an archaeologist did it (Alan, Appendix 14: para. 12).

While the busyness of an archaeological site may act as a means of maintaining an emotional equilibrium, it is not a technique that practitioners may choose to adopt; rather it is an unintended consequence of their practice. Perhaps one of the most prevalent forms of emotional management that archaeology professionals deliberately utilise—whether they recognise it or not—is the use of “justificatory rationales” to alleviate the “emotional burden” of disturbing the dead and this technique is, again, a frequently deployed strategy among other deathworkers (Crowder 2015: 90). Indeed, a number of examples of reframing have already been discussed in this study, including viewing human remains as empty shells. It is perhaps unsurprising that practitioners would tend to “reframe, recalibrate or refocus the meanings associated with their . . . work so that negative connotations are downplayed and positive narratives inserted in their stead” (McMurray and Ward 2014: 5), for as noted in Chapters One and Two, due to the inability of the dead to give their consent (Joyce 2015), archaeologists may find themselves questioning their right to disturb human remains and this can pose a significant source of conflict or moral distress (Chapter 5.7.).

As such, those who participated in this study and worked in the development-led sector tended to adopt one of two positions in which the disturbance of the dead was justified: it was either normalised as part of the life cycle of a city—“Everyone's in a city, nothing stays still, everything is always disturbed or destroyed and that’s something that’s happened, you know, from time immemorial” (Marie, Appendix 24: para. 68)—or the moral responsibility was shifted to a third party. Accordingly, Marie (Appendix 24: para. 66) stated that “It's not that we've decided to take them [human remains] out of the ground.” This was a sentiment repeated by virtually all of my respondents working in this sector, with Philip and Mary explaining that:
We excavate them because people want to put up buildings. I think that’s something that the public doesn’t generally appreciate, things like *Time Team* and those sorts of programmes, they think that archaeologists wander around the country trying to find sites to dig up and we have to tell people that’s that not the case. We don’t choose to dig anything. And our philosophy now is that, wherever possible, you preserve stuff in-situ, so what happens now if someone wants to build a building on a cemetery, if they can build it on piles that don’t disturb the rest, the majority of the burials, then that’s great, because we can then leave the burials in for people in the future to potentially study. So, really, as far as my job is concerned, the less we disturb burials, the better (Philip, Appendix 8: para. 12).

It’s a combination of saving them from being obliterated because the choice is either we do it or they get a necropolis firm in who’ll just a mini-digger and scoop them out, basically. Um . . . I know that happens for more modern burials, but it’s also to try to and understand past populations, history of disease, are we taller, are we shorter, are we fatter, are we thinner, is there evidence of different racial groups, is there evidence of people coming in, going out, did the Vikings make a difference, did the Romans make a difference, were they shorter, taller, fatter, thinner, you know, all of that, so it’s double-edged, it’s both for research and for saving these burials from just being smashed to pieces, because if it wasn’t for archaeologists, that is what would happen, you know, no question of that (Mary, Appendix 10: para. 28).

This neutralisation of moral responsibility is a technique often used by ‘dirty workers’ where their activities cannot be reframed by “wrapping them in more uplifting values”, which for archaeologists often entails making the case for why the study of the dead is important, both in terms of adding to our knowledge about the past but also, for example, in terms of understanding the development of diseases within the human population (Ward and McMurray 2016: 67). Many of the commercial archaeologists interviewed in this study thus operated on the premise that it is “sometimes right to cause lesser harms in order to prevent larger ones” (Scarre 2013: 673). It is regularly noted in the academic literature that without commercial archaeology—the largest source of primary archaeological research in the UK—many archaeological discoveries would not be made at all, such as with the Crossrail excavation across London (see Sankey 2015; Brown et al. 2016; Pfizenmaier 2016). Yet, as Scarre (2013: 673) argues, it is not clear whether archaeologists can “legitimately shift” all of the ‘blame’ “given the advantage that they themselves take of [disturbing the dead]”.

Nevertheless, archaeologists may frequently reframe their activities—a form of “cognitive restructuring” that refers to the act of presenting whatever the source of anxiety may be “in a more adaptive and positive light” (Granek et al. 2016: 53)—as performing a service for the deceased in much the same way as funeral directors may
state, for example (McCarroll et al. 1993: 212), “that they are helping relatives with grief, rather than processing dead bodies and profiting from their work” (Thompson 1991 cited in Ashforth and Kreiner 1999: 421). They often spoke of the “careful and meticulous nature of excavation” which refocuses attention on mortuary archaeology practice as a respectful process, a concept that is “often voiced on site during the excavation of cemetery sites with archaeologists imagining the fate of the remains if they were not the ones removing them” (Kirk and Start 1999: 201). Accordingly, Rob (Appendix 11: para. 38) stated that:

If I were buried, I’d much rather be dug up by an archaeologist than anybody else, because nobody else would do it as carefully, you know? Not even the forensic police, not even the forensics would do it as carefully as we do.

Similarly, Marie (Appendix 24: para. 74) commented that:

Because we will work on a site and you will never excavate an entire site, it will be divided as to what can be archaeologically excavated and then what isn’t and if you’re again working on a site that has a large burial area or several burial areas, you’re working in association with a clearance company, so a clearance company will come in and you can literally, one side of the line, excavating it, individual bones, taking everything out as a context, you’ve then got a clearance company next to you just having to take out everyone en masse and then they’re being buried en masse, so two very different sort of processes.

Many of my respondents spoke in visceral terms about the damage that would be wrought upon the dead if they were not removed from harm’s way and weighed their inventions against the alternative, such as the commercial clearance of skeletal material (see Figure 79, Appendix 1: 453). Mary (Appendix 10: para. 28) thus explained:

It’s either me or a JCB and I know which I’d prefer if it were my body. So the needs of the living have got to come above the needs of the dead. You can’t . . . if you stop digging everywhere there was a skeleton, most of Western Europe would be uninhabitable, which is crazy. You can’t live like that; you’ve got to be practical about what you do with these things (Appendix 10: para. 66).

Indeed, as Janet (Appendix 13: para. 21) explained, “Some people . . . think we’re weird, we’re strange doing this, but it’s not. It’s . . . if we didn’t do this, somebody has to do it.” Respondents working in the commercial sector often emphasised the ‘rescue’ element of their work in which they ‘save’ human remains from being
destroyed by development work. In fact, one practitioner informed me that a
colleague of theirs in the past had taken this idea to its extreme and, arguably
projecting their own feelings on to the dead, would note on their context sheets
during the process of recording human remains that the skeletons they had excavated
were ‘happy’ that they been rescued from harm’s way and were satisfied with a job
well done. This idea of rescuing human remains is perhaps most often articulated in
terms of giving the dead a ‘voice’ and speaking for those who no longer can. In this
sense, practitioners working in mainstream mortuary archaeology have borrowed
from their colleagues in forensic specialisms where, as Buck and Pipyrou (2014: 275)
observe, “popular accounts of forensic anthropology often talk of the ‘testimony’ or
mute ‘witness’ of bones and describe human remains as ‘speaking for themselves’ in
the service of justice and truth”. As forensic archaeology is seen as a noble endeavour
due to the way in which it operates within a legal framework, it possesses an
“immediate social relevance by contributing to the fight against injustice” (Holtorf
2005: 62). As such, this idea of giving the dead the chance to ‘speak’ has become a
powerful idea and has arguably been seized upon by archaeologists more widely,
reframing excavation as a form of “memory work” in which the archaeological process
becomes a project to rescue all individuals from the “anonymity of a forgotten past”
(Borić 2009: 80). Yet, the idea of archaeology giving a voice to the dead is not a
popular approach with all archaeologists, as Emily (Appendix 18: para. 16) stated:

I really don’t like any of the clichés of ‘We’re giving a voice to those who can no longer
speak’ or ‘archaeology is democratic’ or any of that stuff, I think it’s just . . . it’s a very
unique opportunity to gain information because people for whatever reason, 10,000 years
ago, 5000 years, 500 years go decided that they didn’t want to write that stuff down
because they didn’t think it was important [laughs] and now we’re really curious about it.
So I think that knowledge for knowledge’s sake is really useful, but I think for myself,
whenever I do research, any project that I’ve worked on has to have some form of results
that will be applicable to people that are currently alive or will be alive in the future and
will be useful for them. I don’t begrudge other people researching knowledge for
knowledge’s sake, because I think that’s very interesting and completely worthwhile, but
when there’s so much data already out there and so much material that hasn’t yet been
studied, I don’t see the reason to keep finding more until we’ve worked on the stuff that’s
already out there. So if we are sort of forging ahead with new research projects, I think they
should be useful for more than just knowledge for knowledge’s sake.

Emily’s comments arguably reveal the tension that lies at the heart of archaeology as
to its justification for disturbing the dead, and the question of ethics as pertaining to
research and commercial excavations. Respondents working in research archaeology often stressed the care and attention they lavished upon the remains of the dead, in contrast with what they perceived as the ‘rushed’ efforts of their colleagues working in the commercial sector, thereby reframing their activities as the more respectful manner of removing the dead from their place of rest:

Yeah, in a field school you’ve got time to do it! In a commercial setting it’s just like ‘Get it up, get it gone!’ Like our lecturer was telling us about a commercial dig she was on and there were six people who’d recently graduated and like six professionals and the most complete skeletons were—y’know, the ones that had all like the phalanges and everything—were by the students because they knew there should be this many phalanges and were carefully looking for them, whereas the commercial people were just “Boom, boom, done, next”, so they tend to leave bones behind more, especially like fibulas and phalanges, and like carpals and stuff (Jamie, Appendix 16: para. 30).

I think research excavations are probably a place for people who work in commercial archaeology to come on to a research excavation and do things at a slower pace before they actually excavate human remains, because a lot of people who work in commercial archaeology are not specialists and . . . they might benefit from being trained in a more academic way, even though they won’t be able to apply it that strictly when they’re actually on site, it might help them to do things and gather more information from commercial sites as well (Emily, Appendix 18: para. 18).

I’ve done both. I’ve done commercial and research. I much prefer research digs. I don’t know about better funded, but they’re certainly better paid and the work is much more meticulous because there isn’t so much timescale and everything gets done properly and that kind of calls to my slightly OCD nature (Craig, Appendix 20: para. 16).

Indeed, the lack of time to be able to devote to excavating human remains was noted by participants working in the development-led sector with some regret. Yet, as Rob (Appendix 11: para. 14) noted, due the constraints they must operate within, they are forced to be “much more pragmatic about things” and simply do not have the luxury of being able to excavate human remains “as long as somebody might do on a university training excavation”. He thus went on to state:

I’d like more time and more money! More people. More money behind it, yeah and the time to do it a bit more justice, really. Um . . . I hate not being able to . . . I mean, in the old days, they used to . . . every skeleton was washed with a sponge, cleaned up, photographed, using a really nice camera. These days we’re just, sort of, having to clean them as best we can, photograph them quickly, whip them out, because the commercial pressure is just relentless. Um . . . so yeah, and that’s probably a big difference you’ll find between what we do and on a training excavation or a university research excavation, is that they will take as long as is necessary to excavate, record, photograph, you know . . . and even we had, when we did the work in 2012, we had a team from the University of York, who were, um, working under Don Brothwell and wanting to sample things like the stomach contents and various parts of the body to see if there were chemical traces of various things, I don’t even know what they were doing, but the level of research that they
were doing, we couldn’t hope to do in a million years. Um, it may be that what they . . .
that sort of research shows in the future what we’re missing out on, by doing things the way
we are and that changes . . . so it would be nice to throw more time, more money and more
personnel at a site like this because things could be done much more, with much more care
and attention to detail (Appendix 11: para. 28).

While respondents working in commercial archaeology thus spoke of their envy at
their colleagues being able to “spend as much time as [they] want” in terms of
evacuating human remains (Mary, Appendix 10: para. 18), they also implied, on
occasion, that they felt that those working in research-led archaeology were perhaps
less justified in terms of disturbing the dead, for there no exists no pressing ‘need’ to
do so, thereby reframing their own efforts as both warranted and necessary. Yet
guidance (Mays 2017: 30) counters this argument by rationalising that a reliance “on
threat-led archaeology has resulted in a rather skewed selection of ancient
populations” available for study and “this has left important lacunae in our knowledge
and important research questions that cannot adequately be addressed”. Conversely,
however, participants in research-led mortuary archaeology often rationalised their
activities in terms of contributing not only valuable knowledge about the past, but to
the training of future generations of archaeologists. Indeed, at Poulton, where there
had initially been concerns over disturbing the dead on the part of the landowner
precisely due to the ethical issues involved, together with criticism over the way the
site had been run in the past—it had been unfavourably described as ‘cherry-picking’
the best remains in a haphazard fashion for students to excavate, an approach that had
been rectified by the time I visited the site—the excavation of human remains by
students was directly related to the training of future forensic practitioners:

[I]t’s training the next generation of osteoarchaeologists, the next generation of
anthropologists and the next generation of people who work with things like Bosnian war
graves. So that is incredibly valuable and it’s good to have that experience for the next
generation going out, so that they will have that experience. The other pluses are to see a
rural community . . . is very rare like this and it produces a lot of a lot of papers, so that’s
good. Another thing is, like I said, this is an urban excavation, there’s so much going on
underneath it, we need to take the graves out because there’s so much archaeology, so that
will enrich humanity (Peter, Appendix 21: para. 12).

This redirection of attention towards the more altruistic aspects of archaeological
practice is a technique of ‘refocusing’ in which the stigmatised properties of mortuary
archaeology may be minimised or overlooked, with practitioners deliberately
disattending “to the features of the work that are socially problematic” (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999: 423). As such, Peter (Appendix 21: para. 10) explained that “the value of what we do way outweighs my personal feelings about it”, revealing how he relied on these justifications to alleviate his own misgivings. Yet, as justificatory techniques were used on the part of practitioners working in all areas of archaeological practice in this study, this would appear to imply a degree of guilt in relation to their work, regardless of the context in which it takes place, as Peter (Appendix 21: para. 10) stated:

> It is very necessary [excavating human remains] and we do need to do it, but it does disturb me and I think that keeps me on the ball with it. I never forget that we’re dealing with a human.

As Robbins et al. (2008: 184–185) argue “the act of justification requires a motive to provide an explanation that one’s actions are in fact just and right, and that motive must necessarily include the presumption that one’s actions could be taken as unjust or wrong and hence in need of justification”. The justification therefore serves as a means to absolve practitioners from implicit guilt, “attributed to the self by the self or by imagined others”, but in the act of doing so, they arguably reveal the taboo nature of disturbing the dead (Robbins et al. 2008: 185). In other words, the justifications are based on the assumption that disturbance of the dead “is in most contexts wrong and can only be made right in extraordinary circumstances that require explanation to rectify or to make right” (ibid.). This sense of guilt, however, arguably finds its greatest expression among practitioners of mortuary archaeology in the jokes that they share.

6.7. “Do you think this is humerus?”

By making light of death, by laughing in the face of our own finiteness, we seek to gain some measure of control—however imperfect—over the uncontrollable. Although we all must die, we have, at least, the ability to laugh at the Grim Reaper (Thorson 1985: 206).

Baudrillard (1993: 182) famously declared that contemporary society is “incapable of confronting death without wan humour” and this is perhaps particularly true of those
whose profession brings them into intimate proximity with the dead human body, with the prevalence of humour within deathwork occupations well attested to by the academic literature (see Scott 2007; Rowe and Regehr 2010; Charman 2013; see Figure 80, Appendix 1: 454). While mortuary archaeology’s dealings with the dead are very different in nature from the kind of deathwork performed by emergency workers, nurses, or undertakers, its professionals are, nevertheless, exposed to the remains of the dead in varying degrees of preservation and completeness, and as a consequence, they too may turn to humour as a ‘buffer’.

Traditionally, the use of humour in deathwork has typically been ascribed to mitigating the emotional upheaval presented by engaging with the human corpse, yet within the field of mortuary archaeology—and in the development-led sector particularly—or indeed, any occupation that involves a degree of repetitive work, the use of humour may serve an important role in keeping “boredom, frustration and impatience in check” (Yarrow and Jones 2014: 266). This is because while working with archaeological human remains is commonly described by archaeology practitioners as an honour and a privilege, the fact remains that burial grounds and cemeteries are often repetitive sites to dig and usually consist of “numerous graves of very similar character” (Bashford and Pollard 1998: 164).

Accordingly, as the work becomes increasingly mundane, it will demand “a sort of levity” (Montross 2007: 69). As described in Chapter 5.5., Roy—a field archaeologist with YAT—found excavating medieval and post-medieval cemeteries a tedious task due to the large numbers of burials this typically entails and the characteristic lack of differentiation between Christian inhumations. These burials usually lack grave goods which may help archaeologists form a stronger connection with human remains as ‘people’, by creating an entry point to (re)construct a social persona and ‘re-flesh’ the bones. As such, after a few days on site, Roy asked me if I had grown weary of excavating these “boring” burials and when I replied in the negative, he uttered a warning: “Wait until you’ve done 300.” Similarly, Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 8) explained that excavating human remains quickly loses its novelty:
And what happens is, because really, excavating skeletons is not a challenge, ultimately, because it’s a human body and even if you don’t know human anatomy very well, you’ve got a body yourself, so you can figure out that you should be looking for fingers and toes and you can figure out there’s a skull and bones and stuff, once you’ve done or two skeletons and maybe a slightly more challenging one, you’ve pretty much excavated every grave you’re ever going to find, so very quickly, those people that are more technically-challenged archaeologists or more technically inspired archaeologists get bored of it, and want to do something else. We definitely had a few that said ’I don’t want to dig any more skeletons, can I just do the ditch? It’s really satisfying!’ and actually that’s right.

Excavating human remains as part of large cemetery sites can therefore feel like a never-ending task, as noted by Bashford and Pollard (1998: 164):

The Project Manager (Tony Pollard) distinctly remembers, during one site visit, the daunting feeling that all the dead in the world were appearing before him as grave after grave was revealed by excavation. It may be the case that repetitive work can lead to nightmares and bouts of depression, since many an archaeologist during an excavation will claim to dream of cobblestones, flint flakes or any other archaeological feature if their excavation requires their attention for a length of time (Bashford and Pollard 1998: 164).

As the saying goes, ‘familiarity can breed contempt’ and thus humour may serve as an effective mechanism for releasing feelings of frustration and for boosting both individual and team morale (Carter III 1997: 201), ensuring that practitioners can perform repetitive actions with consistency and in accordance with professional standards (Yarrow and Jones 2014: 266). This is especially vital for those working in commercial archaeology who not only have to contend with large sites that may contain many hundreds of similar burials, but will, unlike their colleagues working in research archaeology, be expected to undertake heavy physical work in all weather conditions. As Rahtz (1985: 74) observes, in these circumstances “it is difficult to keep up enthusiasm . . . especially when the digging goes on throughout the winter in very unpleasant conditions of mud and cold”, and indeed, we might argue that enthusiasm is further hampered by the “frankly appalling” pay and conditions within the commercial sector, with many young archaeologists “escaping to another part of the heritage industry or . . . transferring their many skills to a more lucrative career” within a year or two of joining the profession (Shepperson 2017).

Humour expression therefore plays a vital role in building and maintaining an amiable working atmosphere and feelings of camaraderie between co-workers, although it was an integral part of daily professional life at all my fieldwork sites, and
was usually elicited by the combination of horror and laughter that resulted when individuals reflected on how their work would be perceived by ‘outsiders’. All participants agreed, however, that it was an accepted, and acceptable, part of working with human remains: it could thus be argued that displaying a sense of humour and participating in workplace ‘banter’ is an integral part of professional identity and a failure to do so could potentially constitute a stigmatising behaviour. As such, even if practitioners find site humour inappropriate, they may feel compelled to participate because of its acceptance as a cultural norm within the profession.

Janet (Appendix 12: para. 35), a volunteer with YAT, therefore opined that there is nothing “disrespectful or weird” about the use of humour in archaeological encounters with the dead and that she regarded it as a necessary “coping mechanism”. Indeed, her colleague Nina (Appendix 12: para. 32) argued that because archaeologists encounter the materiality of death on a frequent basis, so dealing with it becomes part of their normalised experience and, therefore, ‘fair game” for ‘in-jokes’ between colleagues. Yet, while Janet stated that encountering death or human remains becomes “just another” part of the death-worker’s job, she admitted that humour is used specifically to enable interactions with the dead and that this ‘ordinary’ part of the job—whether in nursing or archaeological practice—cannot be undertaken without this mechanism in place:

That’s how I was when I was a nurse. When somebody dies, this is what you do [turn to humour]. It is a coping mechanism, because if you didn’t . . . if you didn’t do that, then you couldn’t do your job. It’s the same as this; you couldn’t do it, could you? If you started thinking about it . . . so you have to have a bit of humour there.

Similarly, Mark, a field archaeologist with YAT, stated that it would be “impossible to maintain a sombre atmosphere during the entire excavation and it would probably cause more harm than good”. Charman (2013: 155) argues that the sharing of humour fosters feelings of confidence and support, while at the same time preventing feelings, or manifestations, of fear or vulnerability to appear visible to others. In this regard, it is a vital form of emotion management and assists in the projection of a professional image, in which the maintenance of a “façade of exterior calm” is an important aspect of the cultural identity of deathworkers (ibid.). Yet, while a robust
sense of humour was widely recognised as an important requirement for working with human remains, there were occasions where self-censorship occurred. When ‘outsiders’ would visit the site under excavation by YAT—be it members of the public or representatives acting on behalf of their client—workplace banter would stop.

This was undoubtedly due to honouring the emotion rules that revolve around the dead in British culture more widely and in deathwork professions specifically, for while humour on site might be appropriate for individuals working in this context, to an observer it could appear disrespectful. Indeed, Brown (2016: 119) recalls an incident about a colleague working in a trench on the former Western Front with a soldier, where they were excavating the remains of the war dead. The soldier felt compelled to leave the trench “because of the banter between the archaeologists which he felt was inappropriate and lacked appropriate respect”. These examples not only highlight the performative nature of archaeological practice, as noted by others (see Tilley 1989; Pearson and Shanks 2001), with humour expression assigned to permissible ‘backstage’ behaviour only, but plays to a notable sense of anxiety among archaeological professionals about whether it is ‘wrong’ to be seen enjoying the archaeological investigation of death, as mentioned in Chapter Three. As Congram and Bruno note (ibid: 43), our cultural discomfort in admitting that one can “possibly be comfortable or even enjoy” working with the dead, means that we often assume such individuals can only work with death “by distorting or suppressing the reality of the circumstances”. Yet, as Rob (Appendix 11: para. 50) stated:

[A]part from anything, it’s just, er . . . it’s just quite fun, sometimes, digging these up, you know? You kind of have to just see that . . . it’s not all negative and that you don’t have to be all sombre about it and that we are also just collecting, recovering information, um, which is quite exciting, you know, intellectually it’s interesting, um . . . in terms of the research that this is going to provide, it’s really important stuff, um, so yeah, I’m always aware that, although there’s these other dimensions where we have to be really careful and considerate and all the rest of it and that these are dead people and it’s very sad that they died and whatever, I also just have to remember that it’s also just actually really good stuff, it’s great archaeology, just like any other great archaeology we do. When we . . . when I understand a building because I’ve dug it all up and got the component parts in my mind, how they all work and we’ve got some dating evidence, it’s the same with all these, you know, getting the sequence of them and working out which ones are the oldest and what date they are, will help me understand the church and when it was built, so that’s all really great stuff, you know, and you can be enthusiastic about all of that.
While adjusting one’s behaviour in anticipation of causing offence may be seen as what Mark (Appendix 27: para. 50) described as “hyper-professionalism”—what he perceived as a pathological form of professionalism in which archaeologists and other heritage professionals treat the remains of the dead with too much reverence, as argued by Jenkins (2011) in her attack on the ‘crisis of cultural authority’ within the museum sector—certainly for some practitioners, particularly those who work within the forensic sciences and must consider the impact of their work and behaviour on the living, to be seen enjoying one’s work, even though they might well derive a great deal of satisfaction from it, remains an unspoken taboo.

6.7.1. The use of gallows humour

The few people I know who are in the army have quite a blunt gallows humour and often that’s because . . . generally, the only way to deal with and process some of the horrendous stuff that they’ve seen and had to do, and you kind of . . . and I’m not suggesting that this is in any way near as traumatic for anybody, you know, excavating these things, but you kind of have to . . . [have a sense of humour] (Rob, Appendix 11: para. 50).

While there are multiple types of humour that archaeologists may draw upon in the course of their work—from quick-witted quips to deadpan one-liners—which vary according to context, the work itself, and the nature of the remains being investigated (Scott 2007: 355), perhaps the most widely researched form in all deathwork occupations is cynical, ‘black’ or ‘gallows’ humour. As Brennan (2014: 263) observes, at first glance death and humour make unlikely bedfellows, “yet it is precisely this paradox and incongruity—between the sadness and solemnity of death, and the pleasure of laughter elicited by humour—that, in the face of mortality, gives humour its particular purchase and comedic value”. Indeed, as Van Wormer and Boes (1997) state, “only those who share in a boundless sense of the absurd can emotionally survive” regularly working with the dead. This is known as the incongruity theory of humour: by normalising a situation through laughter, a stressful encounter can be made more manageable (Myers 2005):
Gallows humour, through false bravado or great courage, makes it possible to deny the importance of death and to accept death as a part of life. Although humour does not change the seriousness of the situation, it decreases the tension between interacting individuals or groups. Death itself cannot be denied, but the importance of death can be put into perspective as a part of life (Johnson 1990: 550-551).

Gallows humour is a distinct form of dark wit, described as a "philosophical attitude" by Kulman (1988 cited in Taylor 2002: 255), breaking "the codes of what is considered tasteful and decent by society" and treating subjects we might otherwise consider too serious or distressing to be the basis of comedy, such as death or disease, in a "silly or satirical fashion" in its lightest form and in a "sick and twisted" manner, at its darkest (Scott 2007: 361). In their account of conducting post-excavation work at the premises of a functioning undertakers, Kirk and Start (1999: 206) write of being "appalled" by the "morbid" and "shocking" humour they overheard, vowing that they would not become similarly "hardened" to death and the remains of the dead:

Observing this behaviour, we determined that we wouldn’t become hardened to it as they had, in other words we found their behaviour undesirable. The thought of indulging in the same kind of humour appalled us; we wanted to hang on to our shock and disturbance at our situation as comforting proof that we were still 'normal'. By remaining constantly aware of this thought we believed we could observe any signs of our becoming hardened, and prevent it.

The profession of undertaking is well known for its particularly dark sense of humour, but it is prevalent to some degree in all forms of deathwork (Palmer 1983; Raphael 1986; Alexander and Wells 1991: 552; McCarroll et al. 1993: 212; Thompson 1993: 629; Young 1995; Hodgkinson and Stewart 1998: 200; Regehr et al. 2002; Rowe and Regehr 2010), including archaeology. Wallace (2004: 131) argues that it arises in archaeological practice because of the sense of “despair” that often accompanies excavation which, she states, marks “the moment when we lose religious faith, when we are most vulnerably exposed to the sheer meaningless of human endeavour and indeed human life at all”. This existential despair therefore finds its release in humour that is considered “a bit wicked” (Scott 2007: 362), allowing archaeologists to play “metaphorically with . . . bones like ‘loggets’, revelling in the nihilism” of it all (Wallace 2004: 131).
While Kirk and Start recognise that archaeology may be placed on the spectrum of professions that deal in death and that, as such, their activities may also, in turn, be viewed by observers as ‘morbid’, they arguably fail to appreciate that archaeologists possess the ‘indulgence’ of working with the (mostly skeletal) remains of the dead who are, by their chronological and cultural distance from us, already depersonalised to a large degree. Archaeologists may, if they choose, actively trigger identification by working to create an empathic connection between themselves and the remains of the dead, such as by naming them, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Professionals who regularly come into contact with the recently deceased and their living relations, however, must arguably work much harder to maintain emotional detachment and, as result, their humour may be considerably darker in tone. More than this, however, both archaeology and undertaking have their own specific professional cultures and group norms; part of which is a “mutually acceptable but culturally defined joke-book” that is based upon “shared experiences which in turn have developed into shared values about the nature of the job” (Charman 2013: 157).

This idea of a shared joke-book highlights an important aspect of humour, in that it is seldom enjoyed on one’s own. Meyer (1997) has observed that the sharing of jokes about death fosters solidarity among deathworkers (Scott 2007: 358), thereby helping individuals to manage the “often incapacitating, liminal space between life and death” (ibid: 362). Sharing in gallows humour is therefore one of the means, together with “explicit and implicit values, codes, customs, rituals, language and storytelling of its members”, by which a culture is both formed and reproduced (Charman 2013: 155). Yet, in accepting and abiding by the rules associated with the occupational joke-book, there requires a certain level of confidence in your co-workers. This has been described as constituting a “social contract” (Critchley 2002: 2), in which breaches of this contract may be regarded as breaking the “rules of etiquette” (Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 103 cited in Charman 2013: 157).

As Scott (2007: 357) observes in his study of medical students, gallows humour is typically “restricted to the immediate team for fear of offending someone so generating a fear of reprisal”. Its usage is thus the hallmark of a tightly-knit group, with humour helping to foster “a strong occupational culture”. Many of my
respondents noted the importance of creating and maintaining an amiable atmosphere in relation to their work—arguably an emotion management technique in itself—and deep friendships were forged between practitioners in this way. As such, outside observers can never fully understand or appreciate the joke-telling within any given profession because the distinctions made between what is categorised as humorous and what is not are culturally specific (Rowe and Regehr 2010: 455-456).

In this way, occupational humour may serve to reinforce an archaeologist’s understanding of their personal identity, by defining the boundaries of the occupation and helping to “establish a collective sense of ‘us’” (Nielsen 2011: 508). To this end, while gallows humour occurred on site with YAT, I did not encounter it with any great frequency on site with the students at Poulton, due to the fact that they were a disparate group of students and adult learners, albeit one brought together by a common interest. There was, however, a running joke on site about catching a potentially fatal disease such as plague or tuberculosis from the remains on site, which was shared every time somebody coughed or sneezed. The remains of the dead are, of course, considered polluting in many cultural and religious traditions (Chapter 5.3.), with the positioning of them as sources of danger in these jokes arguably serving to index students’ worries about being exposed to the materiality of death (Prentice 2013: 49). Interestingly, however, gallows humour is most often directed at the dead themselves: when human remains were the focus of a humorous outburst on site with YAT, it was most often associated with their physical materiality or when the context of discovery was compromised or stood out as being unusual in some way (Scott 2007: 357). It is this, as Scott (ibid: 362) notes, which creates the conditions for incongruous laughter:

Roy called us over to take a look at ‘Michael Jackson’. This was actually a skeleton with a particularly unusual-looking skull caused by some kind of pathology that gave the appearance of eyebrows and a partial nose: hence the nickname. This prompted one of the other archaeologists to shout from the other end of the trench whether the skeleton was wearing one sequin glove, much to everyone else’s amusement (entry from field notes with YAT).

Similar behaviour has been observed in the arena of anatomical dissection: Hafferty (1991), Sinclair (1997) and Scott (2007), among others, have noted that the use of
humour increases significantly among medical students at particularly distressing or intimate moments of working with the dead, such as during the dissection of especially emotionally sensitive body parts. In my observations of archaeological practice, gallows humour was almost always marshalled towards the remains of adults, rather than children, reflecting the way in which contemporary British society regards child death as particularly tragic and too emotionally sensitive to satirise, as discussed in Chapter 5.6. This reflects a cultural understanding of “accepted levels of expression” and is a form of self-censorship that has been observed in studies of other body handlers who tend not to use gallows humour in relation to the remains of children (Dyregrov et al. 1996: 554), for this form of emotional management is rendered ineffective when the humour becomes “too gross, too personal . . . or too disrespectful of the individual dead”.

This supports the existence of “group norms” within the archaeological profession—and arguably British culture more generally—that govern behaviour, but which may not even be consciously recognised (Rowe and Regehr 2010: 457-8). Gallows humour that did on the rare occasion refer to children did not focus on the remains specifically as when, on our way out of the YAT warehouse, Mark grabbed some boxes for the human remains that were to be lifted that day and handed one to a colleague, saying “Here’s a box for your dead children.” This made everyone laugh, but Rob felt the need to explain to me that Mark didn’t literally mean the practitioner’s own children, just the remains she had excavated, demonstrating a profound level of concern that I would misinterpret the situation. Yet, as discussed, this humorous bluntness or “light-hearted nonchalance with death and the dead body” is an attitude common to all deathworkers (Carpenter et al. 2016: 705), and a number of archaeologists I encountered during the course of researching and writing this study took delight in referring to human remains quite bluntly as ‘dead people’ or ‘stiffs’ in order, perhaps, to demonstrate how unaffected they are by their work.

Yet, as other studies have evidenced, such an attitude is perhaps not best encouraged—particularly among students—for “nonchalance and mockery can also be interpreted as a hardening of emotions or ‘habituation’” (Carpenter et al. 2016: 705—the process by which “repeated exposure to a stimulus results in the waning of
the usual response to the point that it is extinguished” (Mitchell 1996: 141 cited in Carpenter et al. 2016: 705). While the use of gallows humour can aid the normalisation of death, thereby helping practitioners to protect themselves from adverse “grief reactions”, it can also have a dehumanising effect and lead to emotional disassociation (Ryan and Seymour 2013: 5). Furthermore, it can potentially prevent individuals from sharing distressing personal feelings and contribute to an overly ‘macho’ culture in which anxieties are suppressed. This is especially pertinent for new recruits to any deathworking profession, as humour acts as an informal mode of learning (Charman 2013: 157).

Yet, with respect and human dignity emphasised in codes of practice across all deathworking professions, the sharing of dark humour is perhaps in greater danger of being marginalised altogether. Such a development could itself have potentially negative consequences, for it is essential that professionals who deal in death have the means to cope with their interactions with the dead body, in whatever form it takes. For those who work with death on a regular basis, it can be a source of amusement and in breaching the boundary of what is considered ‘good taste’ through laughter, the troubling ambiguity of the dead may be more easily managed. Furthermore, gallows humour as response to crisis situations and disaster is not limited to only those who work with the dead: the response of the general public to a major disaster, as discussed by Ellis (2003 cited in Rowe and Regehr 2010: 457-458), often includes the expression of humour in order to help put the tragedy into perspective and “move towards closure”, even though they too are “aware of the general social unacceptability of such jokes” and are frequently castigated for their attempts at injecting humour into a tragic or difficult situation (Rowe and Regehr 2010: 457-458).

6.7.2. Archaeology’s “cadaver tricks”

I mean I've heard stories about people like putting hats on skulls and jamming a cigarette in their mouth and stuff like that and I’m just like, no, that’s crossing the line (Appendix 17: para. 22).
As one of the most controversial forms of humour within archaeological practice, manipulating the remains of the dead is an activity that has been observed in other areas of deathwork. While my participants spoke of their disapproval at past antics on archaeological sites that have since become the ‘stuff’ of legend in what Hafferty identifies within the field of medical practice as ‘cadaver stories’, I still observed an element of performativity with the remains of the dead. This reflects similar behaviour observed in medical students engaged in learning dissection who may invent stories about their particular cadaver or perform “cadaver tricks” (Allen 2015). This sees corpses objectified for comedic effect in order to deflect the strangeness of anatomical dissection, as well as to ease the tension and anxiety involved in such work through “mischievous and constrained acts of resistance or organisational ‘misbehaviour’” (Ward and McMurray 2016: 83; see Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). While I did not observe anything quite of this nature, when one of the archaeologists at YAT covered the torso of a skeleton he was working on from the heat of the sun with a t-shirt, deliberately and momentarily leaving the ‘legs’ exposed, it created an absurd and humorous tableau. Unfortunately, I was unable to photograph this incident, due to concerns on the part of the site director that such images would invariably present archaeologists in the ‘wrong’ light, reflecting once again, anxiety over causing offence to the public and damaging the reputation of both the discipline and the Trust through the revelation of ‘backstage’ behaviour.

6.7.3. The curse of the ‘Indian Burial Ground’

You son of a bitch! You moved the cemetery, but you left the bodies, didn’t you? You son of a bitch! You left the bodies and you only moved the headstones! You only moved the headstones! (Poltergeist, 1982).

I mean, I've got a healthy respect for the people of the past; I certainly wouldn’t . . . mess about with them (Andrew, Appendix 12: para. 30).

One of the recurring themes that provided the basis for much humour on site with YAT was the idea of “haunting” and that the dead were, perhaps, in some sense still alive and, drawing on the long-standing cultural presumption against disturbing the dead, could exact their ‘revenge’ upon us. Indeed, while excavating the remains of a
child with students at Poulton, I felt ‘someone’ tap me on the head. I turned around to see who it was, but there was no one there. While I did not ascribe this to a spiritual presence, my fellow excavators joked that I was being haunted by the ghost of the remains we were excavating. As such, while it became something of a running gag between us, it arguably reflects a degree of unease, and perhaps guilt, over the disturbance of the dead. Similarly, while on site with YAT, I helped Mark to lift and bag some human remains and he remarked, half-jokingly, that there was “nothing wrong” with what we were doing, as they were “just mortal remains . . . I hope!” The idea that the dead might retain an agency that could negatively affect the living most frequently found its expression, however, in the use of humour inspired by popular culture. The classic horror trope of the ‘Indian Burial Ground’—often shortened to IBG and a cultural meme that references the idea that by interfering with an ancient ‘Indian’ burial ground in any way, the spirits of the dead will be disturbed, causing them to seek vengeance against the perpetrators—was drawn upon with regularity. Such is its cultural power that it has even been referenced by archaeologists in print, as in the case of a 4,500 year old Native American burial ground—one of the best preserved in California—which was paved over to make way for a multimillion dollar housing development:

‘The developer was reluctant to have any publicity because, well—let’s face it—because of Poltergeist,’ said [archaeologist Dwight] Simons, referring to the 1982 movie about a family tormented by ghosts and demons because their house was built on top of a burial ground (Fimrite 2014).

Poltergeist is commonly and erroneously attributed as the source of the IBG trope: the house in the film is indeed built on a burial ground, although it is not of ‘Indian’ origin, with trouble arising for the hapless family that move into it as a result of the developer choosing to remove only the gravestones, leaving the remains behind to save him time and money (Murphy 2009). While the ghosts of Native Americans have long formed an important part of American culture, history, and fantasy (see Mackenthun 1998; Bergland 2000; King 2013), Nosowitz (2015) has traced the history and usage of the IBG trope to the 1979 Amityville Horror film, followed by The Shining in 1980—in which the infamous Overlook Hotel is constructed on an Indian burial ground—the novel Pet Sematary in 1983 and its film version in 1989, as
well as countless other horror outings. These classic horror films were regularly referenced by the archaeologists at YAT, demonstrating their powerful cultural influence on the way we think about death. While the trope has continued to resurface from time to time, as Nosowitz (2015) argues, “horror movies rely on novel thrills” and by the 1990s the IBG had begun to lose its appeal—not least because of its racist overtones—but because its overuse had led to it becoming “stale, ordinary [and] expected”. The trope is now largely used as a comedic device “in any plot in which something weird is happening” in which a “Genre Savvy character may make the Obligatory Joke that it’s due to an ancient Indian burial ground, even if they’re in Europe or Asia” (ibid.). It is this that imparts much of its comic appeal in terms of its absurd and tongue-in-cheek usage on a British archaeological site.

There are undoubtedly manifold reasons for the success and enduring appeal of the IBG trope, but it is surely not coincidental that its emergence in the 1970s overlaps with the growth of the Native American civil rights movement and the first calls for the repatriation of skeletal remains to their descendant communities. As ghosts may be understood as “the return of the repressed, symbolic manifestations of a past that will not stay dead” (Ferris 2003: 53), we might therefore argue that the creation and subsequent promulgation of the IBG trope is a reflection of post-colonial guilt. As Bergland (2000: 8) argues, “the history of European relations with Native Americans is a history of murders, looted graves, illegal land transfers and disruptions of sovereignty”. The IBG trope may therefore be understood as reflective of ‘White anxieties’ about (re)possession of land and, arguably, a fear of retribution—not only from the dead, but perhaps more worryingly, from the Native American community that is very much alive—for narratives of haunting arguably refract our present-day concerns through the lens of historic characters and events. In this sense, the narratives and jokes encountered on site with YAT were a very literal incarnation of Derrida’s (1993) theory of ‘hauntology’—a punning reference to ‘ontology’—which refers to “a concern with apparitions, visions, and representations that mediate the sensuous and the non-sensuous, visibility and invisibility, presence and absence, reality and not-yet-reality, being and non-being” (Lincoln and Lincoln 2015: 192). It uses spectral presences in societies as a “deconstructionist methodological tool by
which to consider the disjointed nature of time, being, society, mourning and Marxism” (Bell 2014: 52).

Richardson (2001: 17) notes a “profound latent dread” of hauntings is evident in the ghost lore of Britain and, in particular, the “connection of haunting and disturbed or incomplete remains”. It is notable, therefore, that jokes referring to hauntings primarily surfaced while working with YAT who, tasked with excavating a heavily disturbed burial ground in an urban setting, were dealing with large amounts of poorly-preserved, disarticulated and truncated remains. Reflecting a level of unease about their destruction and removal, the idea that doing so will “awaken malign supernatural forces”, leading to dire consequences—often death—has a long pedigree in both film and literature, particularly in the works of M.R. James (Moshenska 2012: 1195). Indeed, James’ ghost stories often feature an archaeologist as the protagonist who, in pursuit of knowledge or “possession of the past”, unwittingly or incautiously, brings a terrible fate upon himself (ibid.). This recurrent theme therefore presents archaeological investigation—and the revelation of the material past in general—as a sacrilegious and transgressive act that constitutes “a provocation that must be avenged” (ibid: 1197): a fear that archaeologists would arguably never voice, but which is instead expressed, and alleviated, through humour.

6.8. Anthropomorphisation of the dead

Like every ‘Other’, the dead can be approached in two ways: we can either see their otherness as pathological and try to normalize them by making them similar to the living, or we can treat them as members of a certain ‘culture’ (or cultures). In most cases, the dead are spoken of in terms of the living: they have dominion, they are a family, we should cultivate their memory...Things as others are welcomed insofar as they are somehow ‘integrated’ into a dominant discourse, but only if their difference can be neutralized (Domanska 2006: 346–347).

6.8.1. Naming the dead

Above the entrance to Tutankhamun’s tomb is an inscription in hieroglyphics which, roughly translated, reads: ‘To speak the name of the dead is to make them live again’ (Litten 2011: 5).
As Laqueur (2015: 431) argues, “billions and billions of the dead—at least 90 per cent and probably nearer to 95 per cent of all those who ever died—have disappeared without leaving a name behind”. In a culture in which personhood is strongly tied to the body, the “estranged and anonymous” body that cannot be engaged with as a particular individual (Higgins 2016: 362)—as most typically encountered by archaeologists—can prove to be highly problematic “because it draws attention to itself as an object” (ibid: 359). While for some practitioners this might be welcomed, for others, as Robb (2009: 100) notes, being presented with “an unknown body, without any social ties or context, is like being presented with a Rorschach blot”, compelling the living to invent these details. This perhaps accounts for why Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 2) explained that the discovery of “named individuals can really influence at least your later memory of what happened” at an excavation, as a known name serves to differentiate an individual from the otherwise ‘homogenous mass’ of the anonymous dead due to their possession of a stronger semblance of human identity. Similarly, Marie (Appendix 24: para. 146) commented:

Well, I wouldn’t say I was coldly scientific when I look at them, we know everyone has a name, but I have to say that when you know the name of a person, you have different connection with them.

Indeed, while the vast majority of human remains that archaeologists will excavate will be ‘nameless’—typically because their funerary rites “did not involve a method of commemoration that has survived to the present day”, or else they died at a time in which coffin plates were not used in funerary practices or were prohibitively expensive—in a few instances contextual information may be retrieved through excavation that, together with the use of burial records and cemetery plans, may enable archaeologists to identify specific individuals (Redfern and Bekvalac 2017: 370). The human remains recovered from Christ Church, Spitalfields and discussed in Chapter 2.3. are now “guarded” with “loving attention and scholarly rigour” at the Natural History Museum, where they are currently on loan (Spitalfields Life: no date.). As the assemblage contains named individuals, the museum receives “half a dozen emails a year from families who want to know if their ancestor who was buried in Christ Church is in the collection . . . [and] occasionally, relatives ask if they can
come and see them” (ibid.), demonstrating their dual existence as both objects and people, as well as the enduring and compelling connections between the living and the dead. This means that not only do archaeologists have a name to put to a ‘face’, but they may also find themselves meeting the deceased individual’s descendants, thereby re-humanising the dead in a particularly powerful way:

Mrs Milborough Maxwell was excavated from Chelsea Old Church in 2000 and is curated by the Museum of London (MoL). Subsequently, she was included in a stable isotope mobility study and found to be non-local, probably from the Caribbean. Mrs Maxwell was included in the ‘Skeletons. London’s buried bones’ collaborative exhibition curated by the Wellcome Trust and MoL (2008). After the exhibition, a descendent of Mrs Maxwell contacted the Museum to visit her remains again, and provided a wealth of information about her life, including documentation showing that she had spent most of her life in Jamaica (ibid.).

As such, while the archaeological process arguably “imposes a regime of depersonalisation” upon human remains (Robb 2009: 104), thereby transforming them into an object of study, archaeologists may also choose to “re-socialise” the dead by implementing techniques to re-clothe the body in a social persona, an effort of “deliberate re-personification” (ibid: 105), such as by naming, to re-incorporate them into the world of the living (see Bodenhorn and vom Bruck 2006). Naming is a long-standing practice both in mortuary archaeology practice and within other deathworking professions, with Bahn (1984: 216) arguing that it may arise from the discomfort archaeologists feel in relation to exposing or removing human remains. He proposes that the creation of nicknames “might well be interpreted by a psychologist as an attempt to assuage their own slight uneasiness”. Similarly, Craig (Appendix 20: para. 96) commented that:

> People don’t like to think about death, which is why as you’re excavating a skeleton, you give it a name. This is part of the . . . I think that . . . you’re moving away from death, by giving the skeleton a name and you’re giving it a life and you’re colouring in the things, you’re doing the opposite, you’re re-awakening and reliving this person, rather than dwelling on the fact that this person is dead.

Conversely, Laqueur (1996) suggests that naming acts as an antidote to erasure, while Kirk and Start (1999: 206) assert that archaeologists name the dead because it aids recollection of contextual information in a way that a number cannot (ibid: 201). Arguably, however, naming the remains of the dead forms part of “an ancient
tradition known as word magic” in which the practice fosters a sense of familiarity, or perhaps even ownership or control (Carter III 1997: 201), serving to “familiarise something inherently alien and unfamiliar” (Buchli and Lucas 2001: 9). At the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro, for example, visitors to a revamped display on ancient Egypt which opened in June 2012 are encouraged to say the mummy’s name out loud in keeping with the ancient Egyptian belief that to remember the deceased’s name is to bestow the dead with immortality (Riggs 2014: 201). Yet, this practice is perhaps questionable, for as Riggs (ibid.) observes, the names ascribed to ancient Egyptians are often erroneous “because the name is [often] taken from a coffin that is not original to the mummified body”, while names that are considered too difficult for 21st century visitors to pronounce are often shortened, as is practised at the Ashmolean Museum where the mummy named Djed-djehuty-iwef-ankh—a priest who died around 600 BC—is referred to as ‘Djed’ (ibid: 202).

Many of the most famous examples of human remains that have been named by archaeologists arguably occur within the field of museum archaeology, including Lindow Man, or ‘Pete Marsh’ as he is also affectionately known—Britain’s best preserved late Iron Age/early Roman bog body found in Cheshire—and ‘Ginger’, a Predynastic mummy from Gebelein, Egypt, on display at the British Museum (Giles and Williams 2016: 6, see Figure 81, Appendix 1: 455). As these two examples suggest, the practice of naming tends to only occur when the remains constitute “the skeletonised or mummified remains of a once fully fleshed single human body” (ibid.), with fragmented remains considered too ‘Other’ to be re-humanised. Interestingly, the latter’s alternative identity is only tacitly acknowledged by the British Museum and while the use of ‘Ginger’ will bring up the correct entry on their online object database as part of its metadata, there is no mention of it anywhere within the text itself, nor that of ‘his’ other frequently used name, ‘Gebelein Man’: ‘he’ is simply referred to online as ‘human mummy’.

This decision on the part of the museum is undoubtedly related to the issue of ‘respect’ and indeed, the British Museum states that “respect should be at the forefront of anyone working with or researching human remains” and that the “language and terminology used to describe them should always be appropriate and
based on professional standards” (Antoine 2014: 3). This implies, therefore, that there is no place for familiarity in the standards, nor is there in archaeological publications. Similarly, a richly furnished female burial discovered at an Anglo-Saxon cemetery site in Oakington, Cambridgeshire (AD 450–700), for example, was named ‘Queeny’ by the students helping to excavate the remains, due to the lavish quality of her grave goods (Hilts 2012). Further excavation revealed the skeleton of a foetus partially descended in the pelvis area (ibid.) and the burial has since been analysed and is the subject of a paper (see Sayer and Dickinson 2013) that features powerfully emotive illustrations of the position of the foetus super-imposed on a photograph of the skeleton. As this is an academic piece of writing, however, Queeny is, of course, referred to within this study as Grave 57.

Above all, however, naming is seen to acknowledge and restore the humanity and, perhaps more importantly, the individuality of a former person (Leighton 2010: 91–92). Those in favour of naming the dead therefore argue that it creates a sense of personhood that a number alone—such as Skeleton 256 from the Spitalfields excavation, for example—cannot (Kirk and Start 1999: 206), with Alan (Appendix 14: para. 48) arguing that it seemed a “more appropriate” response. Similarly, when I asked Craig (Appendix 20: para. 74) what he thought about naming in relation to accusations of disrespect, he replied:

I think the opposite, I think the absolute opposite because you’re making a connection with them, you are forming a person and um, I know this is going to sound strange, but you’re creating a relationship with that person. You know it’s . . . probably the most reasonable, yet informal way of showing respect, um, you’ve taken time to give the deceased a name and you then construct a persona around, most of the knowledge you know, you know what period of time it came from, you’ll know what it would have been wearing and the sort of life it was and it helps you reconstruct, however wildly inaccurate a life for that person, so it helps you come to terms with the dead person in a lot of respects. To give a name is humanising and to not give a skeleton a name would be kind of cold. I know we don’t even give child skeletons a name, but that’s a completely different kettle of fish, because that’s a thing of respect, but it seems disrespectful not to give an adult a name because if you give someone an identity, you can get to know them. If you’re sat talking about—say you’ve got three adult skeletons in a grave and you call them Tom, Dick and Harry or whatever—they’re not referred to as ‘Skeleton A’ and ‘Skeleton B’ or ‘Skeleton 1’ and ‘Skeleton 2’, they’re called Tom, Dick’ and Harry and you say, I found this with Tom and . . . it does, it gives them substance somehow, in my opinion anyway.

It is interesting that Craig notes that the giving of a name is instrumental in ‘creating’ both a person and a persona from their physical remains—a person with whom one
can then build a ‘relationship’—but then seemingly contradicts himself when he slips back into referring to human remains as an ‘it’. Despite his best attempts, it would appear that Craig is never quite able to reconcile the perpetually ambiguous and ineffable nature of the remains of the dead. Nevertheless, he (Appendix 20: para. 76) added that naming “helps to differentiate between a pot and a person . . . I think it’s adding a human warmth or an aspect of human warmth to an otherwise fairly clinical discipline”. As such, he turned to naming human remains, rather than referring to their sequential skeleton numbers, as a means of undoing what he perceived as the sanitising effect of archaeological practice. Yet, as there is no consensus within the discipline as to the appropriateness of naming—not least because it may be understood as trivialising a former life through the projection of a fictional identity on to the anonymous dead—a number of archaeologists stated that they refrained from the practice, with Philip (Appendix 8: para. 22) exclaiming “No! No, I never do, it’s something that I’ve always resisted. No, it’s just not something I do.” Similarly, Jamie (Appendix 16: para. 32) also resisted naming human remains, perhaps because he equated it with the naming of objects and the implications of essentialism that this entails:

I’ve never given anything I’ve worked on a nickname, but, apparently I’m odd like that because I don’t name my computers, or phones or anything, whereas as other people do. I don’t really give things nicknames, but I think actually it’s quite good because it helps people remember that these are . . . they’re not just abstract things, these were people, so it sort of humanises them in that way.

Yet, while the practice of naming human remains is most typically explained in terms of ‘re-humanising’ the dead, as Hafferty (1991: 85) argues, “assigning a human name to an object does not necessarily mean that the labeller perceives that object to be human or to have human characteristics” and neither does the lack of a human name mean that the non-labeller views the dead as an object. Indeed, Christopher (Appendix 19: para. 83)—a student at Poulton—spoke of the benefits of naming human remains, all while referring to the skeleton as an ‘it’:

Well, when you name a skeleton, you sort of get more attached to it and so you’re less likely to sort of, stand on it or accidentally drop or break a bone, so it’s a nice thing to do, but you have to remember that it already has a . . . it would have had a name when it was buried and a family who liked it and named it, so although you might name it something, its real name could be something completely different.
Hafferty’s (1991: 97) study of medical students in the anatomy lab revealed that those most likely to name their cadavers tended to think of them as biological specimens, rather than as the remains of a former human being, yet we might argue that the use of any name at all—“real or facetious”—stands in contrast to the idea of the dead body as merely a learning tool for medical students or a class of archaeological evidence (ibid.1: 85). Thus, while staff working at the CHB refrained from this practice, they could still recall incredibly rich biographical detail about the remains in their care, while Marie (Appendix 24: para. 125) was similarly able to weave interesting and humorous tales from the information she could recall from a seemingly impersonal skeleton number:

But you just sort of remember, you remember site codes, I remember site codes and numbers because you remember that person having something that seemed particularly interesting or, ‘Oh no, that’s [redacted] or [redacted] and [redacted]’ so when you get requests from researchers and they give you the list of who they want to see and you’re writing out the site codes, it’s ‘Oh, oh’, it’s like the old familiairs, yeah, you do, you get to know them and if you’re . . . you’re person who recoded the site or part of the site you then have that even greater affinity to them because you were there physically, recording, taking the bones out the box, so yeah, you get that sort of connection again. So yeah, we do. And I mean, they are lovely [laughs].

Marie had clearly formed close relationships with the remains in her care over an extended period of time, as reflected in her use of the word ‘affinity’, with skeleton numbers acting as ciphers of a particular past person’s identity. The practice of naming was, however, most frequently mentioned or observed at Poulton, with students viewing the practice as a “normative tradition” within archaeology (Hafferty 1991: 86). Like the use of ‘cadaver stories’, conversations between students about what to name human remains provided them with opportunities to experience and internalise ‘feeling rules’, allowing them to partake in the site banter and camaraderie that was quickly becoming a dominant expectation governing how excavations should be approached and experienced. This is a phenomenon observed by Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 8), an academic archaeologist who has supervised students in the excavation of human remains:

One of our students, it was brilliant actually, they turned around and said, ‘Well, we’ve got to name this skeleton because we’ve spent so much time with them. If you spent that much time with a person and you didn’t know their name, it would be very rude, wouldn’t it?’ So there was a bit of naming skeletons going on, there was a definite relationship that got
developed whilst they were going through this process and that’s the same sort of experience that I had when I was doing that in a professional capacity as well, and with the skeletons I excavated.

Students’ propensity for naming human remains arguably reflects the social etiquette we expect of relationships between living human beings. Indeed, field school participants at Poulton preferred to use quite ordinary first names that drew attention to the remains as a human referent—rather than those that were humorous, historically-contingent, or highlighted physical characteristics of the remains—in an attempt to reflect the former status of the remains as a person, but one which did not attempt to create a backstory for them. Oliver, a 17 year old college student wanted to name ‘his’ skeleton within an hour or so of digging, as he said that it would be easier than trying to remember a number. He eventually settled on the name Humphrey, after I asked him whether he was going to opt for a modern or historic name, but Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 8) explained how his students often used character names from popular literature:

So what’s interesting is that over the course of time as that project developed—because there were repeat students, they always have to do two field seasons, so you have one load come and it’s a new experience and there’s always some of those that come back and they help to supervise them and then we have some third years that stay and come back to get paid to supervise, so actually, there are some people who started in the first year and ended in the last year, because they came back, so we had this sort of growing experience base all the way through—what was interesting was in the first couple of years they gave them [redacted] names and sometimes they’d give them Harry Potter names, that fine, Harry Potter names are good, um, and that frustrated the osteoarchaeologist. She understood the reasoning for names and actually she wanted to do that, but when they were giving them names of cartoon characters or book characters she wasn’t so impressed. So she always renamed them [redacted] names. It’s interesting, isn’t it? The way she’s thinking about that is that they actually deserve a proper name, as opposed to a Harry Potter name.

As Robb (2009: 117) argues, there is a long tradition common to most European languages of coining nicknames that are approachable and intimate, but conflict can arise when they become too jocular or disrespectful. Accordingly, Emily found the practice of naming rather bemusing and in her opinion, it was a “bit redundant” because this ‘person’ already had a name, it was just that it had been lost to history. This might relate, however, to her background: she had grown up in a country affected by the repatriation of human remains to indigenous communities which has
arguably led to a heightened sensitivity regarding the ways in which human remains are treated and which may have subsequently coloured her view.

Yet, archaeologists may also choose more ‘inventive’ names: Nolan (1998 cited in Tarlow 2011: 94) recalls a coffined burial excavated at Newcastle Infirmary which contained a patient who had been dissected after death and consisted of only the top half of the body. A stone slab had been substituted for the lower half, leading to the remains being nicknamed the ‘Magician’s Assistant’ by excavators. This behaviour is also evidenced in medical practice: in 2013 a University of Pennsylvania study examined the practice of naming cadavers and found it to be the most common coping mechanism seen in the laboratory (see Williams et al. 2014). Two-thirds of the medical students surveyed gave their cadavers nicknames, many of which were “unflattering references to a specific bodily feature” (Allen 2015).

Similarly, nicknames were used on site with YAT when a particularly visually striking skeleton was uncovered—usually where there was visible pathology on the bone or the remains had been truncated in a particularly visceral manner, reflecting a form of “body humour” that serves to counter the disturbing characteristics of the dead (see Thorson 1985: 205). Names in this instance were humorous—an attempt to deflect the unease aroused by the physical qualities of the remains in question—and often picked up on deformity or damage and, while never used maliciously, much like the humour used on site, they would almost undoubtedly be considered entirely inappropriate in any other context:

[W]e did have one on George Street where . . . it was a child and this child was maybe, oh, I don’t know, maybe two and half feet long, so quite a youngish toddler, I guess and er, he got named ‘Banana Boy’ because there was such an enormous pit underneath him, he’d sagged, so his feet and his head were about a foot higher in terms of elevation, than his tummy, so he literally was, in profile, the shape of a banana. That was an extraordinary one, but that’s the only one I remember giving a name to and that’s because we’d say ‘Right, it’s time to photograph Banana Boy’ and that’s the only time I’m aware of, er, a burial being given a nickname. (Mary, Appendix 10: para. 52).

This quote actually constitutes a relatively rare example of children being given names by archaeology practitioners. Indeed, Craig (Appendix 20: para. 70) stated that it is something that is generally not ‘done’:
I don’t think . . . not with child burials, strangely, but with all adult skeletons, they’re given names by the people excavating them, but I don’t think . . . it doesn’t tend to get done as much with infants or child burials, which is strange, I suppose, I’ve never really considered that.

Arguably, this restraint reflects the sacrosanct status of child death within British culture; however, Craig offered this explanation:

I think it’s probably to do with informality. And because you know the person, a full adult’s had a life; you are more kind of informal and friendly with it and less afraid of sacrilege, because that’s how adult humour works, we take the piss. You know? You know the way humour works, but I suppose with an infant you don’t and you do tend to be a lot more, sort of, careful and reverential, I think. I think it’s human nature to hold infants or small children dear, no matter how annoying they are. (Craig, Appendix 20: para. 72).

As such, there is no such formality with adults and, accordingly, a skeleton I worked on with YAT was named ‘Stumpy’ by the archaeologists on site, due to the fact that ‘it’ had lost its lower ‘legs’, leading to a somewhat comical appearance. Similarly, Mark (Appendix 27: para. 40) explained:

Most recently one of the larger individuals on this [site] was differentially called Jeff Capes/ Hulk Hogan just because he was massive and just a huge, huge individual. Um . . . I think these things [naming human remains] are fine. As descriptors, really. It’s all about the context you’re utilising them within.

He went on to state in relation to the practice of naming human remains that “I’m not too worried about it, I don’t think you’re necessarily desecrating the dead by naming them . . . I wouldn’t be upset if I was looking down from on high and my remains were being . . . you know, given a name, but . . . it depends what it was, actually.” When it came to picturing his own body as the subject of humour, however, he became uncomfortable and in studies of clinical practice (see Allen 2015), inventive naming has—like other unchecked mechanisms for managing emotion—been implicated in developing modes of problematic and distanced behaviour. Yet, at Poulton, I observed that this practice of naming the dead was, over time, abandoned by students, while the professional archaeologists I encountered only tended to name the most disturbing or extraordinary dead. Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 8) had also experienced this on his excavations with students:
But actually over time, it naturally stopped happening. They just stopped doing it. They became the numbers. I think they still, you know, over the project they just became the numbers, the grave numbers, um, and the grave number became their identity, [redacted] it became part of their identity and I think that some of them did name them while they were excavating them, but those names didn’t make it into the record as they had done previously. And I think, when we had a small number of skeletons, we were talking about them as their names, we were saying, ‘Ah, that person there’, or ‘That person there’, but as we got more, we had to refer to them by their burial numbers to understand them.

Hafferty (1991: 87) has observed the same phenomenon in the anatomy lab, where naming cadavers was also abandoned after the ‘novelty’ wore off. In many historical and cultural traditions, naming locates the person socially and in respect to the dead (Prentice 2013: 42), it arguably represents an attempt to turn human remains back into an individual (Higgins 2016: 365). Carter III (1997: 201) thus argues that within medical practice, naming represents an attempt by students to “construct thumbnail biographies around their cadavers—an entirely speculative process, but indicative of a kind of intimacy between student and specimen”. Hafferty argues, however, that they are named due to discomfort on the part of students as they begin the process of gaining intimacy with the body.

As such, naming—in any area of deathwork—may constitute part of what Buchli and Lucas (2001: 9) refer to as a “domesticating strategy”. As students’ comfort grows, and with an increasing awareness of the dead body as a human being—whether in anatomy class or on an archaeological excavation—the practice is left behind. Yet, Prentice (2013: 42) argues in his research within the field of anatomical dissection that while naming the remains of the dead may be undertaken as a means to personify them, this is only in a limited way and “less as autonomous persons than as objects, like dolls”. This he ties to the appeal of the illusion of control over “this object-that-is-not-an-object” (ibid.) which becomes “a privileged object, not a person, but a quasi-subject” with whom students develop a meaningful bond and which encourages them to take care of ‘their’ cadaver, or in the case of archaeological practice, skeleton (Prentice 2013: 42).
6.8.2. Speaking with the dead

Writing about the human corpse, Cantor (2010: 32) has described how “the human-like nature of a cadaver is reflected in the common phenomenon of attributing human feelings and reactions to it”. This is arguably at its most acute in the period immediately after death, when the corpse “still bears a striking resemblance to the living person” and “it is easy to continue identifying the body with its former occupant even to the point of attributing to it continued physical and emotional awareness”. This tendency to anthropomorphise the corpse and the belief that it retains the potential to experience physical and emotional feelings is expressed in many ways in Western culture, as Cantor (ibid.) notes:

Often observers at a viewing treat the decedent's remains as capable of physical and emotional feelings. At an open-casket wake, many people approach the exposed cadaver. Kissing the departed is a frequent gesture. Some people caress and speak soothingly to the laid-out corpse. Others lower their voices in the presence of the body, as if not to wake or disturb it. Conversations with the corpse may continue for some period, including at the graveside, as the mourners find it difficult to treat the remains as mere inanimate matter. Eulogies at funerals or memorial services are often addressed not only to the mourners but also to the recently departed. 'You will be missed', the speaker intones toward the casket.

Conversing with the dead has long been an observable technique of anthropomorphisation in deathwork, particularly within the field of nursing and the practice of attending to Last Offices, in which the ‘patient’ is washed, dressed and prepared for the mortuary, thereby conveying them from “the living to the category of dead” (Quested and Rudge 2003: 554; Cooper and Barnett 2005: 427; Hadders 2007: 211). It is commonplace for nurses to talk to the deceased as though they were still alive, even though they might admit that this makes them feel uncomfortable or ‘silly’ (see Hadders 2007). In this way, the dead are treated very much like comatose patients, which not only assists nursing staff in overcoming the abject qualities of the corpse, enabling them to treat the deceased with respect, but it also helps them to cope with regular exposure to death and “to counteract the experientially paradoxical aspects of being faced with someone who is both present and absent at the same time” (ibid: 215). Indeed, recent NHS recommendations advise that the deceased should be “treated like living patients”—that is, the dead should receive “the sort of
management standards give to the living”—so as to avoid mortuary errors (Press Association 2017).

Archaeologists may also choose to speak to the dead, yet Domanska (2006: 347) argues that such techniques of anthropomorphisation are adopted because they ‘neutralise’ and ‘normalise’ the problematic and ambiguous ‘otherness’ of human remains, drawing them into the world of the living. She argues, however, that this is “ultimately infantilising”, since it establishes a position in which the dead are treated as “being in need of care, like children”. It is notable, therefore, that in my observations in the field, ‘speaking’ with the dead was most often used in relation to the remains of children and particularly amongst those professionals with offspring of their own, thereby establishing a particular, almost parent-like, relationship of guardianship. The most moving example of speaking with or, as in this case, singing to the dead, came from Julie (Appendix 22: para. 16):

[T]he other draughtsman had left site and I was doing this in the pouring rain and thunder and lightning and um, I sang it a lullaby as I lifted it and I think that’s the body, in a way, that I connected with most viscerally, because I thought well whoever cared for these children, mourned them, missed them and I don’t quite understand all of those emotions yet, but what would the mother have done as she’d laid the child there. I think she would have sung probably and so that really … that really connected me powerfully with my own experience to the remains I was excavating and I think that connection has gone on in terms of how I, how I see my obligations to the dead.

In this quote, we can see that Julie never lost sight of the human aspect of the remains she was excavating. Writing about the practice of nursing, Hadders (2007: 214) thus argues that during post-mortem care, when nurses may come close to developing a callous or distant attitude towards the dead, they will often strive to counteract this by treating their patients as people with the capacity for sentient thought and feeling. Archaeologists may do the same, by treating human remains as social persons. This kind of “solicitous behaviour”, however, imputes a level of “sentience to the dead, and implies that dead bodies are hyper-vulnerable, creating a moral obligation to advance a degree of care, an obligation made greater by the decedent’s defencelessness” (Rugg and Holland 2017: 9). Yet, the idea of caring for the dead “may seem like a contradiction in terms, a hollow, even macabre, mockery of what is no longer
possible” (McCarthy 2012: 2), running counter to the powerful cultural assumption that the death of the body necessitates the complete loss of the self (ibid: 5).

As Robb (2013: 447) notes, however, “if one considers the moment of death not as annihilation but as a moment of transformation into another kind of existence, the life course of a social being can extend beyond biological death”. Yet, as Glaser and Strauss (1968), Kübler Ross (1970) and Copp (1998) observe, the trajectory of death and dying does not stop with death but continues with care of the dead body and the cultural rituals of death. The excavation of the dead and their re-emergence into the world of the living arguably triggers the need to deploy this care once more. In spite of the destructive and transgressive nature of mortuary archaeology, therefore, its practitioners strive to safeguard the remains of the dead and a sense of their personhood, in much the same way as nurses protect the personal integrity of their dead patients. Indeed, like nursing, archaeological practice calls for its practitioners to “transgress the limits of personal integrity outlined by everyday social interaction, such as touch” (Hadders 2007: 214), and this physical contact arguably creates an intimacy between the living and the dead in which archaeologists enter into a relationship, of sorts, with human remains. Accordingly, Marie (Appendix 24: para. 146) explained:

[S]o I got lovely people at [redacted], now you’re in the crypt recording them, you’ve got that lovely space and yeah, I found myself talking to them because if I knew who they were and what they did, you then sort of have that connection, so we hit like 2008 and hideous economic problem and one of them was [redacted] so I’m talking to this gentleman and saying ‘Oh, you’d be appalled at what’s going on’ and then I’d apologised to [redacted] for not having read [indecipherable] and he lived in the house opposite my secondary school, so I was going ‘Oh, we were obviously meant to meet one another!’

Similarly, Kirsty (Appendix 28: para. 16) stated that:

I can just remember being just inches away, and just kind of wondering who they were and how they got to be there, and I guess lots of people have reported this, but you sort of feel a sense of, um, protection over them: guardianship, stewardship, while you’re excavating, so it’s . . . it’s a really interesting relationship and I will call it a relationship, even though obviously it’s not because they’re dead, but it does affect you in particular ways.

This behaviour can perhaps be ascribed to what Goffman (1956b) refers to as “rules of conduct”, which determine human behaviour in social interactions. Much like
feeling rules, these guide our actions in everyday life and are usually followed unthinkingly, only becoming apparent to us when we are, for some reason or other, prohibited or blocked from acting in accordance with them. These rules affect us both directly and indirectly: in the direct sense, they dictate how we should conduct ourselves, and in the indirect sense, they create expectations in regards to how we are expected to act. Goffman claims that there are two kinds of acts that categorise rules of conduct: deference and demeanour acts. The rules of deference are the social norms guiding the conduct by which archaeologists may respect a former living person’s integrity, even while breaching it. The rules of demeanour, on the other hand, define the conduct by which an individual signals to others that they are a respectable person, and thus worthy of earning respect from—in the case of archaeologists—their peers and the public. In the case of archaeology practitioners dealing with the dead, it is paradoxically their responsibility to safeguard both positions in the “dialectical dynamics between acts of deference and acts of demeanour” (Hadders 2007: 215).

While the use of techniques that anthropomorphise the dead may be understood as a form of post-mortem care and a way of drawing them once more into the world of the living, it also inevitably “presupposes a certain hierarchy” for—as discussed in Chapter Two and the ethical debates surrounding the ‘right’ of the living to disturb, study and display human remains—the balance of power in the relationship between archaeologists and human remains lies with the former, or the providers of ‘care’, rather than the dead, who are the recipients of their attention and are therefore “considered weaker” (Domanska 2006: 347). Looking at these ‘re-humanising’ techniques from this perspective, we might therefore argue that they simultaneously operate as a means of control, particularly vital when human remains may threaten a practitioner’s ontological security by prompting feelings of identification or intense connection.
6.9. Conclusion

Individuals who must come into contact with mortality and its material reality as part of their professional duties arguably share a feeling of empathy for the dead. Yet, this can also prove problematic and may encourage deathworkers to make comparisons with their own friends, family and, perhaps, even themselves, particularly where the remains evoke close echoes of their own experiences. This chapter has, therefore, explored the acts of distancing used by archaeologists in order to “break down an overly empathetic, and hence disturbing, connection between themselves and human remains” (Leighton 2010: 90-91). These methods represent the implementation of emotional labour in which practitioners of mortuary archaeology, like their colleagues occupied in other deathwork professions (see Stayt 2009), will work to manage the potential emotional affectivity of human remains as a means of protecting their ontological security.

The use of emotion management is particularly prevalent in those professions which constitute what may be categorised as dirty work, in which a range of cognitive, affective and behavioural strategies will be used to manage the stigma or taint associated with such work which, for archaeologists, arguably revolves around the cultural presumptions that exist against disturbing the dead. While dirty work is typically understood as being unappealing work performed by those who have no other choice, in the case of archaeologists I would argue that it represents a source of pride and is largely a positive experience. It became apparent among those with whom I spoke that they took their work and its challenges in their stride, with any negative connotations associated with the practice of mortuary archaeology refocused, reframed, recalibrated or recast so as that they were downplayed.

While the majority of the techniques used by archaeologists serve to create an emotional distance from the dead, these practices are not typically used in a cold or calculating manner; indeed, they are still imbued with a degree of compassion and empathy and, thus, I would argue that they do not appear to reflect a process of “self-hardening or desensitisation”, but function as a self-protective measure in controlling the agency of the dead (Crowder 2015: 93-94). Furthermore, where there are
instances where “transgressions” may be made during the handling of archaeological human remains, or in cases where they may prove to be particularly emotionally problematic, practitioners may oscillate between nearness and distance to the dead, relating to them alternately as inanimate objects or sentient persons.

In this light, therefore, the practice of mortuary archaeology may also be understood as a form of post-mortem care, extending the trajectory of death and dying. I would also argue, however, that as the majority of archaeologists do wish to feel a connection with past people, they may employ reverse mechanisms and re-humanise the remains by creating an identity for them, although these are typically most consciously used by new entrants to the archaeological profession and/or relate specifically to the remains of children. These mechanisms serve to neutralise the ‘otherness’ of the dead and provide those confronting archaeological human remains for the first time, with the means not only to (re)construct a social persona, but to bring the agency of the dead under their control.
Chapter Seven

Belief and practice

As academics we are accustomed to the need to sort out our thoughts, to review our beliefs, arguments and formulations, and check for contradictions or incompatibilities. We generally aim (with varying degrees of success) at a coherent, consistent and rational set of beliefs. It is therefore easy for us sometimes to forget that a preoccupation with consistent and compatible beliefs is not necessarily widely shared. The way people understand things—and perhaps understand death especially—is full of inconsistencies. Human understandings are not necessarily linear, coherent or ‘logical’. In the modern West, for example, we believe that when a person dies he or she rots in the ground. We also believe that a dead person is merely sleeping until the resurrection, that the dead exist as ghosts, that they go straight to Heaven and that they meet up with friends and relatives who predeceased them. Rationally, it’s very hard to make all these fit together. Ways of belief are more flexible—more metaphorical—than academics are often inclined to accept (Tarlow 1999: 47).

7.1. Introduction

As Giles and Williams (2016: 11) observe, archaeologists bring to their encounters with human remains “a particular (perhaps even culturally peculiar) set of experiences” and attitudes, not least because they must navigate their way through the ideals and values held about the human corpse and death in two distinct cultures: those to be found throughout British society and those specifically relevant to professional deathworkers. As such, the very questions archaeologists may investigate, the conclusions that they reach and their reactions to the ‘material’ they uncover, may all be influenced in various ways by the attitudes that are prevalent within these two cultures in which they live and operate. Accordingly, in this final chapter, I explore the impact of working with human remains on my research participants and the effect
of their attitudes and beliefs regarding death, dying and the dead on the human
remains they encounter.

Beginning with an exploration as to whether exposure to human remains affects
archaeologists’ own death salience, this chapter then critiques how their experiences in
the field may influence the ways in which they envisage the disposal of their own
bodies after death. Next, the chapter examines the intrusion of another form of
‘irrationality’ into archaeological practice—the supernatural agency of the dead—and
how this manifests itself within a discipline noted for its scientific objectivity. Finally,
the chapter considers the issues surrounding the screening of excavations of human
remains from public view and the display of the dead, critiquing how archaeologists’
own proclivities and understanding of mortality may be translated into archaeological
practice.

7.2. Beliefs about death, dying, and the dead

7.2.1. Attitudes towards mortality

[I]f you go back a hundred years, you’d have known someone who’d died by the time you
were five, ten years old, you’d have had a brother, a sister, mother, father, aunt, uncle,
neighbour, playmate, they would have died, it would have been common. Therefore you
kind of . . . find ways of dealing with it. Now, people don’t see it, so therefore don’t have
ways of understanding. So when you’re confronted with it, it sort of comes as a bit of a . . .
that’s more of a shock. It’s still shocking, but it made a difference to the way I treated it
compared to the way my sister did. I think that’s down to my archaeological career (Alan,
Appendix 14: para. 52).

Archaeology is a discipline that inarguably deals in death, albeit those typically
removed from the present by the passage of many centuries. Nevertheless, the
discoveries made in unearthing the material remains of the past may make for
powerful and, at times, disconcerting connections between the living and the dead.
What does this do to the way in which archaeologists conceive of mortality? And
what happens when a practitioner’s ‘fresh’ grief strays across death in the
archaeological record? These questions were provoked during fieldwork for this study in an encounter with an archaeologist being treated for cancer and who was undergoing treatment. Rather than “sitting at home and feeling ill”, they preferred to keep busy and elected to continue to be involved with the excavation of a site that, at that time, involved a large number of human remains. I couldn’t help but wonder how this individual coped with being faced with the materiality of death when they were experiencing such serious health issues and it led me to question whether working with human remains affected archaeologists’ responses to death. As such, I posed this question to the participants in this study and, perhaps unsurprisingly, due to the personal nature of the question, received a wide variety of answers. For a number of practitioners, such as Philip (Appendix 8: para. 42), it had made no difference, they claimed, to the way in which they conceived of mortality:

No, no, it hasn’t made the slightest difference. I’ve had relatives die and it doesn’t make any difference. You grieve for the person that you’ve known, that’s the emotional attachment you’ve had to a person, um, looking at bones from a medieval site doesn’t really evoke the same response at all.

As evidenced by his other responses in this study, however, Philip’s comments arguably reflect his commitment to the performance of the particular persona we associate with professional deathworkers. Indeed, research by Bassett and Dabbs (2003) suggests that individuals engaged in deathwork may have a tendency to under-report death anxiety, motivated by the desire to be seen as competent professionals. Yet, Craig’s (Appendix 20: para. 96) answer perhaps suggests that working with human remains may not prompt archaeologists to reflect on issues of mortality because they may not explicitly link them with death at all:

I know it might sound a bit crazy, but bear with me . . . death, to me . . . death and human remains aren’t connected, particularly, because death is when a living person ceases to live, human remains are already dead, that is the state we find them in. And so it’s one step removed from the idea of death, I think. I obviously . . . you understand it was a person, as I have probably gone on at far too great a length, and um, you do, as I say, construct a life for it, you are not immediately connected with the person’s death. I suppose if you’re a forensic archaeologist, looking at bones and you understand how the deceased died, that would connect you more to its death, because you could visualise its death, but on the whole, there are no indicators as you’re excavating, generally, to explain why this person died and so as such, you are not in touch with the moment of the death, you see it as mortal remains and you understand that it had a life, but then you are thinking about its life and not its death. Um . . . and I think that because it’s a skeleton, it’s so . . . it doesn’t connect you to your own mortality because it’s . . . it’s gone past the point of being
recognisable as a person, you know, with features and things. I mean, you know, it was a human and it was a person, but it’s um, I’m probably not making myself very clear, but no, it’s too far away from death to make you think about death, I think. For me, anyway. Other people might think, ‘Oh my god, it’s a body, I’m going to die at some point!’

Yet, interestingly, Craig (Appendix 20: para. 62) had previously spoken about ‘almost apologising’ to human remains for disturbing them, attributing them with the sentience of the living, yet here he refers to them as something ‘Other’ by using the term ‘it’. His comments thus arguably reveal a form of ‘cognitive dissonance’ (Festinger 1957), an emotional state that arises from two simultaneously held attitudes that are “inconsistent or when there is a conflict between beliefs and overt behaviour” (Long, et al. 2008: 121). As Bakker and Heuven (2006: 435–436) note:

The theory of cognitive dissonance holds that contradicting cognitions serve as a driving force that compels the mind to acquire or invent new thoughts or beliefs, or to modify existing beliefs, so as to reduce the amount of dissonance or conflict between cognitions. If emotional dissonance evokes the same psychological mechanism as cognitive dissonance, emotional dissonance can be reduced either by eliminating dissonant emotions, or by adding new consonant emotions.

Solomon et al. (1997: 66) argue that “cognitive dissonance, objective self-awareness and impression management pressures” sometimes lead individuals to alter their “long-standing beliefs and values” in order to fulfil the demands or expectations of the cultures in which they live. As such, “recognising that one holds negative attitudes about death would be inconsistent with a chosen occupation” in deathwork professions, archaeology included (ibid.). These feelings must therefore be minimised by changing one’s perceptions of death (Bassett and Dabbs 2003: 357), ideologically recasting it in more “edifying ways”, as discussed in the previous chapter (Ashforth et al. 2007: 159). Other practitioners, however, were willing to concede that working with human remains could prove to be problematic if they were to be bereaved in the future, with David (Appendix 25: para. 58) explaining how he was yet to be ‘tested’ in this regard:

I’m ashamed to say it [death] hasn’t affected me much, it’s an abstract, academic thing, when it becomes more possible will I want to continue having it as an academic thing? You know? Your hobby shouldn’t be your job. Is that . . . I mean, I don’t know. That’s the thing for me, that’s an on-going discussion I’m having with myself. Is there going to be a moment where, actually, someone close does die or I have to face my death and I think ‘What the hell am I doing writing in the abstract about this?’ Could I write the same way? And could I do it in an academic, objective . . . I don’t think anything’s objective, but
could I continue to do this? I’m not one of those people who have to handle skeletons on a daily basis. I have handled skeletons, they don’t really bother me too much, they’re dead, they’re not hurting anyone, um, but memorials affect me more, or as much, but it’s in . . . I’m still as ignorant of mortality as anyone else and I think I’m still struggling with what to do and how to deal with people in those situations as much as anyone else.

Conversely, at the opposite end of the spectrum, a number of participants stated that they felt working with human remains had made a positive impact on their personal relationship with death. Research by King et al. (2009) indicates that death awareness, as may arguably occur with working with human remains, enhances one’s appreciation of life. Julie (Appendix 22: para. 28) commented that the practice of mortuary archaeology “gives you a much greater appreciation for life itself”, while Kirsty (Appendix 28: para. 22) explained that “It’s definitely made me, kind of, a lot more accepting of mortality, I think. It makes it much more tangible and a reminder that we are here, but for a short time.” Indeed, Julie (Appendix 22: para. 28) credited her career in archaeology with her ability to manage the unexpected death of her father, poignantly stating:

[D]efinitely in relation to his death, it . . . it benefitted me as an individual and helped me. I mean, just the formalities of dealing with death, you know, I felt more capable of doing it right, because it all has to be done so quickly and I felt more poised to do the right thing at that moment and proud, I suppose, of that training and that it’s not just an archaeology degree, it’s just interesting, it was bloody useful! Because it’s the one thing we’ll all have to do for the ones who are closest to us, um, and so it felt good to have that knowledge and to have that experience and to be able to use that help Dad pass on appropriately.

### 7.2.2. Body disposal wishes

Yet, while some of my respondents struggled to vocalise whether working with human remains had affected their thinking about death, many had given thought to what would happen to their own bodies after they died, suggesting that the practice of mortuary archaeology does prompt individuals to reflect on issues of mortality, even if this is not always recognised by individuals themselves. As Jamie (Appendix 16: para. 44) stated “I used to want to be cremated, but . . . since actually working with human remains, I’d actually prefer to be buried.” This undoubtedly relates to the allure
archaeologists may feel in contributing to the archaeological record themselves, as well as leaving behind a ‘legacy’. As such, Rob (Appendix 11: para. 48) stated:

[It’s made me think more about whether I’d like to be buried or cremated, um . . . I kind of think it would be fun to buried with some fun stuff [laughs] buried with my trowels or something like that, knowing my luck I’ll be machined out by some fat hairy builder instead, but um . . . thrown on the spoil heap with all the other bits, um, yeah, I don’t know . . . I think it maybe makes you consider your time here, being alive, being faced with the remains of dead people, day in and day out for weeks and weeks and weeks on end, um . . . I don’t think it’s had any negative effect, I just think it means I’m maybe a little bit more comfortable with just the idea, um . . . you know, I’ve been with . . . I was with both my grandparents, my maternal grandparents as they died, which was . . . I found quite an amazing experience, really and a privilege to have been with them, to see that and that certainly had more effect on me in terms of how I feel about dying and the future and about life in general and obviously, you know, it’s really quite sad and difficult to see that, people that I knew and loved so much, but um, also in a way, at the same time it’s also just quite interesting . . . you know, I just find it quite interesting to see . . . I don’t know if that’s . . . and that feels a little bit wrong sometimes, but it’s not. I’m not concerned about it or worried about it or anything.

A number of practitioners expressed a similar desire but in humorous terms, wishing to exert their agency beyond the grave in order to ‘prank’ the archaeologists of the future with a confusingly anomalous burial, as Jamie (Appendix 16: para. 42) described:

Yeah, I want to be buried in a really funny position, just to fuck with them! I think that’s one thing that you don’t get anywhere else, is that people will think about how they want to be buried. Like archaeologists especially are like ‘I want to be buried like this!’ Maybe just, like, vertically downwards, swearing at the roof. It would be brilliant! They’re going to have to have a separate category for archaeologists, like ‘20th century archaeologists burial’, just because we’ll completely fuck with the norm.

Similarly, when I asked Lauren and Amy (Appendix 17: para. 77–82) if they would object to their remains being excavated in the future, they replied that they wanted to be buried in such a way that they could ensure this would happen:

Lauren: Oh, yeah! Totally! I’d wanna be buried with all this crazy stuff just to confuse them, like here’s an elephant tusk next to me and here’s some jewellery and they’re going to be like ‘Wow, who is this person?’

Amy: In a spring-loaded coffin, so that when they open it, you jump out! [laughter].

Lauren: Like I’ve got to be in the right soil, ’cause I’ve got to be found!

Amy: This needs careful planning.
Craig (Appendix 20: para. 102) too expressed a desire to be buried in such a way that will perplex future archaeologists:

I’m going to have a Bronze Age burial mound and I’m going to be buried in my medieval armour wearing a wristwatch. Just to screw with the archaeologists! So at some point, when some confused students from [redacted] come and hack my burial tomb apart, I hope they show a bit of respect or reverence for my rather confusing mortal remains.

Interestingly, however, despite stating that “I’ll be dead, what do I care?” (Appendix 20: para. 104) when I asked him how he felt about the prospect of his remains being disturbed in the future, Craig still expressed a desire that they be treated with respect, once again, reflecting the ambiguous and unreconciled relationship he has with the ontological status of the dead, in which they simultaneously exist as both subject and object. For a number of practitioners, however, working in archaeology was a reason to be cremated: a particularly common response among those working in the development-led sector, where archaeologists are arguably exposed to the most heavily disturbed burials due to the urban nature of the majority of these excavations.

Janet (Appendix 13: para. 92) thus stated that “I wouldn’t be buried because you’ve only got a limited time in the ground now, haven’t you? It’s a hundred years and then you’ll be dug up, won’t you?” In a similar vein, three of YATs archaeologists wished to donate their bodies to science, an unappealing option for Janet who—despite being a former nurse and engaged as a volunteer with the Trust where she was working her way through the washing of hundreds of skeletons—didn’t relish the idea of someone “fumbling around inside” her (Appendix 13; para. 98). Indeed, Roy, who had recently buried his father, told me that he didn’t care what happens to his body after death and, horrified by the cost of funerals, plans to donate his body to science in order to help others and, more pragmatically, to have the funeral costs covered by another party.

As Rumble et al. (2014: 253) note, the 19th century notion of the “polluting dead”, who have to be removed from the world of the living through burial or fire, is now
more typically usurped by the notion of the “useful dead”, in which the human corpse has come to acquire a utilitarian value. In recent decades, “recycling has become such a self-evident ‘good’ that the notion is now being transferred to human remains, with surprisingly little resistance” (Rumble et al. 2014: 252–253). As a consequence, the dead are now increasingly viewed as being useful to science or the environment, as with natural burial, and in this way the remains of the dead may gain new value and “re-sacralisation”. Accordingly, Mark spoke of his desire to have a ‘sky burial’ (see Martin 1996), a practice that he lamented is not permitted in Britain:

Um . . . yes, it’s made me more aware of how death is perceived within the culture I live in and also, the people who I know who are non-archaeologists, um . . . it’s never, it hasn’t changed the way I’ve wanted to be buried or handled in death, I . . . the means of . . . the means of funerary rite that I would like to be subjected to isn’t even allowed in this country anyway. Have you heard of excarnation? So, sky burials? That would be really, really amusing [laughs] That automatically gives you, well, it depends, on what you believe is then done with the disarticulated, dismembered remains, are they left to flitter and decay or are they collected up and put in a secondary burial rite? I haven’t quite decided on that yet.

As an individual who arguably possesses an intimate relationship with the earth and the natural elements through his choice of occupation, his wish speaks to a desire to become a part of the “great cycle of life and death”. Indeed, Rumble et al. (2014: 253) suggest that religion is increasingly being replaced in British society “by an ethics and spirituality discourse, in which individual immortality in heaven is replaced by ecological immortality for humanity on earth”, a form of spirituality that resonates with many people irrespective of personal faith.

7.2.3 Sensing the presence of the dead

All supposedly educated people have ceased to believe officially that the dead can become visible as spirits, and have made any such appearances dependent on improbable and remote conditions (Freud 2003: 365).

In March 2015, Vice (see Mullin 2015) published an article about an archaeological excavation taking place at Liverpool Street in London as part of the Crossrail Project (see Figure 82, Appendix 1: 456): one of Europe’s largest construction projects. A
team of 60 archaeologists, working six days a week, had unearthed a large burial
ground near the site of the original Bedlam hospital: the first ‘lunatic asylum’ in the
world and where “medical treatment could double as popular entertainment”
(Symonds 2011). Operating from 1569 to 1738, its name has become synonymous
with the “casual brutality of early healthcare” (ibid.) and left archaeologists with the
task of excavating the remains of an estimated 3000 individuals (BBC News 2015).
Due to its association with the hospital, the discovery attracted widespread media
attention, despite the fact that as London’s first municipal burial ground it had been
used by people from around the capital who could not afford a church burial or who
chose to be buried there for religious or political reasons (MOLA 2015). Indeed, the
burial ground also served as an overflow cemetery when existing sites were full,
including in times of plague (MOLA 2015), with analysis of a sample of human
remains taken from the mass burial pit enabling scientists to identify plague DNA
from the pathogen *Yersinia pestis* as responsible for the Black Death of 1665
(Museum of London Archaeology Briefing Note: no date).

At the site, the *Vice* journalist met with a self-described ghost hunter and a
professional clairvoyant, the latter of which believed that the disturbance of the dead
by archaeologists would unleash “a great wave of spiritual chaos” across the city
(Mullin 2015). So concerned was the psychic that archaeology professionals had
placed themselves in “personal danger”, that she recommended that they at least
“wash the souls off their shoes with salt water before they go home” at the end of the
day (ibid.). The article was shared across social media and while a small number of
archaeologists commented that they enjoyed “its unusual angle on proceedings”,
noting that it is “good to be reminded that some people have a very different
perspective of this work than we do” (Figure 89, Appendix 1: 374), it was largely met
by mockery by the archaeological community in which professionals poked fun at
both the discussion of the supernatural and the practice of archaeology itself:

I don’t see the problem, I thought archaeologists can hold their spirits (Facebook comment,
Screenshot 3, Appendix 2: 462).

That’s it! I’m going to demand Crossrail provide us with salt water to cleanse those souls off
our feet. This is a health and safety issue (Facebook comment, Screenshot 3, Appendix 2: 462).
Surely this will require an extra page in the Skills Passport: ‘Preferred methods of spectral decontamination following excavation of skeletons’ (Facebook comment, Screenshot 3, Appendix 2: 462)?

Yet, a number of comments from archaeology professionals also reflected a degree of unhappiness with their work being presented in such negative terms or, perhaps more pertinently, the intrusion of the spirit world into the realm of science:

I hate digging skeletons as they are firstly way to [sic] fiddly and time consuming and secondly get people with imaginations worked up. Ghosts decay . . . seriously what is this? I’ve never heard of anybody working on a cemetery seeing ghosts, possibly cause they don’t actually exist. If that had been my sight [sic] some people would be getting their ears bent (Facebook comment, Screenshot 4, Appendix 2: 463).

One commenter thus noted that archaeologists had a responsibility to protect the dead from “imagination running wild” (Facebook comment, Screenshot 2, Appendix 2: 461). Yet, as Horsley (2005: 140) observes, “the question of death, more than any other, generates conflict between the beliefs of science on one hand and the collection of alternative social discourses that science labels ‘irrational’”. Britain in the 21st century is, as Watkins (2013: xvi) describes, a place of “many faiths and none”, a place where “religious narratives about how to live and how to die have lost much of their power [and] where many pick and mix spiritualties from an array of ideas”.

Accordingly, recent data from YouGov Profiles of nearly 12,000 people who self-identify as Christians and a control set of 39,000 British people representative of the whole population has revealed “some startling juxtapositions in belief” (Dahlgreen 2016). Despite a decline in religious belief, an “estimated two-thirds of the population still believe in the soul; as many as four in ten believe in the existence of ghosts and around half hold that there is some kind of life after death”, figures that have that have remained remarkably consistent since the end of the Second World War (Watkins 2013: xvii). Indeed, the UK—and England in particular—has a strong tradition of ghost lore, with more recorded encounters with the supernatural per square mile than in any other country in the world (Clarke 2012: 2):

It is the country where archaeology is placed on national television, and where every town and village has its own local historian. Ghosts therefore may be seen as a bridge of light between the past and the present, or between the living and the dead. They represent continuity, albeit of a spectral kind (Ackroyd 2010: 1).
So prevalent are these beliefs in the supernatural that they may even manifest themselves in professional practice within deathwork occupations. Nurses, for example, have been observed incorporating spiritual practices into their care of the dead, with instances of individuals opening windows to allow a deceased patient’s ‘soul’ to depart the hospital building (see Kessler et al 2012: 292; Rytterström, Unosson and Arman 2010: 3518):

The first time I ever saw a lady who’d passed on…they were washing her and everything, and I’ll always remember, the one thing that got to me, was the fact that a nurse auxiliary opened the window and she went ‘go on’ and then she shut the window. It still sends shivers down my spine just thinking about it (Kessler et al. 2012: 292).

It might be anticipated, therefore, that archaeologists would have more than a few good ghost stories to tell, not only because of the diversity of beliefs its practitioners may be likely to hold, but also because the discipline is, after all, quite literally ‘haunted’ by the ghosts of the past (Lucas 2010: 30). However, perhaps as is to be expected, participants either did not ascribe to a belief in the supernatural or did not feel comfortable in discussing the issue. Tales of hauntings within archaeological practice are perhaps more usually told as jokes or humorous anecdotes, yet they also arguably reflect a level of anxiety about the continued agency of the dead (Chapter 6.7.3.). As such, the only serious ghostly encounter I was told came from Marie and Christina (Appendix 24: para. 146–148):

Marie: When I then started to record her, there was this really strong perfumey smell and of course, I was all like ‘Ooh, I wonder whether she might be with me while I’m recording’ and she had changes in her ribs, so it looked like, poor thing, she’d had corsets and then she’d had lots of children and I thought ‘Oh dear’ and that must have all been rather uncomfortable, put her back and the perfumey smell went and then I went to give a talk at Bradford about them and there’s a gentleman up there who deals with aspects of decomposition, [redacted], and all the sorts of changes to the body and so there’s me going ‘And well, I think [redacted] second wife may have come to join me’ and afterwards he was like ‘No, that’s decomposition’ and I was like, “But that’s phenomenal’ and that was really intriguing.

Christina: None of the others were like that . . .

Marie: None of the others had that and she . . . they’d all been buried in lead coffins, the church had been bombed and that’s how they’d rediscovered the crypts because all of them had got sealed in the 1850s and then they were put in ammunition boxes with their plates which wasn’t brilliant and then they got put in plastic boxes which was even worse and then they got put into conservation cardboard boxes, so I mean, she has been, you know, a skeleton in a box like all the others for over 50 years. I still think she came to see me at that point.
This anecdote may be understood as falling into the contemporary tradition of ghost lore in which people typically report feeling some type of ‘presence’, rather than witnessing a ghostly apparition (Guiley 1992: 13), standing in contrast to the ways in which Hollywood presents the supernatural (Banks Thomas 2007: 29). A frequent motif in these accounts is the inclusion of “rational explanations”, in which speculation about the “potential causes of . . . disturbing and anomalous occurrences” will be included in the narrative. Notably, however, “either the rational explanations are not satisfying enough or the possibility of an encounter with the supernatural is just too intriguing not to narrate” (ibid.), leading to the experience being framed as a ghost story. The telling of the story therefore marks an event that does not “square with a narrator’s knowledge of the ordinary”, in which its unexpected or unusual character evades explanation, with the result that this ambiguity takes on a ‘haunting’ quality of its own (ibid.).

Encounters with the supernatural are, however, often predicated on holding a belief in the existence of such and while the majority of participants in this study did not hold any religious beliefs or, indeed, a belief in life after death—Alan (Appendix 14: para. 60) ascribed his decline in religious faith to his experiences in archaeology, stating that archaeologists “see too much” to allow them to entertain such thoughts, a sentiment echoed by Andrew (Appendix 12: para. 30) who explained that “I’m not religious at all because [as an archaeologist] you see so many people pass through [your hands] with different religions, many of which are so utterly contradictory”—Marie (Appendix 24: para. 136) did hold spiritual beliefs and stated “I don’t believe that I am just my bones, there’s something more.” Accordingly, she went on to explain that:

I do believe in heaven [laughs] and . . . God, well I suppose, I’m not quite sure, but I do believe there is some kind of entity and I would hope that I would go somewhere nice and I have to say I do find myself thinking, you know, when I do die, am I going to meet any of these people? And are they going to come up to me and go ‘I was not that age, I did not have that disease. How dare you say that I had that disease!’ so yeah, I do. I think there’s something, because what I find really strange and because different people have died, close relatives and friends, is that I just can’t imagine that the world goes on without . . . how’s it going to go on without me? Does that sound selfish? But I know it does, but it’s like, I’ve experienced those people dying and so life does just carry on and that’s the strange thing, but yeah. I believe there’s something else. And I hope there is and I would hope that I would meet some of these people and then probably go ‘Ooh, yes, terribly sorry, I got that horribly wrong!’ and ‘Oh, you look like that!’ because that’s the other thing we all do is,
you look at them, you have your own picture of them, so it's like the lovely gentleman we've got [redacted] and we know he was [redacted] now, in my mind, he is this rotund, jolly figure, but he may well not be, he could have been a really bad-tempered chap and so yeah, I have those sorts of things, but I do believe there is something else.

Marie’s comments reflect her relationship with the human remains under her care, in which she treats them solicitously as ‘people’ due to the possibility of meeting them in the afterlife. Yet, her description of the rational explanation offered by her colleague after her experience with the strange fragrance also reflects deep-seated attitudes towards the supernatural within archaeology and, indeed, scientific disciplines in general. While Sørensen (2009: 113) argues that “most of academia no longer believe that the dead can act—as we do not believe in physical ghouls and ghosts, and corporeal rebirth and resurrection is disputed”, Marie and Christina’s comments reveal that perhaps the discipline should not be so presumptuous about what kinds of personal beliefs its practitioners may hold. As Horsley (2008: 142) observes, the “traditional certainties of science and religion have become more flexible [and] their boundaries have also become more porous”, allowing practitioners to hold multiple and potentially conflicting beliefs (ibid.).

Nevertheless, as Goldstein et al. (2007: 18) note, “too often people assume that ghost stories are simple, trivial stories”—the lingering remnants of a “naive past” (Goldstein 2007: 60)—that are told by “unintelligent, uneducated, ‘superstitious’, pre-modern or anti-modern ‘folk’”, ignoring the reality that supernatural narratives transcend categorisations of class or educational background (Goldstein et al. 2007: 18). Ghost lore is thus still very much a part of our modern and increasingly technological world (ibid.), even if the telling of such narratives runs counter to the expectations of academic rationalist traditions, in which belief in the supernatural ‘should’ decline as our scientific understanding of the world increases (Goldstein 2007: 60).

As Swain (2013: 28) notes, however, there exists a “fundamentalist set of archaeological scientists for whom enlightenment and humanist values allow them to hold the moral high ground”. Such individuals may be found within all scientific disciplines and tend to “humour those naïve enough to hold religious or non-enlightenment values” (ibid.). Recalling an incident in Koff’s memoir about
her time working in forensic investigations of mass graves, Rosenblatt (2015: 169)—a fellow forensic archaeologist—criticises her for interacting with and speaking about the dead in such a way that it was as if “she believed in ghosts, rather than voicing the powerful feelings that come with unearthing missing, beloved, sought-after bodies”. Such attitudes may perhaps be duly summarised by Mortimer Wheeler’s memorable quote about the finality of death, in which human remains become nothing more than scientific material to be studied:

> I don’t believe in disturbing rest . . . that’s a mere sentimental tradition. No – if you dig up a man with bowls and things around him—like those people we dug up at Maiden Castle—they were dead. They had been dead a long time . . . and they were going to be dead a long time . . . they’re still dead . . . We do no harm to these poor chaps. When I’m dead you can dig me up ten times for all I care . . . I won’t haunt you—much (Mortimer Wheeler cited in Bahn 1984: 128).

Thus, while Marie believes that the scent that accompanied the remains she was recording was indicative of a spiritual presence, for her colleague it was nothing more than a natural by-product of decomposition. His correction of her explanation of the event, however, arguably reflects a palpable level of hostility towards “superstition” (Richardson 2001: 7), as well as a level of professional unease with “being seen as outside of rationality” (McCarthy and Prokhovnik 2014: 29), because as Lunghi (2006: 33 cited in McCarthy and Prokhovnik 2014: 29) observes, “to ‘see’ the dead as having continued existence may be regarded as a doorway to magic (and madness)”. Accordingly, while research indicates that women possess a significantly higher propensity in supernatural belief and are ten per cent more likely than men to believe in ghosts and 17 per cent more likely to believe in life after death (Dahlgreen 2014), Marie was the only participant to broach the issue of spirits in this study, despite a number of informants explaining ‘off the record’ that they are frequently asked by members of the public as to whether their involvement in disturbing the dead has left them vulnerable to hauntings.

Unlike her colleagues elsewhere in the discipline, therefore, Marie demonstrated that she can comfortably balance the “discursive and mutually inconclusive narratives of spirituality and scientific, blending them into a somewhat benign mix” (Horsley 2008: 141), as well as reject the simple life-death dichotomy, subscribing instead to
the idea that it is possible to “exert a social presence without maintaining the biological processes of life” (Robb 2013: 447-448). This is perhaps because as an osteoarchaeologist, she is afforded a degree of ‘protection’ by the Enlightenment and humanist values believed to be prevalent within the specialism, which layer her comments with a level of ambiguity as to whether she is merely indulging in creative story-telling. Conversely, it may be that as a woman, Marie’s tale of her encounter is humoured by others due to the stereotypes that surround women and emotion, as discussed in Chapter Three (Davies 2007: 242).

Yet, despite practising within a specialism that is known for its scientific outlook, it is perhaps not surprising that Marie would ascribe to a belief in the supernatural. As an osteoarchaeologist, she arguably works in a liminal “threshold site” (Casey 1993: 275), where science, sentiment and spirit may be said to meet (Horsley 2008: 142). While the practices that are conducted within it arguably serve to reinforce archaeology’s authority over the remains of the dead—holding and reproducing foundational frameworks of death—human remains are also caught in a state of ‘limbo’ as a result of their ontologically confused nature, existing somewhere between life and death, where the supernatural may be understood to thrive. In this way, repositories of human remains may not only be understood as holding the remains of the dead for the purposes of science, but they also be perceived as retaining some of the more “ethereal artefacts of death” and ‘remnants’ of human life now long gone (ibid: 141).

Yet, while other participants in this study may not have felt comfortable discussing such ‘irrational’ beliefs, even practitioners, in a similar vein to Wheeler, who argue that “dead is dead” will perform a “fleeting salute” to “the body multiple” as it is constructed and enacted within archaeological practice (Horsley 2008: 142). As such, all archaeologists will subscribe to the doctrine of respecting the dead, not only in formal archaeological protocols, but also in privately observed actions. Indeed, once researchers have completed their analyses, the remains recovered from the Liverpool Street site will be “reburied on an island off England’s southern coast”, on consecrated ground. While this would undoubtedly be described by archaeology professionals as a gesture of ‘respect’—which is deemed of fundamental importance in the handing of
the dead, irrespective of any particular belief about death, afterlife or the fate of the soul (Laqueur 2015: 1)—it also undoubtedly constitutes “a nod to mainstream magical thinking” (Mullin 2015), in which treating the dead with due respect undoubtedly reflects “suspicions or hesitations about an afterlife” (Horsley 2008: 142) and acts as a means of ensuring the fate of the ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ of the deceased (Richardson 2000: 17). Furthermore, while archaeologists may not openly admit to a belief in ghosts, a number did unconsciously ascribe a level of agency to the dead which was often most powerfully evoked in recollections of the weather conditions during moments of discovery and the excavation of human remains. Recalling the excavation of the remains of Private Alan Mather on the Western Front in 2008, Brown (2016) states that:

At about 3:30am on the night following Alan Mather’s discovery, a large and powerful electrical storm broke over Ploegsteert and Messines, waking the team and soaking those guarding the remains. Two years later, on the night following his funeral, there were similarly large and impressive storms at about the same time over both Messines, where the project team was staying, and over Lille, where the family was staying. In subsequent conversations, both team and family members quietly said that they felt this was Alan saying goodbye . . . Such reactions may be dismissed as fanciful and romantic, but Alan Mather’s ownership of himself was clearly asserted to many of the participants through the agency of the thunderstorm. Whether it was a ghost or atmospherics, the thunderstorm prompted us to remember that the bones were the earthly remains of a human being who had enjoyed his own personality, free will, and experience.

Similarly, Dan stated (Appendix 23: para. 24) that:

[W]e did a prehistoric cremation, well, basically we didn’t know, it was a prehistoric cemetery site and they knew there was going to be stuff there, because they’d found a lot of flint and other stuff from field-walking and y’know, bits and pieces, but it was a quarry site, so the diggers were stripping back a massive area, y’know, like ten football pitches, absolutely huge, and as they did that, you could see all the cremation pits, y’know, just like hundreds of them, all over the place, so we had to excavate, y’know, a sample of those, ready for it being quarried away, so . . . I personally had to excavate cremation burials and then there was only four of us in the team, there was just four on this site and the guy who was the project officer, well then the digger uncovered human remains, as well as cremations, an inhumation burial, and he excavated that, but obviously we were there and we saw it and it was a Neolithic female burial and she’d died in the very late stages of pregnancy, so her baby’s like, skeleton, was still there . . . and it was quite bizarre, really, that y’know? There was no one else around, almost. It was like . . . it was November or December, so it was like a cold and misty morning and there’s this like Neolithic skeleton and you think ‘God, first time anyone’s seen this for 6000 years’. It was that personal thing, that . . . seeing dozens and dozens of skeletal remains but never one like that and I’ll never probably see it again, y’know, with the baby’s remains there as well, so it slowly became like really personal.
While there is no obvious encounter here with the supernatural, the inclusion of the mist in the tale arguably serves to set a suitably evocative atmosphere of mystery, liminality and suspenseful stillness. Indeed, it is a convention widely used in Gothic literature to prelude a terrifying person, thing or event, due to its ability to both conceal and reveal, and may even be attributed with supernatural agency itself. Similarly, Julie (Appendix 22: para. 16) recalled:

I think one of my most powerful ones was, I haven't actually excavated these bodies, but I was drawing them, it was on the [redacted] and I was a draughtsman at the time and it had been the end of a long day and we'd had a set of human remains stolen from the site, the day before, a beautiful mother and child burial, where the woman had a little necklet and her fingers were touching the necklet and the child was at her feet and we assumed that this was a mother and child who died of disease or maybe, infection following birth and we'd cleaned up the skeleton and left it for photography the next morning and then somebody had stolen it that night, so the following night when we found another set of—it was a child and an infant close by—we finished drawing them quite late and we knew we had to lift them before we left site and it was pouring with rain, in fact there was a thunder and lightning storm going on, the rest of the team were off site and myself and another draughtsman had to finish drawing them before we left the site, so in the pouring rain I finished my drawing and then we were trying to lift these bodies, very fragile, vulnerable human remains.

Again, while there is no spectral encounter in this quote, flashes of lightning often accompany a moment of revelation in Gothic literature, while thunder and rainstorms typically prefigure the beginning of a significant event. As such, the weather conditions serve to index the ‘supernatural’ quality of the encounter and may even be understood as the dead demonstrating an “assertion of self, presence, and identity” (Brown 2016: 133).

7.3. The impact of belief on professional practice

7.3.1. Screening human remains

As we were lifting the remains from the ground, we saw a woman approach the screens and heard her shout “Are those human remains?” For a brief moment we all paused what we were doing and waited to see whether she was appalled or fascinated. She then declared them to be “awesome” and left after a brief conversation with a couple of the archaeologists on site about we’d found (entry from field notes with YAT).
In recent years, the issue of screening human remains from public view has become a matter of topical debate within the discipline, focusing on whether the public should, or should not, be able to see human remains being excavated. The necessity to screen the remains of the dead during archaeological excavations is stipulated by law (Chapter 2.6.5.)—despite a lack of evidence suggesting that the public wish to be shielded from the sight of all human remains; indeed, their continued popularity may suggest the opposite (see Sayer and Sayer 2016)—and is principally undertaken to protect the public from distress and to mitigate possible looting or vandalism. Yet, implicit within the conversations revolving around this issue are the attitudes and beliefs of archaeologists themselves and the various ways in which they view the act of screening: from a practical necessity, to a means of according respect to the dead.

Respondents in this study were broadly supportive of the idea of allowing the public to see behind the screens, although their statements were often followed by a caveat regarding the age of the remains. Ruing the state of commercial archaeology, Mark (Appendix 27: para. 50) thus commented that:

> I think it’s one of these weird things, that at one end, from a professional point of view, we treat them with a bit too much reverence, we shield them away from people, we don’t allow them to be gazed at by others, which I think is nonsense. Yet, at the other end, we have these impacts of time and cost put on us by the contractor which can, I believe, but it’s only anecdotally, can lead to lower quality of excavation and therefore recording.

Conversely, Mary (Appendix 10: para. 24) believed that screening is a “wise decision” and while her comments arguably jar with efforts elsewhere to increase public access to archaeology, I would argue that her position is rooted in her desire to protect the remains in her care:

> I think it’s wise to screen them, if nothing else, to stop people from coming in with metal detectors. Again, I have had problems with that . . . not on this particular site, but sites in the past, the minute people think you’re digging up burials, they immediately think Tutankhamun’s treasure and it’s staggering the number of people that will then grab a metal detector and think, ‘I’m going to get loads of treasure cos there are dead bodies’ and they don’t realise that most burials in this country anyway are Christian and most burials therefore have absolutely nothing buried with them. Um . . . so I would personally prefer it if there was no information available to the public until after you’ve finished.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the practice of mortuary archaeology may be conceived as a form of ‘dirty work’, which comprises work that most typically takes
places out of sight or in the back rooms of institutions (Twigg 2000: 405), due to our desire to “create distance from what we see as contaminating and ‘unclean’” (Grandy et al. 2014: 175). Death has long been perceived “as a dirty and polluting thing” (Page and Komaromy 2005: 305), and thus the maintenance of our ontological security is understood to necessitate that death and the potentially polluting body be managed and controlled (Scott 2007: 360), as “modern secular society with its ethic of material success and its emphasis on youth and glamour” prefers to avoid thinking about “decay, dirt, death [and] decline” (Twigg 2000: 406). Accordingly, the dirty work of excavating human remains takes place behind screens or hoardings which, both symbolically and ‘ritually’, may be understood as demarcating the space as an area that is ‘unclean’ and in need of containment.

At the same time, however, and as Lawler (1991) notes in her study of dirty work, by shielding the visibility of the dead, so a degree of ‘privacy’ is afforded to those who must carry out the removal of human remains. As Zimmerman (2013: 117) observes, “most Westerners cherish and indeed demand a right to privacy as individuals” and, as such, we might therefore argue that the use of screens protects the “status and public esteem” of archaeologists who, in the course of excavating human remains, may be forced to handle them in a manner that may jar with our ideas of what constitutes “respectful” treatment, as in the “incident” recalled in the previous chapter, where Roy was forced to break skeletal remains in order to be able to extricate them from the earth (Lawler 1991). The use of screens therefore serves to establish a boundary in which archaeologists can conduct their work safely without fear of reprisal, for as Rob (Appendix 11: para. 34, see Figure 83, Appendix 1: 457) observed, the practice of archaeology is not always well understood by the public:

[O]ccasionally we do get people who just generally seem a bit angry about archaeologists in general. We’ve got one lunatic who turns up every so often and just shouts at us, um, and . . . but that seems to be more a case of the misguided belief that we’re doing it for the sake of it and that . . . that we’re getting in the way of things and that we’re just interfering and we already know everything that we need to know, so why are you digging around in there kind of thing? And that’s generally archaeology I think, they seem to have a problem with that … otherwise, people tend to just be really quite interested, we get lots of people coming up and asking us what we’ve found and when we tell them it’s burials, they’re like ‘Ooh, wow!’ And they think it’s the most amazing thing ever, whereas for me, it’s like, ‘Oh no, not another one’.
Yet, screens also protect the ‘dignity’ and privacy of the dead: an understanding that was in play during the Crossrail project mentioned previously, in which an area of land earmarked for the construction of a new station on Liverpool Street was identified as constituting the cemetery for England’s first hospital for the mentally ill: Bedlam. Writing for *Current Archaeology*, Symonds (2011: 19) reports that as many as a thousand skeletons were shielded from onlookers “to ensure that those buried . . . are protected from precisely the casual morbid curiosity visited on [the] patients” as when they were alive. It is quite unthinkable to 21st century minds, but the patients of Bedlam were a popular tourist attraction in the 1800s and visitors were charged a penny to view them (ibid. 13). Thus, whilst as Sayer and Sayer (2016: 140) note, the site of the excavation was located “adjacent to a busy city street and so screening was deemed appropriate”, it is clear that its purpose has evolved in this article from protecting the living from ‘accidentally’ viewing human remains being exhumed, to a duty of care towards the dead themselves.

Yet, as discussed, Bedlam never maintained a dedicated cemetery for its patients and the cemetery was in fact ‘overspill’ consecrated land used by the surrounding parishes, with the link between hospital and churchyard principally one of geographical proximity. As such, during the excavation it was unclear what percentage of the burials could be ascribed to the hospital with any degree of certainty. This makes the comments of the *Current Archaeology* journalist particularly curious, revealing their own personal understanding of the need for screening—which from a legal standpoint is only designed to protect the public from the potentially distressing sight of the dead—and perhaps something of the sentiments expressed on site by the excavation team.

As Mark (Appendix 27: para. 24) suggested, however, archaeologists have a deep connection with the remains they excavate, even though he stated that he hated using the word, saying “I dislike anything that’s too kind of . . . what’s the word . . . I can’t say airy-fairy . . . spiritually connected to it or whatnot.” The act of screening may therefore be understood as another form of post-mortem care and it is perhaps notable that the guidance on screening is deliberately vague in terms of its wording, therefore affording archaeologists with the ability to interpret its implementation as
they see fit. Indeed, as Brown (2016: 122) argues, many archaeologists experience feelings of “ownership and responsibility”—a “feeling of ‘our body’”—in relation to excavating human remains, with the result being “a strong feeling that these individuals are, in some moral sense, the property of the team”. Accordingly, while working with YAT, the understanding on site was that the remains would not be fully screened until the moment of lifting, as they were largely hidden from view by the arrangement and depth of the trenches. This decision, however, suggested that they viewed the moment of lifting as a particularly intimate moment and one which should not be publically visible, as evidenced in Rob’s comments:

I think basically people today are quite interested in seeing them, we tend to get people just looking though and trying to see what we’re doing anyway, sometimes putting up a screen just makes that worse because then they’re like ‘Oooh, what are they trying to hide from us’, but um, again, I think it’s important that, again, it’s about context, if this were a parish church where there were living relatives of potentially people buried in that graveyard, much more important then, because you would potentially have . . . you know, people who get really quite angry about you digging in their graveyard. Here, we’re talking about a very different context, because nobody has any association with that site any more, that graveyard, it’s much more a curiosity than a horror, that you’re digging it. So yeah, I think it’s right to screen them when they’re being lifted.

It would therefore appear that due to the ambiguity of the licensing conditions, archaeologists are forming their own interpretations of how the condition regarding screening should be implemented and why. The irony was, however, that the site being excavated by YAT was positioned alongside a busy road that was frequented by open-top tourist buses. Thus, while the remains were screened at street level, this did nothing to ‘protect’ tourists from seeing directly into the site from above which, upon observation, they appeared to enjoy. Once the screens were in position—which consisted of mesh-covered heras fencing—there was a notable increase in members of the public stopping to ask what was taking place, whereas previously it appeared that members of the public assumed that it was just another city centre construction site.

As one of the few archaeologists to have vocally campaigned for a change to the law and to advocate the benefits of mortuary archaeology beyond science, Sayer (2011: 13) argues that the popularity of screening amongst archaeologists may result from the fact that it prevents them from having to engage in discourse with “the howling hordes of interested people”. Thus, despite being very much in favour of removing
the screens from archaeological excavations of human remains—“I think that’s just hyper-professionalism, utilising emotion to be professional but it’s not really, because in the end I don’t think you’re really doing anyone a great service by shielding these things, by basically obscuring knowledge”—Mark (Appendix 27: para. 24) nonetheless commented, as the excavation with YAT continued apace and members of the public approached the screens to ask what was happening, that “there’s nothing worse than a member of the public with a little knowledge of archaeology”, suggesting that practitioners enjoy the invisibility afforded by the screens.

While his comment was undoubtedly tongue in cheek, it does suggest that practitioners would perhaps prefer to work without ‘distraction’. Accordingly, Nina (Appendix 13: para. 49) stated that “there are good reasons why we don’t want to be constantly bothered and we also want to get on with our work”. As such, while there is nothing in the burial legislation that states that the public should not be able to view human remains as they are being excavated, it would appear that the requirement for screening is often used by the profession itself as a means of keeping the public at bay. Nevertheless, respondents in this study argued that it was practical constraints that prevented them from inviting members of the public on to site, with Emily (Appendix 18: para. 36) suggesting that the lack of opportunities for public engagement with archaeological excavations resulted from a paucity of time and funds, particularly in the development-led sector:

For most commercial sites they probably haven’t got the staff to do that and they probably won’t pay for a dedicated staff member to stand by a fence all day and talk to members of the public as they go by, but on a research site, I think it should almost be required that your site is open to the public if people are interested in coming and it’s not going to interfere with your excavations, you should be able to have tours or an open day or something because if you’re doing all this archaeology and you’re learning this information, it is of no use if people are not aware of it. We might be the people excavating this site, but it is not ours. The information does not belong to us.

There are, of course, also considerations regarding health and safety, as well as ethics, in terms of widening public access to the excavation of human remains, with Philip (Appendix 8: para. 32) noting that the public maintain the right to not be confronted with skeletal material “on their way to the shops”: 

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I would tend to think that people have a right not to see human remains if they don’t want to, somebody on their way to the shops walking around the corner and being confronted by skeletons, that could actually be very bad publicity for us because we’re subjecting people to something that offends them. We don’t need to. We should encourage visits to archaeological sites, but I think they should be warned if that is the case, um . . . in practice, if you do that, it increases their interest, you cover yourself if you say ‘If you don’t want to see human remains then we suggest that you don’t take the tour’, but I think, you know, that if you screen, you stop people from seeing things that they don’t want to see, it doesn’t stop people who are interested from coming in and having a look.

As such, many, if not most, archaeological excavations are not accessible to the public and few projects apply for an exemption relating to screening; this lack of opportunity for the public to interact with ‘their’ dead undoubtedly conflicts with efforts elsewhere to increase public engagement with heritage and perhaps leads to unnecessary tension between archaeologists and the wider community. Indeed, Sayer (2011: 11) argues that if the public cannot see and engage with human remains because they are hidden from view, they not only become separated from the process but also suspicious about what is taking place—reflecting the distrust of authority figures that has undoubtedly increased since Alder Hey and the breach of trust between the medical establishment and the public—thereby leading to further claims on human remains and more stringent legislation (ibid.). While on site with YAT, I thus noted that they were not initially permitted to tell members of the public what was occurring on site, offering vague answers with limited details. Yet, once the screens were put into place they were affixed with noticeboards which provided details about the excavation, a situation which bemused Mark (Appendix 27: para. 18, see Figure 84, Appendix 1: 458):

I’m unsure exactly why we put up netting, um, along our hoardings, but at the same time have large public display boards that say we are excavating human remains here. If we are excavating human remains here and we’re telling the public about them, as long as they know they are there, it’s up to them, if they don’t want to stare at them, then they don’t have to, you know? It comes back to personal . . . their personal responsibility, as well, I suppose. I have heard arguments saying that we need to shield them and I’m not sure whether this is based in law or anything, we only have to shield them when we’re lifting them, which again, I think is even more . . . you know, absurd, really.

While the consequences of screening arguably “strike against much of the current thinking of archaeology work: to be open, reflexive, and involve communities, and to present archaeology as a vital part of reinforcing common identity and heritage”
(Anthony 2016a: 27), we might also argue that it contributes to the idea that the archaeological excavation of the dead is a taboo activity and not a topic for public consumption. Inherent within the subtext of the *Current Archaeology* article and, indeed, the act of screening itself, is the idea that the public may not possess the ‘right’ way of looking at human remains. As Sayer (2010a) has observed, the archaeological literature has long identified the public as being drawn to human remains out of ‘morbid curiosity’ (see Larsen and Walker 2005; Curtis 2003) which, while often used as a pejorative term—standing in diametric opposition to the more noble ‘archaeological gaze’, even whilst, as Penfold-Mounce (2016: 24) argues “the voyeuristic gaze can be conducted by different people with varying motivations”, including archaeologists— it refers simply to an interest in death and thus is almost certainly the key to the popular appeal of mortuary archaeology (Sayer and Sayer 2016: 142). Accordingly, attempts to control public access to human remains might therefore be described as paternalistic, treating both the public and the remains of the dead as dependants, a situation that particularly concerned Anthony (Appendix 9: para. 14), as he suggested that “emotional” archaeologists themselves are causing harm to the discipline:

> Actually I think it’s very dangerous to develop that protective . . . it’s almost as if archaeologists are turning skeletons into dependents, children or something like that, which is both very patronising and it is, um, not . . . it’s partially the result of professionalisation. Ok, so if you professionalise something then it’s not ok to have emotion in that context. Emotion and professionalism are anathema, ok? And so, archaeologists are being emotive and protective, but they need to make that professional, so take it away. And that’s what I think is going on. I think we need to realise that and stop doing it.

Yet, as this thesis has argued, it is perhaps easier said than done for archaeologists to stop being ‘emotive and protective’, for whilst as professionals they work hard to remain objective and detached in their work, as people they may form emotional connections with the human remains they encounter. These are not so easily overcome, ‘seeping’ into the conduct of professional practice and the implementation of legislation, as evidenced not only in the practice of screening, but also in the display of the dead.
7.3.2. The display of the dead

Human remains are not the gory, gruesome thing that should be shut away, forever and a day. They are part of life (Mark, Appendix 27: para. 18).

The debates that surround the issue of screening human remains are closely aligned with those that emerge in relation to their display, yet while my respondents were generally in favour of allowing the curious to see behind the hoardings, they were divided on the issue of human remains being publically exhibited: a somewhat surprising finding. Accordingly, Craig (Appendix 20: para. 78) commented that he thought “it’s probably more educational to see them excavated than it is to go and visit them in a museum”, while Rob (Appendix 11: para. 32) stated:

[W]hen it comes to actually displaying the human remains, I’m a little more uneasy about that to be honest, in some cases, because I think, you know, we tend to take one burial out and display it . . . I think it depends on the reasons for doing that, if you’re doing it for a specific reason, because it’s educating people about a certain type of thing, like a particular bone disease or whatever or something like that, or even, if it’s just generally to educate people about human remains and why we excavate them and that kind of thing, then that’s fine, but if you’re just presenting it because it’s a sensational, you know, showpiece, then it’s not really, very ethically, very sound reasoning, so I don’t, you know, I don’t like the idea of just displaying human remains just because we can and it’s exciting for people to see, um . . . I think you need to make sure that it’s being done for sound reasoning.

Peter (Appendix 21: para. 10) also expressed concern about the display of human remains:

I am against showing human remains in museums because we show . . . when we . . . I know that the majority of archaeologists here will show respect to a child or the adult or the baby or whatever, but in a museum context . . . people are looking at it for the ‘Wow! Look at that, it’s a dead person!’ factor, which I find incredibly disrespectful to the human because they’re dead, but they’re still people. They were somebody’s love, somebody’s children, somebody’s father, somebody’s mother and I don’t like that level of disrespect being shown. Weirdly, I don’t get the same feeling if I look at a sarcophagus, which I know has got a person in it, but I’m dead set against showing it for museums.

Craig (Appendix 20: para. 46), meanwhile, felt particularly uneasy about the display of Egyptian mummies which, perhaps due to their ‘humanness’, as discussed in Chapter 5.2., evoked a stronger feeling of conflict within him about display practices:

Obviously, it’s nice to display certain bodies, like the Amesbury Archer, for instance, with all the wonderful grave goods, the gold and the archery stuff. Er, you can see it as it was and as it was found and you can draw your own conclusions from that, but I’m not [sighs] and
then you know, you get your bog bodies and things which are really interesting, but . . . [sighs] there are certain aspects of display when it’s more morbid curiosity than educational. And I mean, particularly if you go to Manchester Museum or any museum that has mummified remains from Egypt, I just feel . . . [sighs] terrible. I mean, they’re ghoulishly to look at because they’re quite hideous cadavers, really, with sunken skin and protruding teeth, but if you look at it in a very basic way, these mummified bodies were important people who paid an awful lot of money to get to paradise and somehow ended up in Manchester.

He went on to state:

I feel kind of bereft for them, really. I know they’re dead, but the last thing they bloody wanted . . . they’d never even have dreamt that they end up in Manchester and yet there they are, on display, for a bunch of kids to point at and say ‘Eurgh, look at that thing’ and ‘Mummy, it’s staring at me!’ I don’t know, I don’t see what the educational purpose is in that, you know? Display a sarcophagi [sic] by all means. I feel a little sensitive towards the mummy. Don’t take that as any indication of my own domestic relationship with my mother [laughs], but I do . . . I feel somehow that, despite everything they did, life did not turn out well, death did not turn out the way they expected it to and um, I think there’s no surer denial of one’s beliefs than to be buried in Egypt, expecting to ascend to the heavens and end up in Manchester (Appendix 20: para. 48).

He added:

I somehow feel that the further the distance of the site of origin of the body, the more tragic it somehow it is. Um, you know, if you find a body in Wiltshire and it’s displayed in Wiltshire, that’s not too bad, but if you take it 50,000 miles and display it as a curio, really, then you’ve lost all claim to education and it simply becomes something ghoulish for people to stare at, which is undignified (Appendix 20: para. 50).

Egyptologists, however, might well be inclined to disagree and have argued that the display of mummies grants them a form of immortality originally sought by the mummification process. Yet, while the remains of the dead are often credited as the means by which people can come ‘face-to-face’ with past people, it appears that such engagements must occur purely on the very specific terms of archaeology professionals and are only deemed acceptable if there exists an educational remit as constructed and controlled by the discipline itself: that is to say, such engagements should facilitate learning something explicitly about the past. In this way, a sharp divide is created between archaeologists and their ‘academic’ interests and those of the ‘public’, which are all too frequently characterised as prurient.

As noted in the discussion of screening human remains, encounters between the public and archaeological human remains are regularly described in terms of ‘morbid
curiosity’ and may often be regarded as “simply an act of gratuitous voyeurism” (Lazer 2009: 1). Tatham (2016: 199) recalls how exhibition designers at English Heritage were concerned that visitors attending a refurbished display at St Peter’s Church, Barton-Upon-Humber, “might choose to visit the site in order to morbidly gawp at the displays and not be prompted by a desire to learn, spoiling the scholastic efforts of the exhibition”. Yet, a wealth of arguments support the broader value of mortuary archaeology to the public, in which satisfying one’s curiosity is no more or less a valid engagement (Holloway and Klevnäs 2007: 9). More importantly, as Julie stated (Appendix 22: para. 8):

I think it’s important that people see bodies, because we need to learn about our bodies and we need to learn about death. We need to do death better! Because we are so poor at that in contemporary UK society, particularly if you’re not of a strong religious leaning.

Archaeology therefore presents one of the few remaining opportunities in British society for the public to comfortably indulge their curiosity about death. Indeed, the deathways of the past as evidenced by archaeology reveal the “ancient world as ‘Other’, a foil for our sanitised, western practices” in which death and its material reality are experiences almost entirely detached from our everyday lives (Gilchrist 2005; Chapter 2.2.). It thus forms an integral part of our death culture, with the archaeological remains of the dead presented to museum audiences as ‘relics’ of our human past in the church-like space of the museum, thereby providing a socially-sanctioned public arena in which death can be ‘looked in the face’ and rendered a common feature of life, whether that be past, present or future. In this sense, as Williams (2007: 49) argues, archaeology may be understood as embracing “religious metaphors and practices, as well as secular and personal notions of dying, death and commemoration”. Nevertheless, Dan (Appendix 23: para. 40) expressed that unless the public were learning something educational about the past, then encounters with human remains were of little value:

I could go and look at the museum and see some Roman skeletons, but what does that actually tell me? If I could go and see an Iron Age bog body and that does tell me something because it’s almost … it sounds strange though … it’s captured the person, so you actually see what an Iron Age person looks like, y’know? That Iron Age person’s bones are exactly the same as my bones, 3000 years later or whatever, but physically, they may have been different, I don’t know. Same about studying, y’know, Neanderthals or whatever
else . . . Ok, Neanderthal bone structure is different to ours, but they’ve still got arm bones, do you know what I mean? Rib bones and everything else, but their physical make-up was different, so it’s tricky. I don’t really see what we get . . . I can understand studying the bones, but what do we actually get by going to see them? Especially just the general public, we all know what a skeleton looks like, why do we need to see one or assume we do? I don’t know.

When I asked him whether human remains serve a role as ‘archaeological mediators’ between the living and the dead, he replied:

But at the same time, they’re still not dead bodies, they’re seeing bones, do you know what I mean? So it’s still not a dead person. So, if we are saying that we’re disassociating between bones and physical bodies, then it’s not really making up for that, in that sense, but I do think that perceptions have probably changed a lot since . . . well, if you think in just 200 years, go back 200 years ago, you could have people who were bodysnatching and that’s like . . . I’m not going to say that it’s part of everyday life, but people could physically dig up dead bodies and it not bother them, and the scientific community receive them and it not bother them, as it’s still part of everyday life, you know? You could perhaps even see dead people on the streets, but now . . . because we’ve got undertakers that do all that for us, we see none of it, do we? Well, not in our culture anyway, obviously in some cultures they still do, but I don’t know, we are very sort of disassociated from death and dead bodies, but again, I don’t really see skeletal remains bridging the gap. I don’t know . . . no amount of skeletons you see in a museum is ever going to prepare you for the moment you see an actual dead person, y’know, a relative or whatever, ‘cause I assume that’s the only time that most people are going to see a dead person, if you see a relative, d’you see what I mean? So, it’s still not going to prepare you for that (Appendix 23: para. 44).

Despite recognising that experience of the dead body has become increasingly rare in British society—Walter (2018: 10) notes that the remains of the ancient dead have themselves become increasingly sequestered in recent years, just like their newly deceased counterparts (Chapter 2.2.) as a result of the Ministry of Justice’s re-interpretation of the burial legislation and museums “increasingly insisting human remains be displayed in special, demarcated areas”—Dan saw no opportunity for archaeology to provide these encounters. Yet, as discussed throughout this study, archaeologists possess a unique and privileged relationship with death and the dead—wrought by their experience and professional activities—that is perhaps is not always consciously recognised or appreciated. As such, archaeologists should perhaps be mindful that the concerns and the debates driven by the profession do not always align with those of the wider public, who already have limited opportunities to engage with the material remains of the past.
Yet, while archaeologists’ attitudes towards public access to human remains may, on occasion, come across as over-protective or as containing a degree of implied moral authority, it is clear from my conversations with practitioners and observations of their activities in the field that their reticence rests, in large part, on the close relationship they form with human remains. As Dan (Appendix 23: para. 32) himself stated, he was ‘bothered’ by what happened to the dead after he had excavated them, stating “because I was just a field archaeologist, we saw that Neolithic skeleton, then I moved on, so I don’t know what happened to it, where it went”. Implicit in this comment is the intensity of the bond formed between an archaeologist and the ‘person’ they have excavated, with Kirsty (Appendix 28: para. 16) similarly stating:

[You sort of feel a sense of, um, protection over them: guardianship, stewardship, while you’re excavating, so it’s . . . it’s a really interesting relationship and I will call it a relationship, even though obviously it’s not because they’re dead, but it does affect you in particular ways.

Indeed, Christina (Appendix 24: para. 130) stated that:

[I]t’s very embarrassing because my daughter will be [redacted] next month and she said ‘Mummy’, because I was talking about work and she said, ‘Now are these people alive or dead?’ [laughs] And even my husband is like, ‘Is this someone . . . alive; are they dead?’

I would therefore argue that this feeling of moral responsibility relating to the eventual fate of human remains pertains not only to the individual ‘bodies’ that archaeologists may excavate—after spending time and care removing them from the earth, archaeologists must relinquish control and this can, perhaps, provoke feelings of unease—but to the entire community of the archaeological dead. These feelings may spill over into professional practice, with Tatham (2016: 198) noting in regards to the exhibition at St Peter’s that the project team took it upon themselves “to set their own moral gauge in the tone and content of the exhibition”, rather conducting a public consultation. Meanwhile, Exell (2016) has traced the controversy at Manchester Museum in 2008 over the covering of its publically displayed Egyptian mummies to the feelings of personal conflict experienced by senior figures within the museum at the time. Accordingly, Dan (Appendix 23: para. 38) revealed the lengths that a curator he knew had gone to in order to comply with his ‘duty’ as a museum
professional to present the material remains of the past to visitors, while balancing this with his desire to protect the ‘dignity’ of the dead:

[His policy was he would have human remains on display, but not bones. He wouldn’t have bones out on display, even though they’d got them and he would have cremations on display, in the pot, but only if the pot was on the top shelf of the cabinet, so you could see the pot and you knew the bones were in there, but you couldn’t see into the pot and see the bones. He liked them to be displayed in that manner [laughs] and I just thought . . . I understand where you’re coming from, but you’re still displaying them, what difference does it make whether someone can see them or not? You’ve still got that pot of bones, as it were.

Similarly, Alan (Appendix 14: para. 34) revealed how he had ‘steered’ a heritage trust away from displaying human remains at one of their historic properties:

[Redacted] asked me about displaying some bodies they found when they were doing an excavation [indecipherable] in the milking parlour on one of their sites and I kind of steered them away from that because I think to display those bodies, they’re not really special, they’re Iron Age bodies buried in grain storage pits, the display of those remains doesn’t outweigh that they were human beings, if you know what I mean . . . but if you can do something sort of interpretively with that evidence in a different way, you needn’t use the bodies, you can still connect people visiting the site and the finding of those bodies with the evidence they can show, with the person that was that body.

While Alan (Appendix 14: para. 32) was in favour of displaying human remains, he stated that it had to be under “very, very special circumstances”. As such, he was in favour of using other means of conveying mortuary data to museum visitors, such as CGI:

It should not be something that you … you do lightly, but there are occasions where a person, or persons, there might be real value to help people connect with their past, with certain times. I am probably these days increasingly less in favour of it because you have the development of other ways of getting people to access things. So you’ve got the ability of photographs, CGI, you’ve got all sorts of things where you can move away from the need of having the actual bones or even a facsimile of them. And you know, connect people in a very, very different way, but nonetheless equally . . . equally personal, equally close. If that makes sense. I think the traditional way we connect somebody with a burial made in the floor of a Roman villa meant that you had to dig that person up and then kind of put them back with a little glass plate over them over the top, so you can look as you walk around the villa, um … you can do it in so many other ways, that I think are more acceptable to most people, but more importantly, I think you can fire up more people because you can … well, with CGI you can take a representation of the burial as archaeologists excavated it and you can then add in, um, whatever and you can morph that representation of the skeleton back to the date of burial. I know it sounds like a cartoon sequence, but it needn’t be.

While it is not always necessary to display human remains to tell a story—as evidenced at the Richard III visitor centre where, by necessity, curators have had to
utilise a 3D model and a ‘ghostly’ projection of the king’s skeletal remains into the original grave space (see Figures 85 and 86, Appendix 1: 459)—the premise of the museum is arguably rooted in the idea that it displays ‘real things’. Yet, Alan (Appendix 14: para. 38) appeared to suggest that the ‘real’ things contained within museums should only be stored ‘backstage’, thereby problematically placing them into the category of ‘things’ accessible only to experts:

\[\text{In the broadest sense, you need to display things that people can see. They should be able to touch some of the stuff as well, seeing something is only one of the many senses that you have, only one of the many ways you access something, sorry, it annoys me when you have lots of things stuck behind boring glass cases. Ok, somebody like me can get a lot out of greyware pots tucked behind glass, but the average punter, it’s just grey and it might be pottery. You know? So yeah, I think if you use your imagination you can connect people with a lot of these things in a better way, a more interesting way, I think museums have a role in bringing the past to the public, but I also think they have a twin thing, which is preserving past objects so that people can handle them, understand them, learn from them. The two are not quite the same and the two can happen in different places within that museum. Objects can be stored and accessed behind the scenes and people should be encouraged to do that, and you have the front of house where things are displayed in a different way and people are engaged through imagination and story-telling, that sort of thing. So, they have two sides and you don’t need, necessarily, the object front of house to tell the story, you can do it in other ways and possibly more appropriate ways.}\]

Yet, as Daniel (Appendix 26: para. 22) noted, public access to the ‘real thing’ is important and he thus delineated the importance of the display of authentic objects from the past:

\[\text{I think the real thing, the ‘real thing’, is the most important thing, seeing a real mummy and that issue of authenticity because that’s what makes a museum a museum, we have the real objects, we have the, you know, the genuine samurai sword that was used, we have the genuine dinosaur bones, we have the Egyptian mummy that has come from Egypt and was a living, breathing person 2500 years ago. It would not be the same with just an interactive.}\]

Indeed, we might argue that, within a culture in which opportunities to engage with the materiality of death are already limited, the popularity of human remains within museums reflects what Linke (2005: 15) describes as “a yearning for the ‘thingness’ of things” and a longing for “an authentic reality, a perceptual realism without simulation or copies”. As such, the appeal of human remains perhaps principally lies in the fact that they represent the first, and perhaps only, ‘dead bodies’ that members of the British public ever see.
7.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the impact of working with human remains on practitioners of mortuary archaeology, revealing how engagement with the materiality of death may affect the ways in which archaeologists conceive of their own deaths and, in turn, the disposal of their own bodies, as well as calling into question the possibility of the existence of an afterlife: a belief in which arguably opposes the paradigm of objective rationality that mortuary archaeology espouses. In addition, through a discussion relating to the practices of screening human remains during excavations and displaying the dead, this chapter has highlighted the ways in which the beliefs held by these individuals may affect the treatment of the human remains under their guardianship: a word I have chosen deliberately as a result of the conversations I have had with practitioners and the observations I made while watching them ‘in action’. It is clear that a considerable depth of feeling may exist between archaeologists and the dead, as well as a profound sense of moral responsibility for their future fate, after their re-emergence into the world of the living. This chapter has thus demonstrated that archaeologists may wrestle with feelings of conflict regarding the public display of human remains and while this may be expected—archaeologists are, first and foremost, people, as well as professional ‘death dealers’—this becomes problematic when it hampers public access to mortuary archaeology by efforts to sequester them from view. As we arguably live in a culture in which death, dying and the dead are already marginalised from our daily lives, this chapter reminds practitioners that the display of the dead forms a vital part of our death culture, providing individuals with the opportunity to reflect on issues of mortality, but buffered by the comforting distance afforded by the passage of time.
Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is as crucial as scientific objectivity in the struggle to understand the past. We need sentiments and chronologies (Taylor 2002: 16).

8.1. Findings

We believe that a certain aura pertains to physical remains even if we believe these remains are, in their essence, of no significance; we act as if the dead are somewhere even if we claim to believe that they are nowhere, [and] we speak as if they remain or return individually to the world of the living even when many of our rituals, practices, and professed beliefs suggest the opposite (Laqueur 2015: 81).

This thesis has explored the practice of mortuary archaeology in the UK and the impact of this work upon its practitioners—together with the remains of the dead they unearth—revealing the “hidden and often incommensurate understandings” archaeologists may hold about human remains as both professional deathworkers and as members of British society (Crossland and Joyce 2015). As such, it has examined the ways in which archaeologists develop the emotional capital necessary to cope with the ‘darker side’ of archaeological practice: a term that speaks to a place “like the dark side of the moon . . . that most of us cannot see, will not visit and may struggle to understand” (Ward and McMurray 2016: 120). Accordingly, this study has revealed how such practitioners make sense of, and come to take satisfaction in, work that is characterised by ambiguity and ambivalence, while probing the conditions and circumstances most likely to take practitioners to those darker places through primary
ethnographic observation and interview. The results have important ramifications for how we might seek to train the next generation of archaeological deathworkers, delivering not merely the skill-set for excavation and analysis, but the awareness that this relationship with the dead is a lifelong one, which may be significantly coloured and transformed as they themselves experience life’s major rites of passage.

The work of ‘digging up’ the dead brings archaeologists into contact with human remains discovered in varying contexts, states of preservation, as well as completeness which, as this study has established, may continue to possess an active and social posthumous existence, due to their dual status as both ‘something’ and ‘someone’. How practitioners respond to these remains is not only conditioned by their professional training, but is also intimately connected to the way in which we handle death and the dead as a society, critically examined here through the discipline’s recent fraught ‘crisis’ regarding its authority over human remains. Understanding that crisis has involved sketching out the complex social, cultural, political and legal landscape of 21st century Britain in relation to human remains and bringing into sharper relief the multitude of views, beliefs and attitudes that surround death, dying and the dead. This study has thus examined how these have led to particular moral crises over consent, as well as long-term curation of archaeological human remains, yet these ideological contests over reburial and repatriation have also exposed British archaeologists to very different ways of understanding death and the dead that more prominently foreground emotional connections. Developments within the field of museum archaeology specifically have seen these more ‘peripheral’ elements of archaeological narratives beginning to find a place within exhibitions and displays, while popular accounts of archaeological discoveries recognise the emotional ‘pull’ of a find so as to engage an audience.

Nevertheless, as the respondents in this study reveal, archaeologists themselves work within a paradigm that arguably pits objective scientific inquiry against these very kinds of experiences: whether overt or subconscious, these pressures result in archaeological literature still devoid of emotional reflection, framed by Enlightenment values and archaeology’s developmental ties with the practice of human anatomy and values drawn from the medical profession. Accordingly, this thesis has shown how archaeologists are
expected to conform to the attitudinal and behavioural expectations—or ‘feeling rules’—that surround cognate practitioners who engage with death and the dead regularly. These revolve around the importance of emotional detachment and the ability to convey a calm, objective and rational ‘professional’ persona: qualities acquired through repeated exposure to the dead, the accumulation of experience of working with human remains, as well as through the performance of archaeological praxis itself. This study has thus recorded the discourse favoured in such performances of professionalism, through the frequent use of the concept of ‘desensitisation’, in which practitioners continue to perpetuate a belief that emotional responses impede the construction of archaeological knowledge. Some interviewees were therefore only comfortable in articulating the scientific appeal of human remains with which they worked: a kind of emotive response which represents a form of attachment to human remains, albeit one that allows practitioners to ‘emote’ in such a way that does not interfere with their projection of professional identity.

Yet, as the thesis has shown, there are still occasions in which this commitment to detachment is challenged, forcing archaeologists to engage in ‘emotion work’ which, in turn, enables them to sustain their ‘professional façade’. The thesis warns that this form of emotional labour may disproportionately affect female practitioners due to the background gendering of emotion in British culture and the negative stereotypes that have arisen as a result, particularly in the academic sciences. Yet, archaeologists are aided in their efforts to remain emotionally detached by the archaeological process itself and the journey human remains may take from excavation to reburial. Accordingly, this study has demonstrated how they will come to the attention of different specialists and procedures that will ultimately serve to ‘depersonalise’ the dead and re-categorise them as archaeological evidence (Robb 2013: 443). Yet, both the practices brought to bear on the dead, as well as the remains themselves, may hold an array of meanings which can prove ontologically destabilising. Many of these carry a latent symbolism with parallels in the way we treat our own dead and this study therefore argues that how we understand and treat archaeological
human remains reveals a great deal about how we understand our own bodies and conceive of mortality in 21st century Britain (Robb 2009: 101).

The alternative meanings associated with many of archaeology’s practices, such as the washing and boxing of remains, may therefore reconfigure the practice of mortuary archaeology and the unearthing of human remains as a continuation of the trajectory of death and dying, thereby problematising our very understanding of the boundaries we culturally construct between life and death. In turn, this calls for the care of the ‘dead body’ once more and the enactment of the ‘ritualistic’ practice of archaeology which, as argued here, may also be construed as a form of post-mortem care, reflecting a concern—irrespective of religious or spiritual belief—with protecting the remains of the body and treating them solicitously. This is not just so as to comply with professional guidance regarding best practice, but as many of the responses in this study suggest, because we fear, on an unconscious level, that the actions of the living have a tangible impact on the dead. As such, the appropriate enactment of process and procedure may be perceived as acting as ‘atonement’ for the disturbance of the dead.

Archaeologists may therefore oscillate between relating to human remains as both continued social persons and inanimate objects, not only according to the particular ‘eyes’ of the practitioner and the gaze they bring to their engagements with the dead, but also the context in which they are encountered, the procedures performed upon their bones and the ways in which human remains may provoke or infer the recognition of personhood. In managing their interactions with the dead so as to maintain their professional persona, archaeologists may therefore draw upon a range of cognitive mechanisms—a form of emotional labour—that work to harness or suppress their emotional affectivity and potency. This thesis thus urges the discipline to pay closer attention to the specific cultural frameworks and personal life-histories of its employees which shape, modify or even radically transform practitioners’ comfort and confidence in carrying out such work (Quested and Rudge 2003: 559).

The power of particular kinds of human remains (or associated material such as grave goods) to physically, visually and biographically evoke self-recognition and an
acknowledgement of a shared humanity is revealed through the interviews here: they may act as powerful corporeal *memento mori* which can create an unsettling connection between the past and the present. This may not only invite practitioners to question the moral authority of archaeological mortuary practice (inherently destructive *and* transgressive), but also provoke troubling and existential reflections regarding issues of bodily invasion, privacy and the dissolution of identity. The thesis has sought to link these questions of ontology to methodology, particularly in relation to objects buried with the dead, and whether these should be retained with the corpse or curated for longer-term analysis. It has pushed those affective materials known as ‘grave goods’, as well as the more ancillary materials of funerary performance or death rites, back into the limelight as something that warrants greater debate, given the power of such objects to also deeply unsettle the living when we divorce them from the deceased.

Nevertheless, these outcomes of the thesis do not suggest an immediate ontological crisis in the profession: many of the techniques used by archaeologists—typically unconsciously and replicated across the wider spectrum of deathworkers—will work effectively to buffer the development of an overly empathetic and otherwise disturbing connection which might destabilise personal or professional endeavour. Yet *unlike* other deathworkers, such strategies may involve archaeologists ‘re-humanising’ the dead, through practices such as naming: most consciously used by new entrants to the archaeological profession as a means of coming to terms with encountering human remains, or to relate to very specific ‘troubling’ remains, such as those of children. These mechanisms serve to neutralise the potentially unnerving ‘otherness’ of the dead and provide those confronting archaeological human remains (particularly for the first time) with the means not only to (re)construct a social persona, but to bring the agency of the dead under their control.

This agency, however, is also transformative, for while archaeologists seek to change the dead, “they also have the power to change us”, an acknowledgement that challenges “the insistence upon scientific objectivity and emotional distancing that has been a principle in the field for the last several decades” (Balachandran 2009: 202). This thesis has thus explored the ways in which encounters with archaeological
human remains may affect practitioners’ own understanding of issues of mortality, even influencing the ways in which they conceive of their own deaths, the disposal of their own bodies and their belief in an afterlife. In turn, the study has established that these very personal beliefs and viewpoints may affect the treatment of archaeological human remains themselves; indeed, it has revealed the deep and nuanced relationship that may arise between archaeologists and the dead, together with the profound level of responsibility they feel for their ‘resurrection’ and posthumous existence as archaeological evidence. As a result, practitioners may too come to question their authority over the archaeological dead, such as their ‘right’ to place them on display for the ‘edutainment’ of the living. The thesis thus warns that without open dialogue surrounding archaeological encounters with human remains, practitioners themselves may unwittingly engage in the sequestration of death in Britain and further limit opportunities for engagement with its material reality.

8.2. Research limitations and future directions

This has proved to be an ambitious study to undertake and while I have endeavoured to consider as many aspects of the relationship between archaeologists and humans as possible, without sacrificing detail or depth in analysis, there are many avenues of enquiry that were, by necessity, left unexplored. Indeed, I often felt that each chapter within this study could be a thesis in and of itself, so rich is the data to be drawn from this most fascinating aspect of both human experience and archaeological practice. This study should perhaps, therefore, be considered the beginning of a conversation, in which the findings presented here perhaps raise more questions about the ways in which mortuary archaeology is practised than it is capable of answering, due to the evocative nature of the research subject and the inherent subjectivity of my respondents’ experiences and feelings.

This subjectivity is inherent within the responses and observations provided in this study, in addition to the overall research design, the latter of which often leaves ethnographic studies vulnerable to claims that their data is “unreliable, open to value
judgements, personal and political ideologies and misinterpretation” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle 2000: 1). Undoubtedly, my presence during fieldwork had an effect on what participants did or said and my age and gender may also have played a role in what individuals felt comfortable in sharing with me during interviews. Furthermore, my own life experiences and personality have made an incalculable impact not only on the interpretations I have made of the data, but also on the way in which I presented this material in written form, which not only makes use of the first person in terms of writing at certain points, but also includes some of my own experiences in the field (Bradbury 1999: 26).

Certainly, some of these were unsettling because of my prior experience of working with human remains as museum ‘objects’. Watching other professionals engage and interact with them in different ways was, at times, jarring: not because they were treating them inappropriately, but because of the ‘baggage’ I had brought to the research encounter with me. Indeed, the professionals at YAT expressed concern that I would misinterpret the language they used, the sense of humour they shared and some of the more destructive aspects of the archaeological process, with a running joke on site that I was, in fact, a ‘spy’ sent from English Heritage to write a ‘report’ on them. One of my respondents told me that they would want to read this report upon its completion, but warned me that “we’ll probably think that you’ve got it all wrong”.

While these comments were expressed in a light-hearted manner, it was clear that they reflected a deep-seated concern with the way in which they, and their work, would be represented. This is perhaps the biggest challenge I experienced in the course of this project and what ethnographic texts rarely tend to explicitly discuss: how, in the field, bonds develop between researcher and research subject; you become fond of them. This presents difficulties of its own in terms of writing ethnography, in which a researcher must present ‘the truth’, but may feel conflicted in terms of the ramifications of doing so. Thus, while I have sought to present the words, experiences and professional worlds of my respondents as ‘authentically’ as possible, I make no claim to absolute neutrality or to uncovering a definitive truth in the data I collected.
Indeed, this study reflects a specific point in time: one of my field sites no longer exists, “lost to development, and surviving only as records and archives” and the individuals I have interviewed may have changed jobs and their life circumstances altered, together with their opinions, in the time that has passed since I spoke with them (Flatman and Rockman 2012: 21). It ultimately remains, therefore, my interpretation of what I saw, heard and experienced while researching and writing this study, supported by complementary research into comparable deathwork professions. As such, there is a degree of generalisation in my research findings and further research would perhaps elucidate whether these attitudes and perceptions are replicated across the profession.

In hindsight, therefore, I would have selected a more ‘typical’ osteology lab to include as a study site. Due to the way in which the Centre for Human Bioarchaeology is used by those conducting osteological research, I was limited in what I could photograph while I was in the field, due to both visiting researchers not wanting to be photographed and because of copyright restrictions imposed by the CHB itself. Additionally, this study would perhaps have benefitted from speaking with forensic practitioners directly, but as none elected to be interviewed, I drew my comparative data from existing published studies. Thus, there remains considerable research to be conducted into the emotional labour of mortuary archaeology practice, particularly how this compares with practitioners’ experiences in forensic archaeology, as well as how gender, age, cultural background, ethnicity and religious belief may impact on practice as archaeology seeks to become a more diverse profession.

Furthermore, this study has raised a number of questions about the ways in which archaeology is conducted in the UK, not least the challenges faced by commercial archaeologists whose own personal feelings about the treatment of human remains must be reconciled with the constraints imposed by the development process. I would therefore suggest that, taking inspiration from the death café movement, there is an opportunity here to offer continuing professional development in this area that would offer space for reflection and discussion regarding archaeological encounters with the dead, but which would also recognise that there are aspects of the archaeological process that may cause feelings of disquiet and that practitioners’ attitudes towards
human remains may change over the course of their careers, in accordance with events and experiences in their own lives. Additionally, I would argue that there are also questions to be explored about the ways in which the discipline prepares its students for encounters with human remains and the messages they unconsciously internalise about the need to shed emotional responses in order to succeed as an archaeologist, for creating a more empathetic profession—which “does not mean that we have become more or less scientific in our attitudes towards the dead” (Nordström 2016: 207)—undoubtedly requires mentors to exhibit the values they wish to cultivate in their students.

8.3. Final thoughts

We give the dead a future in order that they may give us a past (Stone 2010).

This thesis has revealed that our relationship with the dead is complex, reciprocal and operates within a “milieu of religious edicts and secular assertions” (ibid.). In many ways this study has therefore been an exploration of the “collective secular consciousness” at work in Britain—perhaps as result of my own search for answers in the wake of my recent experience with death—as well as an analysis of how archaeological practice ‘deals’ with the dead. What emerges above all else is the affective power of the dead, whether consciously acknowledged or not, and thus the powerful role that mortuary archaeology can play in mediating our relationship with mortality in a society in which ordinary and normal death is sequestered behind medical and professional façades, but abnormal and extraordinary death is simultaneously recreated for popular entertainment (ibid.). Indeed, as Asma (2012) suggests, it might be argued that the growing cultural interest in death, dying, and the dead derives from the search for awe and wonder in our experience of mortality—qualities that are now all too frequently missing “in a post-religious culture”—for as Laqueur (2015: 14) observes, “the presence of the dead enchants our purportedly disenchanted world”. As our cultural intermediaries between the past and the present, the work of archaeologists
therefore provides a much-needed space for reflection upon our ultimate finitude through the corporeality and materiality of the archaeological dead.
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Appendix 1

Figures

Figure 1: The ‘Hardy Tree’ at St Pancras Old Church, London, where burials have been disturbed multiple times in order to facilitate development of the capital, beginning with the construction of the St Pancras railway terminus in the 1860s, which provoked considerable public outcry (Wilson et al. 2013: 156). Thomas Hardy, the novelist and poet, oversaw the exhumation of human remains and their subsequent re-interment in a mass grave while working as an apprentice architect, and he is also believed to be responsible for repositioning the associated gravestones in a circular pattern around this tree (Johnston 2014). Further burials were cleared prior to the extension of the Channel Tunnel rail link between 2002 and 2003, which led to “protest among the archaeological community when the field team were temporarily removed from site due to developer pressure, before being reinstated several weeks later following negotiations” (Sayer 2010a: 40). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 2: A dissected skull uncovered during excavations within a 19th century “covert burial ground” at The Royal London Hospital in 2006, where “the unfortunates who died in the hospital, having been dissected illegally in the adjoining anatomy school, were buried by night” (Kennedy 2012, see Fowler and Powers 2012). Source: The Museum of London.
Figure 3: The tomb containing the remains of Richard III which were discovered by the University of Leicester and confirmed as belonging to the monarch in a press conference on 4 February 2013. The remains were re-interred in Leicester Cathedral on 26 March 2015. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 4: After the success of finding the remains of Richard III, the University of Leicester was commissioned by crime writer Patricia Cornwell to identify the exact burial location of the last known victim of Jack the Ripper, Mary Kelly, together with the “likely condition and survival of her remains” (University of Leicester Press Office 2017, see King et al. 2017). This was undertaken as a precursor to possible DNA analysis in a case surrounding her ‘true’ identity, following contact with author Wynne Weston-Davies who believes that Mary Jane Kelly was his great aunt, Elizabeth Weston Davies (ibid.). The project was ultimately unviable, as the location of her burial not be ascertained with any degree of certainty and would therefore have required “a herculean effort that would likely take years of research, would be prohibitively costly and would cause unwarranted disturbance to an unknown number of individuals buried in a cemetery that is still in daily use, with no guarantee of success” (ibid.). While not acknowledged by the university, efforts to exhume the remains would almost certainly have raised significant ethical questions regarding the role of mortuary archaeology in contemporary society. Source: The University of Leicester.
Figure 5: Crossbones Graveyard in Southwark, London, is the site of a post-medieval burial ground and holds the remains of an estimated 15,000 paupers—more than half of them children—who lived, worked, and died in “what was once an impoverished and notoriously lawless part of the city” (Crossbones: no date; see Harris 2010; Berns 2016; Hausner 2016). Archaeological excavations by the Museum of London Archaeology Service were conducted in the 1990s prior to the construction of London Underground’s Jubilee line, leading to the formation of the Friends of Crossbones in 1996. They have worked to protect the site and to raise awareness of its historic, cultural, and spiritual significance, and it has now become a place of pilgrimage for those seeking to remember the ‘Outcast dead’, both past and present. The graveyard gates in Redcross Way are permanently decorated by a constantly changing array of messages, tokens, and offerings Source: Katherine Crouch
Figure 6: A recovering soldier excavating the remains of a Saxon male at Barrow Clump on Salisbury Plain, with ‘Operation Nightingale’. The program uses participation in archaeological excavations as therapy for wounded personnel, assisting them in their physical and emotional recovery, while equipping them with marketable skills prior to their re-entry to civilian life (Rush 2014: 4942). Source: Corporal Kellie Williams RLC via Flickr and shared with a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No-Derivs 2.0 Generic Licence (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).
Figure 7: The site at Peasholme Green, under excavation by YAT. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 8: The site at Poulton, with students recording the human remains they have been working to excavate. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 9: A small number of the human remains held at the CHB in London. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 10: Death Salon—an initiative that holds events that “bring together intellectuals and independent thinkers engaged in the exploration of our shared mortality by sharing knowledge and art” (Death Salon: no date)—at Barts Pathology Museum. Source: Megan Rosenbloom.
Figure 11: The ‘Before I Die’ wall at the University of Manchester, March 2017, part of a global participatory public art project that encourages individuals to contemplate the issue of mortality (see Before I Die: no date). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 12: An autopsy table at *Death: The Human Experience* at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery which ran 24 October–13 March 2016. The exhibition included hundreds of objects—“from a Ghanaian fantasy coffin to a Victorian mourning dress”—to explore how humans, across cultures and time, have coped with mortality (Bristol Museums: no date). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 13: An open day at Co-op Funeralcare in Withington, Manchester, October 2012. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 14: The safety clothing worn by archaeologists during excavations at Christ Church, Spitalfields. Figure 15: A snapshot of a number of the crew taking a break. Source: English Heritage via the Archaeology Data Service.
Figure 16: Conditions inside the parochial vault at Christ Church, Spitalfields. As Crossland and Joyce (2015: 249) note in their discussion of practice within the field of forensic anthropology, the idea of disturbance in relation to the remains of the dead possesses a double valency and can be taken to refer to both the work that archaeologists do—“the ways in which we disturb the dead”—as well as the ways in which the dead may be understood to disturb the living: “by their material qualities, through hauntings, dreams, and other forms of presence; and through political claims and challenges often articulated around them”. Source: English Heritage via the Archaeology Data Service.
Figure 17: An example of the viscid fluid often found inside lead coffins. Source: English Heritage via the Archaeology Data Service.
Figure 18: Detail of a child’s hands, as discovered during the Spitalfields excavation. Source: English Heritage via the Archaeology Data Service.
Figure 19: A ‘safety coffin’ from St Bride’s Church, London, designed to thwart body-snatchers. At Spitalfields, archaeologists discovered the outer wooden coffin belonging to Mary Mason was secured with three iron straps around it (Cherryson 2010: 142), while “some of the most robust anti-resurrectionist defences” were found on the coffin of an undertaker William Horne (ibid.). His “triple shelled coffin had two iron bars running the length of coffin supporting the lid of the wooden shell, the lead coffin had two iron bars nailed to the interior, and the outer wooden coffin had two iron straps wrapped around it and secured with nails” (Molleson and Cox 1993: 205). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 20: Memorial to the ‘Alder Hey children’ in St John’s Park, Liverpool. Source: Charles01 via Wikimedia Commons Images and shared with a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence (CC BY-SA 4.0).
Figure 21: Gunther von Hagens’ *Body Worlds*, an exhibition featuring human corpses that are both dry and odourless, challenges our preconceptions about life, death, and decay. Source: Pierluigi Luceri via Flickr and shared with a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic Licence (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).
Figure 22: A *Tō Moko*—a tattooed and preserved Māori head—was repatriated from Warrington Museum and Art Gallery at the request of the Te Papa museum in October 2013, due to its cultural importance. It was not publically displayed due to its sacred status, although a mask is available to view “demonstrating the intricate facial tattoos—or *mokos*—applied to heads after death to give what the Maori consider the most sacred part of the body additional sacred powers” (BBC News 2013). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 23: A covered Egyptian mummy at the Manchester Museum in 2009. This controversial ‘experiment’ in approaches towards ‘respectfully’ displaying human remains coincided with the museum’s Lindow Man exhibition, which also drew significant criticism from the public and academics alike due to the involvement of Honouring the Ancient Dead (HAD), a pagan organisation. The covering of the mummies was interpreted as resulting from their interference and was seen to embody the “crisis of cultural authority” afflicting the heritage sector (see Exell 2016). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 24: Medical museums have faced their own claims for reburial due to changes in curatorial practice, as in the case of Mary Bateman (1768–1809), or the ‘Yorkshire Witch’, who was hanged for murder and subsequently dissected. Her remains, photographed here in 2010 and on loan from the University of Leeds, had been displayed at the Thackray Museum since it opened in 1997. In July 2015, the remains were removed from display—to be returned to the University of Leeds—due to concerns from curatorial staff that the display was “incompatible with current best practice”, together with a complaint from a member of the public claiming to be a relative who was unhappy with the way the remains had been displayed (Solchaga 2015). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 25: Museum curators have increasingly recognised that their display practices should accord ‘respect’ to both the living and the dead. As a consequence, signs warning museum visitors that human remains are present in their displays are now increasingly common, as with this example at Jewry Wall Museum, Leicester. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 26: Visitor feedback during the Manchester Museum’s consultation in 2009 about the way in which it displayed its collection of human remains. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 27: The now iconic image of the skeleton of Richard III, discovered by the University of Leicester in 2013. Source: The University of Leicester via Flickr and shared under an Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic Licence (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).
Figure 28: The remains of ‘Charlie’, the name given to a Neolithic skeleton of a three-year-old child found near the stone circle at Avebury and subject of Paul Davies’ campaign for reburial. Source: Zoomey2 via Flickr Commons and shared with a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic Licence (CC BY-SA 2.0).
Figure 29: The remains of Lindow Man—an Iron Age bog body, discovered on Lindow Moss, Cheshire in 1984—on display in the British Museum in 2013. In 2008, he was briefly ‘repatriated’ to the Manchester Museum for a controversial exhibition that prominently featured the neo-pagan ‘voice’ alongside that of the museum and other experts. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 30: The excavation of over 300 sets of nineteenth century remains is screened from view using a scaffolded tent on Cross Street, Manchester, in 2015 (see BBC News 2014, 2015; Cox 2015). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 31: Inside Europe’s oldest surviving operating theatre which, dating to 1822, is housed within the attic of an 18th century church in London (The Old Operating Theatre: no date). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 32: An archaeologist with YAT excavating a skull and delicately releasing it from the grip of a root system. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 33: Students excavating a burial at Poulton. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 34: Human remains drying inside YAT’s warehouse, separated according to their skeleton number which denotes their new status as archaeological evidence. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 35: Charnel recovered from site with YAT, in which it has been treated in the same way as other bulk finds. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 36: Articulated skeletons packed within boxes at YAT’s warehouse. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 37: Late Neolithic (c.3000–2400BC) cremation burial found during excavations near Old Sarum, Wiltshire. Both the academic literature and museum displays collude in the marginalisation of cremation within the archaeological record relating, perhaps, to practitioners’ inability to relate such remains to a human source, for they are both fluid and dry, “being of the person and of the corpse - and yet bearing little sensory resemblance to either” (Prendergast et al. 2006: 884). Source: Wessex Archaeology via Flickr and shared with a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic Licence (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).
Figure 38: Inside the ‘Bone Cabin’ at Poulton, where students learn to identify human remains, comparing excavated remains with ‘standard’ examples inside text books. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 39: Students learn that the archaeological reconfiguration of the human body requires the re-naming of its constituent parts. Source: The Poulton Project.
Figure 40: There is no nationally applied standard for archaeological recording on site and every archaeological unit has a slightly different approach, although most recording systems are broadly similar in principle—the differences exist in layout of the various recording forms and some of the terminology used (Schofield et al. 2011: 143). Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 41: Recording a burial on site with YAT, requiring the use of a specific visual shorthand. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 42: Images taken from students’ recording sheets at Poulton, revealing subtle differences between individuals in how they see the same set of remains. Source: The Poulton Project.
Figure 43: Using rectified photography to record the position of a skull. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 44: A student at Poulton demonstrating the way in which bags are marked according to the skeletal element they contain. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 45: An archaeologist with YAT in the process of lifting and bagging human remains. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 46: The reconstructed burial of 'Glen Parva Lady', a Saxon woman who died around 500–550 AD and who was buried with an array of grave goods. The remains, presented as they were discovered, are now on display at Jewry Wall Museum Leicester. Source: Katherine Crouch.
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Figure 52: Tools used in excavating human remains. Source: Katherine Crouch.
**Figure 53:** An osteologist measuring a patella. Source: Wessex Archaeology via Flickr and shared with a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic Licence (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).
Figure 54: Students at Poulton using their own bodies to learn about the constituent parts of the human skeleton, drawing a direct link between the past and the present. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 55: Osteologist Jo Appleby laying out the left arm of Richard III on the CT scanner at Leicester Royal Infirmary. Source: University of Leicester via Flickr and shared with a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic License (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).
Figure 56: The coffin containing the remains of Richard III makes its way through the streets of Leicester, ahead of the king’s re-interment at Leicester Cathedral on 26 March 2015. Source: Katherine Crouch.
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Figure 58: A skull in the process of being excavated on site with YAT, with a ‘painful’ intrusion of a root system. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 59: A student excavating human remains at Poulton while wearing nitrile gloves. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 60: Students excavating a burial at Poulton. The discovery of a skull in the area of the chest unsettled the diggers, due to its unanticipated nature. Accordingly, to account for its presence, they proposed a series of imaginative scenarios, many of which involved murder and decapitation. The skull, of course, belonged to another burial. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 61: A skeleton with teeth in excellent condition from Peasholme Green, a site comparable in date to Poulton. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 62: The excavated remains of a juvenile at Poulton. Source: Katherine Crouch.
**Figure 63 and 64:** An installation in Manchester city centre in October 2016 designed to raise awareness of stillbirth in the UK. The number ‘3254’ is made from hospital wristbands, with each one featuring the name of a baby ‘born still’ in 2014. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 65: Floral tributes left at St Anne’s Square, Manchester, after the terrorist attack on the Manchester Arena on 22 May 2017. The public response to the incident was inarguably heightened by the deliberate targeting of children and young people. Source: Katherine Crouch.
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Source: The Poulton Project.
Figure 67: An archaeologist with YAT lifting the remains of a child. Source: Katherine Crouch.
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Figure 72: The burial of a juvenile at Poulton, alongside charnel. Source: Katherine Crouch
Figure 73 and 74: A collection of charnel at St Leonard’s ossuary, Hythe. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 75 and 76: A skeleton with 'legs' that fall beyond the limits of the trench on site with YAT. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 77: Archaeological human remains may serve as powerful reminders of one’s own mortality, acting as a corporeal *memento mori*, while representing a material form of immortality. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 78: Multiple skeletons under excavation with YAT, as practitioners work to ‘clear’ the site of human remains. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 79: The end of the excavation at Peasholme Green and the JCB moves on to the site. Source: Katherine Crouch.
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Figure 82: Archaeologists working to record a suspected 1665 Black Death pit unearthed at the Crossrail Liverpool Street site. Source: Crossrail.
Figure 83: Archaeologists with YAT excavating human remains behind screens. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 84: A display board informing the public about the history of the site under excavation. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Figure 85: The 3D-printed model of Richard III on display at the Richard III Visitor Centre. Source: Katherine Crouch. Figure 86: The projection of Richard III’s skeletal remains—in the position they were found—in the original grave at the Richard III Visitor Centre. Source: Katherine Crouch.
Appendix 2

Screenshots from Facebook

Screenshot 1: Comments from the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) Facebook group.
Screenshot 2: Comments from British Archaeology Jobs Resource (BAJR) Facebook group.
Screenshot 3: Comments from the British Archaeological Jobs and Resources (BAJR) Facebook page.
Screenshot 4: Comments from British Archaeological Jobs and Resources (BAJR) Facebook page.
Appendix 3

List of individuals interviewed/named in study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Formally interviewed</th>
<th>Appendix No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>Former commercial archaeologist</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Research archaeologist (affiliated with Operation Nightingale)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Adult learner</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina</td>
<td>Bioarchaeologist</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Field archaeologist</td>
<td>N – conversations in field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig</td>
<td>Commercial archaeologist</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Community archaeologist</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Museum curator</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>Masters student</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>PhD student (ostearchaeology)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Masters student</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>Masters student</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Volunteer (and former nurse)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirsty</td>
<td>Academic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
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<td>Mark</td>
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<td>Mary</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>Finds officer</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>N – conversations in field</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Field school archaeologist</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philip</td>
<td>Osteologist</td>
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<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
<td>N – conversations in field</td>
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<td>Rob</td>
<td>Commercial archaeologist</td>
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<td>Roy</td>
<td>Commercial archaeologist</td>
<td>N – conversations in field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry</td>
<td>Adult learner</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Commercial archaeologist</td>
<td>N – conversations in field</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4

Interview questions

Interview Schedule for field archaeologists/academic archaeologists

Semi-structured interviews – these are expected to last 30-60 minutes, but may take up to two hours.

Please can you describe your background in archaeology and the training/qualifications you have undertaken?

- How often do you encounter human remains in your work?
- Do you think this training has had an effect on the way you view human remains?
- When was the first time you encountered human remains?

Reflecting on current practice, can you describe to me what happens when you find human remains on site?

- Do you work alongside osteoarchaeologists? What role they play and how does this fit into the process?
- If human remains are excavated, bagged, washed and catalogued in the same way as other finds, are they in practice seen as just another artefact? Should they be treated differently?

Are there any aspects of current practice relating to the excavation of human remains that you are unhappy or disagree with?

- What is your opinion of the current legislation that applies to mortuary archaeology – specifically the re-interpretation of the Burial Act and the requirement to screen excavations that involve the recovery of human remains from view?
- What are your thoughts on the issue of reburial?
In your work with human remains, are there any examples that are particularly memorable for you in terms of how they made you feel?

How/have your feelings about the ancient dead informed aspects of display or interpretation for which you have been responsible?

What do you think the public makes of the work you do?

Why do you think mortuary archaeology is important and what role does it play in contemporary culture?

Have your colleagues or members of the public ever expressed discomfort about excavating human remains?

Have you ever felt uncomfortable about the work you do?

- Do you have experience of excavating well-preserved remains? Would you be happy to do so?
- Do you use any techniques to help you in the work you do – such as naming skeletal remains?

Do you think working as an archaeologist and with the remains of the dead has affected the way you personally feel about death?
Interview Schedule for osteoarchaeologists

Semi-structured interviews – these are expected to last 30-60 minutes, but may take up to two hours.

Please can you describe your background in osteoarchaeology and the training/qualifications you have undertaken?

• When was the first time you encountered human remains?
• Do you think this training has had an effect on the way you view human remains?
• In archaeology, human remains are viewed as both ‘objects’ to study and as the vestiges of past people…how do you view them?
• If human remains are excavated, bagged, washed and catalogued in the same way as other finds, are they in practice seen as just another artefact? Should they be treated differently?

Are there any aspects of current practice relating to the excavation of human remains that you are unhappy or disagree with?

• What is your opinion of the current legislation that applies to mortuary archaeology – specifically the re-interpretation of the Burial Act and the requirement to screen excavations that involve the recovery of human remains from view?
• What are your thoughts on the issue of reburial?

In your work with human remains, are there any examples that are particularly memorable for you in terms of how they made you feel?

How/have your feelings about the ancient dead informed aspects of display or interpretation for which you have been responsible?

What do you think the public makes of the work you do?

• Why do you think mortuary archaeology is important and what role does it play in contemporary culture?

Have your colleagues or members of the public ever expressed discomfort about excavating human remains?
Have you ever felt uncomfortable about the work you do?

- Do you have experience of working with well-preserved remains? Would you be happy to do so?
- Do you use any techniques to help you in the work you do – such as naming skeletal remains?

Do you think working as an archaeologist and with the remains of the dead has affected the way you personally feel about death?
**Interview schedule for museum curators**

Semi-structured interviews – these are expected to last 30-60 minutes, but may take up to two hours.

**Please can you describe your background in museum and the training/qualifications you have undertaken?**

- How often do you encounter human remains in your work?
- When was the first time you encountered human remains?
- Do you think this training has had an effect on the way you view human remains?
- In archaeology, human remains are viewed as both ‘objects’ to study and as the vestiges of past people…how do you view them?

**Are there any aspects of current practice relating to the curation and display of human remains that you are unhappy or disagree with?**

- What are your thoughts on the issue of reburial?

**In your work with human remains, are there any examples that are particularly memorable for you in terms of how they made you feel?**

**How/have your feelings about the ancient dead informed aspects of display or interpretation for which you have been responsible?**

**What do you think the public makes of the work you do?**

- What do you think the display of human remains achieves in contemporary culture?

**Have your colleagues or members of the public ever expressed discomfort about the display of human remains?**

**Have you ever felt uncomfortable about the work you do?**
Do you use any techniques to help you in the work you do – such as naming skeletal remains?

Do you think working closely with the remains of the dead has affected the way you personally feel about death?
Interview Schedule for students

Semi-structured interviews – these are expected to last 30-60 minutes, but may take up to two hours.

Please can you describe your background in archaeology and the training/qualifications you have undertaken?

When was the first time you encountered human remains?

Do you think your training has had an effect on the way you view human remains?

In your work with human remains, are there any examples that are particularly memorable for you in terms of how they made you feel?

What do you think the public makes of the work archaeologists do?

Why do you think mortuary archaeology is important and what role does it play in contemporary culture?

Have your colleagues ever expressed discomfort about excavating human remains?

Have you ever felt uncomfortable about the work you do?
  
  • Would the level of preservation make a difference?

Do you use any techniques to help you in the work you do – such as naming skeletal remains?

Do you think working as an archaeologist and with the remains of the dead has affected the way you personally feel about de
Appendix 5

Ethics application

Interviews-only application

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
SCHOOL OF ARTS, LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

Research Ethics Template

This form should be completed by the Principal Investigator(s), after reading the guidance notes. The ethical review will be conducted by panel members who will not necessarily be familiar with your academic discipline. The form must therefore be completed in plain, jargon-free English.

The Template is similar to the University Research Ethics Approval form in the questions it asks and the order in which it asks them. Underneath some questions, responses (in red) outline the research activities covered by the Template that have been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee. The responses in red must not be altered in any way. Your task here is to indicate which activities apply to your research and add a brief explanatory note. Some questions have been left unanswered – please answer all questions on the form, even if the answer if ‘not applicable’.

Completed applications must be signed by the member of academic staff or (where the Template is for postgraduate research) a research supervisor and sent to the School Research Office. An attachment to an email is acceptable in place of a hard copy (where the application is for postgraduate research, the supervisor’s signature must be pasted into the application, and the supervisor must be cc’d in to the email). The application should be sent preferably as a single pdf file containing all supplementary documents. Please ensure that all relevant supporting documents are submitted as your application will not be otherwise considered complete and approval will be delayed.

Your application will be considered at the next School Research Ethics committee. Subject to workload and demand, applications may also be considered outside of meetings. Dates of committee meetings can be obtained from the School Research Office.

This Template allows the School’s Research Ethics Panel to approve staff and postgraduate research that:
• Engages with healthy adults;
• Engages with healthy children and young people in a professional setting accredited to work with children and young people, such as a cultural institution, school or youth club, and only when the child is accompanied by a parent/carer or professional with a duty of care;
• Follows standard procedures and research methods relevant to its discipline;
• Does not require research participants to provide personal and sensitive information likely to lead to significant levels of distress (the research topics are either not contentious or sensitive at all, or a reasonable person would agree the topic is of legitimate interest and may result in distress in rare instances);
• Presents a minimal level of risk to researchers and/or research participants.

If your research project does not fit with the Template, then a University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) ethical approval form must be completed. This must be reviewed by the School’s Research Ethics Panel before being referred to UREC for approval.

Please refer to the School and University research ethics websites prior to filling in the SALC Ethics Template or UREC ethical approval form.
SECTION A – Administrative information

1. Title of the research:
Digging up the dead: the impact of mortuary archaeology upon its practitioners

2. Investigator(s) (nb. In the case of postgraduate student applications the supervisor is always the joint investigator):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Supervisor/Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Miss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surname</td>
<td>Crouch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First name</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer in Archaeology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>BA (Hons) Art and Archaeology of the Ancient World</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MA Museum Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>School/Unit</td>
<td>Department of Archaeology, School of Arts, Languages</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School and Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Address</td>
<td>[REDACTED]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address</td>
<td><a href="mailto:katherine.crouch@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk">katherine.crouch@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>[REDACTED]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Subject area contact (if applicable):

Name: N/A
Post: N/A
Email address: N/A
4. Is this study, or any part of this study a student project? Yes

If Yes what degree is it for? PhD in Archaeology, 3 years full-time.

5. Please provide the names and email addresses of any academic staff or students involved, other than those named at 2 above:
SECTION B – Details of Project

6. When will the data collection take place?

Start date: 19/11/13

End date: 01/09/14

I plan to conduct qualitative interviews with archaeology and museum professionals throughout the academic year, but dates will be dependent on their availability.

7. Where will the data collection take place?

The data collection takes place in one or more of the following: (Tick all that apply)

- In a public space, building or institutional setting (for example, a high street, campus, cultural institution or private residence) in the UK. The School’s generic risk assessment for off-site research in the UK has been reviewed and approved by the researcher and supervisor (for postgraduate research) and appended to this application.

- In a public space, building, or institutional setting (for example, a high street, campus, cultural institution or private residence) in an international setting not on the list of countries/regions that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against ‘all or all but essential travel’ to. The School’s generic risk assessment for off-site research in low risk international settings has been reviewed and approved by the researcher and supervisor (for postgraduate research) and appended to this application.

- Where data collection takes place in an institutional setting, approval from the host site has been sought, and a letter of support is appended to this application.

- In an online environment.

Please describe where your data collection will take place (be specific – for example, give names of institutions and community sites):

Interviews will take place at the participant’s place of work or another mutually-agreed public/semi-public location. These will include museums; universities, local authorities; commercial archaeology units and archaeological sites.

8. What is the principal research question?

The aim of this project is to explore the role of mortuary archaeology and human remains in contemporary British culture – from excavation to exhibition – and the impact of this work upon the professionals who both unearth and ‘re-wrap’ the bones of the ancient dead for
public consumption. In short, I will be investigating the attitudes and responses of professional archaeology and museum staff towards ‘digging up the dead’. The objectives are to:

- Critically assess the extent to which the professional training and experiences of archaeologists and museum staff affect both their attitudes towards archaeological human remains and what may be considered as ‘appropriate’ treatment.
- Examine to what extent learning to think and ‘see’ as an archaeologist institutionalises specific attitudes towards death and the dead and whether achieving a level of professionalism and expertise means subjugating emotional connections to the past.
- Investigate the impact of the physical, material and temporal qualities of human remains upon professionals, the ‘coping mechanisms’ they employ in breaking the ‘taboo’ of disturbing the dead and the impact of this work upon personal understandings of mortality.
- Assess how the attitudes, behaviours and professional practices of archaeology and museum staff impact upon the construction of archaeological knowledge, the narratives that produced for public dissemination and popular perceptions of mortuary archaeology.

9. What is the academic justification for the research? (Must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

Over the past 30 years, a bewildering array of claims and controversies have surrounded the dead – ancient, historic and contemporary – plunging British archaeology into a series of ‘crises’, pertaining not only to the legislative context in which archaeologists are licensed to excavate human remains, but also determining whether such discoveries may be curated for the purposes of research, education and display. As such, a large body of scholarly literature has emerged that engages with the ethics and politics of excavating, studying and displaying human remains (Bahn 1984; Ganiaris and Calver 1999; Swain 2002; Curtis 2003; Fforde 2004; Goodnow 2006; Teague 2007; Moore and Brown 2007; Kennedy 2008; Atkinson 2010), but which has also obscured larger questions surrounding how mortuary archaeology interacts and intersects with contemporary society and its attitudes and practices surrounding death, dying and the dead.

In recent years, scholarly interest in contemporary discourses of mortality has become increasingly popular, yet archaeologists, despite the intimate nature of their work, have been noticeably reticent to disclose how their own perceptions of death are shaped by their experiences – both fascinating and disquieting – of working with the dead. At the heart of this investigation is the study of the attitudes expressed towards human remains by the archaeology and heritage professionals who not only unearth the dead, but ‘re-wrap the bones’ for public consumption. This is timely and important research, for reluctance by the profession to engage with issues of mortality may have far-reaching consequences and which, it may be argued, is reflective of wider social anxieties about death, dying and the dead to be found in contemporary Britain.
10. Summary of the design and methodology of the planned research *(Tick all that apply).*

Please give a summary of the design and methodology of the planned research, including a brief explanation of the theoretical framework that informs it. It should be clear exactly what will happen to the research participant, how many times and in what order. Describe any involvement of research participants or communities in the design of the research. *(This section must be completed in language comprehensible to the lay person and should be no longer than half a page. If there is a full research proposal or protocol it can be appended to the application, but it does not replace the information given in this section):*

**This is the first of a two-stage application I will be making to the Research Ethics committee. Due to changes in methodology that require further research, a second application will be submitted at a later date. This will detail the complementary research method that I intend to use which I anticipate will be ethnographic fieldwork based at an archaeological site in the UK.**

I intend to use qualitative interviews in my research with human subjects, which will be conducted with a cohort of practitioners drawn from the archaeology and museum professions (field archaeologists, osteoarchaeologists, archaeology students, museum curators), who have experience of working with archaeological human remains. They will be identified through a method of ‘purposive sampling’, whereby a researcher selects participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research question. This will be combined with ‘snowball sampling’, in which these contacts are then used to establish connections with other suitable participants. I will contact all potential interviewees by email to enquire as to whether they would be amenable to participating in my study and attach a participant information sheet that will explain the main aspects of the research project.

Interviews are expected to take approximately 30 minutes, however, if interviewees wish to talk for longer than this can be accommodated. In accordance with School guidance, however, these will take no longer than two hours. All interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and, following standard qualitative research techniques, interviews will be semi-structured so as to encourage a more informal, conversational approach that will allow individuals the freedom to express their thoughts and describe their experiences. I will be asking individuals to reflect upon aspects of professional practice, legislation and best practice, as well as more personal opinions and feelings which arise from their engagement in working with human remains. I will also ask them to reflect on the impact of mortuary archaeology on members of the profession or general public with whom they work or encounter e.g. on site, within a museum context or in a research environment.

Interviews will be conducted at the place of work (or another mutually convenient public/semi-public location) of those who agree to be interviewed. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed prior to analysis using computer software. I will endeavour to transcribe all interviews personally, as it represents an act of interpretation, but accept that some professional help may also be required. The transcription process will see the interview data anonymised through the use of codes and pseudonyms will be used throughout the thesis and any publications that arise as a result.
I will also be keeping a ‘fieldwork diary’ throughout the period of data collection that will be used to record not only theoretical, analytical and methodological notes, but also my reflections on the reactions and responses of my interviewees.

11. How has the scientific quality of the research been assessed? *(Tick all that apply)*

- [x] Internal review (e.g. involving colleagues, academic supervisor)
- [ ] Review within a multi-centre research group
- [ ] Independent external review
- [ ] Review within a commercial company
- [ ] None external to the investigator
- [ ] Other, e.g. in relation to methodological guidelines *(give details below)*

*If relevant, describe the review process and outcome. If the review has been undertaken but not seen by the researcher, give details of the body which has undertaken the review:*

12.1 Does the research involve the administration of any physically invasive procedures, or physical or psychological testing? *(Please tick all that apply)*

- [x] The research does not involve the administration of any physically invasive procedures, or physical or psychological testing.

12.2 Does the research involve interviewing participants or focus groups?

Yes

If No, proceed to 12.3

If Yes, please describe briefly how they will be conducted *(tick all that apply)*

- [x] The research involves interviews, elicited conversations and/or focus groups with adults or children (in an accredited institutional setting and in the presence of carers or professionals with a duty of care) who have given informed consent to take part in the research (this may include online interviews as well as face to face interviews).
- [ ] The topic guide for the interview, focus group or elicited conversation is appended to this application.
- [x] This research does not require the disclosure of personal, potentially distressing information or any risk of disclosure of illegal activities.

Please expand on the use of interviews, elicited conversation and/or focus groups in your research:
A series of semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a minimum of 20 heritage professionals to gain some insight into their thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards the practice of mortuary archaeology in the UK. These will be audio-recorded and last no longer than two hours.

Interviewees will all be aged 18 and over and will not be drawn from any vulnerable groups. They will all have some degree of experience of working with archaeological human remains, although this will vary considerably between individuals, ranging from just a few weeks (as part of a field school) to many years (as in the case of those employed in the sector). It is this variation and the impact of experience and training upon heritage professionals and their practice of mortuary archaeology that is of interest to this study.

As such, all interviewees will either be, or have been, engaged in employment in the heritage sector that has brought them into contact with archaeological human remains (field archaeologists, osteoarchaeologists, university lecturers, museum curators, etc.) or will be studying towards an academic qualification in archaeology in which they have excavated or handled archaeological human remains (BA, MA, PhD).

12.3 Does the research involve the administration of questionnaires?
No

If No, proceed to 12.4

If Yes, please describe the process of delivery and collection (please tick)

☐ The research involves the administration of questionnaires with adults and children (in an accredited institutional setting and in the presence of carers or professionals with a duty of care) who have given informed consent to take part in the research (this may include postal or online questionnaires as well as those that require face to face contact).

☐ A copy of a draft questionnaire is appended to this application.

Please expand on your use of questionnaires:

12.4 Is statistical sampling relevant to this research?
No

If No, proceed to 12.5

If Yes, please answer the following questions:
12.5.1 Has the protocol submitted with this application been the subject of review by a statistician independent of the research team? Select one of the following:

☐ Yes – copy of review enclosed
☐ Yes - details of review available from [give contact details]
☐ No – justify below

12.4.2 If relevant, specify the statistical experimental design and why it was chosen.

12.5 If you are not using statistical sampling how was the number of participants decided upon?

Formal sample size calculation is not relevant to this kind of qualitative research, which will not be subject to statistical analysis and which uses a snowball sampling strategy.

12.6 Has the research methodology and/or the statistical basis been the subject of a review independent of the research team? (Select one of the following)

☐ Yes – copy of review enclosed
☐ Yes details of review available from the following individual or organisation [give contact details below]
☑ No – justify below

This research does not involve statistical analysis.

12.7 Describe the methods of analysis (statistical or other appropriate methods, e.g. for qualitative research) by which the data will be evaluated to meet the study objectives.

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed (by myself where possible, but additional professional assistance may be necessary) using computer software, such as QSR NVivo. I intend to use this software to facilitate analysis of the discourses surrounding the role of the archaeological investigation of death and human remains in contemporary British culture.

Reflections on interviews will be recorded in extensive field notes which will later be subject to further analysis.

13.1 What do you consider to be the main ethical issues which may arise with the proposed study? Tick all that apply.

☒ Issues of informed consent - research participants’ awareness of the reasons why the research is taking place and what will happen to information they provide.
Issues of confidentiality - research participants may feel that their views or identities will be exposed in undesired ways.

Where researchers are engaged in projects in sites outside of the University, there are additional risks relating to personal safety of the researcher.

Research participants may find research activities tiring or intrusive.

The research does not explore topics that are likely to cause distress, because they are delving into traumatic personal histories or experiences for example. However, some topics may be explored - for example, explorations of religious beliefs and practices, the representation of specific communities in art and literature, questions of cultural difference, the production and reception of provocative exhibitions or performances - may provoke strong feelings in respondents.

Issues of race, culture and gender may also impact on the safety of researchers.

The research takes place across cultural boundaries, presenting specific challenges relating to communication and cultural awareness.

The research will not carry risk of criminal or other disclosures requiring action (for example, involving safeguarding of children or vulnerable/dependent adults).

Please expand on the main ethical issues raised by your research. If relevant, explain how the topics your research addresses may provoke strong responses in participants and any other aspects of your research that presents particular risks:

The main ethical issues relating to the proposed study are typical of those that arise from qualitative social research. They surround the process of obtaining informed consent and protecting participants from intrusion, discomfort and/or inconvenience. As such, informed consent will be sought from all interviewees and measures put in place to ensure that interviews are conducted professionally and sensitively.

13.2 What steps will be taken to address the issues raised in question 13.1?

A participant information sheet, following the University of Manchester proforma for participant information sheets, has been developed for the research project and is attached here. This will be given to all research participants, be written succinctly and in layperson’s terms and will include:

- The name and contact details of the researcher (University email, address and phone numbers only)
- An explanation of the research aims and what the research will achieve
- The reasons why the research participant has been approached
- The activities that the research participant will engage in, where these will take place and how long it will take, including brief details of the kinds of questions that might be asked (especially those questions that may provoke strong responses)
- A description of what happens to the data collected
The likely outputs of the research
A statement clarifying the limits of anonymity and confidentiality offered
A statement emphasising that the participant is free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason
A statement of payment (where appropriate)
The name and contact details of the supervisor and the University of Manchester Research Governance office

- Participants will give written or verbal consent to participate in the study after they have reviewed the participant information sheet. Where written consent is requested, a consent form is attached here.

- Where projects have multiple stages, informed consent will be obtained for each phase of the work.

- Postgraduate researchers will attend a research ethics training session hosted by artsmethods@manchester (covering research ethics principles, risk assessments, good practice when carrying out fieldwork and working alone) and attend subject area research training sessions as relevant to their research. Attendance at artsmethods@manchester research ethics training is mandatory for postgraduate researchers.

- Where the research engages children and young people, a CRB check has been undertaken either via the University or the host institution.

- Where research participants cannot read English, the information sheet will be translated into a language understandable to them.

- Where the research takes place in a language other than English, the researcher will be fluent in that language and/or make use of professional translation and interpretation services.

- Where the research takes place across cultural differences, researchers will develop awareness of cultural norms in the research site/community and act in ways that are respectful of these at all times. Researchers will manage encounters so as to minimise power imbalances that may occur, including making research participants aware of their right to withdraw from the research without giving an explanation.

- Where a postgraduate research project is likely to provoke strong responses in a research participant, researchers will prepare themselves for adaptable and appropriate responses and decision-making through supervision and additional training (where appropriate) prior to and during the project.

- Where a research activity involves direct contact with a research participant and lasts longer than 45 minutes, participants will be offered the opportunity to take breaks.

- The research project takes place off-campus and a risk assessment is appended to this application.
Please expand on the steps you will take to address the main ethical issues raised by your research:

**Conducting interviews**

Informed consent will be sought from all interviewees and measures put in place to ensure that interviews are conducted professionally and sensitively. All interviews will be planned and conducted so as to cause the minimum of disruption and inconvenience to participants. At all times, I will refer to, and follow, the guidelines of The Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA) of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth’s “Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice” (http://www.theasa.org/ethics/Ethical_guidelines.pdf), [accessed 24/06/13]).

Potential participants in the research will be free to decline from taking part without duress, or if they agree to go ahead, to end their participation at any time without giving a reason or any detriment to themselves. Interviewees will be made aware before we begin that they have the right to decline to answer any question and are free to withdraw from the study at any time. This is particularly important as whilst individuals may agree to be interviewed, they cannot be expected to necessarily anticipate their feelings in advance about participating and the effect it may have upon them.

It is important for researchers to remember that respondents may often say something during a research interview which they would not have said in a different context. I will ask at the end of each interview whether there is anything, upon reflection, that they would like to clarify or rephrase. In order to ensure that all participants are treated fairly and equally, together with a list of key questions that will be posed to all interviewees, I will produce ‘scripts’ with which to begin and end interviews, so that all individuals are provided with the same information and interviews are standardised.

**Recording interviews**

It is accepted that the use of a digital voice recorder may worry or intimidate participants, thereby affecting the content of the interview. Whilst this is more a question of validity rather than an ethical issue, I will take all reasonable measures so as to ensure the fair treatment of all those who are willing to give up their time to contribute to my study. With this in mind, I will ensure that the recorder is placed within easy reach of the interviewee and to explain before the interview starts that they may use the pause button at any time. In this way, the interviewee is given absolute control over the recording process and they can pause or stop the recording of the session at any time they wish. I will also offer all interviewees the opportunity to listen to a play-back of the interview recording, thereby enabling them to expand on, or clarify, any points with further discussion.

**Transcribing interviews**

Coding will be used in the place of real names and personal details will be stored separately from the interviews. In the thesis and any subsequent publications, pseudonyms will be used in the place of real names. The only exception will be for individuals speaking in a
professional/official capacity where their job title or status identifies them. In such cases, this will be discussed prior to interview. If I am concerned about potential harm relating to aspects of the discussion I will raise this again with the individual concerned. It is recognised, however, that it is not always possible to maintain absolute anonymity and that the researcher has a duty to be aware of potentially negative implications for participants when referring to them in published sources.

Use of diary

Field notes are largely kept private, as it is a form of personal data, thereby ensuring some degree of confidentiality and the anonymity for the subjects they concern, however, the collection and retention of personal information in this way does compromise anonymity. Whilst I will try to ensure a degree of ambiguity, I cannot omit all personal identifying information from the field notes as this might affect features critical for analysis. Furthermore, the depersonalising effect of pseudonyms in field notes could create a barrier between me and the people I am attempting to write about. As such, all those who participate in the creation of data for my thesis will be made aware that I am keeping a fieldwork diary and that all reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that this is stored securely, protected from unauthorised access and will not be reproduced in the thesis.

14. Has this or a similar application been previously considered by a Research Ethics Committee in the UK, the European Union or the European Economic Area?

No

If Yes give details of each application considered, including:

Name of Research Ethics Committee or regulatory authority:
Decision and date taken:
Research ethics committee reference number:
SECTION C – Details of participants

15. How many participants will be recruited? *(If there is more than one group, state how many participants will be recruited in each group. For international studies, say how many participants will be recruited in the UK and in total. Please ensure you clearly state the total number of participants)*

The number of people involved in the research project has been carefully calculated to ensure that the research aims and objectives are met, and in accordance with the methodological rationale of the study. The need to cause minimum disruption to the everyday lives of those engaged in the research has been fully considered.

Please say how many participants will be recruited here, and say how you have calculated the number:

I intend to undertake a minimum of 20 recorded interviews with archaeology and museum professionals. These will be used to generate referrals for further interviews with other practitioners. A definitive number of participants cannot be given as qualitative researchers, working in the context of discovery, utilise a more open-ended approach than quantitative researchers and cannot necessarily anticipate how much data they need to gather (see Baker and Edwards (eds.) How many qualitative interviews is enough?, http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/4/how_many_interviews.pdf).

16. Age range of participants:

☑️ Participants in the study are adults.

☐ Participants in the study are children and young people, accompanied by a parent/carer or professional with a duty of care.

Please specify the precise age range of participants here:

18-65.

17. What are the principal inclusion criteria for participants? *(Please justify)*

☐ Healthy adults or children and young people who have experiences relevant to the research topic.

18. What are the principal exclusion criteria for participants? *(Please justify)*

☒ Participants unable to give informed consent, who are vulnerable or dependent (as defined by the list below), or who do not have cultural experiences relevant to the research topic.
19.1 Will the participants be from any of the following groups? *(Tick all that apply)*

☑ Adult healthy volunteers (i.e. not under medical care for a condition which is directly relevant to the application)

☑ Healthy children under 16

☐ Adults with learning difficulties

☐ Adults who have a terminal illness

☐ Adults with mental illness (particularly if detained under mental health legislation)

☐ Adults with dementia

☐ Adults in care homes

☐ Adults or children in emergency situations

☐ Prisoners

☐ Young offenders

☐ Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the researcher, e.g. students taught or examined by the researcher.

☐ Other vulnerable groups

**Please note:** If you intend to involve participants in any of the groups above that are not ticked you must apply to UREC for ethical approval.

19.2 If you will be using participants other than healthy volunteers please justify their inclusion:

Not applicable.

20.1 How will the potential participants be identified? *(Tick all that apply)*

☑ Public sources of information such as the websites of cultural institutions, online social media or professional networks.

☐ Visitors or participants identified by the institution hosting the research.

☑ University networks.

Please specify how participants will be identified:

Potential interviewees will initially be drawn from professionals I know to have experience of working with archaeological human remains. These will be a selection of personal contacts, individuals whose work I follow through social media, listings on the websites of cultural institutions and recommendations from my supervisors.
20.2 How will they be approached and by whom? Tick all that apply

☑️ Research participants will be approached by the researcher or research supervisor.

☐ Research participants will be approached by a representative of the institution hosting the research.

Please expand on your response below:

I will contact all individuals personally via email, to which will be attached an information sheet explaining more about the project. As per School recommendations, individuals will be given at least two weeks to consider my request. If I have not heard from them after this time, I will send a follow-up email to confirm whether they wish to take part.

20.3 How will they be recruited? (Where research participants will be recruited via advertisement, please append a copy to this application)

☑️ Direct email/letter from the researcher (a draft is attached to this application).

☐ Email/letter distributed by the institution hosting the research to participants (a draft is attached to this application and will be approved by a member of staff in the host site prior to dissemination). For postgraduate research, recruitment plans and accompanying documents (adverts, emails) have been subject to internal review by a supervisor.

☐ Where the research engages with professionals, recruitment may make use of professionals in managerial relationships to approach research participants. Here, research participants will be supplied with the researcher’s contact details by their manager and be given the opportunity to contact the researcher without further liaison with their manager. The participant information sheet will make it clear that their participation in the research is not a requirement of their professional duties.

☐ Advertisement placed in a public setting (an advert is attached to this application).

☑️ Where there is no reply to initial contact, the researcher will send a single reminder only to invite participation.

☐ Other (please specify):

Please expand on your recruitment plan below:

Further individuals will be recruited to the study through ‘snowball sampling’, whereby I will ask individuals at the end of their interview whether they know of any other suitable practitioners that they think may agree to an interview. As these may be unknown to me, I will ask whether it would be possible for them to put me in contact with them, unless they have a business email address, in which case I will email them myself. The process of recruitment will then follow the same procedure as stated above.
21. Will any research participants be recruited who are involved in existing research or have recently been involved in any research prior to recruitment?

Not known

(If yes, give details and justify their inclusion. If Not known, please state what steps will you take to find out)

I will ask potential participants when I make initial contact with them.

22. Will individual research participants receive reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives or benefits for taking part in this research?

No

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Where reimbursement of expenses or incentives or benefits are received, the sum reimbursed will cover out of pocket expenses and consideration of time given to participate in the study (disciplinary norms will be followed here).</th>
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If yes, indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided:

23. What is the expected total duration of participation in the study for each participant? For ethnographic research focussing on one or more groups rather than individual participants, indicate the approximate period of time over which research will focus on particular groups

The expected total duration of participation in the study for each participant is clearly indicated on the participant information sheet given to possible participants prior to taking part in the study. The duration of participation in the study for each participant is (please tick all that apply):

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<th>Questionnaires that will take no longer than one hour to complete</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews, elicited conversations and/or focus groups will take place over no longer than two hours (per sitting – some projects may involve multiple points of contact). Where a research activity lasts longer than 45 minutes, participants will be offered the opportunity to take breaks.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Observations will be conducted over a length of time appropriate to the study and within the disciplinary norms of the research.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The length of time demanded of participants of experiments related to phonetics and linguistics research will vary, but be no longer than two hours per sitting. Where a research activity lasts longer than 45 minutes, participants will be offered the opportunity to take breaks.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The length of time demanded of participants of creative practice as research – drama workshops, arts projects, exhibitions, film-making, educational interventions – that engage adults in creative explorations of a specific issue or question relevant to their setting, will vary considerably. Projects may include anything from a one-hour workshop to a weekly commitment over a specified length of time, to a week-long intensive encounter. The amount of time demanded by participants will be clearly identified on the information sheet.</td>
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Please specify the expected duration of participation in the study here:

I have estimated interviews to take approximately 30-60 minutes, but if the interviewee wishes to take longer then it may be up to two hours. If this should be the case, they will be offered a break after 45 minutes.

24. What is the potential benefit to research participants? Tick all that apply

- Increased awareness of the topic explored by the research may be experienced as of value.
- Enjoyment and increased well-being are commonly reported effects of taking part in creative practice as research.
- There is no discernable benefit to research participants.

Please expand on your response if appropriate:

Those taking part in a professional capacity may gain from the opportunity to discuss their work and, with dissemination of the results, gain wider understanding of the work they are involved in and benefit from new ideas with which to develop innovative practice.

25. Will any benefit or assistance, which the participant would normally have access to, be withheld as part of the research? Please tick:

- No benefit or assistance, which the participant would normally have access to, will be withheld as part of the research.
SECTION D – Consent

26.1 Will informed consent be obtained from the research participants? Please tick all that apply

If Yes, give details of how consent will be obtained. Give details of your experience in taking consent and of any particular steps to provide information to participants before the study takes place eg information sheet, videos, interactive material.

☑ Informed consent will be obtained from the research participants.

☐ In cases of unobtrusive observation (in art galleries or museums for example) it may not be appropriate to gain consent from each individual. In these cases, staff at the site will approve the research and information about the research will be displayed in a prominent place (via a poster for example). An information sheet will also be created to be given to participants on request.

Please expand on your response:

All interviewees will be asked for their consent. I have previously conducted qualitative interviews and obtained informed consent from individuals in my MA research.

I will explain the background to the project to potential interviewees via email in simple terms. This will include: the subject area and aims of the research; what they may be asked to do if they take part; an estimation of how much time it will involve and any other potential disturbance/inconvenience; how I will record the data; what will happen to the data; confidentiality; and the matter of remuneration. I will also provide participants with an information sheet that they may keep for future reference. Those selected for interview will be asked whether they are happy to participate. No pressure will be placed on those who decline. Those who agree will be asked to sign a form granting permission to undertake an interview which will also deal with intellectual copyright and archiving.

26.2 Will a signed record of consent be obtained?

Yes

If not, please explain why not. Please append any consent forms to this application.

☑ A record of consent in a format suitable for the research will be sought using the UREC consent form proforma adapted to the needs of the research.

☐ If it is inappropriate to ask for signed consent as a result of cultural differences, verbal consent (drawing on the statements detailed in the UREC consent form) will be recorded at the beginning of an audio-recorded interview or conversation.

Please expand on your response:

Please see attached form.
27. How long will the participant have to decide whether to take part in the research? (If less than 24 hours please justify)

☑️ The participants will have at least 24 hours after receiving information about the study to decide whether they want to take part in the research.

☐ Participants will be asked to participate in the study immediately following consent (where the research engages participants in brief one-off questionnaires and interviews, and does not collect personal information).

Please expand on your response:

Interviewees will have a minimum of two weeks to consider taking part, but the interview may take place at any time of their choosing, providing it is mutually convenient, during the academic year 2013/2014.

28. What arrangements have been made for participants who might not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information given in English, or who have special communication needs? (e.g. translation, use of interpreters etc.)

☑️ Where the research involves participants with special communication needs, a translation of the participant information sheet and appropriate communication support will be in place.

☐ Where this is not possible, lack of competence in written and spoken English will be specified under ‘exclusion criteria’ (question 18 above), and clearly indicated on adverts and information sheets.

The research does not target these groups; however, if such situations should occur then they will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
SECTION E – RISKS AND SAFEGUARDS

29. Activities to be undertaken *(Please tick all that apply)*

☐ Questionnaires with adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting). This may include postal or online questionnaires as well as those involving face to face contact.

☑ Interviews, elicited conversations and/or focus groups with adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting). This may include online interviews as well as those involving face to face contact.

☐ Observations with adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting).

☐ Experiments related to phonetics and linguistics research, including recorded listening and speech tests which may include the use of eye trackers or wearing of non-intrusive head gear, with adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting).

☐ Creative practice as research – drama workshops, arts projects, exhibitions, film-making, educational interventions, performances – that engage adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting).

☑ Reflective journaling by the researcher and/or research participants.

Please expand on your use of any of the above methods (in no more than 300 words), and attach a draft observation schedule, interview/focus group topic guide, experiment design or description of creative practice to this application:

I will be using audio-recorded semi-structured interviews which are expected to last between 30-60 minutes, but may take up to two hours. Please see the attached interview topic guide for an overview of the kinds of questions that may be asked. These are dependent on the employment and experience of the individual being interviewed and how much they wish to speak about a specific experience, encounter or aspect of the research study.

30.1 What are the potential adverse effects, risks or hazards for research participants, including potential for pain, discomfort, distress, inconvenience or changes to lifestyle for research participants? Are they any greater than those that would arise from normal social interaction?

☒ There are minimal potential adverse effect, risks or hazards for research participants but these are not greater than would arise from normal social interaction.

Please expand on your response to the above here. In particular, you might use this space to develop your response to question 13.1 above.
• Participants may feel that the research is intrusive or discomforting, although they do not have to consent to take part and are free to withdraw at any time.
• The research may cause inconvenience to participants and every effort will be made to explain the details of the project and how much time will be involved.
• Potential negative repercussions can arise with regard to a participant's personal and professional relationships as a result of what they say. Confidentiality will be used to help protect participants from such harms, with the use of coded interview transcripts and the use of pseudonyms in the place of real names. Professional interviewees will be offered the opportunity to be anonymised, yet they may retain their institutional affiliation if they wish. If they should choose this option, they will be made aware that I cannot guarantee that they will not be rendering themselves identifiable.

30.2 Could individual or group interviews/questionnaires raise any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting, or is it possible that criminal or other disclosures requiring action could take place during the study (e.g. in the application of screening tests for drugs)? Please tick

☒ Individual or group interviews/questionnaires will not raise any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting, or risk criminal or other disclosures requiring action.

☑ The research does not explore topics that are likely to cause distress because they are delving into traumatic personal histories or experiences for example. However, some topics may be explored in the research - for example, explorations of religious beliefs and practices, the representation of specific communities in art and literature, questions of cultural difference, the production and reception of provocative exhibitions or performances - may provoke strong feelings in respondents.

If you have ticked the box above, please describe the ways in which your research might provoke strong responses in research participants:

Whilst it is not my intention to instigate such emotions, an unintended consequence of conducting interviews may be reflection on aspects of death or dying that interviewees may find distressful. This may be, however, some of the most interesting data generated by the interviews and if permitted, this information may be used in an anonymised fashion to illustrate the importance of dealing with the ancient dead, in terms of reflections upon contemporary mortality.

30.3 What precautions have been taken to minimise or mitigate the risks identified above?

☑ Researchers will develop their awareness of the possible negative responses that their topics might provoke, and describe topics clearly on participant information sheets shared with participants prior to taking consent.

☑ Where a postgraduate research project is likely to provoke strong responses in a research participant, researchers will prepare themselves for adaptable and
appropriate responses and decision-making through supervision and additional training prior to and during the project.

Please expand on your response to the above here. In particular, you might use this space to develop your response to question 13.1 above.

The topic of mortuary archaeology may provoke strong feelings in respondents and I have developed an awareness of the possible negative responses that my research might provoke. As such, the participant information sheet that all interviewees will receive prior to the start of research clearly describes that whilst such effects are not intended, the potential for my questions to prompt feelings of discomfort should be given due consideration.

I have discussed my research question at length with my supervisors, who have also reviewed my detailed research plans and interview topic guides so that interview questions are phrased with tact and care. I have also undertaken appropriate training in good interview techniques so as to be able to handle delicate issues, such as those pertaining to death, dying and the dead, with sensitivity.

Furthermore, measures have put in place within the interview design to mitigate against causing offence or distress. These include: remaining alert to signs of discomfort and asking the interviewee if they would like to stop or take a break, allowing the interviewee to control the recording process by giving them access to the digital recorder and offering interviewees the opportunity to revise their interview after we have finished recording. Due consideration will be given to signposting research participants to relevant sources of support, if appropriate.

31.1 What is the potential for adverse effects, risks or hazards, pain, discomfort, distress, or inconvenience to the researchers themselves? (If any)

✔ Where researchers are engaged in projects in sites outside of the University, there are additional risks relating to personal safety. All off-site research projects will be fully risk assessed, and the University’s lone worker and fieldwork guidance will be reviewed as part of developing the risk assessment. A risk assessment is appended to this application.

Please expand on the above, in particular, specify any risks to the researcher presented by the research that are not connected with conducting research off site:

I foresee little risk of danger to myself as a researcher as I will be working in public/semi-public spaces during normal working hours with professional members of staff; however, possible risks may include trips, slips and falls; weather conditions; moving heavy boxes of material in archives or at archaeological sites; and travelling to research locations.

Furthermore, whilst I will be discussing issues of mortality with interviewees, I will be interacting with people who have agreed to participate in the study and I therefore do not anticipate the ensuing discussions I will have with practitioners will cause me distress. I have undertaken relevant and appropriate training in good interview techniques so that I am
prepared to handle sensitive topics and if I am in any discomfort or feel uneasy during the course of talking with professionals, I will end the interview early. Should any interviews lead to unexpected and unwelcome distressing experiences, I will ensure that I debrief with my supervisor and access sources of support where needed.

(Please see risk assessment for full details of risks, hazards and preventative measures).

31.2 Where will the research take place?

☑️ In a public space, building or institutional setting (for example, a high street, campus, cultural institution or private residence) in the UK or low risk international setting.

31.3 What precautions have been taken to minimise or mitigate the risks identified above? (If the research means working alone in a location which is not public, semi-public or otherwise risk-free, please describe your lone worker policy or append a copy)

☑️ A generic risk assessment has been reviewed and approved by the researcher and line manager/supervisor, and appended to this application.

32. The University will automatically provide indemnity and/or compensation for most approved studies, but you should complete the appended Ethics Insurance Assessment form and consult the University Procurement Office if necessary. If another body or institution is providing insurance or indemnity please provide details below.

☑️ A completed Ethics Insurance Assessment form has been appended to this application.

33. Please confirm that any adverse event requiring a radical change of method or design, or even abandonment of the research, will be reported to the Committee.

☑️ I confirm that any adverse event requiring a radical change of method or design, or even abandonment of the research, will be reported to the committee.
SECTION F – Data protection and confidentiality

39. Will the research involve any of the following activities at any stage (including identification of potential research participants)? (Tick all that apply)

Storage of personal data on any of the following:

- [ ] Storage of personal data on manual files
- [ ] Storage of personal data on laptops or other personal computers
- [ ] Storage of personal data on University computers
- [ ] Storage of personal data on NHS computers
- [ ] Storage of personal data on private company computers
- [ ] Use of audio/visual recording devices
- [ ] Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers
- [ ] Electronic transfer by magnetic or optical media, e-mail or computer networks
- [ ] Examination of medical records by those outside the NHS, or within the NHS by those who would not normally have access
- [ ] Sharing of data with other organisations
- [ ] Export of data outside the European Union
- [ ] Publication of direct quotations from respondents
- [ ] Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals

Further details:

Biographical data will be collected from participants subject to consent. Contact details will be taken for archaeology and museum professionals involved in the study. Data will be stored on university and personal computers/laptops. Direct quotations from respondents will be used in the thesis and/or publication and may lead to their identification. Particular care will be taken over issues of identification with regard to direct quotes.

Data will be:

- [ ] Fairly and lawfully processed.
- [ ] Processed for the purposes detailed in the information sheet only, which clearly states the limits of anonymity and confidentiality afforded to research participants.
Not be shared with any researcher or organisation other than in ways detailed on the information sheet.

40. What measures have been put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data? Give details of what encryption or other anonymisation procedures will be used and at what stage? Note: the University requires all personal data stored electronically to be held on wholly managed University servers or to be encrypted. Please tick all that apply.

Management of personal data – researcher notes, audio and audio-visual material and any other data generated as part of the research will be securely stored for the duration of the study. All computers used for storing data will be encrypted – following University of Manchester IT security and data protection guidelines.

Anonymity will be preserved with respect to stored data by the use of ID numbers and/or pseudonyms for research participants, which will only be known and available to the custodians of the data (researcher and supervisor). Details of research participants’ identities will be kept securely (in a locked drawer in an office or on an encrypted computer).

All identifiers will be removed from interview data and individuals will be anonymised through the use of codes and pseudonyms will be used in the thesis and any publications that may arise from the research. The only exceptions will relate to professionals when speaking in a public or official capacity. It is acknowledged, however, that respondents do not always wish to take advantage of anonymity. If anyone expresses a desire to be directly identified, then a written agreement will be drawn up which will set down the main terms of the research relationship. It will be pointed out that if their identity is maintained then this does not alter my freedom, as a researcher, to conduct the project objectively. Furthermore, some individuals may be happy for their institutional affiliation to be attached to their pseudonym, in which case, they will be notified through the participation information sheet that this may render them identifiable.

All interview data will be held on the University’s servers which are encrypted and password-protected.

41. Where will the analysis of the data from the study take place and by whom will it be undertaken?

By the researcher and supervisor, in a private study or workspace at the researcher’s home or at the University.

42.1 Who will control and act as the custodian for the data? Note: for a student project this must be a supervisor or a permanent member of staff
Where the research is undertaken by a postgraduate student, the supervisor named above will act as the custodian for the data. Where the research is undertaken by a member of staff, the PI named above will be the custodian of the data.

42.2 Who will have access to the data?

☑ The researchers named on this application.

Please expand on the above if you are planning to share data with institutional hosts, for example. Please justify this here (and ensure that this is clear on your participant information sheet):

42.3 Will the data be stored for use in future studies? If yes, has this been addressed in the consent process?

☐ The data will not be used in future studies.

☑ The data may be used in future studies, and the ways in which it will be used have been clearly described on the participant information sheet and addressed in the consent process.

43. For how long will the data from the study be stored?

Note: the University requires non-medical data to be held for a minimum of 5 years and medical data to be held for a minimum of 10 years after the completion of the research. Some funding bodies require storage for longer periods.

☑ The data will be stored for five years.

☐ Where the research is for a postgraduate taught Dissertation and will not lead to academic or other publication, the data will be stored for one year only.

44. What arrangements are in place to ensure participants receive any information that becomes available during the course of the research that may be relevant to their continued participation?

☑ If any information pertinent to the study becomes available as the study progresses that may be relevant to continued participation, research participants will be informed immediately and reminded that their participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw at any time.
45. What arrangements are in place for monitoring the conduct of the research by parties other than the researcher?

Will a data monitoring committee be convened?

☐ Yes

☑ Not relevant
SECTION G – Conflict of Interest

Please answer the questions in Section H as appropriate to your research project.

46.1 Will individual researchers receive any personal payment over and above normal salary and reimbursement of expenses for undertaking this research?

No

*If Yes, indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided:*

46.2 Does the principal researcher or any other investigator/collaborator have any direct personal involvement (e.g. financial, share-holding, personal relationship etc.) in the organisation sponsoring or funding the research that may give rise to a possible conflict of interest?

No

*If Yes, give details:*

47. Will the host organisation or the researcher’s department(s) or institution(s) receive any payment of benefits in excess of the costs of undertaking the research?

No

*If Yes, give details:*

SECTION H - Reporting Arrangements

Please answer the questions in Section I as appropriate to your project.

48. How is it intended the results of the study will be reported and disseminated?

(Tick as appropriate)

- Peer reviewed academic journals
- Book or contribution to a book
- Other published outlets e.g. ESRC or Cochrane Review,
- Thesis/dissertation
- Conference presentation
- Internal report
- Other e.g. deposition in University Library

49. How will the results of research be made available to research participants and communities from which they are drawn?

- Presentation to participants or relevant community groups
- Written feedback to research participants
- Other e.g. videos, interactive website

50.1 Will dissemination allow identification of individual participants?

Yes

If No, proceed to 51

If Yes, indicate how these individuals’ consent will be obtained:

Direct quotations from respondents will be used in the thesis and/or publication and may lead to the identification of individuals. Particular care will be taken over issues of identification with regard to direct quotes and pseudonyms will be used throughout the thesis. All participants will made aware that no firm guarantees of anonymity can be made but will be protected to the best of my ability during the process of gaining informed consent.
50.2 Will dissemination involve publication of extended direct quotations from identified participants and/or distribution of audiovisual media in which identified participants play leading roles?

No

If No, proceed to 52

If Yes, indicate how the participants’ possible Intellectual Property or Performance Rights in these outputs will be negotiated. Where relevant, attach a model of the release form that will be used.

☐ Some creative practice as research projects may use audio and audio-visual recordings in creative outcomes of the research (videos, performances, exhibitions). However, the leading creative input will be the researchers and all material will be used for educational and research purposes and not for commercial exploitation. This is made clear on the participant information sheet and addressed as part of the consent procedures.

If this is relevant to your research, please expand on your response below:

50.3 Are special arrangements needed to provide indemnity and/or compensation in the event of a claim by, or on behalf of, participants on grounds such as libel, breach of confidence and infringement of Intellectual Property or Performance Rights?

☑ No special arrangements to provide indemnity and/or compensation in the event of a claim by, or on behalf of, participants on grounds such as libel, breach of confidence and infringement of Intellectual Property or Performance Rights are needed.
SECTION I – Funding and sponsorship

Please answer the questions in Section J as appropriate to your research project.

51. Has external funding for the research been secured?

No

If Yes, give details of funding organisation(s) and amount secured and duration:

Organisation:

UK contact:

Amount (£):

Duration:   Months

52. Name of organisation which will act as Sponsor for the research, if other than the University:

Note: the University will normally act as Sponsor (ie responsible for the design, management and conduct of the research project by University staff and/or students), but in some cases of externally commissioned research the funder will be the Sponsor. If this is the case please provide details)
SECTION K – Confirmation of Application

Signature(s) of applicant(s):

Katherine Crouch 07/11/13

______________________________________
SIGNATURE DATE
K. Crouch

--------------------------------------------------------------
NAME AND POST OF APPLICANT (PLEASE PRINT)
Melanie Giles 07/11/13

______________________________________
SIGNATURE DATE

--------------------------------------------------------------
NAME AND POST OF APPLICANT (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature by School Research Director (on behalf of the Head of School)

I approve the submission of this application

______________________________________
SIGNED BY OR ON BEHALF OF HEAD OF SCHOOL Date

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)
Ethnographic fieldwork application

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
SCHOOL OF ARTS, LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

Research Ethics Template

This form should be completed by the Principal Investigator(s), after reading the guidance notes. The ethical review will be conducted by panel members who will not necessarily be familiar with your academic discipline. The form must therefore be completed in plain, jargon-free English.

The Template is similar to the University Research Ethics Approval form in the questions it asks and the order in which it asks them. Underneath some questions, responses (in red) outline the research activities covered by the Template that have been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee. The responses in red must not be altered in any way. Your task here is to indicate which activities apply to your research and add a brief explanatory note. Some questions have been left unanswered – please answer all questions on the form, even if the answer is ‘not applicable’.

Completed applications must be signed by the member of academic staff or (where the Template is for postgraduate research) a research supervisor and sent to the School Research Office. An attachment to an email is acceptable in place of a hard copy (where the application is for postgraduate research, the supervisor’s signature must be pasted into the application, and the supervisor must be cc’d into the email). The application should be sent preferably as a single pdf file containing all supplementary documents. Please ensure that all relevant supporting documents are submitted as your application will not be otherwise considered complete and approval will be delayed. Please use an alternative font for your responses (this facilitates the reviewing process).

Your application will be considered at the next School Research Ethics Committee. Subject to workload and demand, applications may also be considered outside of meetings. Dates of committee meetings can be obtained from the School Research Office.

This Template allows the School’s Research Ethics Panel to approve staff and postgraduate research that:

- Engages with healthy adults;
- Engages with healthy children and young people in a professional setting accredited to work with children and young people, such as a cultural institution, school or youth club, and only when the child is accompanied by a parent/carer or professional with a duty of care;
- Follows standard procedures and research methods relevant to its discipline;
- Does not require research participants to provide personal and sensitive information likely to lead to significant levels of distress (the research topics are either not contentious or sensitive at all, or a reasonable person would agree the topic is of legitimate interest and may result in distress in rare instances);
- Presents a minimal level of risk to researchers and/or research participants.

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If your research project does not fit with the Template, then a University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) ethical approval form must be completed. This must be reviewed by the School’s Research Ethics Panel before being referred to UREC for approval.

Please refer to the School and University research ethics websites prior to filling in the SALC Ethics Template or UREC ethical approval form.
SECTION A – Administrative information

1. Title of the research:

Digging up the dead: the impact of mortuary archaeology on its practitioners

2. Investigator(s) (nb. In the case of postgraduate student applications the supervisor is always the joint investigator):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Supervisor/Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Miss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surname</td>
<td>Crouch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First name</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer in Archaeology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>BA (Hons) Art and Archaeology of the Ancient World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA Museum Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/Unit</td>
<td>Department of Archaeology, School of Arts, Languages and Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Address</td>
<td>[REDACTED]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address</td>
<td><a href="mailto:katherine.crouch@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk">katherine.crouch@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>[REDACTED]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Subject area contact (if applicable):

   Name: N/A

   Post: N/A

   Email address: N/A
4. Is this study, or any part of this study a student project? Yes

If Yes what degree is it for? PhD Archaeology, full time

5. Please provide the names and email addresses of any academic staff or students involved, other than those named at 2 above:
SECTION B – Details of Project

6. When will the data collection take place?

Start date: 01/07/2014
End date: 30/09/2014

7. Where will the data collection take place?

The data collection takes place in one or more of the following: *(Tick all that apply)*

- In a public space, building or institutional setting (for example, a high street, campus, cultural institution or private residence) in the UK. The School’s generic risk assessment for off-site research in the UK has been reviewed and approved by the researcher and supervisor (for postgraduate research) and appended to this application.

- In a public space, building, or institutional setting (for example, a high street, campus, cultural institution or private residence) in an international setting not on the list of countries/regions that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against ‘all or all but essential travel’ to. The School’s generic risk assessment for off-site research in low risk international settings has been reviewed and approved by the researcher and supervisor (for postgraduate research) and appended to this application.

- Where data collection takes place in an institutional setting, approval from the host site has been sought, and a letter of support is appended to this application.

- In an online environment.

Please describe where your data collection will take place (be specific – for example, give names of institutions and community sites):

Data collection will take place with the following organisations:

The Poulton Project - an archaeological field school in Cheshire
York Archaeology Trust – a commercial archaeology unit who will be excavating a Medieval cemetery site in York
Museum of London’s Centre for Human Bioarchaeology – a repository of archaeological human remains

8. What is the principal research question?

The aim of this project is to explore the role of mortuary archaeology and human remains in contemporary British culture – from excavation to exhibition – and the impact of this work upon the professionals who both unearth and ‘re-wrap’ the bones of the ancient dead for public consumption. The objectives are to:
• Critically assess the extent to which the professional training and experiences of archaeologists and museum staff affect both their attitudes towards archaeological human remains and what may be considered as ‘appropriate’ treatment.

• Examine to what extent learning to think and ‘see’ as an archaeologist institutionalises specific attitudes towards death and the dead and whether achieving a level of professionalism and expertise means subjugating emotional connections to the past.

• Investigate the impact of the physical, material and temporal qualities of human remains upon professionals, the ‘coping mechanisms’ they employ in breaking the ‘taboo’ of disturbing the dead and the impact of this work upon personal understandings of mortality.

• Assess how the attitudes, behaviours and professional practices of archaeology and museum staff impact upon the construction of archaeological knowledge, the narratives that produced for public dissemination and popular perceptions of mortuary archaeology.

9. What is the academic justification for the research? (Must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

Over the past 30 years, a bewildering array of claims and controversies have surrounded the dead – ancient, historic and contemporary – plunging British archaeology into a series of ‘crises’, pertaining not only to the legislative context in which archaeologists are licensed to excavate human remains, but also determining whether such discoveries may be curated for the purposes of research, education and display. As such, a large body of scholarly literature has emerged that engages with the ethics and politics of excavating, studying and displaying human remains (Bahn 1984; Ganiaris and Calver 1999; Swain 2002; Curtis 2003; Fforde 2004; Goodnow 2006; Teague 2007; Moore and Brown 2007; Kennedy 2008; Atkinson 2010), but which has also obscured larger questions surrounding how mortuary archaeology interacts and intersects with contemporary society and its attitudes and practices surrounding death, dying and the dead.

In recent years, scholarly interest in contemporary discourses of mortality has become increasingly popular, yet archaeologists, despite the intimate nature of their work, have been noticeably reticent to disclose how their own perceptions of death are shaped by their experiences – both fascinating and disquieting – of working with the dead. At the heart of this investigation is the study of the attitudes expressed towards human remains by the archaeology and heritage professionals who not only unearth the dead, but ‘re-wrap the bones’ for public consumption. This is timely and important research, for reluctance by the profession to engage with issues of mortality may have far-reaching consequences and which, it may be argued, is reflective of wider social anxieties about death, dying and the dead to be found in contemporary Britain.

10. Summary of the design and methodology of the planned research (Tick all that apply).

Please give a summary of the design and methodology of the planned research, including a brief explanation of the theoretical framework that informs it. It should be clear exactly what will happen to the research participant, how many times and in what order. Describe any involvement of research participants or communities in the design of the research. (This section must be completed in language comprehensible to the lay person and should be no longer than
half a page. If there is a full research proposal or protocol it can be appended to the application, but it does not replace the information given in this section:

This is the second half of a two-stage application I am making to the Research Ethics Committee. Whilst I will be interviewing archaeology professionals as part of my ethnographic fieldwork, I have already received approval from the Research Ethics Committee for this aspect of the study and so any further mention of interviewing is kept relatively succinct.

This project has been designed, and will be conducted, in line with the Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice by The Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA 2011) of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth, the six core principles as set out by the Economic and Social Research Council Framework for Research Ethics (ESRC FRE 2012), as ascribed to by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Statement of Ethical Practice produced by the British Sociological Association (BSA 2002).

To gain an insight into archaeological practices and attitudes surrounding the excavation of the dead, this research projects adopts a qualitative research strategy and a mixed method approach, consisting of in-depth interviews with key professional figures (ethics approval already granted) and ethnographic fieldwork. ‘Triangulation’ between different research methods is an important aspect of qualitative research ensuring that the evidence produced is rigorous and provides a systematic basis for interpretation.

Ethnography offers the opportunity to gain first-hand observation of the specific assumptions or forms of practice that underpin the process of archaeology and the construction of archaeological knowledge. By reversing the traditional outward-looking perspective of anthropology, it is hoped to uncover what archaeologists take to be natural and self-evident. Ethnographic data is typically collected in a flexible and unstructured manner through various techniques which, for the purposes of this study, include:

- Observation at research sites – at Poulton, YAT and MOLA
- Participant observation – at Poulton and YAT
- Conversation-based interviews – at Poulton, YAT and MOLA
- Photography – Poulton, YAT and MOLA
- Reflective journaling – at Poulton, YAT and MOLA

**Observation and participant-observation**

This study will involve varying degrees of continuous observation (MOLA, Poulton and YAT) and participation-observation (Poulton and YAT). This means that I will be playing different roles on site, according to the circumstances of the situation – on some occasions, I will be purely making notes based on my observations of archaeology professionals at work, but at other times I will be actively taking part in the activities taking place on site, i.e. excavating alongside archaeologists. Extensive field notes will be produced during the course of the fieldwork period, providing a record of activities and events on site which will be subject to later analysis.

**Semi-structured interviews**

Interviews will be conducted with individuals on site, identified by their position of authority on site and/or their willingness to speak about their work. These will be structured by key research themes to aid comparison, but they will not utilise prescribed questions. Rather, interviews will take the form of a conversation, allowing participants to speak freely and openly about their
thoughts on the practice of mortuary archaeology in England. Where possible, interviews will be conducted at break times/when digging has ceased for the day, so as to avoid causing any inconvenience. Interviews will take between fifteen and thirty minutes and will be recorded through rough notes and, where appropriate, a digital recording device.

Photography

Within the context of archaeological ethnography, photography is a useful research method, drawing attention to fleeting moments, overlooked objects and to momentary situations that deserve scrutiny and critique. In this study, it is anticipated that photographs will be employed as an aide-mémoire, in which they will essentially become components of field notes, but they may also be used as sources of data in their own right. For this reason and because visual research methods raise their own issues relating to research ethics, I will follow The Visual Sociology Group’s guidelines—a study group of the BSA—which has produced a statement of ethical practice for researchers using visual methods, drawing on the BSA’s Statement of Ethical Practice.

Reflective journaling

I will also be keeping a diary for the purposes of critical reflection on the research process, its impact on participants and my own preconceptions—this is largely a personal and private document, but I will ensure that all participants are aware that such a record is being made.

11. How has the scientific quality of the research been assessed? (Tick all that apply)

☐ Internal review (e.g. involving colleagues, academic supervisor)
☐ Review within a multi-centre research group
☐ Independent external review
☐ Review within a commercial company
☐ None external to the investigator
☐ Other, e.g. in relation to methodological guidelines (give details below)

If relevant, describe the review process and outcome. If the review has been undertaken but not seen by the researcher, give details of the body which has undertaken the review:

12.1 Does the research involve the administration of any physically invasive procedures, or physical or psychological testing? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ The research does not involve the administration of any physically invasive procedures, or physical or psychological testing.
12.2 Does the research involve interviewing participants or focus groups?

☑ Yes ☐ No

If No, proceed to 12.3

If Yes, please describe briefly how they will be conducted (tick all that apply)

☑ The research involves interviews, elicited conversations and/or focus groups with adults or children (in an accredited institutional setting and in the presence of carers or professionals with a duty of care) who have given informed consent to take part in the research (this may include online interviews as well as face to face interviews).

☑ The topic guide for the interview, focus group or elicited conversation is appended to this application.

☑ This research does not require the disclosure of personal, potentially distressing information or any risk of disclosure of illegal activities.

Conversation-based interviews will be conducted with willing participants at all sites to gain some insight into the thoughts, feelings and attitudes held by individuals in relation to the practice of mortuary archaeology in the UK. These may be audio-recorded and last anywhere between fifteen and thirty minutes, depending on the participant, time available and research setting.

12.3 Does the research involve the administration of questionnaires?

☐ Yes ☑ No

If No, proceed to 12.4

If Yes, please describe the process of delivery and collection (please tick)

☐ The research involves the administration of questionnaires with adults and children (in an accredited institutional setting and in the presence of carers or professionals with a duty of care) who have given informed consent to take part in the research (this may include postal or online questionnaires as well as those that require face to face contact).

☐ A copy of a draft questionnaire is appended to this application.

Please expand on your use of questionnaires:

12.4 Is statistical sampling relevant to this research?

☐ Yes ☑ No

If No, proceed to 12.5

If Yes, please answer the following questions:
12.5.1 Has the protocol submitted with this application been the subject of review by a statistician independent of the research team? Select one of the following:

☐ Yes – copy of review enclosed
☐ Yes - details of review available from the following individual or organisation (give contact details)
☐ No – justify below

12.4.2 If relevant, specify the statistical experimental design and why it was chosen.

12.5 If you are not using statistical sampling how was the number of participants decided upon?

Formal sample size calculation is not relevant to this kind of qualitative research, which will not be subject to statistical analysis. It is not possible to estimate the number of subjects who will be involved in (participant) observation or selected for interview as, due to the nature of ethnography, this depends upon the number of individuals on site at any given time.

12.6 Has the research methodology and/or the statistical basis been the subject of a review independent of the research team? (Select one of the following)

☐ Yes – copy of review enclosed
☐ Yes details of review available from the following individual or organisation (give contact details below)
☒ No – justify below

This research does not involve statistical analysis.

12.7 Describe the methods of analysis (statistical or other appropriate methods, e.g. for qualitative research) by which the data will be evaluated to meet the study objectives.

The practices and processes of mortuary archaeology, as well the discourses surrounding it, will be observed and analysed during the course of (participant) observation. These insights will be written up as detailed field notes, which will be subject to further analysis. Recorded interviews will be transcribed and coded prior to analysis using the computer software QSR NVIVO.
13.1 What do you consider to be the main ethical issues which may arise with the proposed study? **Tick all that apply.**

- [ ] Issues of informed consent - research participants’ awareness of the reasons why the research is taking place and what will happen to information they provide.
- [ ] Issues of confidentiality - research participants may feel that their views or identities will be exposed in undesired ways.
- [ ] Where researchers are engaged in projects in sites outside of the University, there are additional risks relating to personal safety of the researcher.
- [ ] Research participants may find research activities tiring or intrusive.
- [ ] The research does **not** explore topics that are likely to cause distress, because they are delving into traumatic personal histories or experiences for example. However, some topics may be explored - for example, explorations of religious beliefs and practices, the representation of specific communities in art and literature, questions of cultural difference, the production and reception of provocative exhibitions or performances - may provoke strong feelings in respondents.

- [ ] Issues of race, culture and gender may also impact on the safety of researchers.

- [ ] The research takes place across cultural boundaries, presenting specific challenges relating to communication and cultural awareness.

- [ ] The research will not carry risk of criminal or other disclosures requiring action (for example, involving safeguarding of children or vulnerable/dependent adults).

Please expand on the main ethical issues raised by your research. If relevant, explain how the topics your research addresses may provoke strong responses in participants and any other aspects of your research that presents particular risks:

The main ethical issues relating to the proposed study are typical of those that arise from qualitative social research. They surround the process of obtaining informed consent and protecting participants from intrusion, discomfort and/or inconvenience. It is possible that discussions about mortality may be unsettling for some participants, although the research is being conducted with archaeology professionals in contexts in which the excavation and handling of human remains is taking place. Furthermore, as I will be working on busy archaeological sites and in professional environments, there are risks to my safety as a researcher in terms of workplace hazards and travelling to research locations – please see below for further discussion.
13.2 What steps will be taken to address the issues raised in question 13.1?

☒ A participant information sheet, following the University of Manchester proforma for participant information sheets, has been developed for the research project and is attached here. This will be given to all research participants, be written succinctly and in layperson’s terms and will include:

- The name and contact details of the researcher (University email, address and phone numbers only)
- An explanation of the research aims and what the research will achieve
- The reasons why the research participant has been approached
- The activities that the research participant will engage in, where these will take place and how long it will take, including brief details of the kinds of questions that might be asked (especially those questions that may provoke strong responses)
- A description of what happens to the data collected
- The likely outputs of the research
- A statement clarifying the limits of anonymity and confidentiality offered
- A statement emphasising that the participant is free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason
- A statement of payment (where appropriate)
- The name and contact details of the supervisor and the University of Manchester Research Governance office

☒ Participants will give written or verbal consent to participate in the study after they have reviewed the participant information sheet. Where written consent is requested, a consent form is attached here.

☒ Where projects have multiple stages, informed consent will be obtained for each phase of the work.

☒ Postgraduate researchers will attend a research ethics training session hosted by artsmethods@manchester (covering research ethics principles, risk assessments, good practice when carrying out fieldwork and working alone) and attend subject area research training sessions as relevant to their research. Attendance at artsmethods@manchester research ethics training is mandatory for postgraduate researchers.

☐ Where the research engages children and young people, a CRB check has been undertaken either via the University or the host institution.

☐ Where research participants cannot read English, the information sheet will be translated into a language understandable to them.

☐ Where the research takes place in a language other than English, the researcher will be fluent in that language and/or make use of professional translation and interpretation services.

☐ Where the research takes place across cultural differences, researchers will develop awareness of cultural norms in the research site/community and act in ways that are respectful of these at all times. Researchers will manage encounters so as to minimise
power imbalances that may occur, including making research participants aware of their right to withdraw from the research without giving an explanation.

☒ Where a postgraduate research project is likely to provoke strong responses in a research participant, researchers will prepare themselves for adaptable and appropriate responses and decision-making through supervision and additional training (where appropriate) prior to and during the project.

☒ Where a research activity involves direct contact with a research participant and lasts longer than 45 minutes, participants will be offered the opportunity to take breaks.

☒ The research project takes place off-campus and a risk assessment is appended to this application.

Please expand on the steps you will take to address the main ethical issues raised by your research:

Informed consent

Permissions have been sought from the ‘gatekeeper’ - the term most often used to refer to the person(s) controlling access to a location where it is hoped that research may be conducted – at all the research lists listed in this application. Even with their consent, however, access to research subjects will have to be negotiated and renegotiated with the individuals present at each site. All individuals present at the research sites will be aware that a PhD student is joining them, as the appointed ‘gatekeepers’ will inform them – either in person or via email – before I arrive on site. I have also produced an information sheet about the project, my role and what individuals can expect from participating. Where possible, this will be distributed to individuals ahead of my arrival, although I will also have copies with me on site. This will provide the first opportunity for individuals to exclude themselves from the project if they so wish, by notifying the gatekeeper of the research site.

Upon my arrival at each research site, I will introduce myself and, again, explain the details of the project. I will ask the site gatekeeper to position a poster about the project in a suitable location, where available. Again, research subjects will have a second opportunity to exclude themselves from the project, either by notifying the gatekeeper or myself. The issue of informed consent is therefore one that will be addressed throughout the duration of fieldwork, for even when it has been sought and the status of the researcher has been made explicit, it is not uncommon for participants to forget that they have an ethnographer in their midst. Furthermore, depending on the nature of the research site, individuals may come and go, thereby leading to situations where people are not immediately aware that they have become part of an ethnographic project.

As such, this project does not see the acquisition of informed consent as a ‘one-off’ event, rather it is part of an overt on-going dialogue between myself and the individuals who have agreed to participate. Acquiring informed consent is a process and one which will be under constant review during the course of the research. I will ensure to keep everyone informed to the best of my ability about the nature and progress of the project by actively engaging in conversation about it and making myself available to answer questions. Individuals will be free to exclude themselves from participating or to withdraw from the study at any time and I will remain alert to signs of distress or discomfort.
Where individuals agree to a recorded interview, written consent will be obtained (see attached form), as these are likely to result in the use of extended direct quotations in my thesis and any publications that may arise. Visual research methods also raise specific issues pertaining to research ethics and in a study that rests on anonymity and confidentiality, there is a conflict in using photographs that clearly feature clearly identifiable individuals. Wherever possible, I will endeavour to use photographs that focus primarily on hands and the backs of people engaged in their work, but where this is not possible, I will ensure that I receive verbal consent (see attached form) from featured individuals that they give their consent to their image being taken and used in the thesis and any resulting publications. At all times, I will follow The Visual Sociology Group’s guidelines—a study group of the BSA—which has produced a statement of ethical practice for researchers using visual methods, drawing on the BSA’s Statement of Ethical Practice.

**Issues of confidentiality**

Potential negative repercussions can arise with regard to participant’s personal and professional relationships as a result of what they say to me on site/during interviews. Confidentiality will be used to help to protect participants from such harms. Pseudonyms will be used in place of all real names in the thesis and any resulting publications, with interview data stored separately from personal details. In the case of all research participants it is recognised that it is not always possible to maintain absolute anonymity and that the researcher has a duty to be aware of potentially negative implications for participants when referring to them in published sources.

All participants will be made aware that I am keeping field notes and a research diary and that for practical reasons, these cannot use pseudonyms, but neither will they be reproduced in their raw form in the thesis. Field notes and diaries are largely kept private, as they are a form of personal data, thereby ensuring some degree of confidentiality and anonymity for the subjects they concern, however, the collection and retention of personal information in this way does impair my ability to be able to make a guarantee of this. To try and alleviate this situation, notes and diaries made in the field will take the form of jottings in a notebook, which will be ‘worked up’ and expanded upon in an electronic version, stored on the university’s encrypted and password-protected server.

**Personal safety of the researcher**

For ethnographic researchers, physical well-being and safety are paramount concerns. I will be sure to follow the university’s lone-working policy and ensure that I leave the details of my whereabouts with a ‘buddy’ and check in daily with them. I will also follow all instructions, health and safety advice, guidance and codes of conduct given to me at each site whilst on fieldwork.

Whilst I do not anticipate feeling discomfort at being present whilst human remains are excavated – I have a long-standing interest in mortuary archaeology and have worked with collections of archaeological human remains in a museum context – the research experience may yet throw up any manner of twists and turns. In engaging in reflexive practice and making use of note-taking and diary-keeping, I will have a space for reflection in which to work through any issues as they arise, but I will also flag up any such issues with the gatekeeper of the site and with my supervisor, who I will keep in touch with regularly – and who will be visiting me – during the course of fieldwork.
Intrusion

It is acknowledged that participants may feel that this research project is intrusive and that my presence – particularly on archaeological sites – is an inconvenience. Every effort will be made to minimise this by explaining as fully as possible what will be involved with this project before I arrive, and during the course of fieldwork, as well as by following the site gatekeeper’s recommendations and instructions – i.e. whether it is appropriate to participate in excavation or whether it would be better if I take a step back. I hope by using participant-observation as a research method and joining in with life on site as fully as I can, that I can overcome any issues of distrust and unease that the presence of a researcher can bring.

Distress

Whilst I will be on site with professionals who are excavating/studying human remains, it is possible that some individuals may still be unsettled by discussing issues of mortality. I will remain alert to this at all times and halt any conversation/interview if it becomes obvious that it is having a negative effect on the participant and inform the gatekeeper of the site, where appropriate. I have received training in interview techniques and have produced a basic interview schedule, in which questions are phrased with tact and care, and have familiarised myself with sources of support that I can refer participants to, if needed.

14. Has this or a similar application been previously considered by a Research Ethics Committee in the UK, the European Union or the European Economic Area?

No

If Yes give details of each application considered, including:

Name of Research Ethics Committee or regulatory authority:
Decision and date taken:
Research ethics committee reference number:
SECTION C – Details of participants

15. How many participants will be recruited? (If there is more than one group, state how many participants will be recruited in each group. For international studies, say how many participants will be recruited in the UK and in total. Please ensure you clearly state the total number of participants)

- The number of people involved in the research project has been carefully calculated to ensure that the research aims and objectives are met, and in accordance with the methodological rationale of the study. The need to cause minimum disruption to the everyday lives of those engaged in the research has been fully considered.

Please say how many participants will be recruited here, and say how you have calculated the number:

It is impossible to state how many people will be recruited for this study, due to the nature of ethnographic fieldwork. Numbers will depend entirely on how many people present at each site are willing to participate.

16. Age range of participants:

- Participants in the study are adults.

- Participants in the study are children and young people, accompanied by a parent/carer or professional with a duty of care.

Please specify the precise age range of participants here:

18-65

17. What are the principal inclusion criteria for participants? (Please justify)

- Healthy adults or children and young people who have experiences relevant to the research topic.

18. What are the principal exclusion criteria for participants? (Please justify)

- Participants unable to give informed consent, who are vulnerable or dependent (as defined by the list below), or who do not have cultural experiences relevant to the research topic.
19.1 Will the participants be from any of the following groups? *(Tick all that apply)*

- [x] Adult healthy volunteers (i.e. not under medical care for a condition which is directly relevant to the application)
- [ ] Healthy children under 16
- [ ] Adults with learning difficulties
- [ ] Adults who have a terminal illness
- [ ] Adults with mental illness (particularly if detained under mental health legislation)
- [ ] Adults with dementia
- [ ] Adults in care homes
- [ ] Adults or children in emergency situations
- [ ] Prisoners
- [ ] Young offenders
- [ ] Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the researcher, e.g. students taught or examined by the researcher.
- [ ] Other vulnerable groups

Please note: If you intend to involve participants in any of the groups above that are not ticked you must apply to UREC for ethical approval.

19.2 If you will be using participants other than healthy volunteers please justify their inclusion:

Not applicable.

20.1 How will the potential participants be identified? *(Tick all that apply)*

- [ ] Public sources of information such as the websites of cultural institutions, online social media or professional networks.
- [x] Visitors or participants identified by the institution hosting the research.
- [ ] University networks.

Please specify how participants will be identified:

Field sites have been approached based on their suitability and have agreed to participate in this research project. They are liaising with subjects on my behalf; that is, they will make individuals aware that there will be a researcher present on site before my arrival. I will, however, introduce myself upon entering the field, explain my role and about the project. As such, I will be including all individuals present on site in this study, unless they make it known to myself/the gatekeeper that they do not wish to participate or exhibit signs of distress.
20.2 How will they be approached and by whom? Tick all that apply

- Research participants will be approached by the researcher or research supervisor.
- Research participants will be approached by a representative of the institution hosting the research.

Please expand on your response below:

Gatekeepers of the research sites are informing participants that there will be a researcher present before my arrival. However, as informed consent is an on-going process, I will introduce myself to everyone I encounter in the course of my stay and explain my role and about the project, therefore giving them another opportunity to exclude themselves from the study if they wish.

20.3 How will they be recruited? (Where research participants will be recruited via advertisement, please append a copy to this application)

- Direct email/letter from the researcher (a draft is attached to this application).
- Email/letter distributed by the institution hosting the research to participants (a draft is attached to this application and will be approved by a member of staff in the host site prior to dissemination). For postgraduate research, recruitment plans and accompanying documents (adverts, emails) have been subject to internal review by a supervisor.

- Where the research engages with professionals, recruitment may make use of professionals in managerial relationships to approach research participants. Here, research participants will be supplied with the researcher’s contact details by their manager and be given the opportunity to contact the researcher without further liaison with their manager. The participant information sheet will make it clear that their participation in the research is not a requirement of their professional duties.

- Advertisement placed in a public setting (an advert is attached to this application).

- Where there is no reply to initial contact, the researcher will send a single reminder only to invite participation.

- Other (please specify):

Please expand on your recruitment plan below:

An information sheet that covers all the major points of this research project has been produced that will be available for all individuals on site to look at and take away.

21. Will any research participants be recruited who are involved in existing research or have recently been involved in any research prior to recruitment?

- Yes  
- No  
- Not known
If yes, give details and justify their inclusion. If Not known, please state what steps will you take to find out.

I will ask each host site and potential participants when I make initial contact with them.

22. Will individual research participants receive reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives or benefits for taking part in this research?

☐ Yes  ☑ No

Where reimbursement of expenses or incentives or benefits are received, the sum reimbursed will cover out of pocket expenses and consideration of time given to participate in the study (disciplinary norms will be followed here).

If yes, indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided:

23. What is the expected total duration of participation in the study for each participant? For ethnographic research focussing on one or more groups rather than individual participants, indicate the approximate period of time over which research will focus on particular groups

The expected total duration of participation in the study for each participant is clearly indicated on the participant information sheet given to possible participants prior to taking part in the study. The duration of participation in the study for each participant is (please tick all that apply):

☐ Questionnaires that will take no longer than one hour to complete

☒ Interviews, elicited conversations and/or focus groups will take place over no longer than two hours (per sitting – some projects may involve multiple points of contact). Where a research activity lasts longer than 45 minutes, participants will be offered the opportunity to take breaks.

☒ Observations will be conducted over a length of time appropriate to the study and within the disciplinary norms of the research.

☐ The length of time demanded of participants of experiments related to phonetics and linguistics research will vary, but be no longer than two hours per sitting. Where a research activity lasts longer than 45 minutes, participants will be offered the opportunity to take breaks.

☐ The length of time demanded of participants of creative practice as research – drama workshops, arts projects, exhibitions, film-making, educational interventions – that engage adults in creative explorations of a specific issue or question relevant to their setting, will vary considerably. Projects may include anything from a one-hour workshop to a weekly commitment over a specified length of time, to a week-long intensive encounter. The amount of time demanded by participants will be clearly identified on the information sheet.

Please specify the expected duration of participation in the study here:

This varies between sites, although observation/participant observation may take place at any time during my stay on-site:
The Poulton Project – two weeks, interviews will take anywhere 15-30 minutes.

York Archaeology Trust – two weeks, interviews will take anywhere between 15-30 minutes.

Museum of London’s Centre for Human Bioarchaeology – one week, interviews will take between 15-30 minutes.

24. What is the potential benefit to research participants? Tick all that apply

☑ Increased awareness of the topic explored by the research may be experienced as of value.

☐ Enjoyment and increased well-being are commonly reported effects of taking part in creative practice as research.

☐ There is no discernable benefit to research participants.

Please expand on your response if appropriate:

Those taking part in a professional capacity may gain from the opportunity to discuss their work and, with dissemination of the results, gain wider understanding of the work they are involved in and benefit from new ideas with which to develop innovative practice.

25. Will any benefit or assistance, which the participant would normally have access to, be withheld as part of the research? Please tick:

☑ No benefit or assistance, which the participant would normally have access to, will be withheld as part of the research.
SECTION D – Consent

26.1 Will informed consent be obtained from the research participants? Please tick all that apply

If Yes, give details of how consent will be obtained. Give details of your experience in taking consent and of any particular steps to provide information to participants before the study takes place eg information sheet, videos, interactive material.

- Informed consent will be obtained from the research participants.
- In cases of unobtrusive observation (in art galleries or museums for example) it may not be appropriate to gain consent from each individual. In these cases, staff at the site will approve the research and information about the research will be displayed in a prominent place (via a poster for example). An information sheet will also be created to be given to participants on request.

Please expand on your response:

Acquisition of ‘informed consent’ during participant observation is not viewed as a single event that can be dealt with on a single occasion. Rather, consent is viewed as a process and will be under constant review and negotiation during the course of research.

It will not always be possible to approach every person in the field site individually and participants will not be asked to sign a consent form. I will ask my research partners to either display basic information about the research in a prominent location or to email colleagues in advance of my arrival on site to begin research. An information sheet will be made available for those who would like further information and individuals will be free to exclude themselves from observation/participant observation at any time. I will make every effort to explain my research to anyone who I engage in conversation with.

Those selected for interview will be asked whether they are happy to participate. No pressure will be placed on those who decline. Those who agree will be asked to sign a form granting permission to undertake the interview (see attached example). I will explain the background to the project to participants in simple terms. This will include: the subject area and aims of the research; what they may be asked to do if they take part; an estimation of how much time it will involve and any other potential disturbance/inconvenience; how I will record the data; what I will do with the data; confidentiality; and the fact that they will not get remuneration. I will also provide participants with an information sheet to take away with them.


26.2 Will a signed record of consent be obtained?

- Yes  ☐ No
If not, please explain why not. Please append any consent forms to this application.

☐ A record of consent in a format suitable for the research will be sought using the UREC consent form proforma adapted to the needs of the research.

☐ If it is inappropriate to ask for signed consent as a result of cultural differences, verbal consent (drawing on the statements detailed in the UREC consent form) will be recorded at the beginning of an audio-recorded interview or conversation.

Please expand on your response:

Consent will be sought for recorded interviews, as it likely that these will feature in the thesis and any resulting publications as direct extended quotes that may identify individuals. For the rest of the participants, it will not be possible to ask each one for written consent, however, all site members will be made aware of my role as a researcher before I arrive, upon which I will introduce myself, the project and their role in it. I will also have information sheets available for participants to read and take away, if they have not received this information from the gatekeeper already.

27. How long will the participant have to decide whether to take part in the research? (If less than 24 hours please justify)

☐ The participants will have at least 24 hours after receiving information about the study to decide whether they want to take part in the research.

☐ Participants will be asked to participate in the study immediately following consent (where the research engages participants in brief one-off questionnaires and interviews, and does not collect personal information).

Please expand on your response:

Wider permission to carry out research has been obtained from the gatekeepers of each site over a period of negotiation involving informed consent. However, it is recognised that each individual participant requires time to decide whether to participate or not. All gatekeepers will be making participants aware that a researcher will be on site before my arrival, so they will have at least 24 hours’ notice. In terms of interviews, it may not always be possible to offer this period of notice, due to the nature of people coming and going, however, I will fully explain the nature of the project and go through the process of acquiring consent with them, so that they can make an informed decision about whether to participate.

28. What arrangements have been made for participants who might not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information given in English, or who have special communication needs? (e.g. translation, use of interpreters etc.)

☐ Where the research involves participants with special communication needs, a translation of the participant information sheet and appropriate communication support will be in place.
Where this is not possible, lack of competence in written and spoken English will be specified under ‘exclusion criteria’ (question 18 above), and clearly indicated on adverts and information sheets.
SECTION E – RISKS AND SAFEGUARDS

29. Activities to be undertaken (Please tick all that apply)

☐ Questionnaires with adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting). This may include postal or online questionnaires as well as those involving face to face contact.

☒ Interviews, elicited conversations and/or focus groups with adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting). This may include online interviews as well as those involving face to face contact.

☒ Observations with adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting).

☐ Experiments related to phonetics and linguistics research, including recorded listening and speech tests which may include the use of eye trackers or wearing of non-intrusive head gear, with adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting).

☐ Creative practice as research – drama workshops, arts projects, exhibitions, film-making, educational interventions, performances – that engage adults and/or children (in the presence of a carer or professional with a duty of care and carried out in an institutional setting).

☒ Reflective journaling by the researcher and/or research participants.

Please expand on your use of any of the above methods (in no more than 300 words), and attach a draft observation schedule, interview/focus group topic guide, experiment design or description of creative practice to this application:

A draft interview schedule has been attached to this application. It is not possible to attach an observation schedule as this project relies on the making of fieldnotes, which are recorded in response to conversations, events, discoveries on the site, etc.

30.1 What are the potential adverse effects, risks or hazards for research participants, including potential for pain, discomfort, distress, inconvenience or changes to lifestyle for research participants? Are they any greater than those that would arise from normal social interaction?

☒ There are minimal potential adverse effect, risks or hazards for research participants but these are not greater than would arise from normal social interaction.

Please expand on your response to the above here. In particular, you might use this space to develop your response to question 13.1 above.

• Participants may feel that the research is intrusive or discomforting, although they do not have to consent to take part and are free to withdraw at any time.
The research may cause inconvenience to participants and every effort will be made to explain the details of the project and how much time will be involved.

Potential negative repercussions can arise with regard to a participant’s personal and professional relationships as a result of what they say. Confidentiality will be used to help protect participants from such harms, with the use of coded interview transcripts and the use of pseudonyms in the place of real names. Professional interviewees will be offered the opportunity to be anonymised, yet they may retain their institutional affiliation if they wish. If they should choose this option, they will be made aware that I cannot guarantee that they will not be rendering themselves identifiable.

30.2 Could individual or group interviews/questionnaires raise any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting, or is it possible that criminal or other disclosures requiring action could take place during the study (e.g. in the application of screening tests for drugs)? Please tick

- Individual or group interviews/questionnaires will not raise any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting, or risk criminal or other disclosures requiring action.

- The research does not explore topics that are likely to cause distress because they are delving into traumatic personal histories or experiences for example. However, some topics may be explored in the research - for example, explorations of religious beliefs and practices, the representation of specific communities in art and literature, questions of cultural difference, the production and reception of provocative exhibitions or performances - may provoke strong feelings in respondents.

If you have ticked the second box above, please describe the ways in which your research might provoke strong responses in research participants:

Whilst it is not my intention to instigate such emotions, an unintended consequence of conducting interviews may be reflection on aspects of death or dying that interviewees may find distressful. This may be, however, some of the most interesting data generated by the interviews and if permitted, this information may be used in an anonymised fashion to illustrate the importance of dealing with the ancient dead, in terms of reflections upon contemporary mortality.

30.3 What precautions have been taken to minimise or mitigate the risks identified above?

- Researchers will develop their awareness of the possible negative responses that their topics might provoke, and describe topics clearly on participant information sheets shared with participants prior to taking consent.

- Where a postgraduate research project is likely to provoke strong responses in a research participant, researchers will prepare themselves for adaptable and appropriate responses and decision-making through supervision and additional training prior to and during the project.
Please expand on your response to the above here. In particular, you might use this space to develop your response to question 13.1 above.

The topic of mortuary archaeology may provoke strong feelings in respondents and I have developed an awareness of the possible negative responses that I may encounter. As such, the participant information sheet that all interviewees will receive prior to the start of research clearly describes that whilst such effects are not intended, the potential for my questions to prompt feelings of discomfort should be given due consideration.

I have discussed my research question at length with my supervisors, who have also reviewed my detailed research plans and interview topic guides so that interview questions are phrased with tact and care. I have also undertaken appropriate training in good interview techniques so as to be able to handle delicate issues, such as those pertaining to death, dying and the dead, with sensitivity.

Furthermore, measures have put in place within the interview design to mitigate against causing offence or distress. These include: remaining alert to signs of discomfort and asking the interviewee if they would like to stop or take a break, allowing the interviewee to control the recording process by giving them access to the digital recorder and offering interviewees the opportunity to revise their interview after we have finished recording. Due consideration will be given to signposting research participants to relevant sources of support, if appropriate.

31.1 What is the potential for adverse effects, risks or hazards, pain, discomfort, distress, or inconvenience to the researchers themselves? (If any)

☒ Where researchers are engaged in projects in sites outside of the University, there are additional risks relating to personal safety. All off-site research projects will be fully risk assessed, and the University’s lone worker and fieldwork guidance will be reviewed as part of developing the risk assessment. A risk assessment is appended to this application.

Please expand on the above, in particular, specify any risks to the researcher presented by the research that are not connected with conducting research off site:

I foresee little risk of danger to myself as a researcher as I will be working in public/semi-public spaces during normal working hours with professional members of staff. The greatest risks posed to my safety as a researcher are posed by workplace hazards: trips, slips and falls; adverse weather conditions; moving heavy boxes of material in archives or at archaeological sites; and travelling to research locations.

Furthermore, whilst I will be discussing issues of mortality with interviewees, I will be interacting with people who have agreed to participate in the study and I therefore do not anticipate the ensuing discussions I will have with practitioners will cause me distress. I have undertaken relevant and appropriate training in good interview techniques so that I am prepared to handle sensitive topics and if I am in any discomfort or feel uneasy during the course of talking with professionals, I will end the interview early. Should any interviews lead to
unexpected and unwelcome distressing experiences, I will ensure that I debrief with my supervisor and access sources of support where needed.

(Please see risk assessment for full details of risks, hazards and preventative measures).

31.2 Where will the research take place?

☐ In a public space, building or institutional setting (for example, a high street, campus, cultural institution or private residence) in the UK or low risk international setting.

31.3 What precautions have been taken to minimise or mitigate the risks identified above? *(If the research means working alone in a location which is not public, semi-public or otherwise risk-free, please describe your lone worker policy or append a copy)*

☐ A generic risk assessment has been reviewed and approved by the researcher and line manager/supervisor, and appended to this application.

32. The University will automatically provide indemnity and/or compensation for most approved studies, but you should complete the appended Ethics Insurance Assessment form and consult the University Procurement Office if necessary. If another body or institution is providing insurance or indemnity please provide details below.

☐ A completed Ethics Insurance Assessment form has been appended to this application.

33. Please confirm that any adverse event requiring a radical change of method or design, or even abandonment of the research, will be reported to the Committee.

☐ I confirm that any adverse event requiring a radical change of method or design, or even abandonment of the research, will be reported to the committee.
SECTION F – Data protection and confidentiality

39. Will the research involve any of the following activities at any stage (including identification of potential research participants)? (Tick all that apply)

Storage of personal data on any of the following:

- ✔️ Storage of personal data on manual files
- ✔️ Storage of personal data on laptops or other personal computers
- ✔️ Storage of personal data on University computers
- ☐ Storage of personal data on NHS computers
- ☐ Storage of personal data on private company computers
- ✔️ Use of audio/visual recording devices
- ☐ Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers
- ✔️ Electronic transfer by magnetic or optical media, e-mail or computer networks
- ☐ Examination of medical records by those outside the NHS, or within the NHS by those who would not normally have access
- ☐ Sharing of data with other organisations
- ☐ Export of data outside the European Union
- ✔️ Publication of direct quotations from respondents
- ✔️ Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals

Further details:

Biographical data will be collected from participants subject to consent and contact details will be taken for archaeology and museum professionals involved in the study. Data will be stored on university and personal computers/laptops. Direct quotations from respondents will be used in the thesis and/or publication and may lead to their identification. Particular care will be taken over issues of identification with regard to direct quotes and the use of photographs.

Data will be:

- ✔️ Fairly and lawfully processed.
- ✔️ Processed for the purposes detailed in the information sheet only, which clearly states the limits of anonymity and confidentiality afforded to research participants.
Not be shared with any researcher or organisation other than in ways detailed on the information sheet.

40. What measures have been put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data? Give details of what encryption or other anonymisation procedures will be used and at what stage? Note: the University requires all personal data stored electronically to be held on wholly managed University servers or to be encrypted. Please tick all that apply.

- Management of personal data – researcher notes, audio and audio-visual material and any other data generated as part of the research will be securely stored for the duration of the study. All computers used for storing data will be encrypted – following University of Manchester IT security and data protection guidelines.
- Anonymity will be preserved with respect to stored data by the use of ID numbers and/or pseudonyms for research participants, which will only be known and available to the custodians of the data (researcher and supervisor). Details of research participants’ identities will be kept securely (in a locked drawer in an office or on an encrypted computer).

All identifiers will be removed from interview data and all individuals will be anonymised through the use of pseudonyms, which will be used in the thesis and any publications that may arise from the research. The only exceptions will relate to professionals when speaking in a public or official capacity. It is acknowledged, however, that respondents do not always wish to take advantage of anonymity. If anyone expresses a desire to be directly identified, then a written agreement will be drawn up which will set down the main terms of the research relationship. It will be pointed out that if their identity is maintained then this does not alter my freedom, as a researcher, to conduct the project objectively.

All interview data will be held on the University’s servers which are encrypted and password-protected.

41. Where will the analysis of the data from the study take place and by whom will it be undertaken?

- By the researcher and supervisor, in a private study or workspace at the researcher’s home or at the University.

42.1 Who will control and act as the custodian for the data? Note: for a student project this must be a supervisor or a permanent member of staff

- Where the research is undertaken by a postgraduate student, the supervisor named above will act as the custodian for the data. Where the research is undertaken by a member of staff, the PI named above will be the custodian of the data.
42.2 Who will have access to the data?

☐ The researchers named on this application.

Please expand on the above if you are planning to share data with institutional hosts, for example. Please justify this here (and ensure that this is clear on your participant information sheet):

42.3 Will the data be stored for use in future studies? If yes, has this been addressed in the consent process?

☐ The data will not be used in future studies.

☒ The data may be used in future studies, and the ways in which it will be used have been clearly described on the participant information sheet and addressed in the consent process.

43. For how long will the data from the study be stored?

Note: the University requires non-medical data to be held for a minimum of 5 years and medical data to be held for a minimum of 10 years after the completion of the research. Some funding bodies require storage for longer periods.

☒ The data will be stored for five years.

☐ Where the research is for a postgraduate taught Dissertation and will not lead to academic or other publication, the data will be stored for one year only.

44. What arrangements are in place to ensure participants receive any information that becomes available during the course of the research that may be relevant to their continued participation?

☒ If any information pertinent to the study becomes available as the study progresses that may be relevant to continued participation, research participants will be informed immediately and reminded that their participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw at any time.

45. What arrangements are in place for monitoring the conduct of the research by parties other than the researcher?

Will a data monitoring committee be convened?
SECTION G – Conflict of Interest

Please answer the questions in Section H as appropriate to your research project.

46.1 Will individual researchers receive any personal payment over and above normal salary and reimbursement of expenses for undertaking this research?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If Yes, indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided:

46.2 Does the principal researcher or any other investigator/collaborator have any direct personal involvement (e.g. financial, share-holding, personal relationship etc.) in the organisation sponsoring or funding the research that may give rise to a possible conflict of interest?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If Yes, give details:

47. Will the host organisation or the researcher’s department(s) or institution(s) receive any payment of benefits in excess of the costs of undertaking the research?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If Yes, give details:
SECTION H - Reporting Arrangements

Please answer the questions in Section I as appropriate to your project.

48. How is it intended the results of the study will be reported and disseminated?  
(Tick as appropriate)

- [x] Peer reviewed academic journals
- [x] Book or contribution to a book
- [ ] Other published outlets e.g. ESRC or Cochrane Review,
- [x] Thesis/dissertation
- [x] Conference presentation
- [x] Internal report
- [x] Other e.g. deposition in University Library

49. How will the results of research be made available to research participants and communities from which they are drawn?

- [ ] Presentation to participants or relevant community groups
- [x] Written feedback to research participants
- [ ] Other e.g. videos, interactive website

50.1 Will dissemination allow identification of individual participants?

- [x] Yes  [ ] No

If No, proceed to 51

If Yes, indicate how these individuals’ consent will be obtained:

Direct quotations from respondents will be used in the thesis and/or publication and may lead to the identification of individuals, as will the inclusion of some photographs. Particular care will be taken in the selection of images to use and over issues of identification with regard to direct quotes. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the thesis and all participants will be made aware (during the process of gaining consent) that anonymity cannot be guaranteed but will be protected to the very best of my ability.

50.2 Will dissemination involve publication of extended direct quotations from identified participants and/or distribution of audiovisual media in which identified participants play leading roles?
Yes  ☒ No

If No, proceed to 52

If Yes, indicate how the participants’ possible Intellectual Property or Performance Rights in these outputs will be negotiated. Where relevant, attach a model of the release form that will be used.

☐ Some creative practice as research projects may use audio and audio-visual recordings in creative outcomes of the research (videos, performances, exhibitions). However, the leading creative input will be the researchers and all material will be used for educational and research purposes and not for commercial exploitation. This is made clear on the participant information sheet and addressed as part of the consent procedures.

If this is relevant to your research, please expand on your response below:

50.3 Are special arrangements needed to provide indemnity and/or compensation in the event of a claim by, or on behalf of, participants on grounds such as libel, breach of confidence and infringement of Intellectual Property or Performance Rights?

☒ No special arrangements to provide indemnity and/or compensation in the event of a claim by, or on behalf of, participants on grounds such as libel, breach of confidence and infringement of Intellectual Property or Performance Rights are needed.
SECTION I– Funding and sponsorship

Please answer the questions in Section J as appropriate to your research project.

51. Has external funding for the research been secured?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If Yes, give details of funding organisation(s) and amount secured and duration:

Organisation:

UK contact:

Amount (£):

Duration: Months

52. Name of organisation which will act as Sponsor for the research, if other than the University:

Note: the University will normally act as Sponsor (ie responsible for the design, management and conduct of the research project by University staff and/or students), but in some cases of externally commissioned research the funder will be the Sponsor. If this is the case please provide details)
SECTION K – Confirmation of Application

Signature(s) of applicant(s):

\[\text{K. Crouch}\]

03/05/14

____________________________________

____________________________________

SIGNATURE

DATE

--------------------------------------------------------------

NAME AND POST OF APPLICANT (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature(s) of supervisor(s) (postdoctoral researchers only):

Melanie Giles

05/05/14

____________________________________

____________________________________

SIGNATURE

DATE

--------------------------------------------------------------

NAME AND POST OF SUPERVISOR (PLEASE PRINT)
Dealing with the Dead: Professional relations between archaeologists and human remains

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to participate in a research study as part of my doctoral research into the practice of mortuary archaeology in the UK and professional attitudes towards the excavation, study, retention, curation and display of archaeological human remains. Before you decide whether to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?
Katherine Crouch (PhD student)
Mansfield Cooper Building, Archaeology: School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.
What is the aim of the research?

The aim of this project is to explore the role of mortuary archaeology and human remains in contemporary British culture – from excavation to exhibition – and the impact of this work upon the professionals who both unearth and ‘re-wrap’ the bones of the ancient dead for public consumption. In short, I will be investigating the attitudes and responses of professional archaeology and museum staff towards ‘digging up the dead’. The objectives are to:

- Critically assess the extent to which the professional training and experiences of archaeologists and museum staff affect both their attitudes towards archaeological human remains and what may be considered as ‘appropriate’ treatment.
- Examine to what extent learning to think and ‘see’ as an archaeologist institutionalises specific attitudes towards death and the dead and whether achieving a level of professionalism and expertise means subjugating emotional connections to the past.
- Investigate the impact of the physical, material and temporal qualities of human remains upon professionals, the ‘coping mechanisms’ they employ in breaking the ‘taboo’ of disturbing the dead and the impact of this work upon personal understandings of mortality.
- Assess how the attitudes, behaviours and professional practices of archaeology and museum staff impact upon the construction of archaeological knowledge, the narratives that produced for public dissemination and popular perceptions of mortuary archaeology.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been selected because of your experience and expertise in working with archaeological human remains and because I value your views and opinions. I would like to talk to you about your work in relation to mortuary archaeology and human remains, specifically aspects of professional practice and legislation, as well as more personal opinions and feelings which arise from your engagement in working with the remains of the dead. This will take the form of a semi-structured interview that will be audio-recorded.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

If I ask to interview you, I will ask you to share biographical information relating to your training and employment in archaeology and to reflect on personal encounters and experiences that relate to the legislation, excavation, study, retention, curation and display of archaeological human remains. I am particularly interested in finding out how you feel about the work that you do and as we will be discussing issues pertaining to death, dying and the dead, you should be aware that my questions may potentially have discomforting effects. You will be under no obligation to answer any of my questions and are free to withdraw from the study at any time.
The length of the interview will depend on how much you have to say and how much time you have to spare. As a rough guide it might last for as little as thirty minutes or up to two hours, as the interview will take a more conversational style so as to allow you to speak freely and openly about the practice of mortuary archaeology in the UK.

**What happens to the data collected?**

The data will be used in the production of my doctoral thesis and interviewees should also be aware that I will be keeping a 'fieldwork diary' in which I will record theoretical, analytical and methodological notes, as well as my reflections on the interviews I have conducted. All interviewees are entitled to request a copy of their audio-recording and/or transcript and data will be stored for a minimum of five years so as to ensure sufficient time to pursue publication of the thesis.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**

All personal identifiers will be removed from interview data and individuals will be anonymised through the use of codes during the transcription process. Pseudonyms will be used in the thesis and any publications that may arise from the research, with the only exceptions relating to professionals when speaking in a public or official capacity. You may choose to have your institutional affiliation (but not your job title) attached to your pseudonym, but with the use of extended direct quotations in the thesis, you should be aware that this may identify you.

Whilst I will employ a degree of ambiguity in recording information in the fieldwork diary, this will entail some sensitive or personal information, such as the names of individuals. All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that this is stored securely and protected from unauthorised access. It will not be reproduced in the thesis or for publication elsewhere.

In the event that I witness or hear about any practices that contravene codes of practice as regards the care and curation of archaeological human remains, such issues will be discussed with my research supervisors as how to best proceed.

**What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.
Will I be paid for participating in the research?
Whilst I greatly value your assistance, there is no provision for payment to any of the participants in this study.

What is the duration of the research?
The main research for this study will be undertaken during the academic year 2013/2014. Interviews may be scheduled at any time during this period, according to your availability.

Where will the research be conducted?
Interviews will be conducted at participants’ place of work or another mutually convenient location to be arranged in advance.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
The research will form part of my doctoral thesis, which will be archived in the University’s digital repository. It is also anticipated that the results will be presented through conference papers and published as journal articles. If you are interested in being kept informed of publications that arise from the research, please let me know and I will notify you as and when they become available.

Who has reviewed the research project?
This research project has been reviewed by the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures Research Ethics Committee at the University of Manchester.

Contact for further information
For further information, or to discuss any problems or concerns you may have about participation, please contact me at katherine.crouch@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk.

What if something goes wrong?
If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with either myself or my supervisor, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator by writing to The Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, by emailing Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk, or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093.
Appendix 7

Consent form

Dealing with the Dead: Professional relations between archaeologists and human

Research Consent form

The researcher (Katherine Crouch) has given me my own copy of the information sheet which I have read and understood. The information sheet explains the nature of the research and what I would be asked to do as a participant. I understand that the research is for a student project and that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded unless subject to any legal requirements. She has discussed the contents of the information sheet with me and given me the opportunity to ask questions about it.

I agree to take part as a participant in this research and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without detriment to myself.

I understand that this project will be carried out in accordance with the University of Manchester’s Code of Research Ethics, which can be viewed at http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/governance/conduct/

Material I provide as part of this study will be treated as confidential and securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have read and I understand the information sheet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and they were answered to my satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand that interviews will be audio-recorded</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I request that my comments are presented anonymously but give permission to connect my institutional affiliation with my comments (but not the title of my position)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I request that my comments are presented anonymously with no mention of my institutional affiliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree that any data collected may be used by the researcher in future studies</td>
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</table>

Name ..................................................................................

Date ..................................................................................
## Appendix 8

### Interview with Philip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can you tell me a bit about your background in osteoarchaeology and what you do in your current role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>I have a first degree in chemistry. I have a masters in archaeological science and a PhD in archaeology, um, I got into archaeology because I was rather bored by chemistry by the time I’d done three years. I didn’t think a career in that field was for me, um, I had an interest in archaeology and had been on digs as a child, so I felt that I wanted to move into that area, I . . . when I finished my PhD, I worked for just under a year, we took archaeology into schools, so we’d turn up in a land rover at a school and teach some kids about archaeology and stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So, do you still get involved in excavations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can I ask what drew you towards osteoarchaeology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>I was about 12 years old and my mum was a member of a local archaeological society and [indecipherable] was our local museum and, er, we went along to that and there was a talk about the site at Visby, the medieval 14th century, and the work that had been done and it seemed to me quite an amazing thing that somebody could come along, perhaps 600 hundred years after the event, it seemed quite powerful to me at 12 years old, and I then dug on local excavations, but that was the real thing that excited my interest in human remains. As I say, when I finished my chemistry degree, the thought of working for [redacted] or something like that just sounded so dull, I couldn’t contemplate it really, so I thought “Well, why don’t I try and get into archaeology?” I didn’t really know a thing about what I was doing, so I saw there was this course called “Archaeological Science” and I thought, “Right, I’m interested in archaeology, I’m trained as a scientist, why don’t I try that?” And so that was actually mainly about animal bones in … so I learnt about animal bones and er, I did human bones for my dissertation and I remember sitting with one of the lecturer’s wives with a copy of Brothwell’s <em>Digging Up Bones</em> and we sat in a room at the teaching hospital in [redacted] where they had some modern skeletons and we kind of literally looked at pictures and held up bones and said, “Oh, I think this is a humerus or something”, so I started off from scratch really, like that, because there was no one in [redacted] that actually lectured or had any research interests in human remains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>There seem to quite a few courses now that relate to osteoarchaeology, so it’s become a specialist activity. What impact do you think that has made on</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>When I started out working for [redacted], a great many people who were human osteologists were kind of medics doing it in a more or less amateur basis and what this meant was that human osteological reports were a list of obscure diseases and there was no attempt to relate them to anything that archaeologists would be interested in. So you’d have people like [redacted] telling fascinating stories about the individuals, but that seemed to bear absolutely no relation to any kind of archaeology I’d ever been taught because when I did my Masters, [redacted] they were talking about structuralism and Marxism and stuff like that, and there’s [redacted] talking about someone having an achy knee or something, um, but what the courses, the Masters courses, have really done is to situate human osteology within archaeology, and to show the rest of the archaeological profession that far from being rather obscure and far less interesting than bits of pottery or stone, human remains are actually central to the stories that we want to tell, and this really started off in Bradford in the mid to late 80s when Keith Manchester and Charlotte Roberts first set up their Masters courses and it kind of, as you say, ballooned from there, I mean there are dozens of these courses around now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Are there any elements of working with human remains that you particularly like or dislike?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>I consider myself a generalist, so I’ve worked on pretty well all the different methodological aspects of human remains, except facial reconstruction, with one or two exceptions like that. I consider myself a generalist and partly that’s due to my job because I need [redacted] so I by necessity am a generalist and there’s no aspect of human remains that particularly interests me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And why do we in your opinion do we excavate and study and display human remains?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>We excavate them because people want to put up buildings. I think that’s something that the public doesn’t generally appreciate, things like <em>Time Team</em> and those sorts of programmes, they think that archaeologists wander around the country trying to find sites to dig up and we have to tell people that’s that not the case. We don’t choose to dig anything. And our philosophy now is that, wherever possible, you preserve stuff in-situ, so what happens now if someone wants to build a building on a cemetery, if they can build it on piles that don’t disturb the rest, the majority of the burials, then that’s great, because we can then leave the burials in for people in the future to potentially study. So, really, as far as my job is concerned, the less we disturb burials, the better. Um . . . and as regards to why we look at them, if we do have to disturb them, they’re the most information-rich archaeological evidence that we deal with really, what we can learn from a skeleton, compared with a piece of pottery or flint, I mean, there’s no comparison in terms of the information we can get. And yet, what we’re actually interested in about the past is not how, you know, people butchered their animals or what kind of stone tools they made, it’s what their lives were actually like, we can get much closer to that, I think, if you look at the remains of people themselves and it was that kind of empathic aspect that drew me towards human remains as a student, I think. It seemed much more interesting than looking at animal remains, which was what my Masters I did was mainly about. And I think there is a great deal of public support for looking at human remains. I mean archaeology programmes featuring bodies, skeletons and mummies are generally popular, you know, and I mean, I think that we always, the scientists have to be aware...</td>
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</table>
of what the public thinks about what we do, we can’t let our work be directed by public opinion, but if we start drifting into things that the public does not support or is actively against, we need to think about what we’re doing quite carefully. Again, there are numerous public opinion polls that show the public is very supportive of the study of skeletal remains, as with archaeology in general, so I think it is important to have that kind of [indecipherable] and it’s important to show human remains in museums, because people want to see them basically and we can tell interesting and very immediate stories about the past if we do so, um, I mean, we talk about the ethics of display of human remains, but we display human remains at [redacted]. And the time that I’ve been involved, complaints are made when people come to see a skeleton and it’s been taken off display, they’ve come to see it and you’ve taken it away, so we don’t really have cases, by and large, where people say that you shouldn’t be displaying human remains [redacted].

| 13 | K | That leads into my next question: what are the biggest challenges in terms of working with human remains? Do the public come into that? |
| 14 | P | I don’t think they do. I think we always need to be positive about what we do in public debate, in public life, er, there is sometimes a tendency amongst scientists to . . . be reluctant to engage in debate with people like, let’s say the Aboriginals, people that may think that we do is wrong, there’s kind of a reluctance to stick our heads above the parapet, it kind of goes back to Darwin’s day when he got Thomas Henry Huxley to argue his case for him and he just sort of hid in the background. I mean we’re not fortunate enough these days to have defenders in our . . . defending our subjects for us, so I think we all have to be, um, Thomas Henry Huxley characters and if somebody says we should be reburying Australian Aboriginal remains or something, then we as scientists should be volunteering to argue against that, if that’s what we believe is true. And I would. I’ve always been ready to debate matters with people who claim reburial in the media, be it on the radio or in print, I’ve done that and I think we all need to do that to ensure that the public understands what we do and has the opportunity to support if that’s what they want to do. In this country it’s undoubtedly archiving, um . . . too much is reburied after the report is published for the site, unfortunately, some people might think it’s an ethical issues, that it’s ethically good to rebury stuff, I think it’s ethically very dubious to rebury material and there are arguments against that. People don’t realise, I don’t think, that the osteological report isn’t necessarily the be-all and end-all, and in fact, the great majority of the work in the published literature, relies on re-examination of curated remains in museums. Museums are becoming increasingly short of space and a lot are reluctant to accept finds of any sort, not just human remains, so I think this problem is a real difficulty. People talk about the methodological problems we have, problems of interpretation, if you’ve got the skeletons to actually work with, all of that is secondary, we’ve got to think very carefully about what we do with archiving. |
| 15 | K | And what do you think is the solution? |
| 16 | P | There’s only one sustainable solution, really, and that’s to pass the archiving on to developers. I mean, this ought to be done really under present practice, but often it isn’t and people believe, rightly or wrongly, that reburyal may be the cheaper solution than keeping remains in a museum, but really we need to pass the full cost on to developers, because no one else is going to find the money. The government isn’t suddenly going to find the money for a whole load more museum storage, um . . . it’s not the kind of thing you can normally
ask research councils for, so it's seems to me the only sustainable solution and it fits with the idea, if your development which you want to put on a site to make you loads of money is going to destroy archaeology, then you should fully pay for the costs of removing and keeping the remains, it's what they do in other countries. For example, I know in Norway they make developers pay for the costs of archiving, so I think there's a pay-off here: we can make do with a less-detailed osteological report, provided the remains were archived securely for the long-term, because if you look at the literature, they rely on curated remains.

17 K That just made me think of something . . . I can't remember the actual term for this, but human remains that are stored in churches on consecrated ground?

18 P Ah, yes. Church archives of human remains, that's something that English Heritage and the Church of England have been pushing forward, there's a case that's happened at Barton-on-Humber, which is a church which is an English Heritage property and, um, part of that was converted into storage for 10,500 human skeletons that were excavated on the site and ideally, the church would like to move towards the situation where Christian human remains from Christian sites, or from any other sites for that matter, are stored in these repositories because they are concerned about human remains being removed from consecrated ground. It's seen as undesirable in most cases and as you can imagine there are lots of practical problems in the way of implementing that as a general policy. I mean it's done in a few cases, there are some other cases apart from Barton, but um, part of the difficulty is when churches are still in use, er, they don't have the space, by and large, to give over to human remains. Plus, there are the staffing issues, how do you regulate access? Because you have to create committees to oversee them, you have to have practical aspects, so for example [redacted].

19 K For you, are human remains people or objects?

20 P They're very much people. You tend to sort of, I mean, I've been working on a medieval collection almost since I started at [redacted] and there's nearly 700 burials, but you know, if I think of a number, think of a particular burial, I think of "Oh, yeah, that's the chap with DISH and a broken leg" or something like that, so they kind of individualise themselves because each of them is different and so there are some that you kind of know straight away: "Oh yeah, that's the lady with syphilis" or "It's a man with DISH". So yeah, I mean, they definitely are people rather than objects. I don't feel the same when I go through animal bone collections at all.

21 K And do you ever name human remains?

22 P No! No, I never do, it's something that I've always resisted. No, it's just not something I do.

23 K Are you of the opinion it imposes a false biography on someone? Like, why does the press like to do it?

24 P Because the press likes to individualise things. They like to tell stories about particular people, even if they can't. You try and explain archaeological studies about populations, rather than individuals and so it's patterns at a population level that you're interested in, but you know, you get a few words into a sentence like that and they've stopped listening. So, you know, I had . . . about
ten years ago now, I had a case of [redacted] and of course it was a female skeleton and so this was an “Essex girl” [redacted], I think that was the way it was described, so individualising it and sort of trivialising it, translating it into sort of popular language. Um, you can’t stop the press from doing that, you never will, you cannot fight the press. But we don’t do it as archaeologists. I remember saying to the press, she’s an Essex lady to me, she’s not an “Essex girl”, but you know, nothing you say will make any difference, so . . . I don’t think, you can say it’s disrespectful, I don’t think it’s meant in that way, it’s just written in a way to sell newspapers and to catch people’s attention.

| 25 | K | And what does the term “best practice” mean to you in terms of excavating and studying the remains of the dead? |
| 26 | P | Um . . . well, I suppose best practice would be anything that’s agreed, would be best practice by people in the sector, [redacted], but that may change to a varying degree, depending on what you’re talking about, so what was best practice ten years ago, probably isn’t best practice today. These things are continually updated. |
| 27 | K | I read somewhere that the arguments over reburial in this country originated in the guidance on the treatment of human remains from Christian burial grounds: the neo-pagan community was aggrieved that there was this guidance for Christians but not for other groups? Do you see anything in that? |
| 28 | P | [Redacted] I think it depends, well, the neo-pagans generally are supportive of archaeology and they’re supportive of keeping human remains in museums so we can learn more about the past. That’s the first thing. It’s a minority within the pagan community that wants reburial of human remains [redacted]. Archaeologists are like “Why are you wasting so much public money on engaging with these people? They’re a minority of nutters, why are you talking to them?” and of course the answer to that is, if you treat a whole group as having opinions that aren’t worth listening to, then you alienate the very people who support you, so you engage seriously with these people and listen to what they have to say, the same as you would if you had a claim from Australian Aboriginals, Australian remains, you treat people like druids just as seriously as you would Native Americans or Australian Aboriginals, so you know, there’s no discrimination there. I think the way it started was, they felt that human remains shouldn’t be studied because it was disrespectful; they felt they should be buried and part of, some of the language they used deliberately seemed to copy that used by Native American groups/Australian Aboriginals claiming their own remains, so it was almost as though, they didn’t say this in so many words, but it was almost as though they considered themselves the equivalent of those groups, but in Britain, um, the people who built Stonehenge were their ancestors and they feel very strongly that their ancestors should not be displayed in museums. So that is . . . that’s where they’re coming from, they don’t really care what we do with Christian remains, it’s those that are non-Christian that they’re concerned about. |
| 29 | K | Are there any aspects of current practice relating to the excavation of human remains that you would like to see change? |
| 30 | P | I think the excavation has moved on an awful lot. I think where it’s going, recovery of human remains is now pretty good, I mean, most organisations who dig archaeological sites dig them competently and they record stuff adequately, I mean you kind of hear the odd horror story about things that have gone on on-site, but now, you know, standards are so much better |
[redacted] and to a great extent that’s due to all these osteology courses producing Masters graduates who know stuff about human remains and know the basics about how to excavate them and as these people feed out into the archaeological world, there’s a general lifting in standards and people say, “Oh, there’s a lot of unqualified people out there, things aren’t being done properly” [laughs] They should have been here 30 years ago and seen what it was like then. So actually I think the excavation is pretty good, I think it could improve with more digital recording, it may speed up recovery and field recording of skeletons, so yeah . . . so already we have digital photography ousting the old planning frames and drawing the skeleton in the ground. I think it’s very important, [redacted] developers don’t tend to worry so much about post-ex costs; they worry about how long the archaeologists are going to be on site. They want the archaeologists to get in and finish the job as quickly as possible and if we can develop computerised field techniques that speed up field records, we can lift skeletons much more quickly and that will help recover larger assemblages for a different cost and so I think that may be the way things go in terms of field excavation.

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because you know, we look at family members as individuals and see what their occupations were and where they lived and that kind of thing, and I think in a sense, some of the public see, look at human remains as a kind of extension as that into the more remote past. I mean it’s not actually what archaeology is like, of course, but I think that’s the perception and I think that helps us to stimulate people’s interest.

35 K  Do you have any particularly memorable experiences of working with human remains for any reason?

36 P  It doesn’t really work like that, does it? I mean, it’s not kind of . . . the satisfaction of researching is finding out about the past and finding out interesting and unexpected things, um, so it doesn’t really tend to consist of memorable moments. It’s an accumulation of knowledge, so it doesn’t really work like that.

37 K  And how does working with human remains make you feel?

38 P  It makes me interested in people’s lives, it makes me think about what things were like in the past and the kind of, the general texture of what life was like in the past, so it kind of, it kind of, it enriches the knowledge of the past, I think that’s the best way of doing it and that is, you’re learning more about the way things really were and also you’re learning, by and large, about people who aren’t recorded in documents, you know, you’re not learning about the taxation of rich people or inheritances, that kind of thing, you’re actually looking at day-to-day life of ordinary people, so that is a kind of satisfaction for me, I suppose.

39 K  Have you ever experienced an emotional response whilst working with human remains or is it more . . . akin to clinical work, I guess?

40 P  I suppose . . . I don’t know. There’s emotion there, of course, when you imagine people’s lives, you empathise, don’t you? And yeah, whenever you’re looking at the bones of a particular person, you do empathise a bit, um, but I mean, you don’t kind of feel upset about anything that’s gone on in the past. I mean, I always dislike these television programmes where people look up their past and find their great-great-grandfather died of cholera and they start blubbing about it 200 years later. I always seems completely absurd to me. I mean, we have to be a bit sensible about this. If I came across the case I did recently—a group of people who seem to have been dismembered and murdered—yeah, it’s a tragic event, but you know, 600 years ago, it’s . . . it’s sufficiently far removed for you not to feel the emotional impact as if it were something that happened in your hometown yesterday.

41 K  Do you think working with human remains, archaeological human remains, could become more difficult if you were dealing with more recent, personal grief?

42 P  No, no, it hasn’t made the slightest difference. I’ve had relatives die and it doesn’t make any difference. You grieve for the person that you’ve known, that’s the emotional attachment you’ve had to a person, um, looking at bones from a medieval site doesn’t really evoke the same response at all.

43 K  Have you ever conflicted about the work that you do?
I can imagine circumstances where I might, but I don’t think I’ve worked with the kind of material that would be likely to cause those sorts of problems. I mean, when I’ve worked with recent material, it’s been with the consent and the encouragement of descendants, um and I’ve always made it clear that I wouldn’t work with recent material of known identity, if the descendants were not happy about it, so I tend to make sure that that conflict doesn’t arise before I even started working.

And how recent is recent?

I was looking at some 19th century remains and they were thought to be of a particular person and we wanted to, er, have a look at the remains and do some analysis to see whether that person, or identity, was correct and obviously, if you do that, there’s the potential for upsetting people if they thought they had some famous relation and they find that this person, who was buried in a particular place, this person isn’t actually their relation at all and they don’t know where their relation is buried. So yeah, even going back 150 years, conceivably that might upset people, so . . . we had the consent of the nearest relatives, the closest living relatives we could find and indeed they wanted to know if this person was truly their ancestor and so we went ahead knowing that we had that support. I mean, another project that I’m planning, well someone else is planning, but I said I’d be a part of the team, I said I’d only join the team if the relatives of this person we were going to exhume were supportive of the project and they were, so I did, but if they said no, I just wouldn’t have got involved.

Have you ever worked with partially fleshed remains?

No, no, that’s a separate specialism really. I would steer clear of those because I don’t understand enough about them really.

Do you think your relationship with archaeological human remains has affected how you personally you feel about death?

No, no at all. I’ve always viewed matters in a scientific way, so it’s not influenced at all.

Do you have any religious or spiritual beliefs and if so, how do these sit alongside your work?

None at all, so there’s no conflict there at all.
Appendix 9

Interview with Anthony

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<td>Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your background?</td>
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| 2         | A       | Ok, so I originally applied to university to do medicine, um, mostly because I thought I should. And that wasn’t a very good reason and I think I realised that quite quickly. I was a bit of a slow developer, so I suddenly . . . up until about GCSEs, I didn’t really do that well and then suddenly I did really well and I thought “Ok” and I did ok in my A-Levels and I thought “Oh, maybe I should do medicine”, so I applied to do medicine and I went and did some work experience and I met some medics and I didn’t like them very much, so I just sort of thought, “I don’t know about this”, um, and so . . . I didn’t do medicine. But when you apply to do medicine, you have to apply to five universities and the fifth place is always, traditionally pharmacology, because it’s sort of in the medical world, so I applied to [redacted] to do pharmacology and I got in, I applied to . . . I got into St George’s medical school as well, so I did pharmacology and I hated every second of it. It was all the things about biology and chemistry that I didn’t like, combined with one quite poorly taught subject.

I happened to take one module that was interesting to me, it was “An Introduction to Archaeology” and I took that because, when I was doing Duke of Edinburgh Awards at school, I was sitting in a mini-bus, well, waiting for a mini-bus and I read an article in the National Geographic and thought “Oh, that’s interesting”, so I thought “Oh, I’ll do this one and it’ll be interesting, see what happens” and I hated pharmacology, really enjoyed that module, um, and it was a horrible year, I got glandula fever and it was just a disastrous year and at the end of it, I came to the conclusion that I should just change and do something else and so I changed to do archaeology. So that’s what happened and that was a really, this is a bit of a tangent I’m going off on here [laughs], but it was really challenging, because I’d always done sciences, so I’d never, ever written an essay before and I suddenly did an essay subject and I hadn’t really thought the consequences of that through [laughs].

So I struggled quite a lot [redacted] and all these kinds of things that I was kind of trying to deny, um, because after you leave school it doesn’t matter anymore and I can see that in my own students now, I know what’s going on, um, so . . . I did that, so I struggled quite a lot, but I was quite good at some of the bits, um, like recognising bone shapes and stuff, and drawing things [redacted], so the practical side of archaeology really appealed to me and we went on field schools and I loved it and I never really looked back from that point. The second I discovered digging, it’s like “Yay, I can move soil around!” So that was
good, yeah, and then so I finished at [redacted], and I didn’t do that well, I got a [redacted], which is fine, there’s nothing wrong with a [redacted], it was just kind of quite frustrating as I felt that I could probably do better than that, but I did my . . . because, I was quite keen.

[Redacted]

I met some of the people in the pub and I said, “Brilliant, I want to work for you”, so I worked for them in the summer of my second year and I worked first on a little project in [redacted], digging up pottery kilns—boring as hell—because I knew that they had a [redacted] that they were excavating the burial ground of and then I went to work on that and it was brilliant. I had a sort of check-list of things I wanted to dig, if I was going to be an archaeologist digging these things and a cemetery was one of them, so my second project ever as a second-year undergraduate was digging up this [redacted], so I did that for six weeks, a month or something and . . . it made me change my undergraduate dissertation because before that I thought I was going to do radiocarbon dating and sequences of roundbarrow cemeteries in Britain, really exciting and actually, having done that, I changed my mind because what we were talking about almost the whole time we were digging up cemeteries was whether it’s right to do it, and what the implications were, and whether the [redacted] were happy about it, and that sort of stuff, whether they would be, the modern [redacted] didn’t mind, they were quite happy for us to do it, but we did wonder about, um, what those [redacted] would have thought quite a lot.

And so, what I ended up doing for an undergraduate dissertation was looking at all the [redacted], chapels and churchyards in [redacted], so I got a list of every single one and I sort of started to think about their value to archaeology and what can we learn from them, so I came up with a grading system. So I did this sort of history and background to 19th century and earlier chapels and churches in [redacted], how many people they would have had and that sort of stuff, it was good fun and I quite enjoyed it and I did very well and I got a First for it and it was the first piece of work that I’d ever got a First for, so I thought this was brilliant and I can clearly do it then, so I associated success and dead people together. So I thought “Right, brilliant, I’ll go and do some commercial archaeology”, and I worked for [redacted], a disastrous experience, and then I eventually got fed up with it and left and I knew that the person that run [redacted], a guy called [redacted], but he had some kind of crisis, partly associated with that time in his life and also with excavating that site. I think it did drive him slightly mad and I’ve actually spoken to him since and he’s said that he never wants to dig one again and I think, there was this sort of moment that triggered a lot of his later crises, when he was excavating this coffin and he found the nameplate and it said something like, or something or other, but it had the same birthday and age as him, and he was like “Eurgh” and I think that sort of caused some kind of internal crisis, but there were all sorts of other things going on as well, [redacted] so clearly, his life was in chaos and it just triggered some sort of reaction and so he emigrated [redacted] for a bit and left [redacted] a bit in the lurch really, because that meant that nobody that had worked on that project worked for them, so they didn’t really know what to do with it, so when he left I [redacted] walked into their offices and said “I know that [redacted] just left and I know that this project hasn’t got anywhere, so I’ll write it up for you” and they went “Ok”, so I wrote up the structural report for it
and I walked into their office after Christmas, put it on the desk of the guy who runs the company and said “There you go, now give me a job” and they said “Oh, yeah, right” [laughs].

So they gave me a job and I was scraping earth off bits of metal, so I spent a couple of weeks doing that, rubbish, um and the bosses used to come down occasionally and I’d have Radio 4 on in the background and the boss would come down occasionally so he could listen to the radio and have a chat and one day he said, “Do you want to write up a desk-based assessment for us?” and I said “Yes” and this sort of led me to working for them pretty much solidly for the rest of that year, um, and working on various other little bits of chapels and churchyards as well, because they knew that I’d done that dissertation and that what’s I was interested in. [Redacted] but I’d got to the point where I knew that I’d pretty much achieved everything that I could at [redacted], so I wanted to go and do a Masters degree, partially to prove to myself that I could do better than that [redacted], which is why a lot of people do Masters degrees, um, so I looked around for a bit and I had this conundrum, because I’d worked on [redacted] and I’d worked with a number of osteoarchaeologists there, I had this decision to make: do I go and do osteoarchaeology? Do I do the Sheffield course, which was osteoarchaeology and burial archaeology together, or do I go and do something else? And talking to them, there were no jobs in osteoarchaeology. Loads and loads of people graduate and there’s a tiny amount of jobs and the second you label yourself as an osteoarchaeologist, you very rarely get other work, because people put you in a little box and say that they haven’t got any bones, so I thought that was probably a bad route and I didn’t think with my [redacted] I’d be able to get . . . I’d be able to distinguish myself enough that that would be a route that would probably be successful and I thought “Well, clearly then, if it’s that competitive you need to distinguish yourself in some notable way”, so I applied to [redacted] it was one of the best years of my life, it was fantastic, I loved it. Every second of it. And I got, I think, the highest distinction they’d ever awarded, um, and it was amazing.

So I think my path was pretty much set at that point and I wrote the paper that [redacted] was submitted in the first couple of weeks I was there, it took about three years to get published that one, four years, but anyway there was all this stuff going on. It was good. Yeah. Um . . . and my ambition with that, well, I’d never actually planned to do a PhD at that point, it was only later when [redacted] who I ended up doing my [redacted] we sort of talked about stuff and I ended up doing some [redacted] for him and he said, “Oh, you should think about doing a PhD”, so I thought about it and I decided to go back to digging. I thought I’d do it, but I’d like to go away and do more digging: it was very important to me to go away and run an excavation, a significant excavation, before doing a PhD and going into academia, because you need experience, if you’re ever going to teach . . . how can you do it? So I kind of felt that way, maybe I should go and get some work experience and so, um, at that point, [redacted] produced the most field archaeologists of any university, there were about 100 people in my year, and that’s quite . . . I knew some of them quite well and my old housemate was working in London and she knew that there was a site coming up [redacted] and that they were desperate for people who wanted to work on 19th century cemeteries, which is the stuff that I knew really well at that point, having worked on a few and having
researched them for both my undergraduate and my masters dissertations, um, so initially I worked for [redacted] for a bit, but that was rubbish and then I saw this advert come out and I immediately applied for it and they said, “Yeah, do you want to come along and be a supervisor on this project?” So I said “Yeah” and turned up and it was a massive disaster, yeah, it was . . . So they have this big digger in the middle and they just dug holes and there’s no three dimensional evidence for any coffins that they’re excavating at this stage before I arrived, it was just a mess and no one really knew what was going on and it was all very upsetting and, two weeks later, all the archaeologists, all of us, got escorted off site by the builders and we said “This is ridiculous” and I’d been involved, you know, I’d been thinking about the ethics quite a lot by this point, I obviously knew the value of all this stuff, um, anyway, so yeah, that all happened. I was pissed, we were all pissed off, I just left the company because it was in [redacted] and it was too expensive to commute unless they were paying me a supervisor’s wage, because I wasn’t on that site anymore they bumped me back down to digger and I thought “Bollocks to that” and so I handed my notice in.

[Redacted]

“Do you want to come back and run this site for us?” because no one else wanted to do it. It’s still the case, I think it’s partially because of the perception of goopiness associated with 19th century cemeteries, but I suspect it’s actually because they don’t really run like other archaeological sites, um and there’s a lot of political-ness that surrounds them and I think that people find that quite difficult, but by that point I quite liked the challenge, so I agreed and said “Yeah, ok” and I went to an initial meeting, sort of faced with this dilemma, which was, do we accept the ridiculous conditions that we are being given to run this site or do something else? And at that point, I said “Well, if we’re ever going to do anything, we might as well do it now”, so I ripped up the conditions and established a good working relationship with the clearance company who was doing most of the clearance at this point, because the conditions said that we had to stand on the edge of site, which was about 50 metres away from where the excavation was going on, so we could effectively record things, but from a distance, we had to sort of guess what was going on, so it was completely pointless, I was like, “Well, why are we even here, if we’re just basically observing?” Anyway, yeah, we ended up, I ripped up the conditions and we ended up working at the face front, at the coffin front, hands-on excavating and clearing coffins. I mean, it’s not really excavating, because . . . you sort of take off the clay with a digger, you find a coffin lid and then you remove the coffin lid and it’s full of water and bones. And you’ve got your rubber gloves on and you fish around and get all the bits and put it in a bag and label the bag and send it off to the Museum of London for skeletal analysis. So you see what I mean? It’s not really archaeology. It doesn’t feel like archaeology, but I think that it is. But I think that’s why very traditional and conservative field archaeologists don’t consider it to be proper archaeology.

So I was doing that, so we actually managed to save, in my mind anyway, we saved the site, because the bit I ran for nine months, we had three dimensional location for every single skeleton we excavated and we turned that from an absolute car-crash of a disaster into a publishable contribution to archaeology and I think it was a bit of a turning point as well [redacted]. I think it was a definite turning point.
in the way the relationship between archaeologists, 19th century cemeteries and clearance companies and stuff was, I don’t know if anyone will get kicked off site in quite that way again, although with HS2 coming up, who knows? It might well be the case, we’ll see.

Anyway, so, um . . . that was a horrendous experience, I was working shifts, working from 8 o’clock in the morning to 8 o’clock at night everyday because I was running it, so I didn’t . . . I didn’t feel like I couldn’t not be there all the time. So I was there most of the time, but one day I worked a shorter shift every week and I was commuting in [redacted] and there was all this chaos going on as well, we had 12 levels of building going on simultaneously all around us and engineers would arrive on a daily basis and say things like:

“What are we going to do with these skeletons then?”

“We’re going to get all the soil and we’re going to stick it all in dumpers and we’re going to drive it up to the north where land is cheap and we’re going to build a huge mound”.

And they go, “Yeah ok then”

And then they come back the next day and they say “Ah, land in the north is not as cheap as we thought it was.”

“No, it’s not is it?”

And then they go, “Ah, what we’re going to do is we’re going to get those dumpers again and we’re going to drive those dumpers down to, um, the docks and we’re going to get a load of barges and we’re going to put the soil on the barges and go out into middle of the British channel and dump all of the soil and the skeletons”.

And we’re like, “Ok, yeah, you do realise that most human bones float?”

“Ah, ok”.

“And what about the ecological damage of all that soil going into the North Sea?”

“Ah, yeah, ok, fine”.

But we were doing this all the time.

One of my favourite days, it was a Wednesday, so I was working the second shift because I needed some time off and we were doing six days, so I did three days and I took the Wednesday morning off and do whatever’s left, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, three days, um . . . and it was my favourite arrival on site ever because I got there and my supervisor turned around and said “Right. I’m just having this conversation with one of the clearance company”—they always found it very difficult to employ people, so their entire workforce was Albanian—they’d just caught this Albanian selling a longbone from one of the graves to one of the engineers who was trying to buy it and mount it on a piece of wood to give it as leaving present to his colleague at his retirement dinner that night. Because the cemetery had been such a crisis, he thought this would be quite funny and obviously we had to stop that quite quickly and explain to this guy that if he did, that he would pretty much jeopardise the entire project because we’d be in breach of the licence that we’d jointly held with the clearance company and he’d probably get fired and he just didn’t really understand, but eventually got the idea and asked us not to tell his boss and we didn’t,
so that was really weird and interesting, but I think it shows you a little bit, certainly the engineers’ attitudes towards what was going on, almost as a problem. What changed was that, because we ended up working with the Albanians really closely, the clearance company didn’t need to have any supervisory staff on, they just had a digger and we managed it, we managed the whole process, archaeologists and clearance, because we knew what we were doing and we did it efficiently and quickly, um, but primarily, because we were delaying the whole thing hugely, um, they were like, “Ok, you’re going to cost us X amount of money”, that’s why we got kicked off in the first place because they won’t hit their targets which means they’ll get fined. We went back and they realised that none of their gas pipes were going to work on time and they got an agreement if the archaeology is delayed, they won’t get fined, so they used us as an excuse to put their project back and that’s why our relationship with the engineers worked better, obviously it worked better with the clearance company because we developed that sort of quite close relationship with them, so yeah, that worked much better.

During this time, I got an email from [redacted] because I told him that I wouldn’t do a PhD without funding. I thought it was a very important vote of confidence if nothing else, so he sent me an email saying “Yes, we can give you some funding. The choice is either pay your fees for three years or give you one lump sum for the first year”, so I was like, “Ok, that’s weird funding, I’ll go for the fees for three years” and left the site. And the other thing I forgot to talk about there is the relationship between the guy who got kicked off and me was very difficult because he got kicked off, but they ended up sticking him in an [redacted]. He was still effectively on the project, he just wasn’t allowed on site and actually, he lied to everybody and he wasn’t allowed on any site on the entire building project. He was supposed to still be there looking at all the other watching brief stuff, but he wasn’t, he didn’t know what he was doing, he was just causing trouble and he sort of sent me big emails about things, you know? So I had to sort of fight to keep him under control, manage the engineers going on, and the clearance company and my staff. They were fine, actually. At one point, they realised that we effectively had no management whatsoever and so [indecipherable] sent us a manager to come and see what was going on and he was like, actually, this was the most cohesive team they had in the field at that point because we were all kind of engaged in what we were doing.

It felt like a real sort of 1980s rescue project. We were there doing really good work, saving this record and doing something important and it brought us all together in a really, really good way. I had one lunatic who painted . . . he got bored, because it’s not traditional digging, so he got bored and drew a giant skull and crossbones on the wall in orange spray paint. This was the wall that was facing the trains, so it was just “Oh god!” but he didn’t admit it, so we . . . we sort of talked to some people and went “Well, what’s going on?” and I think, ultimately, assumed that it was the Albanians because that’s what people had told us, so ok, fine, we talked to the clearance company and they say, “No, it wasn’t us, it was one of your guys”, so I talked to them and they pointed them out and I confronted them and they said “Ah, well, I was bored”, blah, blah, blah, so we moved him on quite quickly, but that was very difficult, very weird. Um . . . so one odd person. So we’d got over that problem, got it cleared up and moved on quickly, but otherwise, the team was absolutely fantastic, cohesive and brilliant and
it sort of helped when we found people, like named people, like um, [redacted] was pretty awesome. And people, one of the things, I've spoken to most of this team subsequently and the discovery of [redacted] was one of the things that people remember quite clearly. It's amazing how many people found him now, anyway, he had these little gold springs that held his teeth together, he had these false teeth, so the first porcelain paste teeth, they're now in a dental museum in London, they had this little gold spring on one side that held them together, I think we lost . . . or the other one was missing, we didn’t know what had happened to it, yeah, so that was very interesting [redacted]. So that was cool, anyway, sort of named individuals can, um, really influence at least your later memory of what happened, of what was going on, so that was cool.

Ok, so . . . it was quite clear to me that the write-up was going to be [redacted] who was the guy who got kicked off and I was trying not to use his name [laughs]. It’s pretty easy to find out, it doesn’t really matter, it’s all in the public domain anyway, um, so he then was basically going to take over writing up the post-excavation side of things, so I thought the best thing to do was to leave [redacted] and go and do something else: either find another cemetery of similar horror to do or I got this email saying “Come and do a PhD”, so I went and did a PhD at [redacted] instead. And I think I decided, if I’m really honest with myself, I thought, “It’s probably time to do some real archaeology rather than this 19th century stuff”. Although I don’t . . . I do genuinely believe that it is real archaeology. There is definitely something in me that said “If you’re going to be successful at this, you need to go mainstream, rather than edge”, so I decided to do the PhD [redacted]. So I developed that into a project and did that for four years and passed and in the last year, [redacted], but there’s no archaeology department there, so he got in contact and asked me if I would be willing to teach an archaeology module on the Masters course and I obviously said “Yes, absolutely!”, so I taught some bits. Initially I taught three classes and they went down really well and so the second year, I put together a whole module on burial archaeology and taught that for a couple of years and did lots of other bits and bobs and then, eventually, I think because of my experience at [redacted] and because I was teaching and debating with people on the [redacted], nurses, undertakers, funeral directors, occasionally archaeologists, and historians, all the time we were debating the ethics of what we were doing, why it’s important and how it works and it was just this constant thing and I was also teaching that same stuff at [redacted] as well, for the undergraduates, so this whole situation was just in my head a lot, for those couple of years and so I decided to start writing it down and I wrote a journal article [redacted] “That’s amazing, they actually published it, this is clearly important” and then I used that [redacted], so I thought “Right, brilliant” and I worked for a bit as a researcher doing some medieval stuff in [redacted] and then the economic crisis hit and I found myself unemployed for a year and a half, [redacted] So there you go, that wasn’t just how I got into it, that was a whole history! But I’m sure there’s some interesting stuff in there.

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<th>Do you miss commercial archaeology at all?</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>No. Not at all. Not in the slightest. I enjoyed the challenge of [redacted] a lot. I enjoyed the chaos. I enjoyed keeping it in order and making it work but I don’t like . . . I don’t think all commercial</td>
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archaeologists are that good. That professional. I don’t know. Ok, I think the problem with commercial archaeologists is that they’re good archaeologists, but not necessarily managers and project managers . . . I think that it’s lost its way a bit. What’s the point of producing a mountain of grey literature that no one can read or access? And who are we talking to? Other archaeologists? So if we’re digging sites for the sake of the archaeology and no other ambition, there doesn’t feel like there’s much point. So I didn’t want to spend my life writing reports that go in the giant grey literature bin and that’s the end of it. It seemed to be a waste of a life, a waste of time. I think unfortunately the way the structure of commercial archaeology works is that the most competent and brightest people leave quickly and those people that end up in middle management positions, at least, are the ones that are left because they’re still in it, and they’re either not able to get jobs elsewhere because they’re weird, difficult or they’re not that good. Because I think there is a problem with commercial archaeology and I think it’s deeply rooted in how it operates and it’s history and I didn’t . . . I just didn’t really see there being a future in it. I certainly feel now that if, for some reason, academic archaeology collapses or [redacted] collapses, I wouldn’t go back into commercial archaeology as an option, I’ve done that, I’ve learnt from it and I got a huge amount from it, but it’s not the future I see. So that’s quite an honest answer, but that’s definitely how I feel. Yeah.

5  K  Do you think students are sufficiently prepared for going into commercial archaeology? Particularly in regards to excavating human remains?

6  A  No. I don’t think so, no. But this is something I now have the opportunity to correct, at least in a small way and so . . . [redacted], pretty much when I started at [redacted] they said, “Do you want to run a research project?” and I said “Yes, ok. Brilliant”. . . and because I’d been working in [redacted] for a bit, I knew about this site that had been found and excavated, but there was more of it and that I would have good collaborators if I established it, so I thought we’d have a go and see what happens. Um . . . and at that point, there were 40 burials excavated and we subsequently excavated a further 90 odd, I think, over five years, with students and I quite liked that. As I said to you, I quite liked the challenge of [redacted] because of the chaos and because the human remains there gave it that extra edge, I think, they brought people together on that project, but I have seen other projects where they divide people, because they’re more emotional than bits of flint, if I’m honest, or bits of pot. Everybody, archaeologists want to find things, but they also want to work on human remains, but they don’t necessarily think about what impact it will have, so there’s this general conception that a number of people have told me, um, that you can’t run a training, field project with human skeletons, so I was like “Brilliant! I like this challenge”, so I thought we’d do that as a field project and train students to dig skeletons, um . . . because they don’t really get that opportunity and if you’re confronted with a skeleton in the first three months of your first commercial job, it’s going to be a terrifying experience, plus, it basically encapsulates all the things you need to do beautifully, excavating graves, doing all the drawings, the recording, all that stuff, so yeah.

[Redacted]
So we had hundreds of graves and skeletons going through our system, the students were brilliant, they just managed it really, really well and they all worked on four or five graves each, we set up little teams. Well, the best thing about learning experience is doing it with your peers, so I set up little teams where four of them would work on a grave together and one of them would have done one before, like a second or third year, and then the first years, so they're sort of mentoring them a bit, and then we had some supervisors wandering around, making sure that everything was ok and not being destroyed and, you know, and I would always be there, working on stuff and helping them to go a bit faster because they're terrified of these things, they don't want to break them, they don't want to stick their trowel through them.

Um . . . and that means, at the same time they come to excavate them, they first off start to go “Ooh, bones!” and they start to mine bones, so they’re digging the soil out and out the middle and going “Come on, there’s some bones here!” and you’re like “No, no no, no! Stop, stop, stop! All the soil needs to come down simultaneously, otherwise you’ll lose all the little finger bones and toes bones and the artefacts and stuff as well”, so ok, fine, and then what happens is they start to dig the edges, so they go to the edge of the grave and that goes down and they don’t go back into the skeleton again, and you go “Oh no, you can’t do that, no, no, no, no! Be simultaneous!” So you have to sort of manage that process quite carefully as a field director. It’s quite nice actually, you can see it happening, every single time. It’s amazing and there are bits they’re nervous about, so how the skull sits in the grave, um, well, if you’re going to take a photograph of it, you don’t want to have it surrounded by soil and it’s also not good archaeological practice, so you’ve got to then encourage them to take the soil right the way to the skull and then excavate all underneath without dislodging it and they’re terrified of this, it’s not going to go anywhere, but eventually they get it. [Redacted] every skeleton excavated has to come out the same day as we start excavating it, because people might nick it and [redacted] and on the one occasion we left one skeleton in the ground, some people tried to break into the site because they saw it that day and they knew it wasn’t finished, so the policy was absolutely right. Fortunately they didn’t manage to break in, so it was fine, but we saw the crowbar attempts on the fencing. Pressure on the student team to get it right. So about 7 o’clock at night they’ve got it to the point where it’s about ready to take a photograph and start doing the drawing and stuff, so . . . I think it . . . they obviously realised it was quite a special thing to be excavating a grave and they all got the opportunity to do it and they were all working in these little teams and they do it in a day. You don’t do a ditch in a day, you’ve got as much time as you like in a ditch. Photographs are finished, they start to plan it and then we would work with them, osteoarchaeologists and me and another experienced site director would always lift, or help them lift, but basically we learnt to do it really, really, really fast, so the students would be like “Ok, I’m done now” and they’ve finished the plan, sit down, brilliant, and the bones come out in about half an hour, especially if they’ve got that soil, bang, in it goes, into the different boxes, off it goes and then the students get to work on it in post-excavation as well, clean all the soil off it. So . . . what I was trying to do with that project is make sure all the records were absolutely perfect. So every single context sheet has every box filled in beautifully. It got to the position where . . . there was one
student who I rejected their context sheet seven times. He got quite upset about this, but he got it right and then he never did it again and every single time it was perfect. And the reasons for doing it in that rigorous way was I wanted to prepare them, as best I can, for what happens next, for commercial archaeology. And I suspect, well, I know, because one of my students told me last week, she came to see me, she’s worked on a 19th century cemetery and she was really proud: she’d managed to dig a skeleton by herself in a day and done all the records and when she arrived and said “I’ve done it, what should I do now?”, they said “Well, fill in the records” and she was like, “No, no, here are the records”, and they were like, “Oh, that’s amazing”. So we did something right. We’re giving them that experience and it’s sort of building on all that knowledge I got in commercial archaeology and it’s helping the students to work and be prepared to go out there and do stuff, if that’s what they want to do. So, I think, they’re not well prepared, but a lot of places, you know, two weeks field experience, which is the bare minimum with some institutions, it’s a taste but it’s not a professional experience that prepares them for excavation.

I suspect that quite a lot of those people leave, if there are jobs to get, which there are at the moment, get jobs, go “Oh my god! This is horrendous, I don’t understand this! It’s the middle of winter” and they leave and I think that’s a real shame. I think that we really need to get more talent staying in field archaeology and really thinking about its value and what it means, because at the moment we don’t do that bit well. It’s starting to change with this sort of swing towards public archaeology, which is really positive, but what value do we bring? Why are we doing it? Not for the grey literature bin, not for me as an archaeologist generically. I don’t want to know all this stuff about ditches, so why are we doing it? Who are we doing it for? And ultimately that comes down to us, for people, so especially on projects like HS2 that are coming up, everybody hates having a railway line through their backyard, but if the archaeology is done well and it’s done in a big outreach public archaeology way, it can be used to give people a sense of history, a sense of place and it can add so much value to that, that it changes their perception. That’s what we should be doing and that is what I think the new generation of [indecipherable] should be leading that charge, um, but I suspect that will be very slow and suspect that won’t happen on HS2 at all, which will be a shame. There you go, so that’s what I believe [redacted].

We’re doing it in exactly the same way we’d have done this behind the screens, there’s nothing wrong, so the problems with the screens, if you put them up people assume that you’re doing something wrong, something that needs to be hidden and that’s a terrible thing, anyway we’ve digested into a different area, but my students believe that now as well. Which is cool! That’s great! We turn out students that are very practical and will be archaeologists and I hope . . . I hope that that will help to influence the future. We don’t know. We’ll see. It has to be a good plan!

And how did the students react to excavating human remains? Did any of them find it a particularly moving experience?

That’s interesting. I think they’re terrified of it . . . the technicality of it, the fiddliness of it, um . . . and they all wanted to do it, but they didn’t know why. Actually, that’s not true, there were some people who didn’t
want to do it and I wouldn't make anyone do it, but there were one or two people who wanted to come on the project and there are other projects they could have gone on, but they came on our project, possibly because they liked the community element, but they didn't actually want to be involved in the excavation of human remains, which is fine, I didn't make anybody do that. So we definitely had one or two of those, but we've turned over, must be 150 students to do that project, and there's only ever been one or two that didn't want to do it and I assume that others, if they didn't want to do it, they'd go somewhere else. So they know upfront what it is.

A lot of the people who say that they've come on the project said they want to do it because of the rigour of it and because it gives them … the experience is the one closest to what it will be like as a contract archaeologist, so they see the project as a commercial training exercise, at least that's what they tell me, some of them definitely chose to come on the project because of the human remains, but it's quite often the people that are trying to prepare themselves to go off and do osteoarchaeology and there's always one or two of those. The students . . . it's a much easier project to run when they are no graves because they get a little competitive and jealous, it doesn't happen on most . . . lots of archaeological . . . you get a group of students and then someone will come up and say "I haven't done any skeletons yet".

And you're like “Actually, I know you were here last year and I know you dug skeletons”.

“Oh, alright then”.

So . . . they're trying to get involved, they're trying to be part of that and it had to be managed quite carefully. I had to have a rolling list in my head, I didn’t have it on paper, as I felt that would be too formal, but I had a rolling list in my head of what people had excavated. I always do anyway because I’m trying to track skills, make sure they’ve had a chance to do everything, who has worked on graves and who hasn’t, sort of mix up the balance, and you also don’t know how many you’re going to find, so that’s a challenge!

Um . . . and there’ll always be some point in the week, in the middle of the project, towards the end of the project, “Can I have a chance please?”, but at the same time you also want to make sure that the skeleton is done well, so the challenge is to mix it up so that experienced people are doing it alongside new people and you’ve got try and make sure those teams are competent. So you’ve got all those things going on. Yeah. So they get a bit weird and jealous about it. And what happens is, because really, excavating skeletons is not a challenge, ultimately, because it’s a human body and even if you don’t know human anatomy very well, you’ve got a body yourself, so you can figure out that you should be looking for fingers and toes and you can figure out there’s a skull and bones and stuff, once you’ve done or two skeletons and maybe a slightly more challenging one, you’ve pretty much excavated every grave you’re ever going to find, so very quickly, those people that are more technically-challenged archaeologists or more technically inspired archaeologists get bored of it, and want to do something else. We definitely had a few that said “I don’t want to dig any more skeletons, can I just do the ditch? It’s really satisfying!” and actually that’s right. Digging a ditch is actually one of the most satisfying things you can do, because you’re just shifting the soil and sticking your finds in a bucket and you get down the bottom and you draw this beautiful section, take
a photograph and you go off and do another one and ultimately, that’s really very satisfying. It’s therapeutic and a skeleton certainly isn’t therapeutic in that way, it’s a bit more stressful, especially with that 12 hour turn-around time, but we were very lucky and were camping on site, so we were able to work quite late. So they definitely . . . I think because of that, there was a sort of stress with the skeletons that wasn’t experienced with other things, so yeah, I think that . . . excavating children is the one that has the most impact on people, not necessarily at the time. I remember we had one girl, [redacted], about a year and a half later, she got pregnant and she had a baby and, um, her friend who was one of my students told me that she said “I can’t believe we excavated that child at [redacted]” now that she’s playing with her own baby, which is sort of interesting. I don’t think it’s in a creepy way, but in a reflective way. Thinking about the baby as a person. Um . . . and we were definitely trying to encourage that. One of our students, it was brilliant actually, they turned around and said, “Well, we’ve got to name this skeleton because we’ve spent so much time with them. If you spent that much time with a person and you didn’t know their name, it would be very rude, wouldn’t it?” So there was a bit of naming skeletons going on, there was a definite relationship that got developed whilst they were going through this process and that’s the same sort of experience that I had when I was doing that in a professional capacity as well, and with the skeletons I excavated.

I always had to do [indecipherable] “Right, go! I excavated Burial 100 at [redacted] and I did it fast and I did it in half a day!” and I was very pleased that I did that and I must admit, that for me, it was very much a technical challenge, rather than developing a relationship with a skeleton, but the students do it and there were one or two that I helped out with and got involved with a bit more, that were definitely like that, [redacted] was absolutely that. This was one of our first adults we excavated, it was actually the second adult we excavated on the whole project and it was such a special and unique burial and I think it was such a vivid cause of death, it suddenly makes that person very human and very tragic and very fast, so yeah, and I think that’s certainly something true of 19th century cemeteries, because we’ve got a name, that’s why I was saying with [redacted], his little mini-crisis, that actually that name, turns that from dry bones into us. The same thing is true with remains that are a bit more squidgy and fleshy, is that it immediately turns them from being sort of dry to being human and that’s a sort of Hertzian dynamic, isn’t it? It’s the wet/dry contrast. It’s definitely, definitely true for field archaeology.

So what’s interesting is that over the course of time as that project developed—because there were repeat students, they always have to do two field seasons, so you have one load come and it’s a new experience and there’s always some of those that come back and they help to supervise them and then we have some third years that stay and come back to get paid to supervise, so actually, there are some people who started in the first year and ended in the last year, because they came back, so we had this sort of growing experience base all the way through—what was interesting was in the first couple of years they gave them names and we tried to give them [redacted] names and sometimes they’d give them Harry Potter names, that fine, Harry Potter names are good, um, and that frustrated the osteoarchaeologist. She understood the reasoning for names and actually she wanted to do that, but when they were giving them names of cartoon characters or book characters
she wasn’t so impressed. So she always renamed them [redacted] names. It’s interesting, isn’t it? The way she’s thinking about that is that they actually deserve a proper name, as opposed to a Harry Potter name, but actually over time, it naturally stopped happening. They just stopped doing it. They became the numbers. I think they still, you know, over the project they just became the numbers, the grave numbers, um, and the grave number became their identity, [redacted] it became part of their identity and I think that some of them did name them while they were excavating them, but those names didn’t make it into the record as they had done previously. And I think, when we had a small number of skeletons, we were talking about them as their names, we were saying, “Ah, that person there”, or “That person there”, but as we got more, we had to refer to them by their burial numbers to understand them.

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<th>Are there any human remains that you’ve personally excavated that have stood out for you in any way?</th>
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| 10 | A | Um, I’ve mentioned the [redacted], the one that does sort of is the absence of human remains in one case, at [redacted] where we were digging and we got to the bottom of a stack of coffins and sometimes they dig little tiny cuts at the bottom and put a little baby’s coffin in and I got to the bottom and there was a little cut at the bottom and a little baby’s coffin, excavated it, lifted the wood, the lid up and there were no bones in it, because they’d decomposed or maybe they were never there, who knows? And it suddenly made me feel quite sad because that baby wasn’t going to be reburied with or become part of the collection with the other skeletons, whereas if it had sort of been there, so I got a little bit emotional and I bagged up the coffin and put a little label in it saying “Please rebury this coffin with the skeletons”. I think they chucked it away! [laughs] But that made me a little bit sad. Um, yeah. So I always remember that. I think boys tend to be more affected by that sort of thing than girls do. I think girls approach it in a very matter-of-fact and systematic way whereas, at [redacted] the boys had to go for a little walk and that’s just a general observation, there’s no statistics there, no quality control on that observation. But it’s interesting. I don’t know why there are more girls in osteoarchaeology, but that might be part of it. I don’t know [redacted].

[Redacted]

There’s another one that I think is really . . . that I remember quite well. I wasn’t actually involved in the excavation of this very much, but I was involved in helping recording it right. It’s because the arm placement was very strange, this woman was buried face down, with her hands claspings beads there and her left hand underneath and on the hip of the child she was buried with, and it suddenly struck me that’s an incredibly emotive position, that relationship.

[Redacted]

They just make you think. And practice is so important, how can you think about the taphonomy of the grave, how can you think of that sort of thing if you’ve never actually excavated one or worked on one? So yeah, stuff like . . . a few, but I mean, I have now dug or been responsible for thousands of skeletons, [redacted] we excavated 1200 odd skeletons and at [redacted] we excavated 111 and we’ve done 90 or so at [redacted] and I’ve done various other ones here and there, so yeah, I must have dug dozens and dozens myself. But I remember those
particular individuals, so that’s interesting isn’t it?

One of the things I encourage my students to do a little bit is to turn your brain off, which is weird because in every aspect of archaeology you want them to be thinking all the time, thinking all the time. If you overthink excavating a grave, you're trying to guess where the body’s going, the legs are going to go there, da-da-da-da, “I’ll just start digging here” and then you get it wrong. It turns out the leg goes over there, it turns out to be crouched rather than supine, so it’s almost important just to let it happen and go with the flow which can be quite nice actually, just let it be what it is. There’s something very relaxing about just letting it be what it is. So I quite like that.

11 K Do you think excavating human remains has affected the way you perceive death in any way?

12 A Oh, that’s interesting. Hmmm . . . I don’t really know what I thought about it before! [laughs] What I think is really nice is that . . . what I’m interested in is people, um and that’s what attracted me towards burial archaeology in the first place, was that it’s about people, it’s not about bits of pot or economy or technology, it’s people and I think that’s what’s fascinating about it and I think death . . . that is a very personal thing, it’s people, we all go through it, we have to go through it ultimately and that’s just part of life [redacted]. We’re not really talking about dying or death, we’re talking about people, so I think it’s very difficult to distinguish those things and I think people are ultimately incredibly fascinating and it’s the people of the past that drew me towards archaeology. It’s that challenge, the way they think, it’s the technical challenge of it, it’s the interpretation, it’s amazing, it’s much more exciting than science because, well, it is a science, you know what I mean? Where you’re doing like a hard science like chemistry. You come up with an experiment and you do it for many, many days, it’s quite boring and repetitive and you’ve got to come up with a solution to the problem. Ultimately, there’s not the same challenge as trying to understand what the hell’s going on on site where all things interrelate. What the hell were they doing in the first place? And trying to put that jigsaw together is just absolutely a fantastic intellectual conundrum. I think that some of these issues are also a bit like that, so this relationship between people and skeletons is a really interesting intellectual conundrum. What is there about that relationship? Why is it that skeletons are different to loaves of bread? Why is it that fleshed corpses create a different response to dry ones and is that true? How can you see that and quantify it? And that’s a really intellectual challenge to explore fully and completely, you have to immerse yourself into lots of different subjects and different ways of thinking and get to know people and so that’s nice, I like that a lot. Um, has it changed the way I think about death? Well, no, I don’t think it’s scary but then I’m not sure that many people do. I think that’s been over-mythicised in the anthropological literature anyway.

13 K What are you thoughts on displaying human remains?

14 A That’s interesting [redacted]. I suspect that’s because there’s a personal relationship with it, so they want to protect the remains from the “morbid curiosity” of the evil, nasty, viewing people. It’s horrendous, frankly, because what’s wrong with being morbid? The word morbid doesn’t mean anything. It means interested in death, curious, well,
that’s a particular trait, so we’re interested in death and curious. What’s wrong with that then? [redacted]. Um, yes, so I suspect that’s why archaeologists think that way. I think that’s something that happens, but the tail end of which you can see at [redacted] is that protecting them from the morbidly curious. Um, personally, I think we should do it, I think it’s fascinating. And I think it’s very important for us to experience skeletons, bodies, and the stuff that’s inside us, but I also think it’s a way for all of us to get a relationship with our past and that’s ok, that’s cool, we’re . . . we have to understand where we come from, we’re not just people that live here and can do anything we like, we’re people that come from thousands and thousands of other people that lived before us and that’s really what archaeology is. I think that’s what those skeletons are: they are everything about the human experience in that one place.

So yeah, I think that’s really important and I think we need to do it. And I suspect if we don’t, we’ll also develop a strange relationship with the public because of this perception that archaeology and skeletons go hand in hand. If we remove that, then we lose an enormous vehicle for us to communicate with the people we should be communicating with in the first place, so yeah, I think it’s really important. I think it’s amazing that Body Worlds attracts all this controversy and yet it is the most visited exhibition in human history, isn’t that interesting? You know? So I think that’s also a bit of a conundrum, isn’t it? There’s a sort of ambiguity attached to it, but we’re drawn to it and I think that’s very important for us. So yeah, I do.

[Redacted]

Actually I think it’s very dangerous to develop that protective . . . it’s almost as if archaeologists are turning skeletons into dependents, children or something like that, which is both very patronising and it is, um, not . . . it’s partially the result of professionalisation. Ok, so if you professionalise something then it’s not ok to have emotion in that context. Emotion and professionalism are anathema, ok? And so, archaeologists are being emotive and protective, but they need to make that professional, so take it away. And that’s what I think is going on. I think we need to realise that and stop doing it.
## Appendix 10

### Interview with Mary

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<td>So the first question is really basic . . . can you tell me a bit about yourself and your background in archaeology and what you do here at York Archaeological Trust?</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Ok, alright, I’m a field officer . . . [redacted] . . . um, an awful lot of that digging has been on skeletons and cemeteries, totally by fluke, it happened to be what was available at the time. I’ve dug up thousands of them, I really do mean thousands, um . . . I [redacted] um . . . and I really like digging skeletons, but I’ll have crack at whatever, it’s a commercial unit, so I do whatever job comes up, so I’ve dug everything from Iron Age to a steel works and it’s just whatever job comes along. I’ve spent a lot of time recording churches and various monasteries in North Yorkshire, er, the love of my life is parish churches. I absolutely adore them and I know a lot about them, um, but basically anything Roman onwards, because I’m in York [redacted], most of what I’ve done has been Roman and medieval, but . . . you know it’s whatever job comes to hand, really, that’s it really. I’ve got a degree, a postgraduate diploma and a MA and [redacted]. So that’s what I do and all the rest of it, really. There we go.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Did you learn to excavate human remains on the job?</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>On the job, yes. Um . . . the first site I went on in [redacted], between my A-Levels and going to university was [redacted] which was a Roman- Christian cemetery, so no grave goods, but some very nice burials, um . . . and I basically got there on day one and started digging skeletons and was still digging them five months later. You know? That was it, really. I was just naturally absolutely brilliant at it, I can just do them really quickly and I just took to it like a duck to water, so I really enjoy digging them up [laughs] I don’t know what that says about me! [laughs]</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What do you like about them particularly?</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>I like them because they’re intricate, I like them because you can play “spot that disease”, I like them because I don’t think you can get any closer to your ancestors than actually digging them up, I find it fascinating, you know, to think about what they had to deal with without modern medicine. You know, no painkillers, no anaesthetics and yet you see what these people were capable of living with and surviving and I mean that admiration of them, really. I just really like it and I think and it’s a nice self-contained thing, you know, one burial is half a day to a day’s work, it’s nice and easy to get them out and dig them . . . it’s just a nice challenge, really.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>So you can get them all done in half a day?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>My record’s four in a day, I think.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>That’s incredible!</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Well, it’s not normal, as my colleagues will tell you. I’m not normal in the way I work. Anyway, there you go. Never more than a day. Never, ever more than a day. Never.</td>
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<td>I’m impressed.</td>
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<td>Well, to be frank, I don’t think you should take more than a day because we have had problems on one of the sites we dug, where people were coming in and stealing the skulls for nefarious purposes, um . . . so my personal feeling is start it, dig it and get it out on the same day and then it’s not in any danger from the weather, thieves, people standing on it, you know, the builders coming in whacking a machine through the middle of it or whatever, so we try and always get them dug on the same day that they’re started, if at all humanly possible.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Yeah, I didn’t realise . . . I thought when I started here that they would come out in a day and we wouldn’t be covering them up at night.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>To be honest, I’m quite surprised it’s being done that way.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Um, in terms of this site, has it been a particularly enjoyable one?</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Well, this one is a funny one for me [laughs] because I dug up the church 20 years ago and it’s like the Cemetery Mark Two for me! Um, it was a lovely . . . it was a lovely little church excavation and we had some very unusual burials, we had two with papal bullae, which is extremely . . . I’ve never found one on any other site and we had two, which was quite extraordinary and we also had a prone burial which was odd . . . um, in the original one and it was just a really nice, you know, ’cause we got quite a big chunk of the church, which you don’t often get, um, it was a lovely little dig, so it’s kind of nice to come back and do a few more, really, and I haven’t dug a skeleton for quite a few years now, again, it’s pot-luck as to what jobs come up, so it’s nice to get back to doing them, really. So yeah, it’s a trip down memory lane, I think.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>What does the phase “best practice” mean to you in terms of excavating human remains?</td>
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| 18 | Er . . . treating them with respect, treating them with dignity, um, remembering always that it is a human being that you’re digging up and it could be your remains one day, so treat them in the way you would hope someone would treat you, um . . . making sure you don’t cause unnecessary damage to the bones, making sure that you get as many of the bones as is humanly possible. I know sometimes that fingers and toes are difficult because they are so small, and it’s also very difficult with children for the same reason, their bones can be incredibly small and incredibly fragile, but basically trying to recover as much as you can, within the constraints that you’re working in, because obviously if you’re in a watching brief style situation, you haven’t got time to clean them to
the same degree as you would have if you were doing a proper excavation and sometimes it is just necessary to clean them, you know, for example, just clean the top of the rib cage, don’t dig out and see the bottom of the rib cage because you haven’t got the time. Dig them so you can see the position and then get them out, so that they’re not going out in the bucket of a machine, basically. So it’s doing as good a job as humanly possible within the time that you have, which given I’ve always worked in a commercial set-up, I’ve never done these things as a research project where you can spend as much time as you want, I’ve always worked in the commercial world and you always have to balance what you would like to do with what you’ve got the time to do, so there is a need for speed, but there’s also a need for care and compassion as well.

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| 26 | K | I think it’s odd, again, it’s not our choice, we are often given very stringent conditions by the county archaeologist or in this particular case, the city archaeologist and they are all into community involvement, that’s the new buzzword, so it’s all “Get the community involved! Tell the community what you’re doing!” Well, yeah . . . but it will and it can create problems, for example, I was digging on a site—nothing to do with burials—in South Yorkshire last year and this was a vast acreage of site and we found nothing, we found a golf ball and I’m not exaggerating, that was it, but somebody in the local pub went down and said we’d found a bronze shield, and a sword, and a Roman soldier and the security guard that night was literally threatened and you know, he had hundreds of people turning up with metal detectors and there was nothing there. So all it takes is one idiot to tell the pub, to say something stupid and that’s
it, you're inundated and there's nothing you can do, even with a security
guard, you'd be pushing it and most sites don't have that, so it's a bit of a
problem.

What do you think is important about excavating human remains? Are
we saving them from being obliterated or—

It's a combination of saving them from being obliterated because the
choice is either we do it or they get a necropolis firm in who'll just a mini-
digger and scoop them out, basically. Um . . . I know that happens for
more modern burials, but it's also to try to and understand past
populations, history of disease, are we taller, are we shorter, are we fatter,
are we thinner, is there evidence of different racial groups, is there
evidence of people coming in, going out, did the Vikings make a
difference, did the Romans make a difference, were they shorter, taller,
fatter, thinner, you know, all of that, so it's double-edged, it's both for
research and for saving these burials from just being smashed to pieces,
because if it wasn't for archaeologists, that is what would happen, you
know, no question of that.

Are you in favour of displaying human remains?

I personally don't mind it, but I can understand that people with a
religious view might find that offensive, but it doesn't bother me, if it
bothered me I wouldn't be digging them up, so I have no problem with
it, but I know that in a lot of Islamic countries, they're not on display, for
example, in the Cairo museum, they've moved all the mummies into one
room, where non-Muslims will go and go “Ooh, look at that one!”
whereas Muslims just won't go in there because they don't find the
display of human remains tasteful, they think it's abhorrent, so they've
discreetly moved all of the mummies away or shut the lids of the coffins,
whether that will end up happening in British museums, I don't know,
but I personally don't have a problem with it. Whether the person whose
body it is would have had a problem with it is another question, but we
will never know.

Do you think we should try and take into account the deceased's wishes?

How do you know what the deceased's wishes were? We have no way of
knowing. If the desire was immortality, what's more immortal than being
gawped at by a load of humans saying "Ooh, look at him!", you're never
going to know, so I don't think you can go down that road and say, well,
he would have said this and she would have said that, you're never going
to know. Some . . . presumably, in an average population, at any given
time, some people would have found it fascinating and other people
would have found it horrific, just the same as we do today. Some people
would be “Ooh, how fascinating!” and others would say it's just appalling
that you're digging people up.

What do you think are the biggest difficulties or challenges in terms of
excavating human remains?

I think in the commercial world and I'll be very specific here, because
that's the world I work in, it's time. Quite often you will have very strict
time limits on trying to get the burials out and . . . certainly with
medieval, your typically medieval parish church in an urban setting,
which most of the ones in York are, most of the ones I’ve dug up are, there are just so many burials and they are so heavily intercut, it’s quite a slow process, because you’ve got to find one, dig it out, record it, find the next one, dig it out, record it. Doing that in heavily intercut burials is quite a challenge and doing it with the developer breathing down your neck is difficult, so for me personally, it’s a time and money issue, really.

| 35 | K | Do you think in a way then that archaeologists just go in ahead of the developer and clear up, in a way? |
| 36 | M | Er, sometimes and it varies with the developer, I mean some developers are more interested than others and some developers will dig the burials up and other developers will say “Too expensive, that’s going to be the carpark” or “That’s going to be the green in our new patch of luxury houses” or whatever it is. I mean it varies with the developer, some are better and more sympathetic than others and sometimes they’re a nightmare. |
| 37 | K | Do you have any particularly memorable experiences of excavating human remains? |
| 38 | M | Loads and loads and loads. I’ve dug up one that had a lead coffin and it had its fingernails and its hair, which was fabulous and we had to get the British Museum and a crane to get the coffin out. I’ve dug a Roman cemetery at Tenter Street in London, which is near Aldgate East train station and it was a Roman pagan cemetery and I have never, ever, in my life, dug up so much bling. It was just everywhere, fabulous . . . it was one of the best sites I ever worked on. It was a real fluke of survival because it was a Roman cemetery and then Henry VIII gave the land to the Royal Navy for stretching sails on, which is what a tenterhook is, that’s why you’re on tenterhooks, because you’re being stretched to the limit and . . . so literally, you peeled the turf off and there was the Roman cemetery. It had never, ever been built on, even though it was smack bang in the middle of London, so the preservation was freakishly good, it was literally as the Romans had left it and every single grave had something with it. Necklaces, hobnail boots, glasses, bottles, entire suites of dinner services, mirrors, knives, swords, anything you can think of, we found it on that cemetery. It was absolutely gobsmacking and probably the most beautiful thing I found was a glass bottle in the shape of a swan, a scent bottle in one piece and all these things were in one piece and you’ll know yourself as an archaeologist, you very rarely find an entire bowl, or entire glass bottle or an entire anything, you find all the bits that have been thrown away when it broke, and on this site we just got these things out by the dozen. Literally by the dozen. I have never, ever dug up so many fabulous objects in my entire life, so every day on that site was just a joy because you never knew what you were going to find. It was just stunning. Um . . . I’ve dug up some with the most horrific diseases and you feel so sorry for them, it’s sympathy for the pain they must have gone through, so I’ve got lots of really happy memories of digging them up, you know. I think, probably, the saddest one was on Jewbury. There were two adults next door to one another, a sort of adult female and then an older adult male and um, it was described in the report by the bone specialist as they’d been subjected to a psychopathic attack and they had so many vicious wounds on them, they’d clearly been hacked to pieces and the man, miraculously, had survived and they’d done surgery on him, on his
head and they'd cut away, he'd had a sword wound on his head or a knife wound on his head, and they'd gone in, pulled the scalp back and taken all the little slivers of bone out, so that they wouldn't go into the brain and kill him and it started to heal but he'd obviously died very soon after, presumably from septicaemia, but the fact that in the 12th century, someone had tried to help this poor man and the fact that they were buried next door to on another, when it seems to have been a first come, first served burial arrangement, you know, you went in the next slot in the row, you have to think were they attacked together? Were they two unfortunate Jews who just got, you know, hacked to pieces in the pogrom or some anti-Semitic nonsense and that was so poignant to dig them up and I'll forget that as long as I live, so yeah. Great memories.

39 K That links to my next question, how does excavating human remains make you feel?

40 M Um, it makes me feel . . . interested. It makes me feel compassion, it makes me feel sympathy for them, um, all of those things, really. And it makes me feel glad that I'm the one doing it and not a JCB [laughs]

41 K Do you have any favourite osteological element?

42 M No, all of them, really, hands and feet are a nice challenge and fiddly. No, not particularly. I don't have a foot fetish or anything, if that's what you mean! [laughs]

43 K Are some human remains easier to excavate than others?

44 M Well, an adult male is always going to be—and this is going to sound like a stupid thing to say—but an adult male in good health when he died with robust bones, you know, someone who perhaps has been bopped on the head by a sword, is always going to be easier to dig up than a neonate, where nine-tenths of the bone are cartilage and you're left with little odds and sods and it may not even look like a human being, it may just look like a rat or a bit of rabbit or a bit of cat and it's . . . I mean, they're very difficult to dig because they're so fragile and so tiny and likewise, a little old lady with osteoporosis will be more of a challenge because the bones will be brittle. Some bones, you know, the soil in York is very variable in terms of preservation and sometimes they're absolutely fantastic and other times they're absolutely, they've got the consistency of digestive biscuits, that's the only way I can phrase it. They're absolutely shot at. If you really want a nice skeleton, you need to go to Dorset and dig on chalk because they're fantastic, they just come out of the ground the way they went in and they're in much better condition because of the soil than in other places. If you were digging in Norfolk, you wouldn't get a thing, because it's sand, you know, you'd get next to nothing. So it depends on so many things, how healthy they were when they died, I know that sounds bizarre but you understand what I mean, and also the soil. Um, and even within one cemetery you can get burials, you know, you can have one that's really good and then next door to it, you'll have one that's absolutely appalling.

We had bizarre ones on Jewbury where the graves there were very deep and they were cut into solid clay, so of course when it floods, there's nowhere for the water to go, it just kind of sits within the coffin and they all had, you know, very sturdy wooden coffins, so what had happened was
seasonally, they'd flood and then recede and then flood and then recede and as the body was rotting away merrily inside the coffin, what would happen is the whole of the leg would detach and then roll upside down, so quite often you would get them with the top half the right way up and the legs upside down, which was rather bizarre. We also had on Jewbury, a lot that had very messed about ribcages that was thought to be the same thing, er, and we had some where the ribcage, quite a bit of the … this area, the abdomen area, was missing, um and in medieval England, the Jews had to be buried by law at a specific Jewish cemetery and there were only ten of them in Britain, so if you were a Jew in Beverley and you died in Beverley, you had to be brought to York for burial and likewise, for a long time, the Jews of Lincoln had to be brought to York for burial. Now, Lincoln to York in the medieval period was quite a long way and we wondered if they’d taken the bowels out to make the body not, you know, not rot so much. Having said that, that would be against everything Jews believe, but there were some that were noticeably manky in the middle and we wondered if it was something to do with that long journey for a body, you know. So it varies.

<p>| 45 | K | And emotionally, are some easier to excavate than others? Are neonates— |
| 46 | M | That doesn’t bother me. I don’t like children, so that doesn’t bother me! [laughs] I’m not a fan of babies and children, that’s why I haven’t got any, so digging them up doesn’t bother me any more than digging up a . . . an old age pensioner, a burial is a burial, I treat them all the same, really. |
| 47 | K | How do you find fleshy remains? You mentioned the one with nails and hair? |
| 48 | M | It’s great! It was fascinating, because I’d never seen one like that before and it was amazing to see it. It didn’t bother me, it didn’t worry me at all. |
| 49 | K | You’re a natural! |
| 50 | M | Absolutely! |
| 51 | K | What are your thoughts on giving human remains nicknames on site? |
| 52 | M | Never done it. No. Oh no, actually, we did have one on George Street where . . . it was a child and this child was maybe, oh, I don’t know, maybe two and half feet long, so quite a youngish toddler, I guess and er, he got named “Banana Boy” because there was such an enormous pit underneath him, he’d sagged, so his feet and his head were about a foot higher in terms of elevation, than his tummy, so he literally was, in profile, the shape of a banana. That was an extraordinary one, but that’s the only one I remember giving a name to and that’s because we’d say “Right, it’s time to photograph Banana Boy’ and that’s the only time I’m aware of, er, a burial being given a nickname. |
| 53 | K | Has excavating the remains of the dead affected how you perceive death in any way? |
| 54 | M | No. You’re dead, you’re dead. |
| 55 | K | Would you like to be excavated yourself? |</p>
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<td>56</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Um, I think it’s a very unhygienic way of disposing of bodies, actually, I think it’s more hygienic to cremate them. It’s not that I object to being dug up, I think it’s um, a very unhygienic thing to do, have bodies rotting around the place, really.</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>That’s true, mind you, we’re running out of space anyway.</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Well, that’s another consideration, but yeah. You know, it’s not what I want, really.</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Well, that’s the end of the questions, unless you have thoughts you would like to share?</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No. Um. I should just say that I was brought up in quite a religious household. My mother is appalled that I dig skeletons up. She finds it really difficult because she thinks it’s disturbing the dead. She doesn’t mind if they’re Romans, because they’re not Christian, but er, when I’ve Christian ones up, she’s not, um, a hundred per cent happy.</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you share—</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No.</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So you’re not religious?</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No. And also, when I’ve been in Muslim countries, I’ve done a lot of travelling, particularly in North Africa and whenever I’d had guides and they’ve asked me what I do, their reaction to the fact that I dig up dead bodies is horror. So it’s quite interesting seeing different people’s reaction to what you do.</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Does that ever make you question what you do?</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No. No. Because as I say, it’s either me or a JCB and I know which I’d prefer if it were my body. So, er, the needs of the living have got to come above the needs of the dead. You can’t . . . if you stop digging everywhere there was a skeleton, most of western Europe would be uninhabitable, which is crazy. You can’t live like that, you’ve got to be practical about what you do with these things, but it’s quite interesting seeing different people’s reactions. And also in the Muslim world I’ve come across the attitude that they care about the Muslim burials, but they don’t give a monkey’s uncle about the things that came before. So if they’re preceding pagan or Christian, back of the skip, it’s exactly the same sort of feeling, only Muslim ones matter and it’s the same in Israel. Jewish burials matter, but Christian church, back of the skip, so it’s very interesting how people perceive these things.</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What do you make of the pagans and the druids making a kerfuffle about excavating human remains?</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>They have no idea what these people thought. None whatsoever and it’s a totally phoney-baloney religion that was made up in the 1870s by a mad vicar in South Wales, so I have very little time for phoney-baloney nonsense. Sorry. I can’t take it remotely seriously, I really can’t. It’s right up there with crystals and all of that. No. I’m too practical for that.</td>
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<td>69</td>
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<td>And what about reburying human remains? Do you think that's something that should be done?</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<td>Um . . . I think, you have to strike a balance and I think the ideal is to have reference collections of good examples, if you like, so I think, for example, we’re a registered museum and we have a reference collection of skeletons because we’ve dug so many up in York, so we’ve got some Roman ones, we’ve got medieval ones from St Helens and different sites round and about, um, and they are used a lot by researchers who come and say “I’ve got X, Y, Z that I want to research, can I come and look at your reference collection?” If they were reburied, that research would not be possible, so it’s nice to have a reference collection available, but I think you don’t need to keep every single burial that you find, in order to have good regional reference collections and they would have to be regional because, you know, prior to everybody moving around like we do today, we have no way of knowing whether people from northern England were different from those in central Scotland and, you know, Dorset, or wherever. I really like what they’ve done in Barton-on-Humber with the burials they’ve done up there, in that they’ve built a sort of little annexe on the side of the church and each burial is housed in a box in that . . . in proper storage facilities in there, so that they are housed in the church that they were buried in, but yet, a researcher could apply for permission to go and use them. So I think that’s nice for them because they’re back where they belong, it’s great for researchers because it was a very important excavation, you know, these burials and Saxon churches go right the way back, so um, I think that’s a very nice way of doing it, but it’s not always possible to do that. I’m very sorry that the burials from Jewbury were reburied before they could be researched because I think that was a tragic loss of scientific data, I really do. But the Jewish community, well, the most vocal members of the Jewish community at the time insisted that they were reburied before they could be fully researched and I think that was really sad because it was a golden opportunity to actually do something positive about Judaism in England to learn more about it. But it didn’t happen, so I found that very sad.</td>
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Appendix 11

Interview with Rob

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<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>The first question I have is can you tell me a bit about yourself and your work here?</td>
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<td>Er, right. Ok. [Redacted]. I’ve been an archaeologist, a professional archaeologist since 1999, when I graduated. So I did a degree at [redacted] in archaeology . . . started off as history and archaeology but, um, dropped the history because the two departments just didn’t seem to get on with each other. Everybody I knew who did that degree, effectively ended up doing two whole degrees, so it was kind of one or the other, so my first term was archaeology and it seemed like really good fun, so I stayed in archaeology and before that, really, the main reason I got into archaeology, I suppose, was I did A-Level Art History, Geography and went to art college, did a Foundation course and the kinds of things that I was interested in were a kind of combination of all those things, um, but really kind of looking at things like, really, exactly the sorts of things that you’re looking at with your research, in terms of the ways that we treat the dead and how we deal with death and burial and all that sort of thing, um, things to do with interpretation, interpretation of objects, interpretation of landscapes, all that sort of stuff, so basically I was looking at artists who were interested in those sorts of things and looking at things like use of space and all that kind of stuff, so kind of quite heavily theoretical art in terms of things like sculpture and that kind of thing. And then I thought, after doing the Foundation course, rather than go to art college, I would go and study archaeology because I wanted to be an artist, but I wanted to learn, properly learn, about the stuff I was interested in, rather than going to art college, which probably would have been a disaster for me [laughs].</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>[Redacted] I mean, I have often regretted not doing a Fine Art course, but I kind of see excavation as sculpture in reverse. That’s the . . . basically, every day when I’m doing this, I see it as essentially I’m taking stuff apart and it’s all three-dimensional, so . . . and that’s what I love about the job, it’s that you’re always . . . you’re always looking at the . . . on many levels, it’s either the landscape or a certain area of a site, or buildings and seeing how they were put together and what the sequence is and what that tells you about the development of a use of a place or whatever and objects and their interpretation and that kind of thing, so that’s really, that’s really the sort of stuff that makes me tick. Um . . . and, yeah, I haven’t . . . I mean this is the</td>
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first site that I’ve run where I’ve had any great number of burials. In the past, they’ve usually been other people’s sites, so I’ve not been in charge but I’ve done some of the digging or I’ve had watching briefs where bits and pieces have turned up, quite literally. I mean, I had a watching brief a while ago, a few years back, where the police were called because someone found a human skull in their front garden. It was a Roman one, but it’s quite common in York for these things to just pop up.

I saw something in the papers over the weekend about some human remains popping up at the end of someone’s road in York . . .

Yes, some naughty developer has machined out a load of Roman bodies and got into a bit of trouble, so that site’s been closed down, I think. We’ll wait to see what happens with that, but I think that might be another emergency excavation. What quite often happens is that if something like that occurs, although there’s all sorts of, I guess, legal issues with removing human remains, I don’t know of anybody over the years where these things have occurred, that they’ve been prosecuted for it. You see, we have to have a licence to remove human remains, generally, they just assume that it’s ignorance or stupidity that these things happen, rather than the intention to do so. So these guys have just ripped through some bodies and what will probably happen is that they’re often then told, right, in mitigation of that, you must allow the archaeologists to dig a certain area and pay for that, so we have a better understanding of the context of where these burials have come from. So it’s too late to do anything about the one they’ve already trashed, but they . . . their punishment in a way, is to then pay for doing some proper work, so that we can contextualise what’s been lost, as it were. I think that’s the way these things sometimes go. And that’s obviously what this whole project we’re working on is designed to avoid. It’s designed to remove those burials before those guys start work on the site and . . . it’s worked fairly well, I mean, it’s a shame that we’ve had to leave one or two in, but yeah. Sorry, I kind of digressed there!

So did you learn to excavate human remains as you’ve gone along?

No, I learned, in fact literally, about a hundred yards that way, on the corner [redacted]

[Redacted] When we did the evaluations here . . . it probably would have been around about 2000 or 2001, we … there were lots of buildings like these all over this area and we came in and dug holes in the middle of the buildings—that’s when our job gets a bit strange, when you find yourself in the middle . . . we’ve dug old supermarkets, y’know, with no electricity and it’s dark and you’ve got floodlights and you’re digging trenches and things through the concrete, but um, there were some burials in there and I had, at that point, never dug one. I’d been digging for two or three years, I think, and wanted to have a go, we knew that there would be some, so I said to the guy in charge of the site, “If one comes up that I can dig, would you put me on it?” and that’s what they did, they moved me over on to it and I was digging a medieval skeleton. Unfortunately, the trench that I was in at the time that I was moved away from, if I’d been in there for another 20 minutes or so, I would have found a Roman skeleton, with all kinds of grave goods, um . . . but yeah, that’s where I actually dug my first one, just over the road here. It would have been part of [redacted] um . . . and then I’ve done
various ones over the years. I've had a watching brief on [redacted] where there was six or seven bodies and I did all of those, I had to do all of those myself, which was fun [laughs] and then [redacted] ... we did two holes either side of the nave of the minster and had 30-odd bodies out of that one. That was a nice site. And yeah, just other things, really, I've done a few cremations, um ... but yeah, this is the first one where I've actually had lots of burials, although for me, it's different because my role is running the site, I've not actually dug any burials, really. So ... and I'm a bit sad about that because I quite enjoy doing them, yeah, my role has become more, just sort of managing the site and that's one of things I think that all of the field officers get a bit sad about, the fact that they, you know, as you progress, you end up doing less of the digging, the stuff that we tend to enjoy. So, yeah, no formal training in how to dig them, really, just um, watching others and learn as you go. And of course, the more you do, the more you learn about them, because each one is slightly different, they'll be in different postures and you get different ages or whatever, so you're always learning how to tackle them.

13  K  I've been super-lucky then! Students don't get the opportunity to excavate human remains and you might even be taken off them, if they're discovered.

14  R  Yeah, and I think that's such a shame. It's wrong because, y'know, I mean I noticed this at university, I think, there's a ... I suppose it's because we work in a commercial environment and we have to be much more pragmatic about things, um, you can't spend as long as somebody might do on a university training excavation, on some of the ones we have. And, unfortunately, there's ... I guess a ... different levels, and again, in a way it's a shame that there are different levels, because we may spend longer on certain types of burial, because they're deemed to be more important or special, because they're unusual, whereas as a site like this, we've got hundreds, literally, six or seven hundred medieval burials and a very tight time frame and budget to remove them. So, you know, it would be nice to spend a few days over each one, but we just can't do it. Um ... but in terms of training people, if someone hasn't ever done one, I'm ... I usually ... I try and let them take the time that they need. I think there's often a pressure to try and remove a certain number within a day on commercial excavations, which I think can be detrimental to the preservation of the body and y'know, the quality of your excavation and recording. Some people, if they're experienced and they've done lots of them, they'll be able to do them much more quickly. But you need to accept that someone like yourself, who'd never done one before, it might take you a while. But it didn't actually, it didn't actually take you any longer than some of our professional team who've got 20-odd years of experience. Y'know?

15  K  Maybe I was just hacking away at it though? [laughs]

16  R  Maybe. Maybe you're a born commercial archaeologist!

17  K  I very much doubt that!

18  R  But, I mean, some people will sit and tinker away and be really, really careful and in some senses that's great, because they'll be less damage to the bones from the trowel and lifting more carefully, they're less likely to be broken, but then ... sometimes, you have to take a view on the actual individual burial, if it's one that's so badly degraded anyway that we're not going to gain a great deal of information from it, in ... the context of this big
excavation, we may be less . . . inclined to be that careful with it because at the end of the day, it’s a matter of, in a way then it becomes a case of removing the burial for the ethical reasons of removing it and making it safe, so it’s not trashed by the builder coming in with the machine, more than it is for research value, because . . . we are not going to be able to afford to do analysis on all of the skeletons, we will have to select ones that are, you know, of a certain level of preservation. But yeah, it’s a fine balance, um . . . but I certainly wouldn’t . . . I don’t see how anyone is going to get experience and learn how to do it, unless they’ve been given an opportunity. And for you, it was good for us because you were digging a skeleton that no one else could dig because they were all busy doing other things, so it wasn’t like you were slowing anything down and you were being supervised, so you know and if then, if anyone had noticed that you weren’t doing it carefully enough, they would have stopped you and said, “Right, we need you to do it a bit like this” and that’s, you know, that’s the thing. And so I was keen to make sure that you got to do that, partly because we needed the help and partly because, you know, I think it is a rare opportunity and we’ve offered other universities the chance and their students just don’t seem to be bothered, which seems crazy. I think sometimes it boils down to timing, if it’s during term time, they may be more inclined, but now, during the summer holidays, they’re all off on holiday, or they’ve gone home, or they’ve got summer jobs, so . . . you know, unpaid digging experience seems to be, I guess it may just be that, um, they need the money and they have to go and work and unless we can pay them, they’re less likely, less inclined to get digging experience. But yeah, it’s also difficult on commercial digs, because I think people are reluctant to take volunteers on because obviously there’s the health and safety aspect and there’s . . . they can slow us down and make things more difficult. So it depends very much on the person, if you’d been utterly useless, I probably would have made you do your interviews and bugger off! [laughs] Because, you know, to be blunt, at the end of the day, if someone is taking up more time than they’re worth, on site, it makes it more difficult. We um . . . we just can’t do that.

| 19 | K | That’s fair enough. Could you give me quick overview of this site that you’ve been working on? |
| 20 | R | Ok. It’s a medieval church and graveyard at Haymarket, Peasholme Green, basically the site was known . . . has always been known to be a church and graveyard, the approximate location of the church has always been known, but it’s one of those churches that were demolished gradually from the end of the 16th century. Um . . . and the stone was robbed out and re-used elsewhere, um, there are references in the early 1700s to ruins still standing, but essentially it disappears sometime between the 1730s and the 1800s. Um, and, but the . . . in the landscape, the graveyard . . . um, remained as a square, basically and then that was remade into the Haymarket, it was turned into the Haymarket in the early 19th century, I’m not sure, I can’t remember the dates now. So it was always an open space in the landscape, right up until the 1930s, when they demolished all of the Victorian buildings and things in this area. Um . . . the Trust did an excavation there in 1986, winter of 86-87, er, and that was [redacted] they excavated part of the church, the bulk of the interior of the church actually, and the north aisle, which was a later add on, but they didn’t get the south side or the west or east ends, so they got most of the interior of the church, but didn’t get the actual . . . most of the structure was missing from that excavation, so they got something like 80 bodies out at that point and found a couple of the papal bulls [redacted]. Um . . . so they excavated quite a few burials and then the site never got |
published, it was one of those that there wasn’t a great deal of money behind at the time, it was pre-PPG 16, so there was no sort of planning framework within that which that would be funded, it was done for the council and anyway, it was written up to a certain point, but they didn’t, for example, the burials, the actual skeletons weren’t analysed, they weren’t assessed or analysed or anything, so they’ve been stored ever since and the council built the Peasholme Hostel on the site and that had been there since then basically. That was demolished a few years ago, 2012, um . . . prior to that we’d also done an excavation where the old ambulance station was, so that was basically the south end of the graveyard and we identified where that was, we didn’t dig any of those graves. Um . . . that was more a case of characterising the landscape around the graveyard, so looking at the medieval buildings and looking at some of their earlier post-med predecessors, um, so there’s been a number of . . . there were a few other evaluations in 2000 and 2007 around that area as well, so we’d done a few little holes here and there, and then the council decided to sell the land and in order to make it saleable really, they decided it was worth spending the money on, excavating a certain area, finishing off the area of the excavation of the church and . . . then digging the rest of the burials out and so that’s basically what we’ve been doing. We started in 2012 and we did the first part, but we had to leave a strip where all the live services were for the car park—the council wanted to keep the car park open, so that’s basically why we’re here now in 2014, doing those last bits and . . . as of yesterday, we’ve moved on to the watching brief stage, so my job now is to basically monitor what the developer does on site and to make sure that they don’t just go digging holes all over the place without being monitored.

What do you think have been the biggest challenges with this site?

I’d say, firstly, the time and cost pressure of removing so many bodies. We’re talking . . . I’m not actually sure of the total figure now, but it’s somewhere between 600 and 700 and, um, obviously, trying to do that within a set budget and set time-frame, that’s the hardest thing because as I was saying before, you want to make sure that you do every single one of them as carefully as possible, because you’re aware that’s somebody’s grave, it’s not like other archaeology in that respect, it’s . . . it gives it that, you know, ethical dimension, where we have to be . . . we have to treat every single one of them with that due care and respect, whereas other kinds of archaeology you can say, “Well ok, we’ve got all of these deposits, if we dig a slice through them, understand them, we can date them and we can leave it at that”. With these we have to do every single one of them and make sure they’re all done to the same standard, um . . . secondly, the other biggest problem, for me, the other biggest issue is doing the site in so many bits. It would be much better to open the whole site and have done it all as one excavation and not have to try and stitch together . . . . I think we’ve got five different interventions on the site, so we’ve got the 86/87 excavation, we’ve got the 2000 evaluation, the 2007 evaluation, the 2010 ambulance station excavation and then, in fact, the 2014 work has been done in two separate stages and then the watching brief. Oh, and I think there was another watching brief in 2010 or 2009, so actually, there’s like eight different interventions, so my job now . . . when we’ve finished the watching brief, is to try and gather that information together and make some sense of it all and then eventually publish something off the back of it and again, all of that has got to be done within a set time frame.
I was going to ask, how does that work? Will you be working on that while working on another site?

Hopefully not, but there’s always that added pressure. If I’m sat in the office doing a post-ex project like that and another big site comes up, the temptation is always to send us out to do that, because that’s immediate money coming in, whereas what I’m working on could be put back for a few months. So that does happen, occasionally and again, we’ve had issues in the past where sites have got pushed back and back and back so far that eventually they never get done and that’s bad practice, but certainly with some of the older sites from the 70s and 80s, there’s lots of work that could be done, but no money for it and you know, that’s the problem with rescue archaeology back then, often there wasn’t the money to do it [redacted]! So yeah, that’s gonna be the next big problem for me. In terms of actually removing the bodies, I don’t . . . I don’t personally have a big problem with doing it, um . . . it seems a shame, I suppose, in a way, because . . . the . . . to my mind, the best thing to have done with that area would be to return it back to being a square and make it a public space and leave the graveyard where it is, but the costs . . . the value of the land and the potential for development means that was unlikely to have ever happened, um . . . but they could easily have left that as a square and built round it on the old line of the where the old buildings used to be and had a really nice space. The only problem is Stonebow because that’s a busy road, but if that was partitioned off from Stonebow, it could have made a really nice landscape in among all these new buildings. Um, actually, it’s a relatively small area, the graveyard, but doing it this way, it means that they can build on the frontage with Stonebow, but yeah, because I understand how the site may have looked 200 years ago when it was the Haymarket, well, before it was the Haymarket then, but when it was an open space and Peasholme Green was actually a green, you know, it must have been quite an amazing little spot in the landscape. But yeah, in terms of removing the bodies, I can see why it’s the sensible thing to do; it just seems a shame to disturb all those burials when we could work around them.

Do you think it’s important then that the wishes of the deceased are considered?

Yeah. I do. I mean, I’m an atheist and I don’t . . . I really don’t have any religious beliefs whatsoever, um, but I do think it’s important to try and treat those burials with the respect that maybe they would have expected at the time and also with the respect that people expect them to be treated with today, because, you know, as we were saying earlier, members of the public, if they see bits of human remains on the spoil heap, tend to be quite upset about it and they will phone up, quite often it’s the police, or they’ll phone up the church and say “Did you know that somebody down there’s digging up Christian burials?” You know, because there are people around who, you know, um, quite rightly, feel sensitive about it and um, so we’ve got, there’s two elements there, in one sense, you know, I’m trying to understand as much as I can about medieval Christian beliefs and burial practices, which is interesting in itself because that’s a circular thing, because in doing what we’re doing here, we’re trying to understand that anyway, um . . . but obviously there are books like the Chris Daniell’s book I showed you, that for me is a really good way of understanding, so what I try and do, is try . . . if I know that the burials are dealing with are of a certain period, I try and read what I can to understand what they may have believed and how they
were buried and um … yeah, treat them accordingly, so over there, these are the documents that, these are produced by English Heritage, so we’ve got Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England, so it’s very specific, I assume that they do some for other denomination as well, because obviously, well, for example, when the Trust excavated the Jewbury site, that’s a Jewish burial ground, there were a lot of issues because of the Jewish community being unhappy about it being done in the first place and how it was done and lots of politics involved and all of that, which I think the Trust would like to try and forget. I mean, I think it was a learning experience, not just for the Trust, but for archaeology in general, that example, um . . . and there have been a number of sites and I’m by no means an expert, but the reading I’ve done, I get the impression that over the last 10/15 years, these sort of things have become more and more of an issue and something that we’re . . . the profession is trying to tackle sensitively.

27  K  Is there anything you’d like to change about the excavation of human remains?

28  R  Yeah, I’d like more time and more money! More people. More money behind it, yeah and the time to do it a bit more justice, really. Um . . . I hate not being able to . . . I mean, in the old days, they used to … every skeleton was washed with a sponge, cleaned up, photographed, using a really nice camera. These days we’re just, sort of, having to clean them as best we can, photograph them quickly, whip them out, because the commercial pressure is just relentless. Um . . . so yeah, and that’s probably a big difference you’ll find between what we do and on a training excavation or a university research excavation, is that they will take as long as is necessary to excavate, record, photograph, you know . . . and even we had, when we did the work in 2012, we had a team from the University of York, who were, um, working under Don Brothwell and wanting to sample things like the stomach contents and various parts of the body to see if there were chemical traces of various things, I don’t even know what they were doing, but the level of research that they were doing, we couldn’t hope to do in a million years. Um, it may be that what they . . . that sort of research shows in the future what we’re missing out on, by doing things the way we are and that changes . . . so it would be nice to throw more time, more money and more personnel at a site like this because things could be done much more, with much more care and attention to detail. But it becomes very much a case of just recording the bare minimum and getting them out of the ground, so that they can be assessed and analysed afterwards and again, it goes back to this issue of different levels, because if these were, um, Roman burials with grave goods, we’d have to take a bit more time to record where the grave goods are in relation to the burials, but these are Christian medieval burials, so there don’t tend to be any grave goods at all and mostly, there’s no coffins or coffin nails, if we do get them — and we have had a few over there where they’ve had the coffin stain and some nails and bits of iron that are probably handles or whatever—then obviously that takes longer and you have to take your time over recording those things, so because these are mostly shroud burials and just . . . it’s a poor parish, a medieval graveyard, they tend to be the most basic type of burial, really, they tend to be all in the same sorts of positions, mostly, you know, either the hands on the chest or . . . crossed over, or down the sides or over the hips, so you know, so that’s probably it, really, but then that’s probably the same for everybody, really. That’s the main thing I’d change. Or, leaving them in because that would make my life a lot easier, but no, obviously, you know I see the benefit in removing them.
is we get to understand, I mean, it’s a really interesting site. I’ve only started, I had only just started when we came back on to site, to do some of the post-ex for the previous phases and um . . . started to see things like the groupings of potentially family groups at the east end of the church and stuff like that and I’m excited, because it means if I can spend a little bit of money on doing DNA analysis or whatever on them, I might be able to work out if they really are family groups and if that pays dividends, then we might spend a bit more money, you know, we can ask for more money to do that from the client, so . . . it’s interesting to be able to do that.

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<th>What’s your opinion on screening excavations?</th>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>Um, yeah, I think, yeah, it’s a difficult one, isn’t it? It’s probably a respectful thing to do, because for those people, where they’re buried, if you ask them, would you like your bones to be on display for the general public in 500 years’ time, who knows? Maybe some wouldn’t be bothered, maybe others would, um . . . and again, I guess it goes back to ideas about whether or not people were bothered about their physical remains being disturbed, or whether it was their soul that was more important and that’s to do with changes in concepts during the medieval period about what happens to you after you die and after you’ve been buried and again, I probably don’t know enough, but that sort of . . . I get the impression that until sort of the 13th/14th century, it’s more important that your mortal remains are intact for resurrection, as it were, Judgement, but then after that, the idea of Purgatory comes in and becomes official doctrine, so that becomes more important, so it’s the journey of your soul and things in Purgatory that become more of an issue than what happens to your actual physical remains. But then you see, we don’t see . . . again, I don’t know enough, we don’t really see that in terms of the archaeology. It’s not like in early Christian burials they’re being more careful about not disturbing earlier burials, when you see what a gravedigger does to other graves in a graveyard, they just chop through them and sling the bones back in, but we do see a certain element of care in the way they do that, in some cases. So there’s the family group that [redacted] was digging, where they seemed to almost have . . . they’ve chopped through and dislodged the arm of one of the adults, but they’ve kind of laid it across one of the infants or children that was laid in next to them, so it kind of almost looked like they’d tried to make it hug the one they were putting in next to it. Maybe not. Maybe they just threw it back in and that’s chance, but there did seem to be more of a careful placement in the way that they were doing that, so you do sort of get these hints that maybe they were aware of not disturbing earlier burials. I don’t know. I’ve forgotten what the question was now!</td>
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| 32 | R | Yeah, screening, so I think basically people today are quite interested in seeing them, we tend to get people just looking though and trying to see what we’re doing anyway, sometimes putting up a screen just makes that worse because then they’re like “Oooh, what are they trying to hide from us”, but um, again, I think it’s important that, again, it’s about context, if this were a parish church where there were living relatives of potentially people buried in that graveyard, much more important then, because you would potentially have . . . you know, people who get really quite angry about you digging in their graveyard. Here, we’re talking about a very different context, because nobody has any association with that site any more, that graveyard, it’s much more a curiosity than a horror, that you’re
digging it. So yeah, I think it’s right to screen them when they’re being lifted, when it comes to actually displaying the human remains, I’m a little more uneasy about that to be honest, in some cases, because I think, you know, we tend to take one burial out and display it . . . I think it depends on the reasons for doing that, if you’re doing it for a specific reason, because it’s educating people about a certain type of thing, like a particular bone disease or whatever or something like that, or even, if it’s just generally to educate people about human remains and why we excavate them and that kind of thing, then that’s fine, but if you’re just presenting it because it’s a sensational, you know, showpiece, then it’s not really, very ethically, very sound reasoning, so I don’t, you know, I don’t like the idea of just displaying human remains just because we can and it’s exciting for people to see, um . . . I think you need to make sure that it’s being done for sound reasoning.

33  K  In your dealings with the public, do you come across negative reactions very often or are they more interested in what you’re doing?

34  R  Generally, they’re quite interested; occasionally we do get people who just generally seem a bit angry about archaeologists in general. We’ve got one lunatic who turns up every so often and just shouts at us, um, and . . . but that seems to be more a case of the misguided belief that we’re doing it for the sake of it and that . . . that we’re getting in the way of things and that we’re just interfering and we already know everything that we need to know, so why are you digging around in there kind of thing? And that’s generally archaeology I think, they seem to have a problem with that . . . otherwise, people tend to just be really quite interested, we get lots of people coming up and asking us what we’ve found and when we tell them it’s burials, they’re like “Ooh, wow!” And they think it’s the most amazing thing ever, whereas for me, it’s like, “Oh no, not another one”. But they’re . . . yeah, generally they’re very interested, um, I’m always amazed by how children are so accepting of these things, they want to see them, they don’t seem freaked out by it or anything. We had a school party come round during the 2012 excavation and at that point we hadn’t started excavating burials, we were still doing the buildings and the things around and I just sort of steered them past the bit where there were skulls and things on the ground and talked to them about all of the buildings and everything and just mentioned the graveyard and the church and all that and as we were walking out, one of the teachers said, “Oh, are there any actual skeletons?” and I was like “Are you sure you want to show the kids that?” and they were just fascinated with it, they were like 8 year-olds or 9 year-olds or whatever and they thought it was amazing to see all of these bits of bone. Yeah. So, generally, it’s very positive, I’ve never had any real issues. I think where we do tend to get more problems is where it comes down to particular denominations, if there’s a particular interest group who feel they have a right or an interest in a particular type of burial, so again, Jewbury, or I guess—I’ve never had any problems with it—people like the modern druids who have claim on who they think their ancestors are in the distant past, when actually there’s no connection whatsoever really, well . . . or particular religious groups.

35  K  Do you see human remains as people or objects?

36  R  Um . . . yeah, that’s an interesting one, because I think . . . to be rational about it, I just see them as bones in the ground, so on one hand, they’re no different to any other artefact that we find, it’s all just organic material in the ground, um, but what it represents is a person, so they’re no longer a person, to my mind, they’re dead and gone, but . . . those remains are . . . they
signify a person to us, still, so there is that, there is always going to be that connection, you know, I couldn’t stamp up and down on one, you know what I mean? Because it . . . it’s just . . . it would feel wrong, so there’s always going to be that connection, because when you look at it, it’s still represents a human being, so . . . yeah. I don’t know if I can answer that either way, really, because it’s kind of . . . I can see it as both things, um, like, for example, over the road there, I have to accept the fact that we cannot collect all of the charnel, it’s impossible, there’s so much of it and whilst they’re machining out there, if I walk across the site and I happen to see a piece of something on the ground then I pick it up and put it with the other pile that we’ve got and it gets bagged and brought in, but um . . . there is really is just so much of it on the spoil heap, that it’s all over the place. I kind of feel uneasy about that because I would like to be able to remove all of that, just so it gets put aside and reburied with the rest, but then you also have to accept that with those people, they would have understood that their bones would decay and become part of the earth again and that’s all part of that process. At the end of the day, what’s left there has been dislocated from all the rest, it’s disarticulated bone and it’s been mixed up and it will continue to degrade and disappear eventually, one day, but um . . . there’s that kind of, I find that uneasy, because I guess that you still feel that you should still treat that with the same respect that you would a burial that’s still intact, but um . . . again, for practical reasons, I just can’t do that. I’d need a team of two to walk around on site constantly, just picking bits of bone up [laughs] poking around for it! It becomes very much . . . you know, you accept it, as you’re trowelling, there’ll be bits here and bits there, you know, there’s a tooth, there’s a rib, and you’re like “What do I do with these bits?!” But again, you have to try and treat those with that respect, even though . . . on the other hand, I see them as just a part of the . . . they’re just like the bricks and the animal bone and all the rest of it that’s kicking around.

37 K When you talk about respect, what does that mean to you?

38 R What? You mean in terms of respecting the burial? Um . . . I think what it means to me is just um . . . making sure that we . . . it’s partly a professional . . . professionalism, in terms of how we treat them, archaeologically, so how we expose them, recover them, record them and all that, um . . . in a way that process, there’s something ritualistic about that. For an archaeologist, doing that is . . . in a way mitigation of the fact that you are disturbing a burial, so you’re saying it’s ok to remove this burial because I’ve done all these things and I’m doing it for legitimate reasons because it would feel wrong to just go in and dig them out with a spade, just because, you know, just because you wanted to get at the bones. Um . . . so I guess the process is a way of making that ok to do so . . . on a number of levels, partly just for our own . . . our own feeling about doing it, but also because it conforms to the guidelines and it conforms to the burial licence. There’s a legal aspect there that I have to have a burial licence, you know, a licence to remove burials. A burial licence. It sounds like I’m licenced to bury people! [laughs] So, um, there’s that level of respect and obviously, it’s things like trying to lift them without damaging the bones, because it would just feel wrong to do so, unnecessarily. So, yeah. I mean, I think, as an archaeologist, I feel like . . . we are about as respectful as anybody could be of those burials, apart from maybe leaving them be, which a lot of some people I’m sure would rather, and again, certainly some other denominations would say ‘Do not dig up our graves. Under no circumstances do you develop that site because our burials are there and they are not to be disturbed ever.’ In others it’s more acceptable, um . . . yeah . . . if I were buried, I’d much rather be dug up by
an archaeologist than anybody else, because nobody else would do it as carefully, you know? Not even the forensic police, not even the forensics would do it as carefully as we do, it’s um . . . and I think you were here when we were talking about that, I was quite surprised to learn that the forensics had actually been learning from archaeologists how to go about recovering and recording these things, because they were not following the sorts of rigorous processes that we would and in a way, just wasting potential information on these things. If I were you, I’d try and get to talk somebody who does that. So there’s all those different levels, respect on an ethical level and on a legal side and as I say, I think in a way, the processes of recording and removing the burials is kind of faintly ritualistic in its own right and makes us feel like we’re doing it . . . doing it respectfully and doing that burial justice, um . . . because it’s kind of the trade-off for getting that kind of information from them as well and that extends through to the whole cleaning, drying and packaging process. Everything is done very carefully and with an emphasis on making sure that they are all kept together. I mean, we were talking about the ones that were . . . like the grave that had the two children in it, there’s a bit of me that kind of feels like, maybe it’s just me being sentimental but they ought to be kept together, because they were buried together and it would be nice to keep those groups together because there was a reason why they were grouped, we don’t yet know quite why— we may never know—but there’s a reason why those two were put in the same grave and I’m assuming it’s because they were siblings, um . . . so in a way, it would be nice to put them in a siblings box, rather than a . . . you know what I mean? That sounds a bit crazy, maybe, but I think again, it that sort of level of respect, um, maybe, being an atheist, maybe it doesn’t mean anything to me, necessarily, on that level and to those children . . . as far as I’m concerned they’re dead and gone, so it doesn’t really matter, but that would probably matter to them if they were alive, so that makes it seem significant. I don’t know. I don’t even know if all that makes sense.

When I started I was warned that what I would see might seem quite brutal and I was surprised that, actually, it seemed very careful and considered and very respectful, but there was one thing that I saw that made me wince and . . . I don’t know if this a thing that happens all the time or whether this is a [redacted], but he was working on a skeleton that ran out of the trench, the lower legs were underneath it, so the legs got chopped. Is that something that happens regularly?

No, it’s rare. Usually what we would try and do is . . . dig into the section and try and remove the whole bone, but it’s not always possible. Um . . . yeah, again it’s one of those things, if you dig a graveyard, you’ll see that’s essentially what a grave-digger will do, they will just chop through—chop chop—so you find bones that have just been hacked straight through, it’s very . . . it happens occasionally, but we only ever do it if we have to and in a way, it’s better than trying to snap them off because that feels even worse, so if you can’t leave part of the bone in and you don’t want to . . . you don’t want to dig a massive hole in the section, but to be honest, if I’d known he was going to do that, I might have said, let’s just hack a bit more of the section out and see if we can get the rest. But you have to accept that there will sometimes be parts that are outside of your excavation, but yeah, it’s something that I’ve had to do in the past as well and I’ve watched workmen do it on sites and again, I don’t know really if there’s any . . . I’ve not seen any guidance on that sort of thing, um . . . but yeah, I remember, one I did in town, a watching brief, where . . . they’d reduced the size of the graveyard and they’d built the graveyard wall over a body and it was directly
on top of the vertebrae and when the workmen got the machine and went [makes machine noise] along the edge, they basically stripped out one half of this skeleton, so underneath the wall, there was just like section through the middle of all the vertebrae and the skull and everything . . . which looked amazing, but it just made you think, “Ohh, this is just wrong”, but . . . there’s nothing you can do about it, it was . . . a watching brief and it happened before . . . before, you know, anybody could stop them and when I got up there, there was just bones everywhere and we stopped them and it’s just one of those things. Um, but yeah, it’s unusual in archaeological practice, let’s put it that way. Um, but occasionally, it’s necessary.

41  K  I guess that comes down to experience though, it was the first time I’d seen that. I mean, you’re more used to it.

42  R  Yeah, I mean, again, it’s part of the process of . . . in a way of decomposition of that skeleton, that archaeology is inherently destructive to an extent and even if we’re . . . no matter how careful we are, by exposing them and removing them they will suffer some damage and sometimes when we’re lifting them, the bones crumble, or we’ll try and undermine the bone first and then lift it with the trowels, but sometimes they just snap and it’s unavoidable.

43  K  Do you have any particularly memorable experiences of excavating human remains?

44  R  They tend to be unusual ones or particularly poignant ones. So . . . yes. I mean, my first one—they say you never forget your first—was amazing really because, this sounds weird to say, but it was a really good burial, with a good skeleton, well-preserved, complete and um . . . undamaged, so the skull was totally complete and according to the osteologist who came and looked at it, she said it was probably a woman in her early 30s or something and you know, for us, that’s someone who died very young, but in the medieval period, not massively. I mean, still young but, um . . . and so, yeah, digging that was memorable because it was the first time I’d ever tackled one and it took me, I think, a day and a half or something to do. I guess it was 400 mil deep before I actually got to the skeleton, so there was a lot of soil to move and when you’re doing it, you’re kind of thinking “Well, where is it? Where is it?” and then you hit a bit of the bone and you think “Well, which bit is this and where am I?!” and you’ve hit the shoulder rather than the skull or something and it’s kind of . . . it’s that process of working out where everything is and where it is and uncovering things like the clavicles and ribs and learning how to get in between them without dislodging stuff and getting to the really tricky bits like the fingers and the toes and the kneecaps, which are the bits that you accidentally knock or lose . . . um, but otherwise, the more poignant ones, like children, I’ve done quite a lot of children [redacted] was, um, because it was right up against the nave, apparently they used to—and again, I don’t know how much truth there is in this—but apparently they used to favour burial for children right up against the church, especially if they were really little and unbaptised because they, I think believed, that the rain water running off the church was almost baptising them in the ground sort of thing, um . . . or it may just be the proximity to the body of the church that was important, so there were quite a few little ‘uns and that’s always hard, you know, like seeing the ones, the one that [redacted] had that was . . . in utero foetus and the neonate next to his mother’s leg and the twins or the siblings that we had in that grave, and we’ve had, I think, three or four pairs in graves like that and you think,
"Aww" and it’s partly because, you know, I’ve got young children of about that age and you . . . I have to say, it’s made me more sensitive to things like that because you look at them and you think that must have been awful for the parents and the kids as well, and you wonder what they died of and you realise what a shame it is because today, it probably wouldn’t have happened, you know? You can bet your life that it was something that’s totally curable today, you know, like the woman who’s obviously died in childbirth, um, the chances are that she’d have been perfectly fine these days and you realise . . .

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<th>45</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>I think you’ve answered my next question—are some human remains easier to excavate than others? Have you ever had to deal with gungy remains?</th>
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| 46 | R | I’ve never had to deal with any of those, no. I’ve seen one or two that have had remains of hair and clothing, but nothing that made me feel like "Eww", um . . . some of the more . . . again, I suppose it’s that sort of proximity in terms of how old they are, so in terms of some the more recent ones I dealt with at [redacted] were more difficult because I knew that they were more like a 100, 150 years old, rather than 500 years and again, that makes you think, well, why does that really matter? Um . . . the older they are, does that make them seem less . . . real, in a way? Or make you feel like you’re less connected to them? I don’t know . . . yeah, so on that sort of level, yes, the ones that are more evocative, I suppose, tend to be more difficult in that respect and on a practical level, the ones that . . . the children tend to be more difficult because the bones are smaller and, um, it’s hard to gauge where things should be because you don’t know quite how old, how big the child would be and the bones tend to be much more fragile and fiddly. You know, you can imagine the fingers and toes of a three-year-old are much, much more difficult to define than on a fully grown adult male, you know. And obviously, multiple burials in one grave or in a cluster, it gets more and more complicated because you find bits and pieces and you’re like "Who’s foot’s that? Who’s leg’s that?" So on a practical level those are the more difficult. The easiest ones are undisturbed adults that are well-preserved and you tend to be able to do those a lot more quickly. |

| 47 | K | Has excavating human remains affected how you think about death in any way? |

| 48 | R | Um, I suppose . . . I don’t know . . . I think it’s, um, made me, it’s made me think more about whether I’d like to be buried or cremated, um . . . I kind of think it would be fun to buried with some fun stuff [laughs] buried with my trowels or something like that, knowing my luck I’ll be machined out by some fat hairy builder instead, but um . . . thrown on the spoil heap with all the other bits, um, yeah, I don’t know . . . I think it maybe makes you consider your time here, being alive, being faced with the remains of dead people, day in and day out for weeks and weeks and weeks on end, um . . . I don’t think it’s had any negative effect, I just think it means I’m maybe a little bit more comfortable with just the idea, um . . . you know, I’ve been with . . . I was with both my grandparents, my maternal grandparents as they died, which was . . . I found quite an amazing experience, really and a privilege to have been with them, to see that and that certainly had more effect on me in terms of how I feel about dying and the future and about life in general and obviously, you know, it’s really quite sad and difficult to see that, people that I knew and loved so much, but um, also in a way, at the same time it’s also just quite interesting . . . you know, I just find it quite interesting to see . . . I don’t know if that’s . . . and that feels a little bit . . .
wrong sometimes, but it’s not. I’m not concerned about it or worried about it or anything. There’s a bit of me that kind of thinks that it’s nice to leave something for posterity and each of these individuals in a way is lucky that they’ve been … they’ve been buried and they’ve been under the ground all these hundreds of years and now that they’ve been recovered by us carefully, there’s still a legacy there, you know what I mean? They’re the lucky ones, because a lot of people don’t . . . they just disappear and there will be who knows how many that will be disarticulated by the number of graves that go in after them. When you think about it, we’ve got six or seven hundred graves and that’s only part of the graveyard, but over a five or six hundred year period that the church was in use, you know, that’s not very many burials, you know? A burial a year, so where are the rest of them, you know? We know there’s another . . . there’s a whole load of them in the rest of the graveyard, but . . . so these ones, in a way, it makes you kind of think that it would be quite nice to be buried somewhere where you know that in the future there will be . . . there’s your bones and the stuff that you were buried with and that can tell a story for somebody in the future and in a way that’s why doing this can be quite nice, because generally, the people who tended to have that privilege tended to be the rich people who had a tomb or whatever and that’s the whole point, you’ve got your tomb and you’re leaving your . . . or they have tomb with their effigy carved on it and everything. These people would never expect that . . . that all this time later, they’d be treated with this much respect and removed and that they’ll form part of this eventual publication, so in a way, it’s quite nice to get at the . . . this different sector of society. Again, I’ve kind of digressed again, but it kind of feels like you’re doing something good in that respect, you’re giving them a voice, so far on in the future and doing some useful research from it. And not all of us will be that lucky. I’ve always fancied being jettisoned into space or something like that, that would be quite fun.

49  K

Well, there’s all sort of crazy options now! Well, that’s the end of the questions, unless there’s anything else you’d like to share?

50  R

I don’t think so . . . there was something I was thinking earlier, apart from anything, it’s just, er . . . it’s just quite fun, sometimes, digging these up, you know? The few people I know who are in the army have quite a blunt gallows humour and often that’s because . . . generally, the only way to deal with and process some of the horrendous stuff that they’ve seen and had to do, and you kind of . . . and I’m not suggesting that this is in any way near as traumatic for anybody, you know, excavating these things, but you kind of have to . . . you kind of have to just see that . . . it’s not all negative and that you don’t have to be all sombre about it and that we are also just collecting, recovering information, um, which is quite exciting, you know, intellectually it’s interesting, um . . . in terms of the research that this is going to provide, it’s really important stuff, um, so yeah, I’m always aware that, although there’s these other dimensions where we have to be really careful and considerate and all the rest of it and that these are dead people and it’s very sad that they died and whatever, I also just have to remember that it’s also just actually really good stuff, it’s great archaeology, just like any other great archaeology we do. When we . . . when I understand a building because I’ve dug it all up and got the component parts in my mind, how they all work and we’ve got some dating evidence, it’s the same with all these, you know, getting the sequence of them and working out which ones are the oldest and what date they are, will help me understand the church and when it was built, so that’s all really great stuff, you know, and you can be enthusiastic about all of that. Sometimes are people like “But isn’t it really weird digging
up all these dead people?” [sighs] Um, yeah, so that’s it, really. It’s been a stressful site, but it’s also been good fun.

Would you say this was a typical site in terms of how it’s panned out or has it been unusually stressful?

This has been slightly more stressful for me than normal, um, but in different ways. Some sites are stressful in others ways. Quite often . . . it’s not so bad when we’ve got a site to ourselves, like this, it gets stressful now, because we’ve got a developer on site as well, so from a health and safety aspect, you feel much more at risk, because they’ve got big machines and there’s loads more blokes around and there’s stuff going on all over the place, um, and also, there’s much pressure, because also they want you out of the way all the time, whereas when the site is ours, we’re much more in control of what’s going on, we set the pace, and we don’t have constant interruptions, but that hasn’t been the case here. One of the main problems for me has been the fact that the developer, who didn’t even . . . hadn’t actually been awarded the contract for much of the time he’s been on the site has been coming down every day or so and just laying on the pressure. Um, and, er, that’s out of order, really, but I know I have to keep them on side because potentially, they’re a future client and we’ve done other sites for them, so we need to keep them happy because . . .

[Redacted]

Um . . . but generally, yeah, I’ve done other sites that have been really stressful because of having a developer on site as well and them wanting to demolish buildings around us, um . . . and it’s worse when you get a developer who’s not so conscientious about health and safety, then you really feel like you’re at risk and it’s my responsibility to keep the others safe as well and make sure that if I see things that are not good, that we go to them and say “Right, we need to sort this out”. I had a site years ago where they were demolishing a building and breaking concrete up above the entrance to the room we were using as our store and our office, so we were walking in and out and there’d just be chunks of concrete falling down and they were throwing stuff out of the top window on to the ground from three stories up and it was just like “What are you doing?! You can’t do this sort of thing”, but that’s because they were a bit slack on those things, whereas these guys seem like they’re really good. Yeah, so sometimes it’s really stressful, other times, you know, quite often it’s just that we’ve got a very tight deadline and very tight budget, you know, so like [redacted] next site, is the next stage of a site we’ve already done some work on but he’ll have like . . . I don’t know, 60 odd trenches to dig and they’ll all be as long as that one we’ve got out there, but mostly, they’ll have very little in them, some of them might have loads of stuff in them, but basically, it’ll be things like ditches and pits and whatnot and we’ll have to investigate loads of that, so it’ll be a big team spread out over a massive area and it’ll be on farmer’s land, so the farmers will be like “Please don’t trash my field!” So yeah, and they rightfully are really concerned about the damage we’ll cause, so there are different stresses from different places, depending on what kind of site it is. But in terms of human remains, I’ve never dug a site like this and it’s rare to dig a site like this, I think, as far as I know, it’s one of the biggest graveyard excavations, medieval graveyard excavations anywhere of its kind in the last 10 years. There’s been two or three in York that have been really big, um . . . sort of more than a thousand burials, but mostly they tend to be less than a hundred or so, so we’re kind of up there in the mid-range, but I think there’s only really been somewhere between 15 and 20 of these sorts of excavations ever in
the country.

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<th>53</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>It seems such a shame then, because it seems to me that, in a way, archaeology goes in ahead of the developer and it’s almost like a clean-up operation . . .</th>
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<td>54</td>
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<td>Yeah. It’s not the right the right way things are done, but in a way, that’s the system that we have to work within at the moment. I think when it comes to human remains, it would be nice to see, um, more emphasis on . . . I don’t know . . . it’s difficult, what I was going to say is a price based on the number of burials that we excavate or something, um and more flexible timeframes to do these things in, but that always boils down to other pressures, so in this case, the council would have given us longer, um, if we had costed the site . . . saying that we need more than the number of weeks we asked them for. So I think there’s a bit of a short-falling on our side, the people who put the costing together for it and estimated the number of burials got that wrong, um, and then also the, um, the impetus to sell the land, so the need to sell the land to a developer at a certain time, so that they don’t fall behind on their schedule for building the building, but then we were sandwiched between their deadline to start and the fact that the council were trying to close the car park, but they alsococked up and didn’t put things in place that they should have done, so it meant that our timeframe got contracted and what that meant was there was no leeway, because it’s very hard to say that there’ll be this number of bodies, it will take us this many weeks, what I would have liked is to know that we had six week . . . six months, sorry, where our three to six weeks would have fit in somewhere in that six months and then there would have been a buffer either side to say “Well, actually, we’ve got twice as many bodies as we thought”. Ok, we take a hit on that in terms of what we costed it for, so we’re not going to make a profit on the job or whatever, but at least then we’re not under pressure and we’re going to get it done before the developer moves in and there won’t be any risk of leaving them in the ground, you know? But that’s just the way archaeology works at the moment, because it’s all to do with commercial work. Yeah. I would much rather have tackled this site as a research excavation over five years or something, um, with built-in training for students and community excavations and all the rest of it, like we did with Block H over the road, but that wasn’t going to happen. [redacted] But yeah, you can always just say there are also at times political reasons for certain things being done and burials being removed in certain ways and in certain cases [redacted]. But you see, by removing them it makes the land more valuable. A developer will pay more for a clear site, than they will for a site with problems, it’s like contamination. If you have a site that’s got contaminated ground, you get that professionally cleared and you’ll get more for the land. You’ll get a much worse rate if you say, “Oh yeah, sorry this land is contaminated with arsenic” or something, they’d be like, “Right, ok”.</td>
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### Appendix 12

**Interview with Andrew**

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<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can you tell me a bit about your background and your work as an archaeologist?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I did my, well, this goes back ages, I’ve always known that I wanted to be an archaeologist, which is great, I started off as a kid, my comprehensive school had a Roman villa underneath the football pitch, so you’d always find bits of oyster and things like that, which was quite fun and eventually it got excavated [redacted] but it was a lovely Roman villa, there were substantial mosaics and that was great and the school had Roman coffins in the flower beds and that sort of thing, so that was always an interest of mine. I did my first dig when I was 16, on a Bronze Age burial mound at, very close to Silbury Hill, at a place called, where was it? West Overton. It was very lovely and the sum total of my finds for that excavation was one Roman nail, in a Bronze Age barrow, but I was booked at that point because it was still a Roman nail. I did a lot of pot washing and pot marking of Bronze Age wares, which was great and I loved doing that, so I went to university at [redacted] after that and I did an undergraduate over there and then I moved to [redacted] where I did my postgraduate, I did my Masters at [redacted] in archaeology and then I worked. I ended up working as [redacted] researcher for 8 years, as a research assistant which was again, fantastic, and then after that I got a [redacted], promoting archaeology to local people and then I’ve been with [redacted] after that, for ten years. And I head up the archaeology side of the conservation team, which is, I love it. It’s great. Fantastic landscapes and really great people to work with, so that’s a very brief synopsis of what I do.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And what drew you towards archaeology?</td>
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<td>I’ve just always been into it, it’s just one of those things, I’ve always been fascinated in history, it’s that tangible, being able to do, visually see and touch history and being the first person to see it, all those clichés, first person to see it, X hundred years, or even 20 years, that sort of thing, that drew my towards it. It was just a love of the topic and I’ve always been interested in the past. I guess growing up in Wiltshire probably helped, growing up in Bradford-Upon-Avon, which was had got a lot of history, as you may or may not know, there’s a Saxon church and that sort of stuff and having a Roman villa on the playing field, again, so you were surrounded by heritage and it’s just something that I’ve always enjoyed doing. And my job is great because it’s facilitated doing a career in something that I’m interested in, I never have that morning thinking of “Oh, I’ve got to go to work”, you know? It’s pretty priceless really.</td>
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So can you tell me a little bit about Operation Nightingale, the aims of the project and the types of excavations you’ve taken part in?

Yeah, yeah, of course. Um, it started in 2011, um, [redacted] but I’ll just go through the various regimental things so you’ve got it. The Rifles are the biggest infantry regiment in the British Army, they’re formed out of a lot of the old county regiments, um, so the First Battalion of the Rifles are based in [indecipherable] over towards Chepstow and they’re formed out of units such as the Devon and Dorset regiment and a few others, so they’re based over in Wales. There are five regular and two army reserve Battalions of The Rifles. [Redacted]. He’s got one chap who, um . . . is . . . he’s done several operational tours, come back from Afghanistan, um, probably going to be medically discharged and wanted to do some archaeology because he’s been passionate about it having watched loads of *Time Team* episodes, weirdly. Yeah, that was the sort of thing that kept him going, um, and he’s been on television, so I’m not breaking any medical confidences about this, if you looked at the *Time Team* that was done about one of our digs later on, he’s speaking about it, this chap called Steve Winterton who was a corporal in the First Battalion The Rifles, um, and he was in quite a bad way but he’d always been passionate about archaeology and [redacted] wondered if we could get a group [redacted] to come and do some archaeology somewhere on the MoD estate [redacted] as a way of sort of giving them something positive to do and give something back as well, by providing a resource that we wouldn’t otherwise have to deal with some of the heritage aspects.

So that started in 2011 at a site called Chisenbury Midden, I think it is part published in *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, you know, the Proceedings of their society, um, about probably, gosh, about seven or eight years ago. A chap called Dave Comish wrote it up, it’s not scheduled, um, but it is a hugely important site. It’s about three metres deep of deposit formed over about 80 years from about 700 BC, so cusp of the Late Iron Age/Early Bronze Age of feasting debris, quite an important site of several hectares and it is, as our many of our monuments here, affected by badgers. They kick out the soil regularly, which has a lot of, um, very important Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery in it, things like funnel-necked beakers, all sorts of lovely stuff really, you get burned flint, you get the occasional Bronze Age antlers, um, all that sort of stuff coming out, so . . . this material is out of context, but having this resource, i.e. all these soldiers to come out and excavate the badger’s spoil and to do sections through it, learn all that and do planning and plotting it all in, um, to do some sieving and all those sorts of things means that we get these artefacts quantified, get at least some sort of spatial recording of them, um, and then we have a collection of material as well, so as to have a handling collection to illustrate the importance of the site, so that was really quite useful, so that was the first one we did.

And it’s gone from there, really. So the other sites that we’ve done, major sites, have been, we’ve done . . . three crashed aeroplanes, one of which was not under our aegis, it was done by an external group and we just watched it and did some recording for them, using some of the army reserve surveyors, [redacted] so that they could do their, um, practising their surveying skills, so that was probably a win-win situation, we get a survey and they get some training, yeah, so they’re using the GPS kit and total stations and all sorts of stuff, but they’ve also done some laser-scanning for us, so they . . . the first crash site was in East Sussex and then we’ve done
two [redacted] um, one of a battle of Britain spitfire, which crashed on Salisbury Plain in the Battle of Britain and that was published in *British Archaeology* about, just under a year ago. So you can chase that one up. And we’ve, this summer, excavated a crashed Messerschmiet 110, that crashed at Lulworth on the attack ranges down there. The reason we did these two is because the MoD controls the protection of military remains act of 1986 and so we’ve tried to provide some case studies to English Heritage of how you can do archaeological practices properly on these sites, rather than simply digging them out with a JCB. So the information will go to local curators for the HERs and things like that and English Heritage will revise their guidance notes, a chap called [indecipherable] is currently doing that at the moment and we’ve given them two case studies, so that’s the air crash sites.

Surveyors have worked on one of our Heritage at Risk sites at a place called Buttle Hill, up in the north of England to record some cup and ring mark stones on Heritage at Risk, and the results of those surveys should mean that they come off of “at risk” because we’ve got the empirical data sets. They’ve done scrub clearance on the Napier Lines at Woolwich, which is a practice fortification, another scheduled ancient monument, and it’s been removed as a Heritage at Risk asset as a result of the scrub clearance there and these were all done by either The Engineers, the 135s survey or Rifles and then we worked, [redacted] there was a site near to Caerwent—which is very near to where the One Rifles are based—of a Roman villa, scheduled, or Roman building, scheduled and under the supervision, of [redacted] they’ve put together a team investigating the Roman site out there which has got some stone [indecipherable] hypocausts and very little by the way of Roman artefacts, as you probably know, that’s very odd for a Roman site! They’re investigating that with Simon James of Leicester University, um, that’s now gone from being The Rifles solely to anyone in the British military who wants to do something as part of their recovery process, post-Afghanistan or Iraq or indeed, just because they’re interested in doing it, we provide them with that opportunity. So we’ve had navy, army, and air force on it and in addition to that site, they assisted, this was One Rifles, they assisted on a site in Kent which is a Roman site again, but it’s run by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust and they just had people on placements over there.

Another site we’ve worked on has been Barrow Clump which has been the biggest of the excavations thus far, which was, it’s a Neolithic … it was a Neolithic debris spread to start with and then there’s a Beaker burial and then a Bronze Age burial mound and there’s a Saxon cemetery cut into it. It’s a Scheduled Ancient Monument, on Heritage at Risk. I’ve tried for years to try and keep the badgers out of the site and failed miserably and so it was an unusual state of affairs, English Heritage agreed that preservation by record would be quite important in this instance because the badgers are kicking out Saxon elements so quickly that we’re losing huge data sets that were really quite important. So over a period of three summers, the Tri-Service team have excavated this barrow and overall we’ve recovered, when you add it to the English Heritage work done in 2003 and 2004, 75 burials, a large number of Saxons with shields and spears, we’ve had one sword, which was brilliant, because that was found by Steve Winterton, the corporal I mentioned to start with, very, very good, and then things like square-headed brooches and cosmetic brushes and beads and stuff, so that’s really rather lovely and if you put Barrow Clump in there are numerous films online if you want to see those, there’s bits on YouTube, there’s bits on various videos that you can chase up.
So that’s Barrow Clump on Salisbury Plain. There’s been a site at Albemarle Barracks, which has part of Hadrian’s Wall going through it, so they’ve done a little bit of work there on the [indecipherable], um, there has been a project over in Cyprus, on a Byzantine church, that’s still going, they’re actually out there at the moment, some of the guys, there has been a few of them over to Ypres this year and we excavated a British frontline trench and former cemetery, which still had some of the human remains in, that’s probably more on your side of things, looking at human remains, um, and so it’s been quite varied and a number of the guys have now been medically discharged and work as professional archaeologists. So, again, if you go back to human remains, most of them are pretty cognisant with that sort of thing. Um, in fact, we’ve got one lad who’s working on a post-medieval burial ground appended to a church in Halifax as we speak, he’s dug about 60 coffins, as far as I can recall. That’s probably a synopsis of some of the things we do anyway, I might have missed some, but that’s off of the top of my head.

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<td>7</td>
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<td>That’s pretty impressive!</td>
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<td>That’s quite a bit since 2011, isn’t it?</td>
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<td>It really is. I didn’t realise you’d done so much, that’s really quite impressive.</td>
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<td>The way we did it, we wanted to provide an opportunity to the military participants, but the archaeology had to be done properly as well, so it was stuff that would be passed on to the stat bodies and would pass the local curators and the HERS and would be of an equivalent IFA-approved, because I don’t want archaeology done badly, so these guys had to fit in and we either had a commercial partner, say Wessex Archaeology or similar, or we’ve had university departments, so you’ve got all of the able-bodied support and you’ve got the guys who are very experienced in it anyway providing training to these people and also being able to step in with some of the back-filling requirements, if our guys aren’t able to do it.</td>
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<td>And what’s the response been like from the archaeological community towards you doing this?</td>
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<td>I think broadly positive, I mean it’s one of these things, we’re not trying to take jobs from archaeologists or make a legion of archaeologists, we’re just trying to give guys an opportunity to see their training areas in a very different light, um, and most of the infantry guys that come out here have usually objected strongly to digging on Salisbury Plain or wherever, it’s a real hassle, but when they do it archaeologically, it’s much more interesting than digging just a slip trench to sit in for two days. So the archaeology side has actually been really generous in volunteering their time, we’ve had some amazing people just turning up, just taking annual leave to assist the guys, whether that be because they think it’s a good thing to do, um, they don’t necessarily have to agree politically with some of the campaigns we’ve been doing overseas, but most of the guys have their support, so we’ve had people like, I don’t know, Jacqui McKinley, Phil Harding, Simon James, some pretty big names, volunteering their time for free and just coming out on their annual leave to help train these individuals in how to dig these sites properly. It’s been great. Then you’ve got things like they’ve got a British Archaeology Award in 2012, so that was a . . . that was really lovely because their efforts were acknowledged by the archaeological peer group, so that</td>
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was really good and positive for them.

And what’s the response been like from participants in the project?

They all seem to come back! Yeah, we’ve got, you know, I always joke that we’ve got a paramilitary wing of archaeology now, we’ve got all these guys that are really keen to come back, some of them have got archaeological interests that they had already, there’s one lad I know who’s ex of the Six Rifles who had a forensics qualification so he’s really interested in that side of things, um . . . lots of people do it as, you know, an interesting thing to do, we’ve had a couple of lads who’ve said that it’s not necessarily their “thing” to do archaeology, but they actually like meeting up with other ex-military people, you know, a fun and friendly environment, they like the camping out, they like just the social aspects that archaeology is just brilliant with, but there are those passionate about archaeology, like I said to you before, there are a number who are working professionally, I think, how many are there? Well, there are three doing it all the time and a couple who are on zero-hours who are doing it now and again, there are few of them doing it as degrees, having left the military, um and others who just do it as a passion and hobby. So it’s great and I find it really encouraging to see these individuals have that same passion for heritage and discovering things about the past that I have and um, maybe they’ve never had those opportunities before.

The case we always use as an example, I suppose, is a chap called Rifleman Kendrick, formerly of the Fifth Battalion the Rifles and he was informed by his career’s advisor at school that archaeology was probably not going to be something, whether he was not capable of doing or probably not for him, so he joined the infantry, um, he’s now left the army and he works for West Yorkshire Archaeology having also worked for Wessex Archaeology, he’s doing a degree at Leicester University, there’s a picture of one of his finds, which is a beautiful Saxon drinking vessel on display in the British Museum, right next to the Sutton Hoo helmet with his name there. And that’s something I’m never going to get! So that’s absolutely brilliant and his career advisor was wrong, he shows an aptitude for it, in fact he’s a pain this individual, because wherever I put him, he finds stuff! He costs me money! But yeah, it’s a good thing, they’re a good bunch.

So . . . going back to the human remains, um, what are the biggest difficulties or challenges in terms of excavating them within the context of this project?

So which sites have we had human remains on? We had . . . well we had all the Saxons and two cremations at Barrow Clump, there was a potential for human remains at one of the aeroplanes, there were fatalities on the German aircraft, not on the Spitfire, and you only need 3kg of remains to get a war grave, so even though there are war graves for these two individuals, um, that doesn’t mean to say that everything is off. There were human remains over on the Western Front site, um, and that was fairly inevitable and there’s always the potential at the Roman sites, Caerwent might have it, but they haven’t encountered any yet, but I think we’ve encountered human remains on . . . on those ones, Barrow Clump and the Western Front side of things.

Um . . . and all the ones that have gone on to do professional archaeology, they’ve all encountered human remains, Msrs Kendrick and Winterton, who I mentioned before, they have found a series of crouched burials whilst
working for Wessex Archaeology and a previously unknown round barrow on Salisbury Plain and, Rifleman Kendrick found all those burials up in Halifax that I mentioned earlier and what we’ve done with all of these sites is, we’ve checked with participants beforehand that they wouldn’t necessarily have too big a challenge connecting with human remains, because you’ve got to be cognisant of the fact that they’ve all had potentially some pretty traumatic experiences and human remains, are a fairly large part of that, um . . . so we have to make sure, by quizzing them, that that’s not going to be a huge challenge and we’ve only had one person who before we even really started said that they really didn’t have any interest in doing it, they didn’t want to do it, but the rest of them were all like “Not a problem”.

Um . . . during the actual process, they all actually really enjoy it, they seem to gravitate towards it, they’re quite interested in things like this and we’ve had nobody who seems to have any problems with, certainly the ancient side of stuff, the Saxon stuff, they’ve um . . . actually found it a really intriguing process, especially as it takes so long and you have to concentrate so hard, so that’s actually quite a positive thing, because you’re concentrating and blocking everything else out and just thinking about doing this job properly. I mean, they’ve found it quite tricky at times and we’ve had incidents where, um, some of the more physically impaired individuals, we’ve had to come up with some imaginative schemes as to how they can physically excavate these things, dangling over a rock-cut grave if you haven’t got legs or something, it is quite tricky.

Oh, there’s another site whilst I think of it, Rat Island, which I think is pertinent to your work. Rat Island was a site in the inter-tidal area between Gosport and Portsmouth and you can only get to it a couple of times a day, judging by the tides and so the urban myth of that site was that it had loads of either prisoners or prisoners of war during the 18th and 19th century on it and it does indeed. They were washed out by the storms last year, um, so I took a team out there and we recovered the remains and we buddied up with the defence academy at Cranfield University. We were doing all the forensics with them, so the guys did recover human remains there, so that’s another set of remains, um . . . who did we have on that one? We had one of the guys who’s at university and one of the guys who’s doing it professionally, came out and assisted on that one and a load of other volunteers as well from the Op Nightingale programme and two that have gone on to do it as a degree or job, um, so they knew that was human remains and they didn’t have a particular challenge with it, it was just, the bigger challenge was more how to get to site, rather than dealing with the human remains.

Speaking with Rifleman Kendrick, he’s very open about it, so again, not breaking any confidences, he said that when he was excavating the Saxons, he was certainly not thinking about Iraq, he was just simply thinking about the field work, concentrating on it very hard, so it was a really positive thing. Um . . . the First World War may be more of an issue, in that you’re likely to find bits of uniform, potentially bits of hair and also, they are empirically guys who were killed in fighting, so it’s very, I don’t know, it’s a very sort of tribal thing, the military, in certain ways, and so, if it’s one of your own, I would imagine not being military myself, but I would imagine that you could make a direct connection with your predecessor, as you see it, and therefore it’s not a huge leap to start thinking about what happened on your own tours, that’s just my own personal thoughts, but . . . if you’re going out to a First World War site, you ask the participants beforehand, you tell them the scenarios of what you may find, um, ordnance, pretty
certainly, trenches very likely, human remains, also pretty likely, um, and so as long as they’re aware, then that’s the right thing to do to start with and all of those who have participated have been fascinated by it. So, no actually alarmed, all the people that I’ve worked with so far on these things.

17  K  That’s interesting. And did they relate to the human remains as people or objects?

18  A  Yes, very, very definitely, no they were definitely people. Um, they were all thinking about who they were, where did they come from, really, wondering where the isotopes would take them, even to the extent of referring to them by name, rather than skeleton number, so you know, we’d refer to them by name and talk about “their” lady or “their” man and stuff like that, so you know, they got quite attached, in some ways, to these individuals. Yeah, so they were definitely people. The First World War one is an obvious one to think about who those soldiers were, but they were certainly also treating the Saxons as people, it was done with a lot of respect and there was a really good line that one of these lads, [redacted] he was asked about this sort of thing, the respect agenda on recovering human remains at Barrow Clump, one of the Saxons had a spear and shield boss and [redacted] he had a couple of really nice lines, first of all, he thought that these Saxons with the shields, many of them were in the ditch of the barrow and he interpreted that as being a shield wall protecting the other burials, which is really quite nice, but his other line was, “Well, these burials are going to get exhumed by badgers anyway, bones chucked out disrespectfully” and he thought that the individuals in the graves would far rather be recovered with respect than chucked out by a badger and as he also saw it, the chaps with spears and shields, he interpreted as being warriors and, um, a warrior being recovered with respect by a modern warrior is probably a very good thing, so they were really thinking a lot, these guys, about the general narrative and the paradigms involved, so yeah, it was positive.

19  K  And why do you think archaeology works so well as a rehabilitative—

20  A  Well, we always say it’s a recovery thing, rather than rehabilitation, as it’s not actually a medical intervention and I’d get slapped on the wrists! I don’t know, I’m not a medical professional and there are people investigating this at the moment, but as you’ve seen from, just as a layperson, if you look at things like, there’s all sorts of stuff like gardening, I don’t know, I would say the outdoors, in a group, you’ve got a nice fire, decent food, mates being able to chat about experiences, and a lot of them said they liked being back in a group of military and ex-military and they could do banter. It’s a strange phenomenon, but banter, it seems to outsiders that they’re being quite abusive to each other! [laughs] But they love it and it is a lot of fun and it’s a nice little group, so we’ve got our Facebook group and they all look out for each other and they go out socially now and many of them never knew each other beforehand, it’s all different regiments, but they’ve got this shared kind of interest, so I think it’s a lot about being outdoors, doing some mental stuff, physical stuff and just having fun with friends. And also there’s an element of pride in doing some pretty good work and producing a set of tangible results that are actually useful. And that’s purely my own thoughts that’s, you know, there’s no evidence base to it, it’s just my feelings on it, but it’s being looked at the moment.
Do you have any memorable experiences from the Barrow Clump project or any of the others that involved human remains?

Oh, loads. Probably most of them I couldn't give to you! [laughs] Weird and wonderful, you know, seeing people absolutely thrilled with what they've found, I don't know, I think one of the most memorable was probably, this one I can tell you, the rest I can't, but the guy we started it all with, Steve Winterton who now works for Wessex Archaeology, um, so he started with the very first lot in 2011 and he found the last of the big burials at Barrow Clump and the one thing we'd been wanting to find throughout this Saxon cemetery was a sword, just because it's, you know, it's a good martial thing and an object of prestige and beauty and stuff like that and er, Steve, in the penultimate week, found a sword and he just stood up and the look of thrill on his face... and his heart was absolutely racing, um, it was just that sheer thrill from really quite an important discovery and it was just great that it was this guy that made it. Yeah, that was brilliant, just to see somebody who started out with an aspiration to maybe one day have a look at an archaeological site and he's now doing it professionally and he's making that sort of discovery, so that was fantastic. That's what I can share! [laughs] All manner of weirdness, but that's a nice one!

And what was the response like from the participants at the digs? Did they say how excavating human remains made them feel at all?

That's a good question! Have they said anything...? Here's an example, one of the guys, I won't give you his name, he's [redacted], I was looking at him one day and he was excavating, and he's still in the army this individual and he will continue to be. He was excavating this Saxon with one of his, er, former colleagues from [redacted] and he's looking at this really quite carefully, this um, particular burial and um, I noticed that on his arm he's got a load of skulls tattooed and um, he's looking at this and actually, he confirmed to me afterwards, that he was looking at the skull in particular because that's going to be his next tattoo, and all the other skulls are apparently commemorating his mates that were killed. Each one is an individual mate, but this one, his one that he was excavating was that important to him that's also going to on there, which is quite an honour, really. As far as he sees it, so there you go. That's an unusual one, but most of them are really, really interested in the burials and who these people were and one of them had a forensics qualification beforehand and a couple of others want to do... want to work on human remains afterwards, so we've gained them access to the defensive academy at Shrivenham, that's linked to Cranfield University who are doing the post-excavation work on the Rat Island burials and um, some of them have gone over to Wessex Archaeology and looked at the other remains. Jacqui McKinley is brilliant, she does all of them a sort of masterclass on how to excavate the cremations that we had and also how you excavate human skeletons properly, so they've all had... so they start off with no experience and by the end of it they're doing their own levelling and planning and all that side of stuff as well, under Jacqui's watchful eye, and they do all really enjoy it.
| 27 | K | And do you personally have any memorable experiences of excavating human remains? |
| 28 | A | I’ve had one, I suppose. This is nothing to do with Op Nightingale, this was the discovery of an Australian soldier in the First World War at um, a place called [indecipherable] just out on the Messines Ridge, um, there’s a lot of this online, so we found him in 2008, um and eventually identified him in 2010, it was a lot of work, but we got him in the end, he was a chap called Private Alan James Mather, 37 year-old from the village of [indecipherable], Serial No. 1983, um and he was part of the Third Australian Division, 33rd Battalion and Infantry, and um, the curiosity for me in excavating that one, excavating Alan, was that my grandfather was also Third Australian Division, they would have trained together on Salisbury Plain because they all trained for this particular engagement on Salisbury Plain, um, the both of them fought their first battle at the Battle of Messines in which Alan was killed and my grandfather got through it, so there’s an outside chance that I . . . that Alan Mather would have met my grandfather or certainly would have seen him or encountered him, but they were all there at the same time and had this shared experience and I never met my grandfather, he was dead before I was born, so it’s quite peculiar, excavating archaeologically something, a person, who may well have known one of your relatives. That was a curiosity: it was a dynamic that you don’t ever get with the prehistoric burials. |
| 29 | K | Has your involvement with the excavation of human remains affected how you perceive death in any way? |
| 30 | A | Ooh, I don’t know. I’m not religious at all because you see so many people pass through with different religions, many of which are so utterly contradictory, but I don’t know, I probably would have had that anyway, just with my upbringing. The human remains side didn’t necessarily have anything to do with it, but it probably didn’t turn me to a religious belief. I don’t know, really. I don’t know whether it’s affected me at all. I’ve done, you know, lots and lots of different burials of different nationalities and places and time periods, so I don’t know. I mean, I’ve got a healthy respect for the people of the past; I certainly wouldn’t . . . mess about with them. It’s one of the, I remember all the huge debates in this region that we had about the display of human remains at visitor centres at Stonehenge and Avebury and places like that and all the discussions about whether they should be displayed or not. My feeling is, as long as humans are treated with respect, if it was me, I wouldn’t have a problem with it, a bit like Mortimer Wheeler’s great quote about not being bothered if he was dug up in the future, that sort of stuff. I’m conscious of mortality and things like that, yeah, but that’s probably about the limits of it. |
| 31 | K | And what does respect mean to you in terms of displaying human remains and the like? |
| 32 | A | Well, it’s not for prurient titillation and things like that. Respect means all sorts of things to different people, we were talking about it this morning, you know, what’s tasteful and what’s not with human remains. We were talking about the Sainsbury’s advert, in fact, the First World War one and you know, I think it’s beautifully made and it’s not especially accurate that you see all those lovely pristine uniforms in winter 1914. I’ve seen photographs and they’re covered in shit, they look like a right rag-tag bag,
so that’s not great. I just think, at the end of the day, it’s flogging supermarket products, it just strikes me, for all the legitimising of having a chocolate bar that’s being sold in the supermarkets that the elements go to, the British Legion, it’s still at the end trying to get you into Sainsbury’s and spend a lot of money and I don’t know, just for me, that struck me as not particularly tasteful, but it’s well-made [laughs]. So it’s that sort of thing with human remains, I wouldn’t want people going into a museum and saying like “Oh, look, there’s the dead person” and buy the t-shirt. Tollund Man’s on display and I thought that was incredibly respectfully done. I don’t know if you’ve seen him, but you sort of go into this quiet room and it’s quite a reflective area and I think as long as you’re not in there just for titillation, I think that strikes me as respectful.

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| 34 | A | Definitely, people. Without a doubt, people. There’s an interesting debate when do you rebury because you wouldn’t dream of having a . . . I suppose, most people wouldn’t dream of having First World War soldiers on display in a museum because there is this idea that these are war heroes and deserve a war grave and when does that stop and become interesting? I don’t think I’ve got an answer to that because should you display the bodies of execution victims, which was done, as you know, until pretty recently, um, but that’s now not acceptable. Well, I guess it’s not acceptable; they’ve all sort of been removed. What about Maori heads? They’ve all been returned. So, yeah, when is it? When does it become disrespectful? I know there are aspirations to excavate at Waterloo . . . would you have any of their remains on display? I’d presume probably not. But there are probably contemporary ones that are on display somewhere. Is it . . . do they become unacceptable to be displayed if they have this, um, narrative to them of being a “war hero”? I don’t know. I can’t ever see a set of First World War British remains being on display in a museum acceptable, although the French ones are visible in ossuaries, yeah, over in Verdun and places, but the British ones, I know there used to be things like feet in boots on display, but there was an outcry and so they’ve all been removed. So I don’t know.

| 35 | K | I’ve noticed in the press that human remains from the First World War, on the British side, won’t be photographed, but I’ve definitely seen other human remains photographed. There seems to be a massive discrepancy. |
| 36 | A | Oh god, yeah. There’s definitely a difference in approach. There’s a difference in approach in treating the war dead anyway, I mean the Americans have an archaeological unit to recover all their war dead based in Hawaii, nice job, joint prisoner of war and missing in action and counting command, so it’s a mixture of forensic anthropologists and all that sort of stuff and will go and look for human remains whereas the Brits don’t do that. The other thing you talk about the display of human remains, well we’ve never shown a photograph or published a photograph of the Australian we excavated in skeletal form, still holding all his kit, although the line drawing is acceptable, whereas if you go and look at a book by a chap called Yves de Foss, *The Archaeology of the Great War*, you can get it in English now, it’s wall-to-wall skeletons inside, there’s skeletons wearing British boots, so they’re doing, the French are doing exactly . . . they’re showing photographs of remains. It’s an interesting one, although the press do, so the Fromelres one didn’t, I recall, the publication by Louise Loe, um, that Oxford Archaeology did of the Australian First World War mass grave, um, but, there were photographs certainly in the press and again, you can
Google these, online, I think they were called the Grimsby Chums by some people, the Lincolnshire [indecipherable] Battalion, a large number of these First World War soldiers, supposedly arm-in-arm. They weren’t, they were in body bags or shrouds in the grave, they were just put into one big long grave, but it looked like they had all linked arms and that was all over the press and you could see photographs of that, so that’s a different attitude of some newspapers maybe, I don’t know.

37  K  And my last question for you is what are your thoughts on screening excavations from public view?

38  A  As per the requirements of the licences from the Ministry of Justice? That’s an interesting one, isn’t it? Are you creating theatre by doing that? I don’t know. Um, we’ve . . . we’ve had our . . . the sites we’ve been working on with the military lads, when it’s been human remains it’s been fairly inaccessible, so we had those conditions of it’s not to be visible, but they weren’t anyway because they’re on an army training area and you couldn’t really get there. Um, but by the same token, we had an open day I suppose, um, so we screened from view just by dint of where it is, inaccessible tidal island or in the middle of an army training area, the Belgium dig was fenced off anyway, so you couldn’t get to it, so it was just the field team that could look at the remains. What do I think personally of having human remains screened off? It goes back to the museum stuff, what’s the reason for human remains? As a kid, I was always fascinated by them, if you ever go to the British Museum, the mummies gallery is always solid, isn’t it? Um, and if it’s an educational thing, then great, if it happens to inspire people to be a bit more respectful and to learn a bit more about ancestry and our past, things like that, then fine. I mean, we do comply with the licence conditions, but would I have it in there? I don’t know, I think probably it would depend on age as well, if you’re going to shock people by having … I certainly wouldn’t want an 18th century/19th century burial ground being excavated in public, I think that would be fairly shocking. Potentially. If you think of the Spitalfields example, I suppose, I think that would be pretty grim. I don’t think I’d want to see that. So, er, yeah, I think it’s just one of those conditions that I’ve not probably put too much thought into because we don’t tend to do it anyway, just by very dint of where we’re working. It’s automatically inaccessible and we just comply with the licence. So I probably haven’t put too much thought into that one, if I’m brutally frank.

39  K  Do you have any thoughts or comments or you’d like to make?

40  A  Um, do I? No, I just think most of the individuals, certainly on Op Nightingale are genuinely fascinated, intrigued, and pretty respectful of human remains, really. Maybe because they’ve faced mortality at a much more visceral level than most people do.
### Appendix 13

#### Interview with Janet and Nina

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<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So my first question is: what do you both do here at York Archaeological Trust?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>I’m a volunteer. Yeah, a volunteer for the Finds Department. Yeah.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I was a volunteer for the Finds Department, but I’ve been hired to, er, take the job of Finds Supervisor.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So do you have a background in archaeology?</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not really! [laughs] I’ve actually, um . . . I’m a microbiologist, yeah . . . but with an interest in archaeology, um . . . I did do a PhD in archaeological science here. I did a Masters in Forensic Archaeology in [redacted] um, before that I did Chemistry in [redacted], so er, I kind of evolved more towards archaeology during the course of my studies.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And why did you decide to volunteer?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Well, I’m a retired nurse, so people, human bodies, and I’m just passionate about history. An interest in history. And also, I’ve been digging on the sites in York since I started Archaeology Live. I’ve done various digs around York.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>You’re a pro then!</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Amateur! So yeah, I’m doing the finds now. Washing the finds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And which do you prefer?</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>I like both. I do like both. It’s not a preference, really. I like the outside, yeah. But I do like both. ‘Cause when you wash them, you see what you’ve dug up, what’s been dug up, you’ve got all the dirt off and then you can see what there is. I also like bones, human bodies, you know.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Are these bones from—</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Um, so, can you tell me what you’re doing now?</td>
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| 15        | N       | We’re processing the finds, so cleaning the bones, keeping them separate and how they were delivered to us and lifted. Because there is a lot of juvenile skeletons, sometimes they’ll lift that whole, so um, we keep them separated as delivered, um, we clean them, just using a toothbrush, so not to damage
any pathologies on the bone, if there are any, um, and then just clean them with water, let them dry and then they will be packaged and stored for when the osteologist has a chance to look at it.

16  K  Do you end up cleaning teeth with the toothbrush?

17  N  Oh, yes. The first toothbrush they’ll see in however many years! [laughs]

18  J  I always say that this is the first time they’ve ever had their teeth cleaned properly, because they did clean their teeth, but in a different sort of way, didn’t they? They used twigs and I think soot was another thing that they used to clean their teeth with, but not like this.

19  K  Um, and do you think this is a respectful thing that you’re doing?

20  N  I’ve never thought of it as disrespectful.

21  J  No. ’Cause you say to some people, as we were saying, and they think we’re weird, we’re strange doing this, but it’s not. It’s . . . if we didn’t do this, somebody has to do it, but I mean they can learn from such a lot from these bones when they have been washed and they’re looked at. You can learn such a lot. No. You don’t think of it . . . because I look at it, it’s just a shell, whatever was there has gone. It is still a human being, because I said that to [redacted] didn’t I? And I don’t think he liked that, when I said that. He said it’s still a human being. But if we started to think about it, you could get really strange. You couldn’t do it, if you started to think about these things in your mind. Because [redacted] couldn’t understand why we have the radio on and we’re chatting away you see, but it’s a way of um, distancing yourself from it, coping with it, because if you start to think about it, it could start to turn your mind a bit strange, yeah.

22  K  How many have you washed so far?

23  J  I don’t know, I’ve lost count, because they took up 553, didn’t they? In the first phrase, with Peasholme. So, I don’t know if we’ve washed 553.

24  N  No, we haven’t.

25  J  It feels like it.

26  N  There’s still hundreds left.

27  K  That’ll keep you busy for some time then.

28  J  Till we’re dead, yeah!

29  K  It could drive you mad then, if you’ve got another couple of hundred to do!

30  J  If you thought about it, yeah. So yeah, if you dwelt on it. You block it out and do it.

31  K  I find that interesting. On site they’ll be having a laugh and a joke, so that’s no different . . .

32  N  Yeah, that’s also just coping with it. If you see it every day, it just becomes a
part of your regular life and therefore you have in-jokes with each other, I think it’s just natural for that to happen.

33  J  That’s how I was when I was a nurse. When somebody dies, this is what you do. It is a coping mechanism, because if you didn’t, if you didn’t do that, then you couldn’t do your job. It’s the same as this, you couldn’t do it, could you? If you started your mind to thinking about things, yeah. So you have to have a bit of humour there, yeah.

34  K  I quite agree.

35  J  It’s not being disrespectful or weird or anything; it is a coping mechanism, yeah.

36  N  We don’t . . . being disrespectful is like, when people will vandalise the graves when they’re open, it tends to happen around Halloween, it’s the kind of times when you have to be really careful to keep such sites shut and that’s also why we lock the warehouse and stuff like that. There’s other things to be stolen, but you hear such kind of stories and um, that’s really vandalising, that’s what I see as being disrespectful, whereas this is getting a certain amount of information and I think even from the point of digging up, we don’t dig up if we don’t have to. So it’s only when it necessary and even then it goes through a process where people will eventually learn from what we get out from it . . . [indecipherable] sometimes it’s reburial, sometimes it’s part of being a museum collection, but it’s not like, they might not be seen for a while, but I don’t feel it’s disrespectful.

37  K  Um, you mentioned reburial, are you in favour of that or do you think we should try and retain skeletal remains?

38  J  That’s a difficult one that, in’t it?

39  N  I don’t think I have an opinion on it, really. It’s also often out of our hands, because sometimes it comes down to . . . sometimes the faculty of the church have something to say about it. In some cases, which isn’t of relevance here I think, um, I know in [redacted] there were cases where people wanted bodies returned that were dug up for, um, archaeological examination and um, in some cases that’s ok. In some cases, it can be, um, necessary to explain to people why you want to retain the bones in favour of reburial. For example, the [redacted] monks tended to not survive in the soil in which they were buried, so to keep any historical information intact, they would have to keep them. So sometimes it’s really the process of delivering what’s . . . what would you rather keep?

40  J  It’s tough.

41  K  Do you think human remains are people or objects?

42  N  That’s a good one.

43  J  Well, they’re still people. They’re somebody’s family, somebody’s . . . yeah, still people. But I look at it as yeah, it’s still a person, but the important part, the inner self, has gone. It’s somewhere else, ’cause that’s how you cope with death and everyone, we’re all different in the ways of coping with death, aren’t we? And people. Yeah, still people, yeah.
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<td>44</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I think more a combination of both, is more how I deal with it on a day-to-day basis. Like, I know it was once a person, but I think I now see it as more as, well what I find interesting about it is the information archive it also is and I think in that idea you handle it as an object almost. There is always that idea next to it, I think, that once this was a person attached to it.</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Yes, we have like flashing moments where if you’ve got a young person or a child because if you’ve got children of your own, you form a picture in your mind of that child because they haven’t had a . . . they’ve died suddenly and they haven’t had a life, so you get those feelings, but if it’s an older person, you don’t have them feelings because they’ve lived a life. But a younger person or a child, you just can’t . . . but then you pass it, you pass it off.</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What do you think about screening excavations?</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Yeah, I mentioned the one dig in the [redacted] where they don’t cordon it off and this was dead city centre and people looked and they found it interesting and . . . I think there is also some part of . . . it’s part of their culture too, so why shouldn’t they get to see it? And it’s still like gates around; they can’t walk on to the site. Yeah, I think, in some cases, even if a part was visible. They used to have like look-holes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Yeah, little square look-holes so you could see through.</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>And that’s good enough. There are good reasons why we don’t want to be constantly bothered and we also want to get on with our work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>It’s death isn’t it? It’s part of life. People buried in the ground, it’s part of life and it’ll happen to you one day, so why not look at skeletons? But then you’ve got, yeah, you can get strange people.</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Have you had any strange people?</td>
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<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>No, no, not here. Because if they are digging human remains, they always make sure they’ve taken them all up, don’t they?</td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Yeah, they try to really get them out within a day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Yeah, so nothing ever . . . you can’t see then, if there is anything there. But it’s bound to come out in the news because if you know the history of the city, you know, there was a graveyard there once, you would know, you know? You could look it up and research. You could easily find out. So yeah, it’s not a secret, really, is it?</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>No, if it is, it’s one of the worst kept ones! What do you think are the biggest difficulties in working with human remains? Practical, ethical or anything else?</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>It’s for research, in’t it? Whatever they died of.</td>
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I think in the end, just because of the part of where I am within the chain, so to speak, there’s a lot of paperwork attached and a lot of stages, especially when it comes to human remains, it becomes very elaborate. Um, for us, yeah. Some of it just becomes really fragile and I noticed that especially with human remains, I don’t like it when it breaks. You don’t want it to happen! [laughs] And sometimes you really can’t help it, because it’s already broken and it’s just mud covering it up, but I noticed in myself that I don’t want it to.

Yeah, I can relate to that.

Yeah, ’cause it’s held together by soil, isn’t it? And when you get into the water and it all just comes apart . . . yeah, it is a bit disconcerting, isn’t it? [laughs] Yeah.

Do you have any memorable experiences involving human remains in the work that you’ve been doing here?

Oh, that very strange twig!

I don’t know if you’ve seen this one . . .

Oh!

I haven’t seen anything like that before. It’s very strange.

That is weird!

A living root inside his skull.

We kind of had to prune the skull away from it. It was already broken, but yeah.

It’s a bit alien-looking, in’t it?

It is. It’s quite beautiful at the same time, but also . . . weird.

It’s like those little bonsais!

Yeah, exactly!

Yeah, little bonsais.

Um . . . do you find some human remains easier to work with than others?

Yeah, yeah. If you’ve got children of your own, you always feel that, sort of . . . I don’t know what the word is, you know . . . that connection, I suppose. You know, you get those feelings of sadness, I suppose, that they haven’t lived a life. Yeah, it does get you a bit sometimes, the children. But then you get over it. You can’t dwell on it and think about it, can you?

I tend to like infant bones, just to see the difference between an adult’s skeleton and an infant or a juvenile.
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<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>They're so tiny.</td>
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<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>It’s almost like a precursor, it’s not a full bone yet and things haven’t fused yet. That’s where the whole information archive . . . because you can actually, for a lot of infants you can actually tell what age they are from how well the skeleton was developed. Um, I enjoy doing that, just because it’s a puzzle. Yeah, I don’t have many sadness connotations to it myself, but that’s more because I separate myself from it and I don’t have children of my own, so that doesn’t come into it for me. Yeah, for me, the interest I have in osteology and . . . it just comes forth more strongly than with the large bones, I prefer working with the small ones and sorting them out.</td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you have a favourite bit of the skeleton?</td>
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<td>79</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>I like the skull. In a way, it’s more of challenge, isn’t it? The skull. You’ve got a lot more crevices in the skull and it is a bit more of a challenge, isn’t it? When you’re doing the inside, yeah, if it doesn’t fall apart.</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I like doing the feet and hands. Again, it’s the small bones and you can see if they’re complete and see what different ones are, er, I also tend to like torsos, but they have to be non-fragmentary [laughs]</td>
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<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>I think the vertebrae are tricky to do; they can take ages, can’t they?</td>
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<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>They can really be, if they’re in a good state they’re a delight to do because you have everything and it’s complete and it’s . . . and you can kind of arrange them in size and it looks great, and if you have them in really bad condition, they just crumble in your hands, um, or the dirt is so hard and the bone so soft that’s impossible to clean, especially because the vertebrae, they’re kind of spongy, spongy bone, quite porous, so it’s hard to do and the ribs are so long and thin that you can’t really put too much pressure on them or they’ll snap. So yeah, the torso really can be either or.</td>
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<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>How long does it take to wash a complete skeleton?</td>
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<td>84</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>It depends on the condition it’s brought in and the kind of soil it was in, because if it’s this clay stuff, actually, this site isn’t too bad, um, it’s the other Haymarket site that’s really bad and really . . . it’s clay and it becomes really hard, attached to the bones and that just takes so long. I think I might have done a whole skeleton in a day but that was in pretty good condition and I don’t think it was complete either, it had most of the parts, and that’s another one, most skeletons aren’t complete. Um . . . I think that’s the fastest and that’s really if it’s in good condition, otherwise it can easily take up to three days to do one skeleton.</td>
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<td>85</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>It’s a very labour intensive process then.</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Yeah [laughs]</td>
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<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So how many volunteers work on doing this? Is it just you?</td>
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<td>88</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>No, no, there’s more. Um, there’s a couple of regulars coming in and doing this every week. Or some come in alternate weeks. Um, when I did this as a volunteer, I came in at least three times a week, every morning and sometimes more, if I could. At some points I came in every day, every</td>
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There’s always work to do. And a lot of the work relies on volunteers. Yeah, we’re always very grateful for volunteers, ’cause it’s a large amount of work and most of the money will actually go into getting it out of the ground in a decent way. This doesn’t require specialist knowledge, it’s handy if people have it which is why some of the volunteers, we don’t have them now because it’s the summer holiday and um, we usually have archaeology students come in and it’s handy if people know it and you learn while doing it, which is why a lot of people want to volunteer and do this because it’s to learn things while cleaning these bones. It’s why I wanted to do it.

My last question: has working with the remains of the dead affected how you perceive death in any way? Would you be happy to be excavated by an archaeologist or are you planning to be cremated instead? [laughs]

No, no, I wouldn’t be buried because you’ve only got a limited time in the ground now, haven’t you? It’s a hundred years and then you’ll be dug up, won’t you? ’Cause land is so scarce and expensive to bury people, so eventually, it will all be cremated.

Yeah, for me as well. Unless my family decides differently because I think we’re kind of a burial family.

Yeah, see you’ve got to explain to your family your wishes and I keep telling mine. I know exactly what I’m going to do.

My friend has already sorted her skeleton and donated her body to that institution and they’re going to have it.

Donated to science, yeah. I don’t know about that, do you?

No, I’m not too sure.

Someone fumbling around inside you.
# Appendix 14

## Interview with Alan

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<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can you tell me a little about your background in archaeology? What you’ve studied and what you do now?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I started excavating at school, thanks to my classics teacher, who thought we ought to see the Romans, on the first term doing classics, I was probably . . . oh, I don’t know . . . 11 or 12ish, something like that, way back in the 70s. We got taken to a local dig and I found it fascinating and did some pot washing towards the end of the visit and then we were asked if we wanted to come back and do some pot-washing at the weekends and it was near one of my father’s shops, so I did so. And slowly but surely, I did more and more and more archaeology as my school career waned, my archaeology increased! Um . . . I failed my A-Levals because I’m dyslexic, um . . . I always knew I was going to go to university, so I went digging for a few years and then went to [redacted] to do the HND Archaeology in 1984 because that was the last intake that was going to be in [redacted] I went off to [redacted] to do a eighteen month degree there. I’m sort of an ex-circuit digger, one of the old circuit diggers, right up until I went up to college and I was involved in job-creation projects and things. And um, then in ’93 I joined [redacted] Yeah, I worked there right the way through until 2002, so I did a lot of work at [redacted] where you can see my virtual ego, my digital self in the visitor centre, and then I became [redacted] and then I was doing a lot of administration and grants and then I was made redundant in 2011 as part of the government cuts and then after a bit of time, I went back to my roots and joined [redacted] as an archaeologist and I’ve been happily playing in the mud ever since. There you go, a potted history of some 40 years!</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Has it been nice to go back to archaeology?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>It’s been a breath of fresh air! And it gives me a totally different spin on things, as well. Some of my managers told me . . . they know me as an [redacted] and as a monitor of grant projects and that sort of thing, but I now also torture them with that I find things. You know, where a one-day watching brief turns into a week-and-a-half excavation with ten staff. It’s always interesting! Yeah, I have a sort of reputation, I have to admit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And what drew you towards archaeology?</td>
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<td>Um, I’d always been into puzzles. And I suppose that and my grandmother was always interested in the past and very into questioning things. She was, you know, if you’d cut her wrist, she’d have bled blue; she was Tory through and through. In her youth she was a Trotsky</td>
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groupie. She grew up in [redacted] and followed Trotsky around his North American tour and she always believed that people like Tony Benn, although she really hated his politics, was worth listening to because they always had something interesting to say and made a good argument. Um, yeah, so I liked archaeology because you could dip into lots of different things. It was a bit of a puzzle, where you had odd bits and pieces of the puzzle and you had to try and make a picture, a story. And that just sort of captured my imagination, I suppose.

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<th>So how often do you come into contact with human remains as part of your work?</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>It’s changed over time. There was a time in the late 70s/early 80s where it would be, oh, anything up to 25 weeks of the year. I mean half a year would involve bodies because I used to work for [indecipherable], so I’d do seasons at [redacted] and others, as part of, um, a bigger project, not just looking at these historic sites and cemetery archaeology, but also contributing to [indecipherable] and research council projects. So, yeah, I sort of know what it is to be on . . . to smoke something like 60-70 cigarettes a day and be on two bodies a day! I’m not sure which is worse for your health, probably the bodies! Sorry, I’ve got a bad sense of humour!</td>
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<th>How did you learn to excavate human remains? Was it just on the job?</th>
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<td>10</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>No, it was on the job. I think my first one was probably a little baby, a Roman baby, just been dropped in a bit of a stoop . . . I was probably . . . I was 16 at the time. So we started excavating it, not really knowing what it was and eventually the director sort of worked out what it was and told me and it was kind of, um, a bit scary, really interesting, very strange. I’m pleased I didn’t know about what I was doing when I started off. Um . . . and I’ve kind of seen that reaction in lots of people, with their first. It’s always a little bit scary, interesting . . . you get a lot of, it a strange to-do really.</td>
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<th>K</th>
<th>Are there any elements of working with human remains that you particularly like or dislike?</th>
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| 12 | A | Um, yeah, I like . . . I like them because it’s sort of an immediate contact with the past and you can find out an awful lot [indecipherable] and that contributes massively to our understanding of those diseases. But you can sort of find out a lot about how that person lived, what happened to them, did they fall over, you can use isotope analysis to work out dietary things, yeah, so where they lived throughout their life, all sorts of things, as well as things like graveyard inscriptions and the little bits and pieces they get buried with. Even Christian burials, you can find some really weird and wonderful things, so you have that immediate touch with the past, you’re often touching a sort of moment, if that makes sense. You’re seeing part of a burial ceremony, part of somebody’s life, you know? That’s really . . . that’s really interesting and immediate and it can change the way people think about things quite dramatically at all sorts of different levels. I suppose the thing that I don’t like . . . is some peoples’ attitude towards human remains. I mean, you get developers who treat them as if they’re a nuisance and should just be shovelled away and got rid of. I mean, that’s pretty rare, I must admit, but it still happens. Or you get odd people who, well, don’t show the right sort of respect and
that annoys me immensely. You know, occasionally archaeologists do that, but that’s less true. Often it can be, sort of members of the general public who want you to display something for no good reason or a contractor labels you as macabre or stupid. I find that sometimes quite difficult. We dig these things up because not only do we need to find out about the past, but increasingly we excavate them because they will be destroyed, shredded, damaged as part of the development process and quite frankly, I would rather an archaeologist did it. You get a pile of bodies at the crematorium; I’ve seen that in the 70s a couple of times. That was not good.

13 K Would you say things have improved in terms of practice then, in terms of excavating human remains since you first started?

14 A Um, bizarrely, I think it’s one of the things that hasn’t really changed. Um . . . people use the same techniques, they still rush often, many people are still not taught how to deal with them properly, um, no, it’s not really changed, we still use the same recording forms that I can remember being developed in the late 70s and early 80s. Yeah, I can actually remember these things . . . the little picture of the skeleton, yeah, I can remember when that was coming in because you needed a way of being able to record how a person was and notebooks just didn’t cut it, especially if you were dealing with a large cemetery and you needed a quick way of being able to record how much was there, which site it was, blah-de-blah and then, sort of like, using a mixture of photography and stickmen to record the bodies, rather than artistic drawings of remains, again, because of time and realising the key components which were important, whereas a pretty drawing was . . . you could do that from photographs, you know, orientation of the spine, how the body was laid out, so you could work out whether the body was shrouded, how they were placed in the grave, was it intentional, were they prepared to botch a grave that was a tad too short, whatever. All those aspects are kind of more important than getting a pretty drawing, unless you were very good, which you never really achieved. Yeah, I can remember doing all of those.

15 K Ok, you mentioned “respect” a little bit earlier and I wondered what that means to you?

16 A Um . . . I think respect is just really, um . . . well, treating someone as you’d expect to be treated yourself. You know, it’s very [indecipherable] to how you’d treat a member of your workforce, or a friend, or someone you meet in the street, um, you’re there to do a job, you know, should try and achieve what you’re going to do in the right . . . in the right sort of way, in a sense, you should try and get all of that person, um . . . and you should try and do it properly and yes, you should try and get some information out of that burial, but you know, it shouldn’t be at the expense of dignity, if that makes sense.

17 K That makes senses. And do you think the archaeological process manages that?

18 A Um, yeah, a lot of the time. I think the organisation I work for does pretty well, the vast majority of the time. Yeah, I’ve come across instances where people are less than right about things, but most archaeologists care, they try and do their best, in part because they realise it’s storing some information there and they realise it’s often not the long bones that
are most the important bits, it’s the little bones, which are more susceptible to decay but also to damage during life, so they try and get all of that body and do the right thing. I had a fairly bad experience with a crematorium, we had to do a cleansing of [redacted] in the 70s, well it really was, we were just, um, stacking up the body parts and shoving them in bags and you know, the Victorian cemetery is being cleansed before the church is being demolished to become a car park. Yeah, it really wasn’t . . . it wasn’t the right way to about things.

| 19 | K | So, what do you think are the biggest difficulties or challenges in terms of excavating human remains? |
| 20 | A | Um, the biggest challenge is doing a good job in bad conditions. i.e. you’ve got soft bones, evil soils and it’s piddling down with rain. And you’ve got a developer wanting you off the site pretty quick, you know? It’s easy enough to damage things and make a big mess of it. Yeah, that’s one of the bigger challenges. I’ve never had any problems, especially in the last few years, convincing the developer or project manager or whatever to give one the time to do the human remains. It can often open up extensions to digs, particularly if you have to go through and get an exhumation licence and it all becomes very official and very formal and you can mutter words like “Well, if you don’t, you’ll be in trouble and the police will be around” and they usually become exceedingly compliant. But no, it’s often the conditions in which you have to deal with things. They can often be far from ideal. |
| 21 | K | How do the public tend to react when they find out that human remains are being excavated nearby? |
| 22 | A | I think the vast majority are very, very interested, especially when they realise that you’re an archaeologist and you’re doing things the right way. Um . . . I’ve had people come along and be absolutely intrigued, they’ve been a bit worried to start, you know? But you engage them and they get quite interested in these things, when they realise that you’re trying to, trying to do the right thing. I’ve rarely come across someone who’s been [indecipherable] with the idea. Um . . . yeah, they’re always interested, I think you might have different problems when you’re dealing with more recent burials, yeah, they might be a relation of somebody. It comes down to respect, I think. If you’re showing the right respect, you’re doing it for the right reason, there are examples where, I was working in the south-west region where, you know, they kind of insisted that works for [indecipherable] churches were done with archaeologists to do the trenches that were necessary. The works in the churchyard, all the bodies were exhumed properly and under those sorts of conditions it seems to resonate really well with the parish, as opposed to getting in a pile of builders, labourers, down the side of the church hall. It comes from trying to do things right. You know, people realise that there is a need to do something, make the church more habitable, more usable, there’s a way of achieving that. I mean there’s a bad way, which is just to go in there and start digging around and hoik it out, um . . . and there’s the other way and that’s to do, that’s to try and preserve the bodies as intact as possible and make sure they’re buried in an appropriate way at some point later, you know? Yeah, it’s always difficult. |
| 23 | K | Following on from that, what are your thoughts on screening excavations |
| 24 | A | I find most of the time it’s not wonderfully practical, you know, because of winds and weather and again, you know, hiding something from the public is not always the best way forward, you end up with rumour mills and everything else and end up with a worse problem because of it. I often think that, um, being [indecipherable] and discrete, so if people ask, they’re told, what you’re doing is explained fully to somebody and you engage them in a discussion, which is often far more productive. And if you don’t go out there and shout about it, most people don’t realise what you’re doing, so you’re being discrete. Um, but again, if they find out, you tell them. Again . . . it makes people think that you’ve got nothing to hide, that you’re being honest and trying your best, if that makes sense. So I don’t like hiding things, it’s not my . . . not my way forward, not so much with human remains, but I’ve been caught up in lots of occasions, especially in the last few years, where developers don’t want the locals to know what we are finding on their site, whether it’s a lot of things or nothing, they’re kind of a bit paranoid about it. And invariably what it does is, it sort of breeds, it breeds a rumour mill and then the sort of locals get all uppity thinking you’ve found this, that and the other and it’s being shovelled away, um . . . well, a classic one’s the other week, I found [redacted] and the rumour got out and some of the locals, because it’s very much a [redacted] subterranean feature, yeah, the locals were fearing that the developers who were building a solar farm were just ripping it out to build the solar farm, however, when they were engaged with and some of them were invited over to come and see it and have it all explained to them and everything else, they went away absolutely smiling. It killed dissent instantly. It turned it from a worry and a problem to something really, really useful as part of a PR exercise, especially if you explain that the area of destruction was instantly taken out of the [redacted], it was being avoided and every effort was made, well, they understand what it was, but also preserve it for the future and there was a very, very positive message there. Um . . . and it changed a lot of the feeling of some of the locals towards the whole of the development because it was a sea-change, there was an openness and explaining what was going on and showing them. However, if they hadn’t done that, the developer, I think they’d have ended up with more press and local dissent and I think the same goes for human remains, don’t go out there and flash them off, but you should be able to with people, if they ask, you shouldn’t hide it, if that makes sense. You should explain . . . explain what’s going on. The explanation will be different, depending on who the person is, you have to do it appropriately. |
| 25 | K | Why do you think developers are so reluctant to share that information with the public? |
| 26 | A | It’s to do with the adversarial way that a lot of development happens, they’ve been through a planning process, they fear that if something is found, then [indecipherable] will latch on to it and there will be another round of protest, despite the fact they may have got all their permissions to dig. They also fear that if something more interesting is found, what will happen is that the locals will be able to get enough support to get the planning permission withdrawn and they just . . . they’re very, very scared of that. Um . . . pre-planning permission, archaeological work is often quite confidential because it materially affects the value of that land, that development and again, what’s there will affect the outcome of that |
planning permission, so that's always tied up in the negotiations of consents and money and conditions. And again, there's a paranoia, it's like if someone finds out there's great-crested newts, they'll end up with a lot of protests. The same goes for if someone says, "Oh, there's some Roman remains found", we may not understand what those Roman remains are and how significant they are and how important they are, it could be as little as a manky piece of greyware pottery or it could be a whole villa. Do you see what I mean? It's quite complicated and they're quite paranoid. Myself, I would prefer to be quite open and engage with somebody, but I think that when you do that you learn what those remains mean to [indecipherable] and you can deal with it a lot better, because you have that local input in terms of the significance, how they feel about it. Um . . . you know, if someone's informed then they can make an informed decision. Sorry, I'm rambling!

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<td>27</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>No, no! This is all good stuff, thank you! For you, are human remains people or objects?</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>God, they're people! In the same way that a dead dog that’s been buried is a pet dog. You know, when you come across ponies in fields, again, they’re not a . . . they're not an object, like a piece of manky old pot. They're, um, they're something slightly more than that because they've been put in there for a reason, you know? They deserve a bit of respect. Now, I don’t really mind whether that’s a sort of pet dog, a cat, um, you know, that’s obviously been buried in the corner of the field with a bit of a respect or a human being, there's not a lot of difference, they meant something to somebody. If that makes sense.</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>It does indeed.</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Yeah, I’ve probably had more trouble digging up a field where somebody, when they were a child, had buried their pet pony. They were mortified. This woman must have been in her 40s or 50s. She found that quite upsetting. But that animal meant something to her. So that’s how I think.</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What are your thoughts on displaying human remains?</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>I am for that, but and it’s a big but, it has to be in very, very special circumstances. It should not be something that you do lightly, but there are occasions where a person, or persons, there might be real value to help people connect with their past, with certain times. I am probably these days increasingly less in favour of it because you have the development of other ways of getting people to access things. So you’ve got the ability of photographs, CGI, you’ve got all sorts of things where you can move away from the need of having the actual bones or even a facsimile of them. And you know, connect people in a very, very different way, but nonetheless equally . . . equally personal, equally close. If that makes sense. I think the traditional way we connect somebody with a burial made in the floor of a Roman villa meant that you had to dig that person up and then kind of put them back with a little glass plate over them over the top, so you can look as you walk around the villa, um, you can do it in so many other ways, that I think are more acceptable to most people, but more importantly, I think you can fire up more people because you can . . . well, with CGI you can take a representation of the burial as archaeologists excavated it and you can then add in, um, whatever and</td>
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you can morph that representation of the skeleton back to the date of burial. I know it sounds like a cartoon sequence, but it needn’t be. Does that make sense?

33  K  Yes.

34  A  So you’re not just dealing with a few words on a blank piece of paper, a body in a display case. You can do all sorts of things. Even so, I think you need to be quite careful, I mean I’ve, [redacted] asked me about displaying some bodies they found when they were doing an excavation [indecipherable] in the milking parlour on one of their sites and I kind of steered them away from that because I think to display those bodies, they’re not really special, they’re Iron Age bodies buried in grain storage pits, the display of those remains doesn’t outweigh that they were human beings, if you know what I mean, because they’re sort of relatively, but if you can do something sort of interpretively with that evidence in a different way, you needn’t use the bodies, you can still connect people visiting the site and the finding of those bodies with the evidence they can show, with the person that was that body. Sorry, I’m rambling, I’m terribly rambling.

35  K  No! It’s an interesting answer.

36  A  I don’t think people go far enough in using their imagination. I think we have so many tools and do things in so many different ways, um . . . and I think we can do more without having to display the object, the item, the thing, the person. You know?

37  K  To be awkward, is it the role of museums to display real things?

38  A  Yeah, in the broadest sense, you need to display things that people can see. They should be able to touch some of the stuff as well, seeing something is only one of the many senses that you have, only one of the many ways you access something, sorry, it annoys me when you have lots of things stuck behind boring glass cases. Ok, somebody like me can get a lot out of greyware pots tucked behind glass, but the average punter, it’s just grey and it might be pottery. You know? So yeah, I think if you use your imagination you can connect people with a lot of these things in a better way, a more interesting way, I think museums have a role in bringing the past to the public, but I also think they have a twin thing, which is preserving past objects so that people can handle them, understand them, learn from them. The two are not quite the same and the two can happen in different places within that museum. Objects can be stored and accessed behind the scenes and people should be encouraged to do that, and you have the front of house where things are displayed in a different way and people are engaged through imagination and story-telling, that sort of thing. So, they have two sides and you don’t need, necessarily, the object front of house to tell the story, you can do it in other ways and possibly more appropriate ways.

39  K  Of course they had to think of different ways with the new Richard III visitor centre because obviously they can’t display the remains because he’s going to be reburied.

40  A  Exactly and that’s the right way. You understand, you understand the story behind that skeleton, the person behind that skeleton. It enables
you to tell a story. If you don’t have the remains, you have to be more imaginative. And a lot of those sort of things, you can then use your imagination if you change your mind at a later date, when people understand a bit more, you can change your interpretation. It’s very much more difficult if you’ve got a king under a glass case in the middle of a car park. That’s very one-dimensional and not necessarily the best thing to have done. Basically, I think to rebury him somewhere is exactly the right thing to do.

| 41 | K | What are your thoughts on reburying human remains in general? |
| 42 | A | Um . . . that’s difficult. To keep them in a museum is not necessarily the most appropriate place to keep them, they might be safer somewhere else. They might be better off left in the ground [indecipherable], but to keep these objects keeps them open for re-evaluation. You can learn again from them when understanding moves forward. Oh, what’s it? The Red Lady of Paviland, thought to be a girl and was in fact a boy, blah blah. Well, if they’d excavated his bones and thought he was a she, they’d have never known it was t’other way round, would they? If you see what I mean? Because you have the remains, you can actually re-evaluate them and understand them and when you have different methods of analysis you can, you can use another tool to understand a different dimension of that person, but again, you have to balance that against the, sort of, what you have. You have to balance that against the relatives, the communities, um . . . which is why it’s probably easier to go along with reburial of more recent remains and it seems slightly more appropriate, whereas distant human remains, like prehistoric ones, tend often to end up in storage. And I don’t like the idea; I really don’t like the idea of sort of prehistoric burials being buried with Christian rites. Where things get confused. Again, so I think you have to deal with things on a one-to-one basis. You have to be clever. You have to understand what these remains mean to communities, what they mean to the archaeological and scientific community, do they have a story to tell? Might that story change in the future? Might it be worth keeping them because that story will develop? All these [indecipherable] are outweighed by the feelings of the community, potential relations, albeit distant. |
| 43 | K | It’s a tough one. |
| 44 | A | Yeah, I don’t think there is a “yes” or “no”. I think it comes down to the fact that you need to consider these things on a one-to-one basis and I think to a point that’s the same whether you keep an animal bone from an excavation, a sherd of pottery, an oyster shell. We could fill museums with all sorts of rubbish, well, we do, but even more rubbish, but one needs to be slightly selective and sort of ask the questions, is this assemblage going to be of value to, in the future? Is it going to be worth curating it? How should we curate it? Does it have value if we do that? And I think it’s the same with human remains, you have to ask that additional question, the attitudes of the community to those remains. |
| 45 | K | Do you have any particularly memorable experiences of excavating human remains for any reason? |
| 46 | A | I have a lot! Um . . . I suppose one that shows the power of something was at [redacted] we were excavating on the south side of the tower, this would be the late 70s, early 80s, as you go on the south side they get
really dense, just bodies on top of each other in layers, so we’d just take things down in spits. So because things were fairly open to the public, what we tended to do was ensure that we excavated things and lifted them pretty quickly, they weren’t left around, so it was unusual for a body to be excavated and exposed for any more than a day, if that. And a friend of mine, his girlfriend was having their first baby and she went into labour and he went off to hospital and he came back a few days later and he was full of everything that had happened and he noticed where he’d been working was covered in [indecipherable], well I pulled it back and showed him this skeleton [indecipherable] and we couldn’t decide whether the foetus had been born after death or it was an in-labour death, they couldn’t tell and this poor guy, he went slightly pale and passed out.

The connection between his experience with his girlfriend who had apparently had a long and quite terrible labour and the skeleton and the story there and it was just too close. It wasn’t, um, it was a real connection. So you get little things like that. I know a lot of people get quite, they don’t mind digging adults, but children . . . and sometimes, you’ll just see just a skeleton and sometimes something that’s much more human. That can be quite chilling sometimes.

When you get burials in weird places, like we, I don’t know, in [redacted] there was a foetus buried under the wall line of a, um, medieval house in a little village, a deserted village and if I remember rightly, it had something like a [indecipherable] with it, this is dating back to ‘89 or so, I’m sure. And again, that was just weird, it was sort of strange. You have a community that has a church just down the road, literally just a few hundred yards away and you have a weird burial, the baby just tucked away under the wall, with a little bit of food. And you get things like plates and dice and all sorts of bits and pieces tucked into coffins. Yeah, there’s not many of them, but you do get things. Again, why is that stuff there? It’s there because it must have meant something to the person who died, but more importantly the person who was burying that person. They had, they had something. And those can be quite touching moments, leading you to stand back. I remember when I dug a post-mortem victim at [redacted] that was quite weird, going down from the skull, realising he had a cut in the skull and then realising that he had no backbone, he had a wooden stake instead and that was . . . weird. That was just plain weird. It was sort of, I don’t know, it was kind of like scary, but intriguing and you get all sorts of things.

47  K  Is there anything you’ve seen people do to humanise remains whilst they’ve been excavating them?

48  A  Well, a lot of people will give them names. Um, that always seems more appropriate than calling them bodies. Well, it does. I know a lot of people do that. I think people who get too . . . who give them . . . who think of them too much as human will tend to never dig bodies because it comes too close.

49  K  And how does excavating human remains make you feel?

50  A  Um . . . I’m interested in that person’s life. You know, it’s a set of questions. Are they male? Female? Are they old? What happened to them? Good diet? Poor diet? Are the teeth good? They’re interesting in the same way that meeting a person on the street is, except they can say less! But, you know, they’re interesting and they range, I suppose, out of 50 bodies
you might get one which is seriously interesting, but the others have the potential to say things as well and I found recently, as I said to you, my father died, I kind of found that in my experience of human remains, it has made it slightly easier to understand that process of death, whereas my sister is a bit weird, but then I realised that she didn’t really have much experience of death in her life, with her being 50. Um, so yes, it’s made it slightly easier for me to cope with things.

<p>| 51 | K | Is it that exposure? What is it about working with human remains that makes it easier for you? |
| 52 | A | It must be exposure, I suppose. The same as if you go back a hundred years, you’d have known someone who’d died by the time you were five, ten years old, you’d have had a brother, a sister, mother, father, aunt, uncle, neighbour, playmate, they would have died, it would have been common. Therefore you kind of . . . find ways of dealing with it. Now, people don’t see it, so therefore don’t have ways of understanding. So when you’re confronted with it, it’s sort of comes as a bit of a . . . it’s more of a shock. It’s still shocking, but it made a difference to the way I treated it compared to the way my sister did. I think that’s down to my archaeological career, in my case, I know that other people have different experiences that do the same thing, so yes, I suppose it is familiarity. |
| 53 | K | Do you think working with human remains has affected the way you think about death? |
| 54 | A | No . . . it’s affected the way I feel about religion. |
| 55 | K | What has it done to your views on religion? |
| 56 | A | Oh, I think most religions are political constructs for elites and control, in some form, but, you know, I suppose a truer religion and the little beliefs and feelings that individuals have are things like the time of burial and why the hell do they put a soup plate in a coffin? Or a bone dice? Or things like that. Why do they put those flowers? Why do they dress in a particular way? That’s probably a truer religion, those sorts of belief systems, that sort of, that sort of level. A lot of religions I increasingly feel is an expedient construct of control. But I must say that I’m cynical. |
| 57 | K | A lot of people have said a similar thing. |
| 58 | A | Yeah, that’s probably because most of them happen to be archaeologists. |
| 59 | K | Yes! |
| 60 | A | We see too much. |
| 61 | K | Have you ever experienced an emotional response whilst excavating human remains? |
| 62 | A | Um, yeah, I have. Shortly after my first daughter was born, Yeah, I uncovered a very young child, probably about a year-ish or so old and that was kind of, nah, I couldn’t cope. At that point, no way. Again, it’s that connection. |</p>
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<th>K</th>
<th>So, in that respect, are adults easier to excavate than juveniles?</th>
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<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>No, I think it’s a connection. It’s the story or something between the two of you. It’s like my mate who just couldn’t cope with the near-term or neo-natal death. Because his experience at that point in his life, the past and the present collided and that was same in the case of my young daughter: it was a connection at that point and that made it kind of weird, difficult, horrible. Scary. Hard to say. I just couldn’t cope. It wouldn’t worry me today at all. But at the time, it was just . . . I was hearing stories on the telly . . . do you have kids?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ask any of your friends who have children and ask them whether listening to the news changed after they children. I would bet that most of them say that when they had children, all of a sudden all of the stories about children being burnt in fires or abducted or . . . damaged in any way, on the news, it becomes a difficult news story to them. More and more so than before they had those children. It's that same connection. All of a sudden you’ve got this vulnerable person that is yours and that you love dearly, and you have that connection with that news story and it becomes real. And I think it’s exactly the same and just occasionally, it will trigger that feeling.</td>
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<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Have you ever worked with partially fleshed remains?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And how was that?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>No different. I can remember at [redacted] one season, I had two new diggers either side of me going down through more recent Victorian burials, so I pushed ahead and I was just cleaning up the skull and I know it’s not flesh, but I came around the top of the skull between the headboard and the coffin and pulled out a bit of hair and then proceeded to show these young ladies this and asked them if they knew what it was and neither of them did and when I told them it was hair, um, they were quite alarmed really. Terrible! Terrible, isn’t it really? No, I don’t think it’s really any . . . it really makes much difference. People are still human.</td>
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## Appendix 15
### Interview with Carol, Terry, and Danielle

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can you all tell me why you've chosen to come to Poulton and what it is that you do? Whether you're working, or a student?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Oh, then we'd better be in two categories then . . . you go first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Um, well, it's quite a long answer for me . . . so I live in [redacted], um, so I found Poulton on the internet and I specifically chose it out of all the ones in the UK because of the skeletons and the human remains and stuff, um . . . because that's what I want to study at uni and I'll be going next year, so I'm on a gap year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I'm guessing that excavating human remains in [redacted] is difficult?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>It's few and far between. In fact, there's no volunteer stuff that I could find and, yeah, it's politically awkward, so there's just no volunteer stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>How about you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>We are mature people [laughter] and [redacted] has always been interested in doing archaeology and we finally found, just looking online, finally found a course that was reasonably local to us and we lucked out really, because it's got the Iron Age/Romany stuff and it's got the skellies and stuff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Are those your two favourites?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>No, there are no favourites, we're just very lucky, we just have a general interest in archaeology and this is our starting point and we will carry on doing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So you've been enjoying it? Is there anything you've particularly liked about this site?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>About the site? Well, apart from the people running it, it's just the variety and the fact that it's not just &quot;Well, we're going to dig here and find Roman pottery and then we'll find more of it and more of it&quot; . . . I mean digging in that trench over there, it was just &quot;This is Iron Age, this is Roman, can you see this trench here? There's another trench coming across there&quot; I think this is exciting this place, but it's the only one we have any experience of.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes, it's not just the one thing, it's the variety.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And what have you learned since coming here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>[laughs] Everything!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Well, we've learned how the various ages fit together, perhaps a bit better and we've learned about VCP and cracked stones and fire stones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>I've only been here two days, but I suppose it's how a dig works, because I had absolutely no idea. I'd never done anything like it before and I'd studied like the theory of a site at school in ancient history, but never actually been on one, so the feel of it, I suppose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yeah, I think that's something as well, the detail, which is obvious when you think about it, the detail that everything is logged in, y'know, well the line gets put down and that's where you mattock to and not beyond there because we haven't logged it for registering purposes and when you go to a certain depth, well, that's another tray there because you see the colour of the clay is changing. It's a huge voyage of discovery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>It's not just merely a trowel and you dig. There's a method to it and I think that's . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>How do you feel about excavating human remains? Has it been how you thought it would be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yeah, it's exciting, really. Not in a ghoulish way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Yeah, I had no hesitation about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>We had no preconceived ideas really.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>It's certainly something different. I did not expect when we first booked on to this, I didn't expect to do human remains, so that's a bonus, really. And I think that's what this site gives you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>I think I chose to come here because of the human remains and I guess I was a little bit worried that I'd be squeamish and I'm really pleased to find that I'm not, yeah . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think it's important to excavate human remains?</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>That's a tricky question. Only in what it tells you about the site. I tend to be a terribly practical person, so practically I'd say it's probably not important at all, because enough has probably already been dug up to know everything that you need to know, but . . . it's just getting a picture of what was going on here. What I think is unbelievably important is how many young people are interested because it's one of those sorts of things that as you get older then these things, these sort of esoteric things, &quot;What's life all about?&quot;, become more important and it's great to see that so many young people are interested in it. So, if you like, that's been one of the learning things for me is that there's a huge enthusiasm from young people. I think it's important that people know there's . . . there is a history there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>And human remains tell you about the individual in a way that other things like pots can't tell you. You know, you can tell how they walked and to a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
certain extent what they looked like, so yeah, I think that’s important.

<p>| 31 | K | And how does doing this make you feel? |
| 32 | C | Ok. |
| 33 | T | It makes me feel like I’m contributing something to the Poulton Project and the wider knowledge of man. |
| 34 | D | Excited. For my future. It’s funny because I’m building my future by digging up someone else’s past. |
| 35 | T | Very poetic! [laughter] |
| 36 | D | You damn foreigners, coming over here and using our damn language back at us! [laughter] That’s not to be on the tape! |
| 37 | K | And how have you found excavating human remains? |
| 38 | D | Slower. |
| 39 | T | I think it’s about as I thought it would be. What’s fascinating me is I’m doing alright with it, I expected [redacted] be the delicate and I’d hump wheelbarrows of stuff around, but I seem to be doing ok with the “go careful” bit. Although I do need to talk to myself severely every day, otherwise I’d be trying to go too quickly. |
| 40 | C | It’s slow, isn’t it? Slow and methodical. |
| 41 | K | I do feel a little bit guilty because [redacted] left you with the feet! [laughter] |
| 42 | T | Oh, we’ve done really well. Have you seen? |
| 43 | C | We’re nearly there. |
| 44 | K | Have you found yourselves dwelling on thoughts of mortality whilst you’re doing this? |
| 45 | C | No. |
| 46 | T | No. We’re basically very shallow people and that’s not occurred to us. |
| 47 | C | Although . . . I do wonder about the life of this person. I sometimes wish I could pop back to various ages, just for five minutes, just to experience for me the sights and the smells and the sounds and then I’d come back, because I know I wouldn’t want to stay there, but just to experience what this person experienced. I think I’d like that; I can’t do it, but if you ever find a way, let me know! |
| 48 | K | I think there’d be a big queue. |
| 49 | D | I think I have pondered it a bit. I mean, I do anyway. I don’t know if it’s because I’m excavating human remains right here, but because I do just think about that anyway, I don’t know. Because this is an interest of mine. |</p>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think this is a respectful thing to be doing?</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yeah, it kind of depends on . . . if this was our relatives here, what would we think? We were saying this last week, it's someone's relative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, it is for someone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>I wouldn't mind being dug up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Yeah, I think it would be quite cool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>If it could help in some way to find out what caused their death, apart from trauma, in as far as murder, but if there was some other reason, then yeah, why not. No problem.</td>
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## Appendix 16

### Interview with Jamie

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<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can you tell me a bit about your background and why you’ve chosen to come to Poulton?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Ok . . . I’ve graduated—this is very boring—I’ve graduated from [redacted], doing an archaeology degree. I’ve worked in [redacted] for six months on placement which is within the [redacted] department, ah . . . I really like skeletons, I’m weird like that, and yeah, I found out about this place last year because I wanted to get some experience of excavating human remains and I decided to come back because bones are cool.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>They are. Did you say you’re going to do a Masters?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Yes, I’m doing a Masters in September in human osteology and palaeopathology.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Is that at [redacted]?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Yeah, I can’t get away. I wanted to, but it’s like the best place in Europe for it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah, it’s got a very good reputation. So, in the future, are you looking at becoming an archaeologist?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>I have no idea! It would be nice! It would be very nice, but whether you get the job or not is debatable, but fingers crossed. If I can, I would. Basically.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can I ask you where you first encountered human remains?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>In [redacted], surprisingly, on my undergrad, so because we had . . . well, does Australopithecine count as human . . . ? Maybe. Well, we had those in the first year and then in second year we had bioarchaeology and part of that was human osteology and then we had a human osteology/osteoarchaeology module and obviously I worked with them when I was on placement, so yeah, at [redacted].</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So what have you been up to on the excavation and are you enjoying it? You’re not actually on the human remains are you?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Not this year, no. Last year I was on . . . I did several of the graves, well, where people are bailing now. I did a couple of juveniles and an adult, which was interesting, but ah, no, this year I’ve got a massive ditch . . . I’m on the other side of the site which is Roman and Iron Age and yeah, I am</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>enjoying it, if I could just find the bloody natural, it just keeps going.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So last year, thinking back to when you were excavating human remains, did you learn anything particularly from coming to a field school or was it all stuff that you knew how to do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Well, the actual excavation I’d never done before, but I knew, like, the bones because that was fresh from working for six months at [redacted], so I’d been working with human remains every day, so I knew all the bones and stuff, but the actual excavation was new, so that was interesting, getting to see how that’s done, like leaf trowels and bits of wood and stuff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>When you’re excavating human remains are they objects or people?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>People. You have to be respectful to them because there were people. I mean, I find them fascinating but you have to sort of treat them right and not kick them or sit on them or anything. You know, watch where your feet are going and general stuff like that.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What are your thoughts on excavating human remains?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>I think it’s good for scientific analysis and for that the fact that we can … y’know, we’ve got like known samples and known populations which we can then use to work out different . . . that’s how they work out aging methods and all that jazz. So to advance that, we have to excavate, but yeah, I think we can learn a lot from them and how people lived and what diseases and stuff they had and things like that. It’s quite interesting.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>In your opinion, what are the biggest difficulties or challenges in terms of excavating human remains?</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Clay. Clay is the biggest challenge because it’s a dick. Sorry, you know, because it’s like a boulder clay and really difficult to dig, especially when it’s dry and it turns to concrete, because it’s a dick [laughter]. I don’t think there are any challenges specifically, well, apart from not damaging the remains, but if you know how to dig then you’re not going to damage the remains, so it’s fine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you have any memorable experiences of excavating, handling or viewing human remains?</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>There’s a few examples that we’ve got at [redacted]. There’s one that’s still got like, some dried . . . it’s over a hundred years old, but only just, so it’s archaeological, but it’s still got a bit of dried . . . stuff on it, that’s a bit [pulls a face] and it’s unknown provenance as well, so that’s . . . but it came from like, I think it’s New York . . . and it's got a ballistics wound to the head, so that was interesting to handle. It’s a bit different. There’s another one and it stank to high heaven, I can’t remember where it came from, but it was the entire cervical and thoracic vertebrae fused together and the ribs. It was awesome. I had to photograph that which was amazing. I worked on—a bit more background—I worked on the project [redacted] and I did a lot of the photography and stuff for that, ’cause I was on placement there and they needed me to do it. So, I did a lot of handling and photographing for that, which was fun. I really enjoyed it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>How do you feel when you’re handling human remains?</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Well, you’ve got to make sure that you’re not disrespecting or being stupid. If you’ve got like a skull, you hold it over stuff, you don’t just wander around with it, so you have to be aware of that, but I don’t find it any different. Maybe I’m just desensitised to it, I don’t know. Maybe I’m just weird! But no, I don’t find it different.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you have any favourite or least favourite bits of the skeleton?</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Um . . . the hyoid’s quite cool, if you find it. I don’t think I have a favourite bone. I very much dislike the thorax, purely because I had to re-bag so many of them and we had to put them in—and these were very fragmentary—and we had to put in them to like vertebrae and we sometimes had to split that into cervical, thoracic and lumbar and then ribs, and we had to side fragmentary ribs, which is a bitch. Sorry, that’s very difficult!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>How do you do that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>You’ve got the . . . I can’t remember! There’s like a ridge and groove which is always on the bottom of the rib and then it’s the way it turns, and it’s thicker at one end than the other, so you have to try and line them up, but sometimes you just can’t and then you have “misc ribs” or “unsided ribs”, in fact.</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think there’s any difference between excavating human remains as part of a field school and then commercial digs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Yeah, in a field school you’ve got time to do it! In a commercial setting it’s just like “Get it up, get it gone!” Like our lecturer was telling us about a commercial dig she was on and there were six people who’d recently graduated and like six professionals and the most complete skeletons were— y’know, the ones that had all like the phalanges and everything— were by the students because they knew there should be this many phalanges and were carefully looking for them, whereas the commercial people were just “Boom, boom, done, next”, so they tend to leave bones behind more, especially like fibulas and phalanges, and like carpals and stuff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What are your thoughts on giving human remains nicknames on site?</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>People do it because they’re weird! [laughs] I’ve never given anything I’ve worked on a nickname, but, apparently I’m odd like that because I don’t name my computers, or phones, or anything, whereas as other people do. I don’t really give things nicknames, but I think actually it’s quite good because it helps people remember that these are . . . they’re not just abstract things, these were people, so it sort of humanises them in that way. And helps pass the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Would you be happy to excavate human remains that were still partially fleshy?</td>
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| 34 | J | Not gungy. Squidgy bits are a no-no, but if it’s sort of like . . . desiccated or something then that would be really interesting. Like there was a crypt, I
think it was St Mary Spital, er . . . they had a crypt there and they were all, like, they'd all been desiccated and sort of slightly mummified and it was Victorian and they all still had, like, their clothes on. Fascinating. That would be cool. But not squishy.

| 35 | K | What is it about squishy? |
| 36 | J | I just don’t like squishy, it's weird, it smells . . . it's squishy! I've done some forensics research, but I wouldn't want to do it all the time. I've seen the different stages of decomposition of the human body and I wouldn't want to deal with that. You'd be stinking of it for weeks. |
| 37 | K | Do you ever feel . . . is there a different in excavating adults and children for you? Do you have a different response? |
| 38 | J | It’s just different things you look for, really. If you’ve got adults then you look for the pathologies and stuff like that, whereas if you’ve got children then you can see, then you can age them a lot better because of the epiphyses, but apart from what you look for, then no. Maybe I’m just a heartless bastard! [laughs] |
| 39 | K | Has the experience of excavating the remains of the dead affected how you perceive death? |
| 40 | J | No . . . I don’t think so! |
| 41 | K | Would you be happy to be dug up by an archaeologist in the future? |
| 42 | J | Yeah, I want to be buried in a really funny position, just to fuck with them! I think that’s one thing that you don’t get anywhere else, is that people will think about how they want to be buried. Like archaeologists especially are like “I want to be buried like this!” Maybe just, like, vertically downwards, swearing at the roof. It would be brilliant! They’re going to have to have a separate category for archaeologists, like “20th century archaeologists burial”, just because we'll completely fuck with the norm. |
| 43 | K | Do you want to be buried then or do want to be cremated? |
| 44 | J | I used to want to be cremated, but . . . since actually working with human remains, I’d actually prefer to be buried. |
| 45 | K | In a fantastic way? |
| 46 | J | In a completely fucked-up way! Sorry, in a very abnormal . . . [laughs] In an anomalous fashion! |
| 47 | K | Do you have any other thoughts on working with human remains? |
| 48 | J | Everyone should do it, it’s awesome! But not everyone should do it, because I want a job in it! |
## Appendix 17

### Interview with Amy and Lauren

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<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So . . . can you both tell me a bit about yourselves? Why are you here?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I just completed my undergraduate degree in [redacted] and . . . partly in archaeology. I got a minor in archaeology and I kind of regretted near that near the end and wished it had been a major, but there's not very much archaeology in [redacted], so I chose not to do a major, just in case, to kind of like cover my back, but I was thinking that I wanted to go and do my Masters in archaeology, so I wanted to do some fieldwork before I, um, before I actually committed to doing that, because it's not required to do any fieldwork in [redacted] to get your degree, even if it's your major, you don't have to do any, because there's just not very much of it around, so you can't really expect people to . . . and what there is, there's a lot of ethical questions about, y'know, the indigenous people . . . you can't do a lot of their archaeology. As soon as you find a site that's theirs, you have to turn it over and rebury it and you're not allowed to study it or anything, so I wanted to come somewhere where we could actually, like, study it . . . and not be upsetting anyone or treading on anyone's feet or anything like that, so that's why I chose England and partly also because I already speak the language. So I kind of wanted to do this as soon as after graduation as possible, so I could figure out what I want to do with my future, so that's why I'm here.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I’ve just finished by bachelors in history and archaeology and I’ve been very interested in human bones, human osteology, so I wanted to come here and . . . y’know, I’ve dug before and I’ve done an internship recording skeletons, so I’ve kind of done both, but I’ve not dug up skeletons, so I thought if I . . . because I’m interested in doing a Masters in human osteology, so if I did that it would be nice to kind of dig skeletons, to see what the differences are.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So you both want to do Masters in human osteology?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I think so. I’m thinking either human osteology or zoo arch, because that’s kind of what I specialised in back home, but I kind of need to get a bit of this aspect in and because I thought bones were cool.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So how have you found the excavation? Is it fun?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Yeah. Everyone’s been really nice and yeah, it’s been really interesting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What’s been your favourite bit? Is there anything that stands out for you particularly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>All the laughter! [laughter]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>My favourite bit was the two juveniles that we dug up over there. I don’t know . . . it was also the creepiest part and the most . . . I think it was the most realistic part, but it was also my favourite for some reason, maybe because . . . like some of the things you dig up it’s hard to associate that that was actually human, but those seemed really real to me, maybe because they were so complete and everything, I don’t know. So that was probably my favourite part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Mine was probably either the first skeleton I was digging over there or then one . . . it’s quite different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What do you think you’ve learned about excavating human remains from coming here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I think the techniques and things because I’ve dig before, but like the wooden tools and things like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Mostly technique and stuff for me too. Like I dealt with a lot of bones, human bones, in the labs and stuff before, but I’ve never actually had the chance to actually excavate anything and it’s quite a different experience. It’s a lot . . . I don’t know . . . like I thought I would be a lot better . . . not better with it . . . like I had no problems with it when I was in the lab, I’d just . . . but there’s been a couple of times when I’ve been like “Oh, this is really kind of upsetting” in a way, which I wasn’t expecting because I’d been so fine with it when it was in the lab, maybe it’s the just different setting or whatever, so I guess I learned that aspect of it as well, maybe they became more human or something . . . I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you find there’s a difference between excavating adults and juveniles and neonates . . .?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Yeah . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I don’t find much of a difference, I think I am just kind of . . . desensitised, I don’t know [laughs]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Maybe give me a couple more years and I’ll be desensitised and fine. Already I’ve noticed that it’s less and less . . . like the first couple of weeks it was “Oh, ok . . . this is, you know, an actual person” and now I’m like “Oh, another body”, you know, whatever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>When people are, like, laughing and joking around them whilst they’re excavating, do you find that problematic or is it fine?</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I’m fine with it, I think. I feel like the great thing about being here is that everyone’s been so respectful. It’s not like they’re laughing and joking around and throwing bones at each other and disturbing the people. I don’t think you have to be like solemn and whatever, the whole time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I mean I’ve heard stories about people like putting hats on skulls and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>jamming a cigarette in their mouth and stuff like that and I’m just like, no, that’s crossing the line, but if you’re having a chat whilst digging, that’s not bad.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I’d like to think that if it was me and these people were excavating me, I wouldn’t be upset about what’s going on here. Y’know, I wouldn’t want, like, you know …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>When you’re excavating human remains, is it a person, an object or some kind of mix of the two?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>A mix of the two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>It switches back and forth. I feel like most of the time, it’s kind of an object, a thing that you’re like working on and then every once in a while, like I said, there’s this moment where you’re like “Oh, there’s a hand, whoa, this is a person!” kind of thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>No, you do when you’re excavating kind of think about “Oh, I wonder what their life was like” and stuff like that, but at other times it’s just like “Oh, I just need to work this”, so it kind of switches.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you have a favourite bit of the skeleton?</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Yes, the hyoid!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Really?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>That’s very specific! I like the feet, but my favourite bone is the hyoid!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And why is that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>It’s the only bone in the body that doesn’t articulate with any other bone, I just like the fact that it’s there . . . chilling! Like “Alright guys, I’ll just sit over here!” [laughter] I like the feet as well, I think feet are interesting, how the bones all fit together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Are there any bits you don’t like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Teeth. I hate teeth. I don’t want to touch the teeth. They’re just so gross; I don’t know [laughter].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Is that because they still look recognisable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Maybe partly, I’m not like a huge teeth person, like I could never be a dentist or anything anyways, even when they’re in like a normal living person, it’s just kind of “Ew”, but yeah, I think, it’s just strange because they look real and some of them look kind of nasty and they’ve got cavities and stuff in there and it’s like “Eurghhh”. Gross. I will deal with it if I have to, I just don’t really want to. It’s gross. It makes no sense!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think excavating human remains is important? And if so why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>This is where we shoot down our career choice!</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>It does obviously help to learn about previous settlements and people and things, but is that really integral to us . . . living in today’s society? I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I feel kind of the same way. It’s great because we can learn about these people and the way they lived and stuff but . . . it’s not necessary. Like, I’m really fascinated by it, so I wanna learn about it but I don’t know if that’s helping our society to be a better society or anything like that. I’m not sure, maybe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>In that case, do you think it’s an ethical thing to do to excavate human remains?</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Well, obviously, it’s not every single body that you come across. There are rules and you have to apply for the licences and things and . . . once you’ve finished the testing and the research, you do bury them, so I guess . . . you know, it’s not just like “Ooh, a body, let’s dig it up, ooooh!” . . . there are these different things in place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I guess I feel that ethically it’s fine to . . . I don’t know . . . maybe I’m just a little strange but I feel, like I said, it’s not like we’re being really disrespectful to the skeletons or anything, so even if they did know what we’re doing, it’s not like we’re . . . I don’t know, defiling them or anything. I’m part of the mind-set that’s just like ”they’re dead” and that’s their shell, it doesn’t . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I’m kind of . . . I agree, but at the same time, if like their religious views were, oh, they need to be buried . . . in order for the afterlife that should be respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>But the problem is, you just don’t know . . . what a person, individually believed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>A tricky one . . . what do you think are the biggest difficulties in terms of excavating human remains?</td>
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<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I feel like my biggest difficulty is that I don’t want to damage it any further and a lot of them are kind of in, not the greatest condition, like the baby right now, I feel like I’m going to break more of the bones and for me, that’s kind of upsetting [laughs]</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>You’re kind of wanting to go slowly so you don’t damage anything, but that’s . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I don’t want to be destructive, so I find that’s the biggest challenge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Yeah, but then obviously, the longer you take, the longer it’s left kind of open, so it can be damaged by the weather and things, so . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Did you find it . . . odd coming here, seeing the jumbles of bone?</td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Yeah, yeah! And like walking over, there’s bits of bone sticking out of the path . . . I wasn’t expecting that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Yeah, the same actually. And I wasn’t expecting, I don’t know, I don’t</td>
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think I was expecting them to throw us in to it so quickly, I mean, I’m glad they did, but you got on the site and it was my first day and like “Here’s a skull, go for it!” [laughter] I was like “It’ll take a while!” I mean, she wasn’t like literally, “Go for it” with no supervision or anything. They definitely walked us through it, step-by-step and everything. It’s great having the hands-on experience, I think.

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<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>How does excavating human remains make you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Happy …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Yeah, that sounds kind of weird if you say happy . . . [laughter]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>It’s exciting!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I don’t know, I find it really interesting . . . I do enjoy it because it’s interesting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What do you think about giving nicknames to human remains?</td>
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<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I think as long as it’s not meant in a disrespectful way, then . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Yeah, I’m kind of indifferent to it. It doesn’t like . . . if you do it, that’s fine. If you don’t, that’s fine too. I don’t think it’s bad or anything.</td>
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<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think some human remains are easier to excavate than others? That can be on like a practical level, or . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Yeah, the juveniles and like this neonate is quite difficult because they’re so fragile and . . . adult ones tend to be a bit more intact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Yeah, larger bones too are less fiddly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>They’re also easier to recognise, if they’re not like unfused and things . . . that’s quite difficult. Emotionally, as I said, I’m just heartless . . . [laughter]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Actually, I find the adults easier for some reason. The kids I found a little weird, but maybe then again, maybe I’ll be fine now. It was just kinda like the first time and I was like “Oh, they’re so tiny, they’re so little, they didn’t get to live their life”, kind of thing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you have any young children in your family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I have a younger brother, but not . . . not, not really.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>That’s just blown that theory out the window!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I’m just emotional!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Who cares?! I don’t! [laughs]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I didn’t really care either way until my sister had a baby and because I remember what he looked like when he was really tiny, now I look at little children and think that’s a shame. Has the experience of excavating human remains affected how you perceive death in any way?</td>
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<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I don’t think so. I wrote my dissertation on burials, so I’ve read a lot of books on death and stuff, so I don’t think this has really changed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I don’t think it’s changed too much for me either, I don’t know, I’ve not really thought about it since I started.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>That’s ok! Would you be happy to be excavated by an archaeologist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Oh, yeah! Totally! I’d wanna be buried with all this crazy stuff just to confuse them, like here’s an elephant tusk next to me and here’s some jewellery and they’re going to be like “Wow, who is this person?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>In a spring-loaded coffin, so that when they open it, you jump out! [laughter]</td>
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<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Like I’ve got to be in the right soil, ’cause I’ve got to be found!</td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>This needs careful planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Next 20 years . . . working it out!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Dig here! [laughter]</td>
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## Appendix 18

### Interview with Emily

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<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can you tell me a bit about yourself?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>[Redacted] I am currently a PhD student in funerary archaeology and osteology at [redacted], which I also did a masters in, which was on mass graves and er, human rights investigations and I did an undergraduate degree which was in archaeology and biological anthropology, but was under anthropology, and I looked at the politics and ethics of displaying human remains and associated mortuary artefacts in museums. So I've always been interested in the ethical side of things, but also the legal framework that people work within, that's sort of what I find interesting, but now I'm researching methodology and how you can actually research these things when you're working within those frameworks.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And you have experience of excavating human remains yourself?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>I do. I started working on human remains in the field, so actually excavating them when I was still an undergraduete. I had the opportunity to go on a field school that was . . . involved human remains and then I have a small amount of experience of excavating human remains in commercial archaeology, but most of my experience comes from research excavations.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Is there a lot of opportunity to excavate human remains in [redacted]?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>No. It’s kind of the same as it is here in the UK. It was a site that was a 1930s cemetery, a 20th century cemetery and it was a community archaeology project. The community knew that there was a cemetery located on some of their property that now was a park and trail area and they wanted to be able to mark out where the cemetery boundaries were so they could flag it up to people who were using the space to say “This is where the cemetery is”. So the university took the project on because the group couldn’t pay for commercial people to come in, so . . . er, we used it as a research opportunity in addition to the community’s desires, what they wanted to find out, so we were testing different types of ground-penetrating radar and geo-phys instruments to identify grave cuts and then finding the boundaries of the cemetery, so we actually excavated very few graves and in most of those, most of the human remains had completely decomposed, including the bones as well.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Is there a difference for you between excavating human remains at a field school and in a commercial setting?</td>
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**8**  | E  | Absolutely there is! [laughs] The biggest difference is time. At the field school you have [redacted] you just have zero time pressure. Literally zero time pressure [redacted]. Whereas on a commercial site, as soon as a cut’s identified, it’s “excavate, expose, record, lift, out” and you would probably be aiming to do more than one in a day, as opposed to most of one in a week [laughs]. I think obviously the difference is that it’s nice, on some field schools there is slightly more time pressure because the ones I worked on as a student, everything had to be lifted before the end of the day if it was exposed. If it was towards the end of the day then we wouldn’t expose anything and wait until the next morning and we had students working sort of quicker, but then we had the supervisors helping to excavate them, whereas here it’s a really good opportunity for students to actually not feel the pressure and learn at their own pace, which is good, but perhaps not realistic.

**9**  | K  | [Redacted]

**10**  | E  | [Redacted]

**11**  | K  | Not all osteoarchaeologists have experience of excavating human remains themselves; do you think they need to?

**12**  | E  | I think it depends . . . I think there’s probably a difference between . . . I call myself an osteoarchaeologist, but I know people who refer to themselves just as osteologists because they only do the bones, the sort of research, post-excavation. Most of them, many of them will have degrees in archaeology, some may or may not have done any field experience, so they know how to read archaeological reports which I probably think is the key thing, but I think it certainly helps to understand what you’re researching when you can see things. It can also help when you’re reading reports, it’s really easy to get frustrated over what’s not in reports, but the reality on site sometimes is that it’s just not possible to include that information [redacted].

**13**  | K  | What drew you towards osteoarchaeology?

**14**  | E  | I was always interested, even when I was in school before I [indecipherable] and went to university. I always liked history and stuff, but I really liked funerary practices. I really liked to know what other people did in different cultures with their dead and read lots of books on mummies and, um, lots of *National Geographic*, the *National Geographic* issue on Pompeii and stuff like that. I was always just really interested. I actually went to university to study history, that’s what I thought I was going to do, but the [redacted] system’s a bit different, so your first year is quite general before you declare your major and in my first year I took a course in anthropology and I really liked it and I went “Ooh, I think this is what I want to do actually” and so I transferred universities to a university where they offered anthropology degrees. I was doing lots of the funerary stuff and I was interested in archaeology because I liked the history, but I wanted to be actually, sort of like hands-on with history, as opposed to just reading other people’s interpretations. I wanted to look at the actual data of it and I thought, “Well, if I’m interested in funerary stuff and the cultural side of things, it would probably be helpful if I learnt about the bones and that, because it would probably help me to understand the reports and all the different interpretations in textbooks.
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<td>15</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What is important about the archaeological investigation of human remains for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>I think what is important is the ability to provide information on things we either have no information on or information may be skewed or misunderstood. Um, I really don’t like any of the clichés of “We’re giving a voice to those who can no longer speak” or “archaeology is democratic” or any of that stuff, I think it’s just . . . it’s a very unique opportunity to gain information because people for whatever reason, 10,000 years ago, 5000 years, 500 years go decided that they didn’t want to write that stuff down because they didn’t think it was important [laughs] and now we’re really curious about it. So I think that knowledge for knowledge’s sake is really useful, but I think for myself, whenever I do research, any project that I’ve worked on has to have some form of results that will be applicable to people that are currently alive or will be alive in the future and will be useful for them. I don’t begrudge other people researching knowledge for knowledge’s sake, because I think that’s very interesting and completely worthwhile, but when there’s so much data already out there and so much material that hasn’t yet been studied, I don’t see the reason to keep finding more until we’ve worked on the stuff that’s already out there. So if we are sort of forging ahead with new research projects, I think they should be useful for more than just knowledge for knowledge’s sake.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>There is an argument that academic excavations or research excavations involving human remains are less ethically appropriate, shall we say, than commercial excavations which are perhaps seen as rescuing human remains from harm’s way. Where would you stand on that?</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| 18 | E | I think . . . well, ethical issues are always a grey area and it depends on who you ask, because some people wouldn’t want commercial excavations to go ahead, they would just say “Don’t build your building there!” [laughs] and I can see people’s point of view, but I think . . . [redacted] I also think with research excavations, I don’t know of any academics who have said “Oh, I just want to go and dig up this cemetery site, for the heck of it!” There is usually a reason why it is being done, whether it’s improving methodology which will help future excavations … a lot of other universities are training forensic anthropologists who will then go and work in areas where they are excavating mass graves and human rights investigations. I think research excavations are probably a place for people who work in commercial archaeology to come on to a research excavation and do things at a slower pace before they actually excavate human remains, because a lot of people who work in commercial archaeology are not specialists and … they might benefit from being trained in a more academic way, even though they won’t be able to apply it that strictly when they’re actually on site, it might help them to do things and gather more information from commercial sites as well. I think certainly there are cases against research excavation of human remains, but I think provided the material is being used and being researched and is being done ethically and the human remains are being handled properly, then I think I’m ok with it. It does of course depend on the context of the site, because I’ve worked on sites in [redacted] [indecipherable] which were research excavations but they were handled very differently because of the ethical considerations of the living
community who wanted the excavations to take place, because they wanted to gain information as well, um … but they were done very differently to the way they would be done here [redacted] and I think keeping the context of the people you’re excavating is also very important and medieval people, as far as we know, don’t have a problem with being disturbed post-deposition.

That’s very good! And have all the students been comfortable excavating human remains? I mean, I assume they would be?

Most of them have because they’ve specifically come to work with human remains, we’ve had other students on site who are not working on this trench, they’re working on other trenches, who . . . have been interested, but they’ve openly spoken about the fact that they’re not quite sure how they feel about it and another student really didn’t like working with either human or animal remains, they just preferred to stick with the ceramics and other things like that, but most of the students who work on this trench, even though they’re comfortable with it and very interested, most of them have a particular moment or . . . a day where they sort of realise that the skeleton they are working on is an individual, so . . . although when they’re excavating they might be chatting about TV or . . . anything else non-archaeological related, there is usually a point in time where students start talking about it and how they feel about it and sometimes people say they feel a bit weird or . . . y’know, curious about the person and stuff like that.

Have you had any memorable experiences of excavating or handling human remains . . . anything that sticks out for you?

I think, usually the thing for me and I know this is going to sound weird because it’s actually not skeletons at all, but doing my PhD research, [redacted] because I can see my model population and it’s broken down into cohorts, so there’s groups of individuals and I can watch it progress through time, that generation. I become somewhat attached to those numbers, even though they don’t, they’re not real, they represent real individuals because they’re based on historical data, but to see an entire population go through all of these generations and watch the cohorts get smaller and smaller and smaller, you start to wonder, did this number make it through all the way or are they one of the ones that have died off in the middle? And then, for me, even though I’m looking at the model, it’s because I’m relating it to a historic population, whether or not it’s a real historic population or not, but I think for me, it’s the long picture, when I look at individual skeletons, when I’m excavating them, immediately I might wonder a bit about the person, but for me, it’s the
whole thing, because I’m interested in the relationships between individuals and I tend to think, well, this is the person who’s buried, but I think more about the people who buried them. Y’know, what did they go through? Was their grief and mourning the same as ours? People always say that in the medieval period, people didn’t really love their kids until they were five [laughs] because they thought they might die anyways and . . . I can’t bring myself to see that point of view, even though you’re surrounded by death and people do die more often and are more likely to die and you’re aware of that, I think the anguish of losing a family member must have been just as significant as it still is today, so that’s where I find myself thinking more about, when I see skeletons, the people who are not that individual that I think about.

29  K  Are human remains, for you, objects or people?

30  E  They’re probably a mixture of both. I think in-situ, in an excavation, they’re an individual, in the lab, when they’re laid out and I’m doing an assessment, they’re an individual but when I’m doing the actual assessment and applying a method to a specific part of that individual, like applying an ageing method to the pelvis or something, it then becomes an object because I’m looking at it and doing the assessment because I’m looking for specific features and I’m not thinking about it as this particular individual’s pelvis, but rather a pelvis and how does it appear compared to other ones and then when I put everything together at the end, it becomes an individual again, I think.

31  K  What do you think are the biggest challenges or difficulties in terms of excavating and studying human remains?

32  E  [Redacted] Then the third difficulty and it’s not even necessarily a difficulty, it’s just curiosity about what’s going on, especially because lots of things are barriered and that makes people more curious because they want to know what’s behind the barrier and you get into conversations with people who are interested and other people who think it’s unethical, so you have to balance all of that as well.

33  K  [Redacted]

34  E  [Redacted]

35  K  Going back to what you said about the public, where do you stand on the issue of screening excavations from public view?

36  E  I think . . . I don’t have any problem with the public seeing an excavation, um, although—I’ll put in a caveat—that depends on the context of the excavation, it depends on the context of the individuals, um, I would think that if it’s a more recent burial, I would think that the Church of England would probably not want members of the public to view it, whereas if it was something more historical, like the site that we’re working on, I think there’s probably less of an issue because of the context of the period in which these people lived and understood their remains, how they would have been handled after their deaths. Um . . . if the staff are available to discuss with the public what is happening and explain and take the time to correct any misunderstandings, answer questions about what’s going to happen to the skeletons, why it’s being done, then I think it’s fine to have members of the public either able to
see from beyond, if there’s no screen, or actually visit sites. If that’s not available, then I think it becomes problematic because people make assumptions and that can be very dangerous if people don’t understand why it’s being done or have a misunderstanding about what’s going to happen, I think that can be very damaging not only to the profession but also the public’s perception of how we as a society treat human remains that aren’t modern, so I think there has to be that balancing.

For most commercial sites they probably haven’t got the staff to do that and they probably won’t pay for a dedicated staff member to stand by a fence all day and talk to members of the public as they go by, but on a research site, I think it should almost be required that your site is open to the public if people are interested in coming and it’s not going to interfere with your excavations, you should be able to have tours or an open day or something because if you’re doing all this archaeology and you’re learning this information, it is of no use if people are not aware of it. We might be the people excavating this site, but it is not ours. The information does not belong to us.

| 37 | K | What do you make of media coverage of stories that involve archaeology and human remains in particular? |
| 38 | E | I am probably one of the more outspoken individuals regarding how the media treats stories, especially to do with human remains because I particularly dislike sensationalist news stories and sensationalist headlines, sometimes the articles can be very well written, but a sensationalist headline is what people... it’s what sticks in their mind. Um, I think, I understand why the media do it and I understand they are not specialists, but I think part of a journalist’s job is to accurately portray an occupation and its intentions, which is not always done properly [redacted] One of the things I particularly dislike is when the media only pays attention to what is unusual or strange or high status or of note for whatever reason, as opposed to the normal, everyday archaeology. People say that it’s because it’s not as interesting, people aren’t as engaged by it, but I think part of our job is to engage with people to make them understand why we are so interested in the normal and the everyday and why it is just as interesting, just as fascinating, just as valid a research area as a king, a gold brooch, y’know? Um... whether or not that will ever happen, probably not, but I would say that from my professional point of view, I will never stop trying to convince people that it’s correct and I think most... I think there’s... I am... I have been slightly more convinced in recent months that... that sort of media attention can be used as a gateway to encourage people to learn more information and so it does have its place, but I think we have to be careful about how we use it and that we’re not just using it to sell stories. |
| 39 | K | What are your thoughts on archaeology being used to encourage conversations about death and dying now? |
| 40 | E | I think it’s useful, but not for everybody. I think it’s probably more useful... less probably for students who are on a field school or professional archaeologists because they are doing this either because it’s a job or because they’re interested in the research... many will be more keyed up on issues because from a personal interest point of view, that’s a topic they’re interested in, but I think it becomes useful, not for everybody, but for someone who might come on a site tour or might visit a museum, it
might be the first time that they encounter a dead body, albeit skeletonised and might make them reflect more on their own mortality, y’know and what might happen to them after they die and how they would want their body to be treated. I think if people were particularly interested in having those discussions you could certainly use archaeology as a tool to do so, but whether or not that’s what it naturally brings up for people, I’m not sure. I mean you could certainly use it to start conversations if you wanted, but I’m not sure that’s where everybody goes to when they think of it.

And what do you think about the explosion of deathy-interests on the internet? Particularly on Twitter, there is a group of people who tweet a lot about it and they are mostly women, what do you think about that?

I think it’s very interesting. I think there’s a very clear dichotomy of people who are interested in death-related subjects online. There are very clear . . . individuals . . . there are individuals who are very clearly approaching from an academic point of view, sometimes a personal point of view and are aiming to educate individuals, either on a particular topic or a particular time period, research going on in the area and then I think there are other individuals who are just as interested and possibly, almost probably, have an academic background, but they post information that is slightly more sensationalist or more attention . . . it grabs your attention quicker and it might lead to something more informative, but I think it is probably more likely not aimed at the academic body, but is aimed at individuals who might be interested in death-related subjects for whatever reason. But I also think by its nature it attracts individuals who are not interested in the related information, they’re just interested in “Ooh, that’s a bit weird, that’s a bit macabre, ooh that’s a bit creepy, but it’s very interesting”, but might not necessarily follow it up any further. I’m not sure how visible anything we do is beyond our own circle, I’m not sure if people on the internet are all just talking to themselves. I have conversations with people on the internet, both supportive of the stuff that they’re doing, but I’ve also been known to contact individuals to say “I am curious as to your position on this particular piece that you have posted”, y’know? “Have you ever considered this?” and sometimes they write back and say “I think you’re right and maybe I should take this down” and other times they say “I get this question a lot and this is my point of view and this is why I’ve posted it”, which I may not agree with them, but I tend not to sit back and go “Oh, this is a bit dodgy”, I tend to get in touch with people and say “Have you thought about the way this looks to other people?” and they may have already thought about it and that’s fine, that’s their . . . the bigger issue is, what really bothers me, is providing titbits of information and often it comes in image form without clear direction as to how to gain more information, so either a credit for that image or a source, whether it comes from a website that has an article on it, but just posting an image without much detailed explanation I think is more problematic because that is certainly just saying “Look at this because it’s neat to look at”, not “Look at this and then learn more about this and its context”.

Have you ever experienced a particularly strong emotional response whilst excavating or handling human remains?

I don’t think I have, actually. I am, as an individual, probably more mindful of death and mortality than many other people and therefore I
think the fact that I am constantly aware of it means that I am already at a level of . . . emotional relationship to whatever it is I’m working on. Um, but, I mean I’ve had colleagues . . . sometimes they’ve had to leave what they’re working on because it’s suddenly become too much for them, particularly individuals working with juvenile remains or neonate remains, but I’ve never experienced anything like that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>45</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Has working with the remains of the dead affected how you perceive death?</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 46 | E | I think before I started working in osteoarchaeology I was already bereaved. My brother died when I was in high school, shortly after the death of my closest friend in high school, so even before I went to university to study the subject— I mean I was already interested in this obviously, like funerary practices and stuff in school—but before I went to university and decided that this is what I want to do, I was already keyed up on mourning and . . . I was anthropologising [laughs] what . . . how my family members were experiencing things differently and thinking about the subject from a personal point of view, um, if anything, it’s made me not think less about it . . . it’s made it more normal, it’s normalised it, it’s made it less of a personal thing and made it more of a this happens to everybody through all of time, so therefore my situation is nothing to dwell on because it happens to everybody else, so yeah. Possibly the opposite effect!
## Appendix 19

### Interview with Heather and Christopher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So you can both tell me a little bit about yourselves, what you do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I’m a student, still at high school. I’m in sixth form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What are you studying?</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Well, next year I’ll be studying maths, physics and chemistry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And what about you?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Um, I’m at [redacted] and I’m doing an undergraduate degree in archaeology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So why have you come to Poulton?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>To get experience in archaeology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Was it human remains you were specifically interested in?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Just general experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>To complete the fieldwork requirement for my degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And what is the fieldwork requirement for your degree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>I have to do four weeks of fieldwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Ok . . . and you get to pick that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Were you interested in human remains specifically then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Yeah. Yeah. I’m doing a lot of modules related to them next year, so . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And do you both want to become archaeologists?</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Yep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Excellent stuff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Shortest answer ever!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you want to specialise in anything in particular?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Not too sure yet. I might do, but I haven’t decided yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Possibly osteoarchaeology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Ok . . . and what is it about osteoarchaeology that interests you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I don’t know . . . I just like it in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So what have you been up to on this excavation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Digging up the most bizarre skeletons, ever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Two disarticulated skulls, one adult skeleton, this skeleton, lifting two skeletons which were here and mattocking what must have been a tonne of dirt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[laughter] Is it what you expected or is it different?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>More mattocking than I expected, but apart from that, pretty much the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[laughter] What’s been your favourite bit so far?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>That skeleton over there, with the feet and the head in a really random place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah, that was a bit odd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>The adult skeleton that I was excavating before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And why was that your favourite?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Because compared to two disarticulated skulls, it’s pretty interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Ok! So what are your thoughts on excavating human remains? Is it an important thing to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>It’s a fairly important thing to do; if you’re studying people in the past then their skeleton is probably quite crucial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>If you need the evidence, then the skeleton is likely to hold quite a lot of evidence for certain parts of history, like if you knew it was a war one, if you dig up a skeleton and find that actually no skeleton has been found with any war injuries then you know that that war was a lie. It never happened or nobody died from it, which would be miracle, so it helps with making sure that what people die in history actually happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Yeah, “and by the way, the whole of British history is completely wrong!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
44 K  What do you think are the biggest difficulties or challenges in terms of excavating human remains? That can be practical or . . .

45 C  Washing them. They're so brittle that when you wash them, they just fall apart.

46 K  So it's very delicate work then?

47 C  Yes, very. Very, very delicate work.

48 H  The whole “respect” thing, because different people have different ideas on how you should be respectful and different ethics.

49 K  Do you think this is a respectful thing to be doing?

50 C  I think this is respectful. We're treating them with respect and we're making sure that the whole skeleton remains, y'know, together, so that their beliefs are still sort of . . . in one piece and not being [indecipherable] in any way. And then if you find something extraordinary, y'know, like they said the two children skeletons they found holding hands and looking at each other, they're being kept together and will be reburied together, so they are being respectful.

51 K  Yeah. Is this the first time you've excavated human remains?

52 C  First time that I've ever been on an archaeological dig . . . [redacted].

53 H  [Redacted]

54 C  [Redacted]

55 K  [Redacted]

56 H  [Redacted]

57 K  So this is your first archaeological dig? That's impressive! You're doing very well.

58 H  I came here last year, so …

59 K  Do you think you've improved in that time?

60 C  Yeah, it's difficult to . . . you can never compliment yourself, can you? “Yeah, I'm pretty . . . I'm absolutely fantastic!”

61 K  Are there any moments on this excavation that will stay with you, anything particularly memorable . . . ?

62 H  [Redacted]

63 K  [Redacted]

64 C  [Redacted]
<p>| | | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted] How does excavating human remains make you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Oh, god!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Does it make you feel sad? Does it make you feel happy? [laughter]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>When excavating human skeletons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yes. Are you thinking about anything or are you just concentrating on the . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Partially concentrating on, like, removing this massive rock for instance, but also thinking about stuff in general, anything . . . like today, exam results and what I’m going to do in the future . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Congratulations . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Thank you! And other stuff in general, depends on what I’ve been thinking about before I get here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Have you got any particularly favourite bits of the skeleton? Some people do . . . some people have bits they really loathe to excavate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Ribs. I loathe excavating ribs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I like finding ear bones. I’ve only found one, which compared to what some other people have found, is actually quite good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Is that because they’re so small?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>They’re so small and it’s the fact that, I didn’t even know, I saw a piece of bone just fall out the skull and picked it up and “Oh, it’s an ear bone!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>It’s the challenge then?</td>
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<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah. Considering the most that’s been found on this site is three by [redacted].</td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Oh right, the benchmark has been set high.</td>
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<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Only two more to go to be joint!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What do you think about naming skeletons? Do you think that’s a nice thing to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Well, when you name a skeleton, you sort of get more attached to it and so you’re less likely to sort of, stand on it or accidentally drop or break a bone, so it’s a nice thing to do, but you have to remember that it already has a . . . it would have had a name when it was buried and a family who liked it and named it, so although you might name it something, its real name could be something completely different.</td>
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<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah, I agree with that.</td>
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<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>But it does help with respecting the skeleton, as long as it’s not a disrespectful name. If you respect the skeleton enough to give it a name, you’re not exactly going to pick up its skull and throw it at someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah. Good. Do you think some skeletons are easier to excavate than others? Like if you were working on the neonate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, it depends on the soil composition. The first things I excavated were two disarticulated skulls both of which were completely surrounded by clay and that’s quite hard to get through, whereas this soil . . . most of it’s quite easy to get through, you can just scrape at it and it’ll come away, whereas the clay . . . you actually had to dig in and lift it because it’s just so solid, which I think is pretty much what was happening with the neonate, with so much clay there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Ok. Has the experience of excavating the dead affected the way you personally perceive death in any way? Have you found yourself dwelling on deathly thoughts? [laughter]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Not really.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Not particularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Not particularly. At one point I did think would I prefer to be buried or cremated, but then I thought “I don’t have to decide yet!” so why decide? [laughter] That’s pretty much the extent of it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Would you be happy to be excavated by an archaeologist in the future?</td>
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<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>As long as they don’t drop my skull or break any of my bones, then yeah, that would be fine!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>I wouldn’t know, so yeah! Anything to help science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Is this a person, an object or a mix of the two?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>It’s a mix of the two because it was a person, but now it’s kind of . . . it’s a bit blurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah. Do you have any other thoughts on excavating human remains? Anything to do with skeletons that you’re dying to get off your chest that you’d love the world to know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>They’re extremely bony [laughter]</td>
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<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Some of them get really, really brittle when they’re, sort of, in the ground because of the pressure of it or because of injuries when they, sort of, died. So it is quite difficult to keep all the bones in 100 per cent condition because the chances are, by the time you get to them, they’ve already been broken by the pressure or been completely and utterly virtually completely destroyed by the soil.</td>
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## Appendix 20

### Interview with Craig

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<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can you tell me a bit about your background, you involvement in archaeology, etc.?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I studied archaeology and ancient history and I worked full-time as an archaeologist after I graduated and then due to the lack of pecuniary remuneration [redacted] and er, I kind of . . . I do a couple of digs every year, just because I love it. My last one was with [redacted], got back in . . . beginning of October and that was in . . . down in Newport, south-west Wales, investigating the origins of the bluestones at Stonehenge.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Very interesting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Tasty stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Kinda. I’ve been a supervisor on all his digs since about 2003, because I’m really good with a shovel and I can drive a mini-bus. To be honest, having a mini-bus license gets you more work than anything else in archaeology, yeah. It’s worth it, trust me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And what drew you towards archaeology?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I’ve always been fascinated with, erm, not so much history, I’ve always loved history, but it’s the ancient history that’s really, er . . . kind of cool to me and [redacted] spending my early years looking at vast quantities of soil, [redacted] I found a medieval horseshoe when I was about six and um, I’ve just always been fascinated by it and I got really fed up, in about 1999, I think, because I was doing some ridiculous hours [redacted] and I thought, “Sod this for a lark, I’ll go and do something really interesting”, so I went to university as a mature student, but unfortunately, I qualified in the only employment field that pays less than [redacted]. Classic career move; just went backwards. Got myself a degree and it was worth half as much.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Any regrets?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>None. Some of my best experiences have been in and around archaeology [redacted].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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Yes, quite possibly. I had a bit of an, um, I tried to get archaeology unionised, because I went to see the UCAPS union people and they were really interested in having archaeologists join them, really interested, they thought it would be brilliant and they guarantee a minimum wage which is quite considerably more than archaeologists are on. If you have a degree, it costs £8 a month to join them and they do interest-free loans of £2000 a year for people and they make sure you have all the right facilities and I thought this is a winner, this is a winner. So I went around kind of surreptitiously, talking to people and some people were interested. There’s a union that keeps trying to get archaeologists to join it and I’ve never bothered joining because it’s a civil service union, it has nothing to do with our trade at all and they don’t have any real power or use and um, they were just starting to get people interested as well, but I kept telling people about the benefits of this union and um, the apathy I encountered, "Oh, it won’t change anything, what’s the point?" You’ve got to help yourselves, you’ve got to, and word kind of got through to certain people within the company who were higher than me in position that I was committing sort of political rebellion within the ranks and I didn’t work for them again. I never considered myself a political activist. Why shouldn’t a graduate be paid £23,000 a year starting wage? It wouldn’t affect archaeology in the slightest because the money would go on the end. Everybody would have to pay that bit extra and everybody’s bids would go up that bit extra, so it would still be a level playing field, they’d just be forced to pay the staff a living wage. But anyway, that’s enough of me and my politics!

Yes. I first encountered them at the Cuckoo Stone at Durrington, near Woodhenge I think, yeah, near Woodhenge and that would be about 2002, something like that and that was a three-year-old child and then I

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<th>C</th>
<th>Yes, quite possibly. I had a bit of an, um, I tried to get archaeology unionised, because I went to see the UCAPS union people and they were really interested in having archaeologists join them, really interested, they thought it would be brilliant and they guarantee a minimum wage which is quite considerably more than archaeologists are on. If you have a degree, it costs £8 a month to join them and they do interest-free loans of £2000 a year for people and they make sure you have all the right facilities and I thought this is a winner, this is a winner. So I went around kind of surreptitiously, talking to people and some people were interested. There’s a union that keeps trying to get archaeologists to join it and I’ve never bothered joining because it’s a civil service union, it has nothing to do with our trade at all and they don’t have any real power or use and um, they were just starting to get people interested as well, but I kept telling people about the benefits of this union and um, the apathy I encountered, “Oh, it won’t change anything, what’s the point?” You’ve got to help yourselves, you’ve got to, and word kind of got through to certain people within the company who were higher than me in position that I was committing sort of political rebellion within the ranks and I didn’t work for them again. I never considered myself a political activist. Why shouldn’t a graduate be paid £23,000 a year starting wage? It wouldn’t affect archaeology in the slightest because the money would go on the end. Everybody would have to pay that bit extra and everybody’s bids would go up that bit extra, so it would still be a level playing field, they’d just be forced to pay the staff a living wage. But anyway, that’s enough of me and my politics!</th>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>But that’s interesting, so why don’t they then?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>It’s just apathy. Absolute apathy. And it drives me mad. It drives me up the fucking wall. I’ve got a couple of other people interested and I’m still in touch with the UCAP representative and he keeps phoning me every six months: “Any further progress, [redacted]?” “No”. But every group of students I supervise, I sit them down and say to them, “Look, if you want to get anywhere in archaeology, this needs to happen”. And I think it will change in the future, but I think it also needs UCAP to approach the archaeologists in universities and say, “Look, join this and you’ll come out of it and instead of earning £16,000, you’ll earn £23,000. For £8 a month”. It’s a classic no-brainer, but no one seems to take it up.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So is all your experience in research excavations or have you done commercial as well?</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I’ve done both. I’ve done commercial and research. I much prefer research digs. I don’t know about better funded, but they’re certainly better paid and the work is much more meticulous because there isn’t so much timescale and everything gets done properly and that kind of calls to my slightly OCD nature.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And when did you first encounter human remains? Have you found them on an excavation you’ve been on?</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yes. I first encountered them at the Cuckoo Stone at Durrington, near Woodhenge I think, yeah, near Woodhenge and that would be about 2002, something like that and that was a three-year-old child and then I</td>
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did some work with [redacted] and there were some adult inhumations there and then at Stonehenge in the palisade trenches, we uncovered, um, in the same trench there was a beaker burial, a cremation burial and three late Bronze Age crouched inhumation burials.

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<tr>
<th>19</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>And did you ever have to do any training or did you learn to excavate human remains on the job?</th>
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<td>20</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I taught myself.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Did somebody else show you or did you just pick it up as you went along?</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Um, it’s kind of like anything really, just care, attention and a steady hand and no mattocks and then you’re generally ok.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I could tell you lots of stories about mattocks being put through skulls, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Richard III had one stuck through his, didn’t he? It was in that documentary. I’m glad to see he was treated like everyone else. So how often do you come into contact with human remains now?</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Professionally or as a hobby?</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Either/or.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>[Redacted] Not that often, to be honest. Um . . . probably only about, I would say, ten per cent of the digs that I’ve done. I mean, a lot of the digs you do are in areas where bone doesn’t survive, if it’s heavy boulder clay or acidic. There would have been bodies but they’re long gone, so the conditions have to be right and if the conditions are right, then you’ll generally find bodies.</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Particularly if there’s grave goods.</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I was going to say, are there any bits about working with human remains that you particularly like or dislike? Is grave goods something that—</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, I’m fascinated by, um, the things people take with them or are given to take with them, um, you know, obviously, it varies from . . . I suppose if you look at the Egyptian burials, the things that they were given to take with them, to small infant burials where they’re given, if anything at all, a little chalk figurine or a single bracelet or something like that, but it’s . . . a lot of cremation burials have stone tools with them, you know, the beaker burials, um, almost always, you kind of find something that has been put with the body and if you don’t find anything, because of the care that the body has been buried with, I assume always that something was put with the body, but it was a perishable item, that obviously no longer exists</td>
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because I mean, I imagine, they would be buried in clothing and you never find clothing, you find brooches in the position on the body where a cloak would have been pinned, so I think universally they would have been clothed, so you know, their grave goods could just be their clothes or some food or something that has not survived. I'm fascinated with what the dead are given to take with them on that journey and it helps me understand their concept of afterlife.

35  K  Why, in your opinion, do we excavate and study human remains?

36  C  Well, the glib and trite answer is because they're there. And I think, um, that is … I think that is the answer at its most basic and then people work out things that they can study on these bodies. They can find out about diet, malnutrition, diseases, they could find out through various analyses where the deceased came from, so there's a massive wealth of knowledge that can be gained from bodies. In some instances, the body is moved because it's in the way, you know, if there's a road going through, it's somehow less sacrilegious to move the body, albeit in suit [indecipherable] boxes, than it is to just bulldoze it out of the way and put tarmac over it. Um … but yeah, I don't know of any instances where people have found bodies and not excavated them. I don't think they ever get left in-situ because … I think mostly it's because there's a wealth of different knowledge you can gain from every skeleton. Obviously, it takes the right scholar to come along and to find the right thing for the knowledge to be extracted, but um, they're part of an archive, as such really, for [indecipherable] study in the future. But the truth as to why they're excavated is because they're there. I don't like runny bodies.

37  K  No?

38  C  I know a guy who … you know during the Bosnian conflict, you know, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, um, they were basically mass-murdering people and chucking them into graves. They employed archaeologists to come and re-excavate them because they had a forensic way of doing it, you know? They weren't fully-forensic, but forensic enough that evidence could be kept with these bodies and find out who was who. And this guy said that when they were digging them up, their watches were still ticking and the bodies were runny and he said he stuck it for a week and then he came home. I couldn't do that. It's … no … nasty.

39  K  Is it the gunginess of them or it because they're so recent? Or both?

40  C  I'm just not a fan of putrescence.

41  K  Why not? [laughs]

42  C  It's a weakness. In my otherwise veritable armour of various things, putrescence is kind of … it's like my kryptonite.

43  K  [laughs] I see. Yeah, ticking watches, that's nasty.

44  C  At least you'd know when it was brew break.

45  K  Do you think excavating, studying and displaying human remains has a role to play beyond furthering our knowledge of the past? Do you think it
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<th>does anything else for us?</th>
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<td>46</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Hmm... it might for some. Obviously, it’s nice to display certain bodies, like the Amesbury Archer, for instance, with all the wonderful grave goods, the gold and the archery stuff. Er, you can see it as it was and as it was found and you can draw your own conclusions from that, but I’m not [sighs] and then you know, you get your bog bodies and things which are really interesting, but... [sighs] there are certain aspects of display when it’s more morbid curiosity than educational. And I mean, particularly if you go to Manchester Museum or any museum that has mumified remains from Egypt, I just feel... [sighs] terrible. I mean, they’re ghoulish to look at because they’re quite hideous cadavers, really, with sunken skin and protruding teeth, but if you look at it in a very basic way, these mumified bodies were important people who paid an awful lot of money to get to paradise and somehow ended up in Manchester.</td>
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|47 | K | What are you trying to say about Manchester? |

|48 | C | It’s rainy. That’s it’s not paradise. And I just feel so... I feel kind of bereft for them, really. I know they’re dead, but the last thing they bloody wanted... they’d never even have dreamt that they end up in Manchester and yet there they are, on display, for a bunch of kids to point at and say “Eurgh, look at that thing” and “Mummy, it’s staring at me!” I don’t know, I don’t see what the educational purpose is in that, you know? Display a sarcophagi [sic] by all means. I feel a little sensitive towards the mummy. Don’t take that as any indication of my own domestic relationship with my mother [laughs], but I do... I feel somehow that, despite everything they did, life did not turn out well, death did not turn out the way they expected it to and um, I think there’s no surer denial of one’s beliefs than to be buried in Egypt, expecting to ascend to the heavens and end up in Manchester. |

|49 | K | Is it mummmies especially that concern you in that respect or is it all displays of human remains? |

|50 | C | Mummies are perhaps the most profound example, but um, it depends on where you draw the line between education and just display, um, I’m not entirely sure, apart from displaying different types of burial, which could be done with diagrams and photographs, but I realise that the remains are more tangible, there’s not a huge amount to be gained educationally from displaying a body. It’s just a body and particularly if it’s a skeleton surrounded by a few grave goods, it’s... you know... it’s the mortal remains of a deceased person and I somehow feel that the further the distance of the site of origin of the body, the more tragic it somehow it is. Um, you know, if you find a body in Wiltshire and it’s displayed in Wiltshire, that’s not too bad, but if you take it 50,000 miles and display it as a curio, really, then you’ve lost all claim to education and it simply becomes something ghoulish for people to stare at, which is undignified. |

|51 | K | Do you think then that we should try and take into account, as far as we can ascertain, the wishes of the deceased? |

|52 | C | As far as we can ascertain. I understand that my views have changed dramatically in the last 20 years or so, and um, when I was younger, like 20ish, I’d have said, “They’re dead, what’s the point, why care?” But um, I think... I’m not a spiritual person, I don’t believe in fairy tales of deities |
and things, I'd like to, I'd love Thor to exist and Odin, they sound like really cool fellas, but they don't exist [redacted].

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<td>54</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>[Redacted] I don’t think it’s possible, really, to . . . I mean, take Viking long boats and burials for example, we know fairly well what their belief system was and we know that they were traveling to Valhalla, with their boat and everything, um . . . I don’t see how you can, um, sort of reasonably cater to their particular religious whim, because if you’re a kind of realist, you know religion is a mockery, but there is no reason on earth why you cannot be reverential and sort of delicate and understanding in your display or your removal of said things. Quite clearly, any notion of soul has well departed by then, but I do feel that when Christianity was a much more prevalent disease in this country—did I say disease? I meant religion [laughs]—that um, it was very easy for early sorts of antiquarians and archaeologists to desecrate graves with less care and attention than they would probably get now, because they were heathen, they were pagan, they were of the wrong religion and they’d made the wrong decisions in life, by you know, the puritanical, sort of evangelical viewpoint of particularly fervent people and um, I think now, there’s a lot more delicacy now with remains because it’s more humanist than being segregated by religion.</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Have you ever felt conflicted about excavating human remains then?</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sometimes, yeah. You kind of, you get into the job and you know, the burial is halfway down when you're digging and they're in the way, but if the burial's at the bottom of . . . because you can't get any information properly if the burial's in, say, the middle of a ditch fill, so out it comes. But if it was at the bottom, then yeah, I don’t see any reason why it couldn’t be backfilled and left. I don’t believe there’s any sense in disturbing a body unless you have to. It’s not nice. I mean, you look at the, terrible mass disturbance of Native American burials in America, they’ve just been ripping them out and chucking them in boxes and there’s now more Native American remains in museums than there are in the ground [sighs] And they didn’t really need to be dug up, you know? Locate your graveite, yeah, we know it’s here . . . if the boot were on the other foot or the shoe, or the stiletto or the high-heeled thing or whatever you like, if the item of footwear of your choice were on the other foot, then can you imagine Native Americans goings to white Christian burial grounds and digging up the bodies because they were there? I would imagine there would be one or two small protest groups with placards, nothing too intrusive, quietly debating in a demonstrative manner that this shouldn’t happen. But um, it seems to be alright, &quot;Oh, these people have been dead for years; we can lift them out of the ground, stick 'em in boxes and store them in a museum&quot;. Um, why? What has this taught you? Other than the Native Americans get a little bit anxious about the fact that you’ve desecrated their ancestral grounds, um, which because of your Christian righteousness, you don’t see as a problem. We . . . I think in America the still pervading view is still pretty much that of the antiquarian, I mean, they calls themselves archaeologists . . . all the decent American archaeologists seem to come to England.</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So would you say that you are in favour of reburial of human remains? Or not?</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Um . . . insofar as it was possible, then I think, yeah. There’s no reason why you can’t dig them up, run a plethora of tests, your DNA tests and you look at various skeletal deformities, injuries, etc., do a detailed study and then put it back. If not in, then somewhere near where you got it from, I don’t see as that’s a problem at all. In fact, I’d be . . . I’d be rather relieved if that happened, to be honest.</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you see where the pagans and the druids are coming from to have certain human remains taken from particular museums and reburied?</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>No, I don’t, because their religion is almost entirely made up. Well, it is. I mean, you look at Stonehenge, right? Stonehenge, finished building it about 2,500BC, right? Your druids are 700BC, so about . . . basically the Roman invasion, really, about 70D, I think. So, they go to Stonehenge to practice their pagan religion, right? But they were so far after Stonehenge that they as may as well, it’s almost entirely as relevant to them to go to St Paul’s Cathedral, it’s the same time gap either way, you know? It’s something that’s been bugging me for years. I mean, you know, what’s it called? Wicca, the pagan Wicca, that religion in its form now, was invented after scientology. It is that new. I mean, morally, mentally, whatever; I am pagan as they come. I’m all for blood sacrifice and you know dancing around naked, but looked at objectively, you know, I am . . . I’m a person of the soil, I love nature and I’m very fond of nature, um, it’s always been a big part of my life and I wouldn’t necessarily call it religion because that would [sighs] that would mean I would have to believe in some kind of deity that was operating it all, rather than it just being a natural phenomenon. I’m a huge fan of nature, but looked at objectively, the pagan traditions that most people practice are very, very new and calling Stonehenge the centre of their faith when it was 2000 years before their faith even occurred, as druids. So . . . nobody knows what Stonehenge was used for, we have ideas, a monument to the ancestors, like, Mike Parker Pearson says, yes, almost certainly, it was also a bloody great big clock, you know, you could tell the seasons by it. There are a lot of cremation burials there and there’s Anglo-Saxon burials there as well and Iron Age in the area, they buried everybody, it was seen as a big … it is a sacred symbol, but to say that it had any relevance to the druidic faith is absolute nonsense. It’s just crazy. I mean, because clearly it was a pagan place, but who’s to say it was anything like the pagan faith of the druids? But no, the druids, yes, I understand that they’d like some bodies put back in the ground, but how are they going to reinter them? You know? What rituals are they going to say over the bodies? It’s just going to be made-up crap, you know? [laughs] It’s unlikely to have any resemblance to, for example, a Bronze Age burial rite or an Iron Age burial rite, so you know, it would be like … it would almost be as bad as somebody trying to bury a devout Muslim with the Christian faith. It has no relevance to that particular deceased person, um, other than they’re being put back in the ground and I think you can do that, if you’re doing that that’s fine, but to ascribe a religion to them that wasn’t necessarily theirs is a cruel thing to do.</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>This question kind of touches on some of the things you’ve already said, but what do you think are the biggest difficulties or challenges in terms of excavating human remains?</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Well, I think, physically, the biggest challenges are not disturbing things as you take them apart, clean up, really it’s just a matter of care and attention</td>
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and making sure you don’t pick up the bone just before you excavate it fully. That’s the physical side. On the emotional side, I know one or two people who won’t do it. I, myself, become very introspective when I’m digging a body, particularly . . . I don’t mind so much, adult inhumations, they’re fine, you sort of talk to them or I do, but maybe I’m strange and um, you know they’ve had a life. But I find child burials quite difficult from an emotional point of view, I get . . . don’t get me wrong, I don’t weep or anything like that, but um, yeah, I get very reverential and try to be really careful and um . . . I kind of almost apologise because it seems the right thing to do. But yeah.

63 K What is about child burials particularly?

64 C They’re just so bloody innocent, aren’t they, children? I know child mortality in the past was shockingly high, but um, we found one . . . one child, well, it was an infant and it was in the palisade ditch at Stonehenge and it was buried with a bowl, a small chalk figurine and a dog. It had the dog’s skeleton with it and er, it honestly meant enough to somebody, it wasn’t just . . . you know, like, spitting them out like pips, “Oh, another one’s died, chuck it in”, ’cause you know, like, in the Roman period, they used to, at some point, I think it was like the 4th century, they had a tax on babies, so that a lot of new-borns were smothered and thrown in the well. And you find quite a lot of wells with numerous infant skeletons at the bottom . . . why you’d do that to your own drinking water is beyond me, but um, they obviously meant something to somebody to . . . [sighs]. We have, as civilised human beings, we have a nasty tendency to look on past peoples as barbaric and simple and it’s not true. We have not changed in the slightest. Ok, we have more material wealth, we have material goods, we have so much material goods that we have to have garages to put it in. We have so much shit that we don’t know what to do with most of it . . . and there’s, yeah, we haven’t changed as emotional and rational and thinking and feeling creatures for thousands and thousands of years and a new-born baby is a new-born baby and when that new-born baby dies, somebody, somewhere is wrench by that. Um . . . and if you think about the material wealth that these people had, for one child to be buried with three items, a pot, a carved figurine and a dog, so they had to give away one of their precious pots, they have carved . . . sat and carved the figurine and they’ve killed their dog to guard their child in the afterlife. You know? And that, three items in an infant’s grave, probably represents a lot of their material wealth [redacted].

65 K Are their young children in your family? Is that why you—

66 C No, because it wasn’t at the time that I first did an infant burial. It just seems tragic somehow because, you know, somebody wanted this child and the child never had a chance.

67 K What does the term “best practice” mean to you in terms of excavating human remains?

68 C Accurate recording, really. Making sure that, particularly if you have numerous inhumations, that they’re kept separate. Um, but yeah, best practice is care and accurate recording, I think.

69 K And for you, are human remains people or objects?
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<td>70</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>They’re always people, I think. They’ve always been someone, you know? Um, so no, they’re not objects. The occasional bone you find . . . if you find a skull, that’s an object, if you find a femur, that’s an object, if you find a complete or almost complete recognisable skeleton, then it’s definitely a person. I don’t know whether that’s because you anthropomorphise it, something that’s recognisable in the shape of a human rather than a part of a human. Full, nearly full, recognisable, or even half, the top half, you can see that as a person or an ex-person. You give it human characteristics. I don’t think . . . not with child burials, strangely, but with all adult skeletons, they’re given names by the people excavating them, but I don’t think . . . it doesn’t tend to get done as much with infants or child burials, which is strange, I suppose, I’ve never really considered that. Don’t ask me why!</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Why? [laughs]</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Um . . . I think it’s probably to do with informality. And because you know the person, a full adult’s had a life; you are more kind of informal and friendly with it and less afraid of sacrilege, because that’s how adult humour works, we take the piss. You know? You know the way humour works, but I suppose with an infant you don’t and you do tend to be a lot more, sort of, careful and reverential, I think. I think it’s human nature to hold infants or small children dear, no matter how annoying they are.</td>
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<td>73</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>There is an argument that giving human remains names is a disrespectful thing to do…</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I think the opposite, I think the absolute opposite because you’re making a connection with them, you are forming a person and um, I know this is going to sound strange, but you’re creating a relationship with that person. You know it’s . . . probably the most reasonable, yet informal way of showing respect, um, you’ve taken time to give the deceased a name and you then construct a persona around, most of the knowledge you know, you know what period of time it came from, you’ll know what it would have been wearing and the sort of life it was and it helps you reconstruct, however wildly inaccurate a life for that person, so it helps you come to terms with the dead person in a lot of respects. To give a name is humanising and to not give a skeleton a name would be kind of cold. I know we don’t even give child skeletons a name, but that’s a completely different kettle of fish, because that’s a thing of respect, but it seems disrespectful not to give an adult a name because if you give someone an identity, you can get to know them. If you’re sat talking about—say you’ve got three adult skeletons in a grave and you call them Tom, Dick and Harry or whatever—they’re not referred to as Skeleton A and Skeleton B or Skeleton 1 and Skeleton 2, they’re called Tom, Dick and Harry and you say, I found this with Tom and . . . it does, it gives them substance somehow, in my opinion anyway.</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think people feel the need to do that because the archaeological process is bit cold and clinical in that it treats human remains like everything else?</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, I think so. It helps to differentiate between a pot and a person. I think there’s a lot of that in that. I think it’s adding a human warmth or an aspect of human warmth to an otherwise fairly clinical discipline.</td>
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<td>77</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What are your thoughts on screening excavations of human remains from public view?</td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I don’t think it’s necessary. Um, chiefly because if you don’t like to see human remains, you don’t have to look. You know, human remains are very common and they’re natural and they’re not offensive, they’re not offensive at all and I think if we’re offended by human remains, then the problem lies with the person taking offence and the fact that there is a fence up. But on the other hand, um . . . no, I don’t think you should ever be afraid to let people see you’re excavating human remains. Going back to the educational thing, it’s probably more educational to see them excavated than it is to go and visit them in a museum. I mean, I spoke to an old archaeologist who’s a, well, a kind of antiquarian really, in fact they’re dead now, but um, he was excavating in [redacted] in the 1970s when they were widening the road and they moved part of the graveyard and they found lots of skeletons and they stuck them in all in bags and because it was raining, the only place they had to store them was the bus shelter [laughs]. Apparently these two old ladies came along to take the bus and they sat down in the bus shelter, saw these bags and had a look inside and they were full of grinning skulls and apparently these two ladies just ran out into the street! So yeah, I think the problem arises when it comes to human remains is, not so much that it’s offensive, it’s that people are kind of educated to believe or ill-educated to believe that this sort of thing is offensive. People were a lot more pragmatic in the past, um . . . we now are so removed from death and stuff to do with it that . . . it’s become something completely alien to us, as a people because, even going back to the sort of 1950s/1960s, there was a lot of infant mortality, there was death in childbirth, people died at a younger age and it was really quite traditional for friends and family to traipse in and have a look at the deceased and say goodbye. It very rarely happens now, er, you know? Young kids aren’t held up to kiss their dead grandad anymore. I’m not saying that’s right, far be it for me to say what’s right and wrong, but er, I said goodbye to my dead grandad when he died. I didn’t kiss him, I’m not weird [laughs] [redacted], but I do think that people are one step further away removed from having anything to do with deceased people and bodies these days, so it is something that they don’t encounter and what you don’t know, you become fearful of and I think that’s where that stems from, but no. Don’t put fences up, it’s natural, it’s part of the life cycle if you will and if you don’t like it, don’t go near it.</td>
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<td>79</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So do you have any particularly memorable experiences of excavating human remains, for whatever reason?</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, I’ve got to say, those three Bronze Age children, well, they were infant burials; they stick particularly in the mind. It was a closing deposit in a ditch and they were spaced equally, so they must have died within a few days of each other, probably, which leads you to believe that there was some sort of epidemic or something that targeted the young, but yeah, that was . . . it’s actually a very precious memory to be honest. I don’t . . . I don’t have any self-recrimination about it at all, I . . . it was done properly and I was content with the way it was handled and the way the remains...</td>
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were looked after, and um, I think it was done with all respect, really, so yeah, I was quite happy with that. It’s a very powerful memory.

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<td>83</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>When you say respect, what does that mean for you?</td>
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<td>84</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>It’s really difficult to define what respect actually is, isn’t it?</td>
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<td>85</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Thanks! Let me get a dictionary out! No, um . . . it’s actually blurring a line between respect and reverence, respect in that the remains are handled carefully and reverence that I was fully aware that this was a deceased infant. It is . . . you are . . . it’s kind of like . . . for me, it’s slightly like an out of body experience, where you are removed from the rest of the world for a short period of time, because you’ve got people digging away in various bits of the site and they’re all having a laugh and joking and possible throwing things at each other, you know how things work, there are certain elements that think they’re funny and um . . . digs are wonderful places, full of wonderful people on the whole. I mean, you do get some people who take it and themselves far, far too seriously, but on the whole, they’re really good places, a really good environment, with really good people, good fun, you know, you’ve got 10 per cent at one end of the spectrum and 10 per cent at the other end of the spectrum, but the other 80 per cent of the spectrum is close enough for you all to get on well. But when you’re excavating a body, you’re in a little bubble of kind of . . . a little bubble of your own thoughts and awareness and you are removed from everything else that’s going on in the trench. You don’t notice it. You’re focused completely on “I’m doing this body” and . . . all your thoughts and care, you’re outside of time, really. And . . . you just . . . get on with it, in your own way and in your own manner, slow and steady, whilst the world moves on around you and you don’t really re-join the world until either someone taps you on the shoulder and tells you it’s brew time or you’ve finished. Once you’ve started excavating human remains, you can’t leave a job half-done and let someone else do it, that’s anathema to an archaeologist, I don’t know why, looked at objectively, it’s just the mortal remains of some deceased person, but because you’re aware of its identity and its past and you’ve humanised it, you take it upon yourself to make sure that it’s all done the same way, in the same sort of manner, I think.</td>
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<td>87</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>On the excavations you’ve been on, do you have to get the skeletons out in day or can you work on them as long as you need to?</td>
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<td>88</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>It kind of depends. On a commercial dig, yeah, you try and get them out as quickly as possible. Depends on how many and how complicated, but if it’s just a single inhumation, yeah, you can do that in a day. And also, it depends on other factors, such as the weather. You don’t want it getting too wet, but if you’ve got a tent, you can do it over a couple of days, three days perhaps. If the weather’s fine, then yeah, you can leave it and cover it, yeah and then come back to it the next day. And then obviously, the recording of it, that’s the most difficult bit of it, actually, because to draw a skeleton to scale, to be honest, it’s a bloody nightmare! There’s all these rib things and bits and all and if they’ve got grave goods, it’s like, do I have to draw that in? Can I just sling it over a hedge and forget I ever found it? I jest! Honest. But yeah, doing an accurate drawing of a skeleton is difficult.</td>
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<td>89</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[laughs] Is that something you get better at over time?</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, it's practice, it's like anything [redacted].</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you get very artistic with your sketches or do you do stick men?</td>
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<td>92</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Um, I try and do an accurate representation, but at the end of the day, it's a representation. You have photographs as well, um, and I think it won't be long until we phase out drawing, um, in the commercial archaeological point of view, that's a brilliant idea, I think, if we can get rid of drawing, it would take away a third of the process, really and there's no reason now why you can't photograph something and turn it into a line drawing on a computer, with a scale and everything, there's no reason at all, apart from “We've always done it this way”, which is the biggest hindrance archaeologists encounter anywhere, ever.</td>
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<td>93</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>It's got to get with the times.</td>
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<td>94</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Pretty much, because we're becoming . . . archaeologists are becoming an anachronism, and we're seen as a bloody liability because we take so long. I mean, you could do it quicker and charge just the same money and, you know, I had an idea that if you had an IT guy in the office and everything was done on iPads and phones and things and cameras and it was all digitally recorded, you could all hand it to him and he could be writing up the report as the dig's going on. You know, instead of the report being written up six months after the dig, it'd be a week, “There you go! On to the next job”. And it would make us more professional, as an industry.</td>
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<td>95</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Has excavating human remains affected how you perceive death in any way?</td>
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| 96 | C | No. Um, because . . . I know it might sound a bit crazy, but bear with me . . . death, to me . . . death and human remains aren't connected, particularly, because death is when a living person ceases to live, human remains are already dead, that is the state we find them in. And so it's one step removed from the idea of death, I think. I obviously . . . you understand it was a person, as I have probably gone on at far too great a length, and um, you do, as I say, construct a life for it, you are not immediately connected with the person's death. I suppose if you're a forensic archaeologist, looking at bones and you understand how the deceased died, that would connect you more to its death, because you could visualise its death, but on the whole, there are no indicators as you're excavating, generally, to explain why this person died and so as such, you are not in touch with the moment of the death, you see it as mortal remains and you understand that it had a life, but then you are thinking about its life and not its death. Um . . . and I think that because it's a skeleton, it's so . . . it doesn't connect you to your own mortality because it's . . . it's gone past the point of being recognisable as a person, you know, with features and things. I mean, you know, it was a human and it was a person, but it's um, I'm probably not making myself very clear, but no, it's too far away from death to make you think about death, I think. For me, anyway. Other people might think, “Oh my god, it's a body, I'm going to die at some point!” I think you reach a certain age in your life and you become aware of your own mortality. You might as a younger person excavating a skeleton, depending on the inclination of the person, either
less or more connection with mortality, depending on their point of view. But anybody over the age of … I can’t give an age, a certain age, you are aware that some point, you are going to die. It’s … I was going to say 17, different strokes for different folks, but because you know you are human and therefore mortal, um, it’s not something you think about, but you are aware of it all the time. You know at some point that you’re going to be old and that you’re going to die, but um, yeah, I that that um … you don’t … people don’t like to think about death, which is why as you’re excavating a skeleton, you give it a name. This is part of the … I think that … you’re moving away from death, by giving the skeleton a name and you’re giving it a life and you’re colouring in the things, you’re doing the opposite, you’re re-awakening and reliving this person, rather than dwelling on the fact that this person is dead.

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<td>97</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So you’ve never become—</td>
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<td>98</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Morbid and drunk myself to death?</td>
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<td>99</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[laughs] Like you name human remains to bring you closer to them as a person, is there anything you do to separate yourself from them, or is that more in terms of forensic work, where bodies are very recent?</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, I think recent remains you would really struggle to separate yourself. Um … prehistoric remains, not so much. I mean, clearly, some things do move you, they are emotionally … I suppose tweaking, really, of course you can become a little introspective and you dwell upon the fact … you’re not dwelling on the death, you dwell upon the fact, particularly with the infant burials, you’re not dwelling on the fact they died, you’re dwelling on the fact that they didn’t have a life, which is an entirely different thing. I know it’s just a question of semantics, but it’s how you view things. You don’t sit there going “Ah, he died as an infant, that’s terrible”, that’s not the terrible bit; the terrible bit is that they didn’t live and I think that’s what you dwell on. It’s slightly removed from the issue of death, I think. You know, these are my views, I couldn’t put words into the mouths of other people, but I think it’s widely held.</td>
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<td>101</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>This one you’ve kind of already answered, but I’ll ask you again … do you hold any religious or spiritual beliefs and if so, how do these sit alongside your work excavating human remains?</td>
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| 102 | C | Believe it or not, no. Er … I don’t believe, like I said before, even if you do hold religious views or beliefs or, you know, blindly follow the flying spaghetti monster, then your religion isn’t necessarily their religion, um … you can do as best by your own religion, but who’s to say that will be right for the deceased? I think, clearly … and if you’re a Christian excavating a grave that’s clearly Christian, I think that would be easier and you would probably, um, as a religious person probably feel more comfortable excavating a Christian grave because, you know … But um, yeah, I clearly have very little faith in anything supernatural and um, I think, I mean, I once got told, I don’t know whether to be happy about this or not, that I’m a very Christian non-Christian. You know, be nice to folks, do good deeds, but do them because you want to and not because you’re fearful of an everlasting torment and so um, I think that you treat people as you would wish to be treated and you know, at some point in the future, I mean, ’cause I’ve already had a word with my brother and [redacted] I’m going to have a Bronze Age burial mound and I’m going to be buried in
my medieval armour wearing a wristwatch. Just to screw with the archaeologists! So at some point, when some confused students from University of Central Lancashire come and hack my burial tomb apart, I hope they show a bit of respect or reverence for my rather confusing mortal remains.

| 103 | K  | So you’d be happy to be excavated then? |
| 104 | C  | Oh yeah. I’ll be dead, what do I care? |
| 105 | K  | So archaeology hasn’t put you off from being buried then, it’s actually inspired you? |
| 106 | C  | Yeah! It'll be like my last practical joke to the world! |
| 107 | K  | Well, that sounds amazing, you have to do it! Um, my last question, have you ever had to deal with personal grief whilst working with archaeological human remains? |
| 108 | C  | No, but I’ve done it with a hangover, which is similar. |
| 109 | K  | I bet that was not fun. |
| 110 | C  | Good job it wasn’t runny! |
| 111 | K  | [laughs] Do you foresee that being a problem or do you think the two are so removed from one another that it wouldn’t really cause a problem? |
| 112 | C  | I suppose it depends upon your mental discipline, I’ve always been the sort of person that can compartmentalise things, if I need to. But if you haven’t that ability and you know, your fresh grief strays across a dead person, then yeah, I can imagine that it would be quite difficult because then it is an immediate connection with a fresh death and because you’re thinking of death—someone you love has died—then um, I imagine it could be difficult. Other than that, I couldn’t say, I have no experience myself. |
| 113 | K  | Do you have any other thoughts or opinions that you would like to share that relate to human remains? |
| 114 | C  | With reference to human remains? Um . . . only certain aspects where certain archaeologists keep seeking refuge in the word “ritual”. We have to treat the word ritual with the contempt that it deserves, it’s like, you know, if an archaeologist is a mediocre archaeologist and doesn’t understand something, he’ll go “Oh, it’s ritual”. You mean you don’t fucking know. Just say so! Nobody will care. But yeah, there’s a couple of things that are ritual, but I don’t like them being called ritual, ‘cause for me, as an archaeologist, to utter the word ritual is to indicate failure. As an archaeologist and a member of the human race. Because, yeah, grave goods, they are ritual, but they’re not . . . they’re ritualistic, but they’re not given as part of the ritual, they’re given, and in certain cases they are clearly part of the big spectacle of death, the whole boat, have a boat, some maidens and a horse, that’s clearly a big ritual, this person’s got lots of shit and he’s going to take it with him, but in the case of the poor burials, you know, that have not much, then um, it’s less ritual and more comfort. Not necessarily comfort for the deceased, but comfort for the living who know that they’ve done their best and given this person something to take with
them. Even if it’s just a knife and a spoon. They can eat yoghurt and trim
their nails or something, in the afterlife. But um, yeah, in certain respects,
the burial goods, they’re not so much ritual, as given out of compassion
and comfort, really. And there’s other things, like that I have bees in my
bonnet about. Like the burials you find, like um, the Romans did a lot
when they buried tribesman and they killed them in the invasion, like
heads under their arms and heads between their legs “Oh, it’s ritual”, is it
fuck! It’s squaddies having a laugh. You know what I mean? It’s like
soldiers, “Ah, we’ll make him sit on his own head in his grave, that’s well
funny!”

“Ah mate, look this one’s got his . . . take a picture of it!”

“The guy with his head under his arm and send it back to
[indecipherable]”.

And then there’s crouched burials. Why are they crouched? You don’t have to
dig such a bloody big hole. Right, ’cause we’re going back to the Iron
Age here, well the Bronze Age here, they didn’t have shovels, they had bits
of bone and antler picks. It was hard fucking work! “It’s clearly a ritual
crouched burial”, no it’s fucking not! Someone didn’t want to a dig a 6
foot long hole, so they thought they’d dig a 3 foot one and squash the body
up.

115  K  You could be on to something there!

116  C  Well, you see, you should explore every practical consideration. And then
when you cannot find practical reasons for doing something, then, and
only then, can you descend into the murky miasma that is ritual. Because
one thing that people forget, because I don’t know what happens to
archaeologists when they become senior archaeologists writing up reports,
but they forget about humanity. Maybe they’ve spent so fucking long
looking at bits of pot that they forget what it’s like to be human and
humans are intrinsically lazy. We are really lazy as a species and you have to
think, what would be the easiest way of doing this? Or failing that, what
would be the most practical way of doing this? And they’re often very
similar. Lazy people make the best inventors. I mean, we spend years
inventing something so that we don’t have to wash up, instead of just
going on with the washing up, by which time; you’ve run out of plates.
But yeah, I think a lot of … a lot of what is ascribed as ritual in burials
isn’t. Rant over.

117  K  Do you think archaeology is a ritual?

118  C  Yeah, I think, definitely. Because it’s . . . it’s become sermonised, it’s
become ritualised and proscribed and everything is done in a certain way
and like I was saying before, oh, what’s his face, who first brought JCBs in,
I can’t remember his name, when he was excavating at Durrington Walls,
he was slated for using mechanical diggers to take off the topsoil, he was
vilified and called all sorts of names. It's now standard practice, but that
was in the 1950s, I think. Really, archaeological technique, or practice, has
not changed since the 1950s in any genuine respect. Yeah, we’ve got digital
cameras and you know, sat-nav stuff and laser scanning, but the actual
digging and recording is the way it's been for 60 years and er, we’ve got to
get with the programme. We’re a little out of fashion. And it’s something
that does need to be looked at, I believe.
## Appendix 21

### Interview with Peter

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<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So, can you tell me a bit about your background and what you do here at [redacted]?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>I started here as a volunteer [redacted] I started here in 200: it was my first archaeological excavation and I started as a volunteer. I was originally going to become a radiographer and before that, I was originally going to become a vicar . . . that’s not a joke, I am now an agnostic, so that’s a bit of a thing, but I decided not to be a radiographer, even though they accepted me on my degree because this place, I had fallen in love with it, I’d fallen in love with archaeology, so in 2003 I went to become . . . I went to [redacted] do my undergraduate and then in 2006, I went to . . . oh, by the way I graduated with a First Class Bachelors in Science of Archaeology and in 2006 I went to do my Masters . . . that was at [redacted] and then in 2007 I got a fully-funded post, for a doctorate in studying ceramics in the [redacted] and just for the record, it turns out the funding was only available to British-born students and I was the only British-born student my lecturer had, so basically, I got it because I was British. Interspersed with that was a commercial career, I did a bit of commercial archaeology during that time as well and [redacted]</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>K</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted] Can I ask you how you feel about working with human remains?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>It creeps me out, but not for the reasons you’d think. Shall I be open and honest on this one? Human remains is . . . an integral part of archaeology and even though we’re digging a graveyard, you can’t dig excavations without coming across human remains in abandon [sic] there’s human remains in my roundhouse, there is human remains in any building you’ll ever find, it’s an integral part . . . but it creeps me out and not because I find it creepy, more because I find it disturbing because they’re human beings and they had loves and lives and histories . . . and the value of what we do way outweighs my personal feelings about it, I know my personal feelings are</td>
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weird, but . . . it’s at times when I see children in graves, I don’t see a skeleton, I see a child and that’s something . . . and I do know these people are lost to history and that’s fair enough, but I dwell on it because I do know that . . . I mean I have pictures of my great-grandmother and if anyone wanted to excavate her in my lifetime they would have to get through me with a very sharp mattock, but it’s different because it’s a long time ago.

But the two children holding hands . . . it seems to be getting worse for me as I get older and it gets worse when it’s children, not babies or adults, but it’s children for me. So it is very necessary and we do need to do it, but it does disturb me and I think that keeps me on the ball with it. I never forget that we’re dealing with a human. I am against showing human remains in museums because we show . . . when we . . . I know that the majority of archaeologists here will show respect to a child or the adult or the baby or whatever, but in a museum context . . . people are looking at it for the “Wow! Look at that, it’s a dead person!” factor, which I find incredibly disrespectful to the human because they’re dead, but they’re still people. They were somebody’s love, somebody’s children, somebody’s father, somebody’s mother and I don’t like that level of disrespect being shown. Weirdly, I don’t get the same feeling if I look at a sarcophagus, which I know has got a person it in, but I’m dead set against showing it for museums. That’s just my own feeling. Does that answer it?

| 11 | K | [Redacted] |
| 12 | P | [Redacted] |
| 13 | K | What does the term “best practice” mean to you in terms of excavating human remains? |
| 14 | P | Best practice is a good methodology, a good excavation skills and proper unified way of doing things. All recordings done, all post-exavation analyses done and due respect is shown. |
| 15 | K | [Redacted] |
| 16 | P | [Redacted] |
| 17 | K | Do you personally have any memorable experiences of excavating human remains? |
| 18 | P | Two. One was the . . . and I didn’t excavate the two children holding hands . . . the other was when I first started here. I was thankfully under [redacted] |
— in the non-sexual sense of the word — and he was a great archaeologist. He taught me a lot about field archaeology, all the things . . . and I was mattocking down the graveyard and I just clipped a skull and the cranium went flying off over my head, but I didn’t break the cranium, it was a piece of earth attached to the cranium and the cranium went flying out from the suture, so the bone wasn’t actually there, so I went and got the bone and I was sticking it back in as my boss came up and went “What are you doing?” and I was like “Argh!” and that was my most memorable moment for the sheer comic value. The most touching moment was the two children holding hands because . . . you hear about life being cheap in the medieval period, but whoever put them in, life wasn’t cheap to them. It was when I saw the human in it and that touched me, because I could see the children and I could see the parents in my mind and . . . that was the most touching part.

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<td>19</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So are children for you . . .</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Yeah. Babies, no, children, yes. Adults live their lives, I don’t know why, maybe I need to see a doctor.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Has excavating the remains of the dead affected how you perceive death?</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>It shows me my mortality more. Yes, it does. It shows me my mortality. But then again, I’ve always been like that anyway, so it reminds me of my mortality, yeah.</td>
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# Appendix 22

## Interview with Julie

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<th>Paragraph</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can you tell me a bit about your background in archaeology and your current role and how human remains feature in that?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Ok, so I started digging when I was 17, before then I’d worked in some museum archives and I did a degree, MA and PhD at [redacted] and during the course of that I excavated a number of sets of human remains. I think it’s fair to say quite quickly I was more on the drawing side of recording than actual excavation, um, but during the course of my undergraduate studies I was greatly influenced by Mike Parker Pearson and his kind of combined approach to the anthropology and sociology of death and burial, um . . . and some of the themes that he, you know, introduced me to as an undergraduate, really stayed with me and issues that particularly pertain to the [redacted], um . . . and so by the time I was looking for a PhD topic, I was very drawn to the study of the dead and one of the best places to explore the [redacted], so my PhD was very much about making sense of the lives and deaths of people in [redacted], which involved analysing a large cemetery data set, um . . . and I’ve since then been very drawn to other [redacted] and death and burial, [redacted] and that drew me into thinking about how we display human remains, so . . . as a lecturer in archaeology now at a UK university, some of my major research areas I’m working on are how we deal with the dead, professionally, in the museum context, but also in the field and what we make of them and how we engage with mortality, um, in archaeological practice and what use that is to society in general. And I suppose those are the bigger questions that I’ve been drawn towards at this bit of my career.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>How often do you come into contact with human remains directly?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Well, we have . . . I did have quite a number of them under my desk, for a while [laughs] from the university’s collections, um. and we’ve got our own human remains collection [redacted], but also a number of the research projects I’m working on are directly involving human remains, so the [indecipherable] burial which I’m working on is a single male burial, [redacted], but we might yet find out he’s an Anglo-Saxon, um, but, er, [redacted], so I suppose it’s not on a day-to-day contact level, but probably every month. or every other month, I’m involved in some encounter with them and, er, occasionally my job takes me to visit sites where human remains are being excavated or I’ve been involved in quite a lot of media programmes around human remains, so that gives me an opportunity to visit archives and look at human remains, so it’s not frequent, but it’s through those research projects, really.</td>
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You mentioned that your work partly focuses on the display of human remains, what is your opinion on that?

J
I think I was forced into thinking about this because . . . well, actually [redacted] the very visceral effect they had on me and for me that was, as a child, it was an intriguing and fascinating account that drew me into archaeology and so there’s that notion that, oh, this isn’t . . . this is not a problematic thing, it’s just a joyful thing, a creative thing, and this can only connect us with the dead. But through that workshop I became increasingly aware that there was more of a level of discomfort around some case studies, partly because some of them were very controversial, so Layla Renshaw was working on the Spanish Civil War dead, um, you know, so it was some of those more contemporary, historical case studies which do bring us up short in terms of the kind of, the lack of time depth between ourselves and our subjects, um . . . and then when I [redacted] but we have had, as a discipline, to defend ourselves against those who don’t want that to happen or want it to happen in very particular ways and so, in the subsequent years, what I’ve been trying to do is to find a kind of a . . . both an argument that robustly defends our use of them in a museum context, but also ideas about how we might do it really well that directly address these issues or problems that people are articulating.

When you mention “respect” what does that mean to you?

J
I think . . . obviously, we can’t look into peoples’ souls in the past, but we can use our evidence to tell the story of their life and their death and regardless of why they’ve ended up where they have, um, in doing that we are remembering the dead and most human remains we come across were meant to be remembered in some way, either because they had a barrow over them or a monument or a marker or care was shown to them at the moment of their interment and I see archaeology as having an ethical obligation to tell that story and ideally they wouldn’t be disturbed at all, but in the context we live in, first of all we need to know about the past, we need to know about histories of disease and how populations change over time, so there is a real scientific value in doing that research, but also many of the dead have to moved, you know, contemporary issues over development require us to rip up the dead from where they are resting and so what do we do with them then? And how do we make a space for them in contemporary society? And the way I interpret the concept of respect is . . . the telling of their story as best as I am able from their evidence, um, and that’s why I very much approve of the marriage of scientific research with interpretation and being open then about some of the different possibilities, about why somebody’s been killed violently or why they’ve ended up where they have.

Um . . . respect for me for those remains also relates to how people encounter them, so in a museum context, I think it’s important that people see bodies, because we need to learn about our bodies and we need to learn about death. We need to do death better! Because we are so poor at that in contemporary UK society, particularly if you’re not of a strong religious leaning. But, um, there are ways . . . I think there are certain tenets there that should relate to respect, which is warning the public that they’re going to see human remains, and trying to create an arena for them in a museum display which doesn’t just treat them like any other object, but nor does it completely divorce them from the objects that they have been interred with, so that a contextual understanding or funeral or
mortuary treatment is generated through how people encounter those remains and that they have time to contemplate them, that they don’t just glance across them and see a body, they are forced—through the way it is displayed—to engage with their story and that to me is the key to a respectful use of human remains in a museum.

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<td>J</td>
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displaying the dead and telling their story? And that’s something that I’ve tried to put a bit of effort into in my own research.

13  K  How do you personally feel about reburial?

14  J  I think maybe earlier on in my career I was more for it, um, more open to it and I think now I’m probably less in favour and that’s probably because I’m more aware of all the scientific arguments regarding long-term collections that allow us to look back over past populations and I know from my own research the value of having those remains, you know? Just in my own case study [redacted], never properly analysed or dated or interpreted. There’s a photo, where you know, they show that they’re aware of the severe trauma to this man’s head, but his story has never been told. His sword is bent in two, he’s buried in a very dramatic location, in going back to that skeleton because we could go back and pull him out of the box and see him and have a look at him, we’ve realised he’s wracked with disease, possibly TB, um . . . I now know, because I’ve got a grant to analyse him, from the isotope analysis he’s probably not British, he’s an immigrant, which, you know, a diseased immigrant who’s died violently! On the surface of it, we’ve got a very nasty narrative there, so my challenge will be unpicking exactly what’s gone on here, at the moment I don’t actually know whether he’s [redacted], that will change the story dramatically, but if the body wasn’t there, all we’d have is a supposed [redacted] somebody had been killed very violently and we wouldn’t be able to go back and tease out important scientific data about disease, but also marry that with the treatment of him, how he died and where he was buried, so I think it’s partly those kinds of bits of research that have changed my thinking on it, um and made it a much more complicated issue for me. I think it’s a bit of a different issue with the return of things like First Nations human remains, where arguably the context of their collecting was much more controversial and I can see a much larger ethical reason for returning those remains, I would still be much more in favour of them being hosted or cared for in some kind of repository like a mausoleum, where if permitted, scientific research could still be carried out, rather than reburial in the ground.

15  K  Do you have any memorable experiences of excavating, handling or viewing human remains for any particular reason?

16  J  Yeah, I think one of my most powerful ones was, I haven’t actually excavated these bodies, but I was drawing them, it was on the [redacted] and I was a draughtsman at the time and it had been the end of a long day and we’d had a set of human remains stolen from the site, the day before, a beautiful mother and child burial, where the woman had a little necklace and her fingers were touching the necklace and the child was at her feet and we assumed that this was a mother and child who died of disease or maybe, infection following birth and we’d cleaned up the skeleton and left it for photography the next morning and then somebody had stolen it that night, so the following night when we found another set of—it was a child and an infant close by—we finished drawing them quite late and we knew we had to lift them before we left site and it was pouring with rain, in fact there was a thunder and lightning storm going on, the rest of the team were off site and myself and another draughtsman had to finish drawing them before we left the site, so in the pouring rain I finished my drawing and then we were trying to lift these bodies, very fragile, vulnerable human remains and I think I was probably 19 at the time and I was doing quite a
lot of childcare in the evenings for the children on the dig and, you know, carrying a three year old around on my hip and although I wasn’t a mother at that stage, just the physical feeling of handling a child of about the same age as the remains I was excavating was very, you know, as I lifted the skull from the ground, I could almost feel the weight of the child’s head as I could with the children I was caring for in the evenings and that really moved me, because it connected me and the other draughtsman had left site and I was doing this in the pouring rain and thunder and lightning and um, I sang it a lullaby as I lifted it and I think that’s the body, in a way, that I connected with most viscerally, because I thought well whoever cared for these children, mourned them, missed them and I don’t quite understand all of those emotions yet, but what would the mother have done as she’d laid the child there. I think she would have sung probably and so that really … that really connected me powerfully with my own experience to the remains I was excavating and I think that connection has gone on in terms of how I, how I see my obligations to the dead.

The other main human burials I’ve been responsible for excavating have been up on [redacted] and it was when I was a PhD student, so you know, I suppose my main focus at that stage with human remains was doing things properly, technically and well and I wasn’t . . . I didn’t know how to analyse those remains, but their proper excavation and recording was important to me. And we had found, um, well, it was a little settlement really and so we weren’t expecting to encounter any human remains and we were working in this very broad verge alongside a road and we encountered a . . . well, some little pits, initially and . . . um, in the bottom of one was a cluster of very delicate bones and I thought it was a bird. They were so light and so fragile, um, I thought it was a bird and so I decided not to excavate in the field, but to just save the whole of the fill as a sample and excavate when we, you know, excavate it in the lab. And so I didn’t really pay a lot of attention to it in the field, we just bagged it up and took it back to the lab. But when we washed it and laid it out, it was an infant and . . . I think the osteologist, it’s formed part of [redacted] teaching collection and I think it is probably around about the time of birth, so whether it was a very late miscarriage or whether it’s a neonate, it’s uncertain, but you know all the little skull plates were separate and tiny little clavicles and things and, um, and so . . . I think I felt really guilty about that because I’d mistaken human remains for animal remains and although I think, you know, conceptually maybe there shouldn’t be such a big divide in the way in which we treat them, I felt guilty for not having recognised it for what it was. And I don’t know whether that would of . . . it probably wouldn’t have changed how I dealt with it because I think the best thing was to kind of save it all, short of sieving, which can damage those bones, the best thing was just to scoop the whole thing out and then we could just very delicately wash it in the lab, but I think it was that lack of recognition that I felt a bit of guilt about and I don’t know whether, I didn’t even question the fact that I laid it all out and I individually marked every bone with the site code, as you’re supposed to do and somebody said to me [redacted] “Why are you . . . you’re trying to mark an infant’s clavicle!” [laughs] “It’s like 2cm in diameter!” And later on it struck me as really bizarre that I’d done that, but I think it was my way of trying to make reparation for kind of not having done justice to it in the field in some way, but um . . . that was very touching, but we should have known in one sense that was the tip-off that was . . . that was something important, because next door to it was the burial of an elderly female and in fact, she is probably in one of those boxes right over there because that’s
the archive that’s come back to us from [redacted] and um, she . . . it was one of those classic finds, late in the day and once we’d realised what we’d got, I was quite pleased because it was quite a small team and they were my . . . I was a PhD student and I was teaching undergraduates and I was quite close to them and fond of them, um, and we recognised that there was a little posthole by the burial which might have been her funeral marker. I was really pleased that we’d spotted that and looked for some kind of monument, but by the time we’d sort of finished clearing it back and down and drawing it and photographing it, it was quite late at night, it was about 6, so we were already late on site and, you know, students being students, they were hungry and they were cold and they were tired and, um, so we sent most of them back to have supper at the farmhouse, um, but I suppose because of that [redacted] experience—where the burials had been stolen because it was by a, not terribly busy main road, but it was a main road—I felt absolutely that we couldn’t leave her in the ground overnight, so we excavated the burial by car headlight and I drew my car up on the verge and we had the headlights on and this little crack team of students stayed with me to lift her and that was a really amazing experience because I think it was that notion that I’d asked for volunteers to stay with me who were up for it. I think we finished at half past 8, 9 at night and when we got back, you know, we were all knackered and cold and tired but we, again, we’d done the right thing by her. Um . . . so I think compared with other kinds of excavation, I think maybe for a fabulous find that’s a similar kind of experience that you’d . . . you must get it out, you must look after it, you must care for it, but for me, the difference between human remains and other kinds of bits of archaeology is that normally they can wait until the next day, but I feel that there is this need to, you know, get them out in a day and that creates a sense of care about them, that just creates a different kind of atmosphere on site and certainly, I think for students, connecting with the actual remains of somebody who’d lived there, who’d dug ditches or lived in the houses they were excavating, that really gave their experience a different dimension too. Um . . . and then, putting the two together of course, it turned out that the infant had been buried next to the elderly woman and probably, although we didn’t have the scope to extend the excavation, that was part of a small cemetery attached to the settlement. Yeah, so those are my own, very personal memories of excavating human remains. I’d been on sites where other remains had been found, but I hadn’t been involved.

17  K  Are the remains of young children and infants more emotive for you than say that of an adult, or is there no difference?

18  J  Yeah, I think definitely, I mean probably, the case studies that I’ve picked out already, two of those were infants and er, I think I’ve always felt that, I don’t think it’s just being a mother that brings that home. I think it’s the sense of a life cut short in a very untimely way and . . . and therefore, the kind of sense of an unfulfilled life, but also, you know, in emotion terms, you can’t help, or I can’t help imagine the grief around the loss of a child and it’s that old adage that there is a normal order to things and you don’t expect your children to die before you and it’s that notion of loss and I know in the past that it must have been much more frequent than in the current world, but . . . but that loss is really . . . it’s something that I feel must stretch across time. Um, and since I have had children I suppose that has only deepened, yeah, the discovery of a child or an infant on site would make me connect much more viscerally. You know, I haven’t excavated human remains since I’ve had kids, but certainly in a museum
context or when writing about such burials, so there’ve been a couple of 
burials I wrote about from [redacted] of mothers who died in childbirth 
and that to me was a really . . . it’s really important to tell their stories well 
and to really bring them out to the fore of the different case studies, as a 
very traumatic set of experiences that these women had undergone that 
was dealt with appropriately by their community and so I suppose I 
looked for those stories in a way to tell, because I felt that was a really 
important thing to write back into prehistory. You know, we say glibly, 
“Oh well, lots of infants died” and that’s a very dry statistical thing to say 
without trying to attend to the archaeology that actually evidences that, so 
suppose that has been part of my agenda.

| 19 | K | Do you think archaeologists should have an emotional response to their work? |
| 20 | J | That’s an interesting one . . . I think . . . I don’t think they necessarily should have, because I think there are some people whose work requires them to have a greater sense of distance perhaps, so I can imagine if my day job was analysing human remains, I couldn’t afford to have the emotional engagement or affection that I might have as an academic, either writing about these things or just occasionally discovering them and I think, you know, I know that osteologists and forensic archaeologists undergo the kind of training that other medical practitioners undergo to enable them to deal with sometimes disturbing human remains and that that’s necessary because some of those forensic archaeologists will end up in, you know, war and conflict environments, excavating quite recent conflict victims and using their archaeological skills to that end and therefore they necessarily have to have the professional detachment to do that job well, um, but it is clear that with many . . . from the people that I talk to, that emotion will out somewhere along the line and that even if people profess a sense of detachment and a lack of engagement with the, ultimately their interest in the humanity of these past people, it’s not just the dry data that they convey and so, that does require some kind of emotional engagement I think, um, and I think that’s pretty typical of archaeology itself, the experiences that we undergo, the field experiences, or lab experiences, are pretty visceral encounters and I think you’d be hard . . . there’s a good reason why in all sorts of art from all sorts of periods the human skull figures as a motif which prompts us, it’s used as people contemplate their own mortality, well, that’s used in elite art circles, but that experience happens to us on sites and so somewhere along the line I think they’ve probably had their own kind of emotional engagement with that material and sometimes that might not be terribly pleasant, if you read some of the Spitalfields material, that really . . . it really had a bad impact on some people, it’s not necessarily a comfortable one and I suppose with students, I’ve always got to have in mind the fact that I can talk glibly about, you know, death in childbirth or traumatic death and I never know, in my audience, what personal experiences they’re bringing to that moment, so you have to be . . . I think part of . . . where I see it’s beneficial to be emotional, is that it prepares for you to be open to people’s personal experiences and in a museum context, that’s really important and that’s why I, I suppose why I’ve tried to forge a bit of a research interest in how we display human remains because I want to be more mindful about the experiences people bring to that moment in the museum.
Do you think there is a place for emotion in archaeological writing?

I do think it’s a loss and I think in the best of writing, um, that will still come through, perhaps in a different manner of discourse though. It doesn’t necessarily have to be romanticised, but . . . I think it’s different if you’re excavating dozens of bodies in a cemetery, picking out one or two, you know, to dwell upon or reflect upon is probably less possible within an archaeological monograph and yet, of course, there will always be those burials that stand out to you, maybe because of the wealth of the grave goods or the particular circumstances of the burial and certainly projects where, [redacted], it’s a kind of one-off almost, that there was a body or a couple of bodies amongst all sorts of other kinds of archaeology and then those do tend to become the focus of the report, so there’s a wonderful recent monograph [redacted] I think that’s no accident, they know that actually the thing we connect with, and the public connect with very viscerally, is the human remains and so that becomes a very human story to write up what is otherwise a set of ditches and some roundhouses and pits! Um . . . so I think it gives our narrative a human dimension and that’s why I . . . I’m quite uncomfortable with some of the recent theory about symmetrical archaeology which is placing in one sense a good, equal conceptual weight towards things as well as people, but I do think in the wider scheme of things the reason we are fascinated with the past is because we want to understand how people have changed over time, how they’ve made things that are different, so people are still at the centre point of the story. Um . . . so yeah, I think there’s room for a more intimate engagement.

I said I thought that insight was remarkable and really thoughtful and to pick that up from the evidence was really, you know, it was a great piece of analysis and she became very emotional about that, because at the time she was analysing those burials she . . . [redacted], but she was losing children, she was having miscarriages and she felt that in her analysis she wanted to attend once more, she was connecting up the very personal with the academic and even within the confines of a piece of academic text, found a way to express intimacy, [redacted] another nice example of that is the Birmingham cemetery where out of this massive historic cemetery, they pick up on a particular family and a particular individual to analyse and they try and contextualise that burial back in terms of the life by using archival records of that person, what kind of life did they lead, why did they die, what might that have meant for the family, and they had a working class individual and a middle class individual and an elite individual from the same cemetery and that was really rich, human interpretation, so I think it is possible and although it differs from the antiquarian romanticism, it still makes for much more effective burial archaeology and um, so I would hope that that’s the kind of account I strive towards, a fair balance of data and evidence with a sense of what that, of how we might tell that story in human terms.

To backtrack slightly, has all the material that you’ve worked with been, um, skeletal or have you ever had to deal with bodies that were more well-preserved?

There was one that was a bit fleshy and that was, um, at a chapel in [redacted] and [redacted] the deposits were quite wet and the burial I was
excavating—which was during the last solar eclipse, so it was a very dramatic day to be on site excavating this body—and the major veins along the arm bones, there was a little bit of squidgy fleshy stuff around the body, but then the veins were still preserved along the arm bones, so you know, when you look at these ones [points to arm] and they were like thin ribbons of red and initially, because I’d found little pearl buttons, mis-matched, so one was a repair, one was a pearl button and the other was a tortoiseshell button, mis-matched buttons on the shirt-cuffs, um, and I thought they were, again, textile remnants or something and when I realised what they were, I did feel a bit queasy, “Oh my god, that’s their veins”, but the thing that really puzzled me was what do I do with this stuff, do I scrape it off? Do I try and put it all in a bag together? It’s not going to survive, it’s just going to be scrubbed off when they wash the bones, but what you do with the fleshy bits of the body … because I think, [redacted] where you’ve got a lot more flesh, but that kind of is the body and I think it’s that in-between state where you might have partial flesh substances that actually as an archaeologist, you know, you’re used to the clean bone and the stuff in-between leaves you in a quandary as to what to do with it quite and you know, er . . . and obviously, generally, it’s of no use for analysis, but it does create a bit of an issue when you’re excavating it and either cleaning it off or incorporating it within the stuff, you know, so yes, that was my moment of disquiet with fleshy bodies and some of them in that cemetery were considerably more fleshy, but I didn’t have to deal with those.

25 K What did happen to the veins?

26 J Well, I . . . when I lifted them, it kind of broke apart, I mean it was all articulated across the wrist bones, but then as I lifted the arm bones it all kind of, fragmented and fell apart and basically, I think I just shoved the bones in a bag and then didn’t think any more about it, um, you know, but realised that it couldn’t be kept in any kind of integral fashion. We took photographs because it was important to record the state of preservation but, um, yeah, effectively that fleshy ephemera was lost along the way.

27 K Do you think with the remains of the dead has affected your own personal relationship with death in any way?

28 J Yes. Most definitely. Yeah. I think, I mean, just at one level, I think I became fascinated with this aspect, initially I was attracted by [redacted] and he opened my eyes to the anthropology of death and burial, it just became such a fascinating window of insight on to belief more generally, but also, what we leave of ourselves and everybody ponders that question and having the opportunity to ponder that and to learn from communities and societies thousands of years ago in terms of how they thought about it and how they dealt with it, for me, has been probably the best bit of my academic career to have the opportunity to look at how others face traumatic death particularly and where this really came home is when my own dad died in a car crash very suddenly and um, and although it was really awful and really unexpected, I kind of felt prepared for it in a way that the rest of my family wasn’t and . . . whether that was just a bit of emotional armour I don’t know, but it meant that practically I just knew certain things that would then happen, um, and our family had never had to go through that close bereavement before, so I knew what would be needed at the funeral parlour and I knew what the processes would be and
I knew what would happen to his body and actually I wanted, and I think my family found it very awkward, because I wanted to know quite a lot of technical information that the doctors, perhaps wisely, were not willing to release and I also wanted to go to the site where it happened, that really mattered to me, the place of death and maybe that was something about my own biography, because I’d excavated burials and I know that’s really, the place of death and burial is really important, I wanted to be there where it happened, but I also wanted to see his body and, er, most of the rest of my family just didn’t want to do that and intellectually I thought, “No this is something we’ve distanced ourselves from”, but also very personally, I just wanted to see him one last time, um . . . and when I did go and see him, I . . . because there had to be a post-mortem after the accident, it was some time after the death and so, the funeral directors were just amazing, it was a local [redacted] family firm, who dad had worked with as a [redacted] and the funeral director met us personally and he said, you know, “Well, I know it’s a tragedy for you, but in one way I’m a bit relieved because I know when I go up there, [redacted] will be at the door looking out for me” and he was really lovely and they’d obviously done a great job cosmetically, ‘cause it was a very violent accident, so it wasn’t a terrible experience and um, what had changed was, it was still him, but, um, because all the flesh had sunken inwards and because decay was starting, I felt I saw the stage in-between life and death, so I’d dealt with skeletonised remains and knew a lot about well-preserved remains, but what I was seeing in his body was that moment that most of our funerary rites revolve around, the coping with the transformation of the living into the dead and I felt I was seeing that in his face and what I felt I was seeing come through is the family face, the cheekbone structure and that I was almost looking into something that was quite timeless, um and there’s a lovely Hardy poem about that, about the family face going on and I felt very privileged to see that and really glad I’d done it, but I felt that my archaeological preparation steeled me for that, made me curious about it, but ultimately enriched my archaeological understanding as well, because I took back from it an increased sense of the importance of negotiating that stage of transformation, the famous Van Gennep liminal stage and I understood better why things have to be done well and done appropriately and why so much concern revolves around that.

So definitely in relation to his death, it . . . it benefitted me as an individual and helped me. I mean, just the formalities of dealing with death, you know, I felt more capable of doing it right, because it all has to be done so quickly and I felt more poised to do the right thing at that moment and proud, I suppose, of that training and that it’s not just an archaeology degree, it’s just interesting, it was bloody useful! Because it’s the one thing we’ll all have to do for the ones who are closest to us, um, and so it felt good to have that knowledge and to have that experience and to be able to use that help Dad pass on appropriately and . . . I suppose the encounters with children who’ve died, or women who’ve died in childbirth, again, and those . . . and those I felt, prepared me, for the fact the fact that actually having a family is quite a risky business still. And it is the major rite of passage that most women will undergo physically and that it wasn’t to be taken lightly and so I felt in terms of my own experiences I had an added appreciation of the fragility of women at that moment and although both of my births went fine, many of the women I met around me whose births had not gone well, again, you could appreciate just why that moment was so fragile and so dangerous and often it’s just dismissed within our society as “Oh well, it was all alright in the end, wasn’t it?” and that’s not the point for many women, that
overshadows them in a very strong way and again, I was prepared to kind of, I could understand that and appreciate it more because I’ve seen the consequences of when it doesn’t go well and ok, that was thousands of years ago, but . . . this is all far more, life is far more, it’s much more fragile than we think it is and I do think dealing with human remains brings home that kind of mortality in the moment and hopefully it gives you a much greater appreciation for life itself.

29  K  In that sense do you think that mortuary archaeology has a role to play beyond just furthering our understanding of the past?

30  J  Yeah. And I feel that passionately and I’ve argued it in print! [laughs] I know that my first encounters with bodies were in museums and in archives and that I visited sites where bodies were being excavated and I found that intriguing and fascinating and that if we’re to . . . we’ve got an ageing population, we’re going to have to deal with, um, planning our own funerals and deaths in a much more detailed fashion than perhaps we once were and, you know, in one sense and handing that out to professionals, the increasing professionalisation of death and burial, that archaeology has a contribution to make there, both confronting people with what their bodies look like under the skin, but not in a Gunther von Hagens kind of way, because what he was doing for kind of entertainment, we do academically in a museum to show people the human body, but because too they are often displayed in the context of a burial rite to show beliefs about humanity and that’s an invaluable thing to do, particularly in a secular society to engage people in how, whatever your belief, you can appreciate why people have interred something intimate with somebody or why they had a feast around their death or put a gravestone on top of their burial and that these are ways which we negotiate our own grief and our own loss and our own relationships, um, that help people think that through for themselves, well, I think that should increasingly be what we do and one of the ethical outcomes or consequences of our work should be to help people to engage with that in a healthier and more fulsome fashion.

I’d like to develop that much more as a kind of an area of research in the future, so I’ve got a colleague [redacted] who’s at the moment using her archaeological case studies to help palliative care nurses think about what people think about death and she’s using very ancient case studies which avoids all sorts of ethical problems to talk them through intimacy of caring for the dying and the dead and what people might think about their remains and the . . . and what people might do, or might want to do, around burial. And she’s just got major funding to work with those nurses to train them in those kinds of skills and I think that’s marvellous because it’s a much more creative engagement for those nurses to think about death and burial at one remove almost, but also to do a bit of thinking outside the box and she’s been holding workshops actually with hospice patients where they’ve been, she’s been taking objects from burials and saying well, they were buried with this pot, or they were buried with this brooch and people in hospices have actually been crafting things to be interred with or to leave behind, so the power of talking about grave goods and the meaning of things as tokens of us or mediators of us between the living and the dead, again I think that’s something very strong that we could develop more explicitly. But obviously it would need to be done terribly sensitively, but I can see that that might bring some good in terms of working with grief counsellors and this notion of the memory box, if the
parent is dying before their child and at untimely points, you make a memory box and put objects in it that they can come back and encounter, well, we can, you know, I feel we could have a contribution to make in terms of thinking about what that might look like or different ideas about that, um, so yeah and then at a grand scheme, of course, the wider data that we gather on past populations contributes to long-term histories of disease, changes in belief, population demography information, as well as that bigger picture, I think it’s got something much more visceral and personal to offer people and I think we should do it more and be more explicit about it and that’s why, despite all the debates about human remains in museums and excavations and reburials, I think we should dig up human remains, I think we should analyse them, I think we should display them and I think we should be bolder about their use to talk to us about our own feelings.
### Appendix 23

#### Interview with Dan

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Please can you describe your background in archaeology and the training or qualifications that you have.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Generally? Or like related to human remains?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>We’ll start generally and then go into specifics.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>[Redacted] Ok, well, degree-wise, I did . . . it’s technically the degree was combined studies, but it was archaeology and history . . . and then I did a Masters in local and regional history which started an archaeological element, but although it was more local history based . . . my sort of thesis was on the archaeology of [redacted], so I did a sort of case study on [redacted], really. Erm . . . that’s like, I suppose . . . academic type stuff. I did a, like, teaching qualification as well around that and I suppose from a fieldwork perspective, I did my training . . . some with the university [mutters]. It weren’t that good, but a lot of it was through [redacted], so I did like so many . . . I think about four months of like crash-course training with them and then I worked for them as a field archaeologist for a while, but at the same time I was working up at other places as well, different units and things, different areas. Erm . . . so, yeah, that’s probably it, really, in that sense, but how I got, I suppose, into doing what I’m doing now is, I started off by teaching . . . from that perspective. [Redacted] it was basically teaching archaeology, but not accredited, y’know, so for adult education groups and also family learning [redacted].</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So when was the first time you encountered human remains?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Erm . . . through excavation, you mean? Or just generally?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Generally.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>I did, erm, at university, for my undergrad, we did an entire module on human remains and um, we got like bits passed round, sort of thing, y’know?</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Actual bits of . . .?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Yeah, yeah, skeletons, yeah, not dead things, but skeletons . . . so yeah, so we got, yeah, we spent some time learning about skeletal remains and then we were sort of passed samples round, but they were actual, y’know they weren’t modern replicas or anything like that, they were actual human remains. I never did ask where they came from! But what was weird though, and I always remember this, [redacted] is that our lecturer passed this skull round . . . so I can’t remember how many of us there was, but if there was sort of</td>
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10/15 of us, but it was like being passed all the way round and everyone was like, “Yeah, cool! No problem” and then he went, “And now I’ve got a severed head to pass around” and everyone went “WHAT? WHAT?” and he was like “No, I’m joking”, but why does that bother you when you’ve got a physical human skull . . . what’s the difference? So it was a massive discussion, really, about what is the difference and the general perception was because the skin, the flesh has gone, so you don’t associate with it any more . . . so yeah, that was the first time I sort of came into physical contact with them. Obviously, I’d seen them in museums and things . . . and probably, my very first experience in museums was seeing like Egyptian mummies . . . which I wasn’t too keen on in all fairness . . . just the fact that they’ve got them displayed in a sarcophagus, then they’ve got them with the sarcophagus open and then they’ve got it by the side, one unwrapped and I just thought that’s a bit, y’know, it’s still a dead person, so I don’t know, I just think sort of the ethics of it.

11 K What did you think of the Manchester Museum’s cover-up of its mummies? Did you hear about that? It was a few years back.

12 D No, but that is where I saw it though, at Manchester.

13 K Oh, it was Manchester.

14 D Yeah, but I don’t if that was . . . this was a long time ago, so I don’t know if that was, y’know, the same sort of . . .

15 K Yeah, this was like 2008/2009? Something like that.

16 D That was way later, obviously before then. Have they covered . . .?

17 K They did an experiment with covering up some mummies to see . . . it was part of a sort of exercise to see how human remains should be displayed but it wasn’t very popular with the public, they wanted them all unwrapped again.

18 D Really? Well, locally, [redacted] have got the same thing, so really it’s on a local, no, it’s not [redacted], sorry, it’s [redacted] and they’ve got stuff on like the local area and they’ve got [laughs] one random case with a couple of mummies in, but that’s the same again, that they’ve got one in a sarcophagus and then one open and unwrapped, y’know? I don’t know. We could talk all day about whether you should or should not but, I saw an interesting one recently, I went to Dublin Museum last year, ’cause they got a bog body display, yeah . . . and how they did it is, it was in a big, open plan room, but they created, so they put, obviously, the remains in glass cabinets, but they’ve built like a fake wall around them, sort of thing, so each one was like inside this circular theatre . . . so you had to like walk in and spiral around to be able to see it. So there’s a sign up saying “There are dead remains behind here” and . . . it doesn’t bother me anyway, I wanted to see them . . . but, bog bodies are just different really, because they’re so well preserved. So there was one, y’know, you could literally get down and you were, like, face-to-face with an Iron Age person’s face. And you could see his, like, eyebrows and his stubble and . . . it was just weird then, because I was just thinking, “This is a dead body”, you know what I mean? Whereas as I look at an infinite amount of cremation pots and bones and whatever else in museums and never think that I’m looking at a dead person. I don’t know . . . it’s strange; it just took me back to that thing at university again when he said
that we disassociate y’know?

19  K  Yeah, the skin makes . . . a difference.

20  D  Yeah, I guess . . .

21  K  Recognisably human, I suppose.

22  D  Yeah, I suppose.

23  K  How about in terms of excavating . . . when was the first time you encountered human remains?

24  D  The first site . . . we did, when I worked for [redacted], we did a prehistoric cremation, well, basically we didn’t know, it was a prehistoric cemetery site and they knew there was going to be stuff there, because they’d found a lot of flint and other stuff from field-walking and y’know, bits and pieces, but it was a quarry site, so the diggers were stripping back a massive area, y’know, like ten football pitches, absolutely huge, and as they did that, you could see all the cremation pits, y’know, just like hundreds of them, all over the place, so we had to excavate, y’know, a sample of those, ready for it being quarried away, so . . . I personally had to excavate cremation burials and then there was only four of us in the team, there was just four on this site and the guy who was the project officer, well then the digger uncovered human remains, as well as cremations, an inhumation burial, and he excavated that, but obviously we were there and we saw it and it was a Neolithic female burial and she’d died in the very late stages of pregnancy, so her baby’s like, skeleton, was still there . . . and it was quite bizarre, really, that y’know? There was no one else around, almost. It was like . . . it was November or December, so it was like a cold and misty morning and there’s this like Neolithic skeleton and you think “God, first time anyone’s seen this for 6000 years”. It was that personal thing, that . . . seeing dozens and dozens of skeletal remains but never one like that and I’ll never probably see it again, y’know, with the baby’s remains there as well, so it slowly became like really personal. You could sort of relate, again, because it was shown it to be human and I suppose that’s what that skin thing does, y’know? Makes it as if it’s a person again, instead of like bones.

25  K  Was the presence of juvenile remains particularly affecting, do you think?

26  D  No, not to me, personally. Not really, in the sense that it was just . . . y’know, another dead person in that sense. It was no more . . . because it was like a baby’s skeleton; it was no more than this female skeleton or any of the cremations that I physically dug myself. So, not really.

27  K  Are human remains objects, people or both?

28  D  Um . . . it’s a tricky one because, obviously, they are people but maybe if you think of a complete skeleton as a person, but if you find a random finger bone or a leg bone . . . I have found disarticulated remains that were, y’know, like I do a test pit project in [redacted] and we found disarticulated human remains then and I think, I can’t remember, I think it’s something like a rib bone and something else . . . I don’t know, maybe like a ball socket, y’know, off of a joint or something like that, but, it didn’t really make me think of it as a person, they were just random bones. Do you see what I mean? Rather than . . . you wouldn’t go, “Ooh, here’s a burial”, but it’s
interesting that, obviously, if we had found a complete burial, it all has to stop and you’ve got to get the proper regulations, y’know, and you’ve got to get permissions to exhume and everything, but what about stray bones? Why doesn’t that . . . see what I mean? Why is it not seen as a person? So, I don’t know, maybe for me, it’s a bit of both, full burial: person, disarticulated . . . but I still think it’s more about the information we can get from them, cause I think if it’s a full burial then it’s likely to be in-situ, whereas if you’re seeing jumbled up, disinterred remains, it’s likely to be disturbed, so it’s probably out of context, but then, they’re still human remains at the end of the day, so they’ve got to be, y’know. I was about to say disposed of [laughs], but that’s not the right word, but you know what I mean? Like reinterred or whatever goes on afterwards, treated with respect, but . . . how many sort skeletons do you see in boxes on shelves somewhere? Is that really how . . . that’s not how I want to end up, so I think that’s one of the big issues, y’know, for me. It’s alright digging them up but then you can’t just keep them in boxes and do nothing with them forever. It’s someone’s human remains, so . . .

29  K  Do you think museums tend to warehouse human remains then or . . . ?

30  D  I think so, not . . . the trouble is, we’ve got so much stuff from past fieldwork, y’know? I’m trying to think who it was now . . . there was a famous skeleton that someone had dug up from like Stonehenge or one of the barrows from round there or something, and they always thought it was lost and then it turns up, y’know, in a museum, found in this box. How did they not know that they’ve got this stuff? But we did like this small thing at [redacted] as well, as it’s got its own collection store and the guy who used to run it in the 80s, he’d built up a comparative collection, just of animal bones, but they’ve got bones of like . . . turtles, crocodiles, giraffes, y’know, every bird and fish you could name all stored there, but they’ve got some human remains as well and again, they don’t know where they’re all from, y’know, it’s just . . . what are these human remains . . . go to any museum and they’ve probably all got them, it’s probably the same situation, they’ve got all these human remains, some know where they’re from, some don’t, some have been passed on through other collections, but should you be doing that, y’know? Big issue.

31  K  So where do you stand on the issue of reburial?

32  D  In the sense that should they be reinterred? Yeah, I think so, yeah. However, the thing that really bothers me is from a religious perspective because we go “We must rebury them, we must reinter them” and whatever else, but then we’re giving them a Christian burial almost that, well, if it’s a cremation burial, it was put in under a pagan religious belief system that we don’t know what that was, but it clearly wasn’t Christian. So should we be re-interring them in the same way? Where do we reinter them then? Surely they should go back where they were put, because that was a sacred place, we assume a sacred place, to them then, so it could have been, y’know, a cemetery in the Bronze Age. Just because it’s not now or in their own period or in the Saxon period or whenever, now, y’know, it’s a housing estate. Well, that’s now, to us. If we’re lucky enough to live another 10,000 years, it won’t be a housing estate then, it’ll be something else to whoever lives there and so, really they ought to go back there.

I mean, again, I could give you a nice local example that, [redacted] where I do a lot of work, there was an um, a school being . . . was gonna be built [redacted] so I did some test excavations, found human remains and they
were Saxon. They’d been laid out over a Roman villa site, they recorded it all and built the school anyway, but then they wanted to extend the school, so they bulldozed a bit out for an extension and they hit an Anglo-Saxon cemetery, so on the one bit they exposed, it’s probably about as big as from that wall to the window, 225 burials, all laid out, proper graves. And they weren’t properly excavated, they guy who was doing the watching brief quickly drew where these 225 skeletons were and they were bulldozed out and that was 1970s, so that’s just like 40 odd years ago and this is what’s happening and no one knows where all those remains went … 225 skeletons . . . they weren’t preserved, the local people said that . . . the local rumours, they were taken down the tip, some people said that they know some were reinterred, but they were reinterred in the Minster’s cemetery site, y’know, in the graveyard, so they’d been interred in a modern-day graveyard, I guess, but these are from a Saxon burial site, one that was carbon dated was 8th century, 8th/9th century, so . . . again, when you look at his reports, it actually tells you what happened to them, they were all reburied in the spoil heap. So right where they bulldozed out is big sort of bank, they’re all in there and again, there’s records at the time of school kids playing on that area and bits of bone coming out, but it’s just funny that, well, it’s not funny, that some local people think they were reburied, some think they were taken to the tip, no one really knows. The report says they were all buried under this heap, but the heap’s nowhere big enough to have the remains of 225 people, so . . . it is a contentious issue. Well, the thing that bothered me again is, because I was just a field archaeologist, we saw that Neolithic skeleton, then I moved on, so I don’t know what happened to it, where it went, but that was Neolithic, so it shouldn’t have been reinterred, in the sense that it wasn’t Christian. So, what did, y’know . . . what did the powers that be do with it? I don’t know. And that’s just like one little experience, isn’t it? I could name you another 10 and every other archaeologist could probably name you another 10, so it’s clearly a massive issue, what’s going on?

| 33 | K | How would you go about dealing with . . . how would you . . . ? |
| 34 | D | You mean like regulating reburial? |
| 35 | K | Yeah, what would you propose? |
| 36 | D | I don’t know, because it’s difficult again, the law changes so much, I don’t think, y’know, unless an archaeologist specialises in human remains, I don’t think they perhaps do know, I wouldn’t say it’s across the board, what is the current situation because they changed the policy, didn’t they? You could have only so long to study it, I think it was like, you could have, after digging it up, you’ve got a year or whatever, to study it before it has to be reburied. And as a lot of archaeologists argued, that’s not long enough, because not all excavations take into account that you’re going to find human remains, so the post-ex budget might not cover, I mean imagine that . . . you thought, alright, we might find eight skeletons, you find 225 … well, what do you do then? You know, how do you regulate it and how long should you have to physically study it? I mean, why a year? Where was that plucked from? Do you see what I mean? It’s not a religious thing and it’s not . . . I don’t know . . . it’s not an ethical thing. It’s just, well, let’s pluck a figure out the sky and say, ”Right, you’ve got a year to study it and then it’s got to be reburied”. Should it be case by case? I don’t know. I don’t really know what the answer is, but I can’t imagine that there’s a one-size fits-all, because it’s different to have, you know, three skeletons or 300 hundred |
skeletons, so . . . I honestly don't know what the answer is, from a personal perspective, how I would try and answer that.

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<td>Do you think . . . the wishes of the dead are considered in terms of them being excavated and going into a museum?</td>
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<td>Erm, I think they do . . . but I guess, again it's on a case-by-case basis. I always remember, again, when I was at [redacted] the guy who was a curator there, a chap called [redacted] he took us round, probably in the early to mid-2000s, so about 10 years ago I’d say and he’s moved on now, but his policy was he would have human remains on display, but not bones. He wouldn’t have bones out on display, even though they’d got them and he would have cremations on display, in the pot, but only if the pot was on the top shelf of the cabinet, so you could see the pot and you knew the bones were in there, but you couldn’t see into the pot and see the bones. He liked them to be displayed in that manner [laughs] and I just thought . . . I understand where you’re coming from, but you’re still displaying them, what difference does it make whether someone can see them or not? You’ve still got that pot of bones, as it were . . . and then I remember, again, last year I went to the British Museum to the prehistory bit because I do quite a lot of stuff on religion and prehistory and trying to understand beliefs, and the thing that struck me there was, there was a site, I can’t remember, I think it might have been Yorkshire somewhere, where they’ve got four pots, they were Bronze Age, y’know, ceramic vessels, four of them, about that size [mimes size of pot with hands] and each one had got a bone in it, so they were excavated as four, each one with . . . it was the same bone, it could have been like a leg bone or whatever, but I think it was sheep, so it’s not human remains, but clearly it’s got a ritual function, whatever’s going on I don’t know, but that’s just on display . . . so, it’s not a human, but it’s still a living thing. See what I mean? What about animal remains? If we’re going to start saying what about human remains, well what about animal remains? Should we differentiate between them? It still goes back to that thing, doesn’t it? You could see a dog skeleton, but if you put a dead dog in a cabinet, there’d be uproar. Do you know what I mean? So, clearly there is a link.</td>
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<td>Do you think it’s important that people do get to see human remains on display?</td>
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<td>I don’t know . . . it’s tricky, in the sense that . . . for skeletons, not really, I mean, what do you get from that? I could go and look at the museum and see some Roman skeletons, but what does that actually tell me? If I could go and see an Iron Age bog body and that does tell me something because it’s almost . . . it sounds strange though . . . it’s captured the person, so you actually see what an Iron Age person looks like, y’know? That Iron Age person’s bones are exactly the same as my bones, 3000 years later or whatever, but physically, they may have been different, I don’t know. Same about studying, y’know, Neanderthals or whatever else . . . Ok, Neanderthal bone structure is different to ours, but they’ve still got arm bones, do you know what I mean? Rib bones and everything else, but their physical make-up was different, so it’s tricky. I don’t really see what we get . . . I can understand studying the bones, but what do we actually get by going to see them? Especially just the general public, we all know what a skeleton looks like, why do we need to see one or assume we do? I don’t know.</td>
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<td>In that case, do you think museums should use replicas to get around this</td>
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| 42 | D | Possibly. If the replicas are in a glass cabinet, what difference is it to having a photograph of the actual remains? Do you see what I mean? You can’t touch them, you can’t move them around or whatever, so you can only see how they’re displayed, if that makes sense . . . to see a picture of it will only tell you the same amount of stuff, although having said that, in the Jorvik centre in York, they’ve got some, I can’t remember if they’re Roman or if they are Viking skeletons that they excavated from somewhere in York and they’ve got wounds on them, so they’ve got, you know, sort of breaks in the bone where swords hit or an axe has hit and they had one who was definitely Roman, he’s got bite marks on his pelvis from they think a lion and the suggestion was . . . was he from a gladiatorial arena, but he was found in York, so they’re going “What on earth? Why has someone got a lion bite?” So . . . seeing that helps, but again, the general public . . . I don’t know. They’re going, “Yeah, there’s holes in that bone where something’s bit it”.

| 43 | K | Do you think there’s an argument that perhaps people see their first dead body in a museum in our culture, because death is hidden away?

| 44 | D | Yeah, maybe, but at the same time, they’re still not dead bodies, they’re seeing bones, do you know what I mean? So it’s still not a dead person. So, if we are saying that we’re disassociating between bones and physical bodies, then it’s not really making up for that, in that sense, but I do think that perceptions have probably changed a lot since . . . well, if you think in just 200 years, go back 200 years ago, you could have people who were bodysnatching and that’s like . . . I’m not going to say that it’s part of everyday life, but people could physically dig up dead bodies and it not bother them, and the scientific community receive them and it not bother them, as it’s still part of everyday life, you know? You could perhaps even see dead people on the streets, but now . . . because we’ve got undertakers that do all that for us, we see none of it, do we? Well, not in our culture anyway, obviously in some cultures they still do, but I don’t know, we are very sort of disassociated from death and dead bodies, but again, I don’t really see skeletal remains bridging the gap. I don’t know . . . no amount of skeletons you see in a museum is ever going to prepare you for the moment you see an actual dead person, you know, a relative or whatever, ’cause I assume that’s the only time that most people are going to see a dead person, if you see a relative, d’you see what I mean? So, it’s still not going to prepare you for that.

| 45 | K | So do you think, in that case, that more collections of human remains should be reburied then? If there’s not an argument for them to be on display?

| 46 | D | I think it goes back to that idea about how much you can study them and then . . . I don’t know [sighs] I think maybe if people can make the case that they need to stay un-reburied for a certain amount of time because of scientific reasons and then when they feel they’ve learned as much from them as they can, then maybe re-inter them, but surely that goes back to the question of should we actually have dug it up in the first place? From a . . . the sticking point is going to come from a development or business perspective, for example, that site with those burials on from [redacted] someone’s bought that land now, the school’s gone, they sold it off for development, someone bought it to put houses on, some archaeology’s been done and there’s more burials there . . . so the argument is, well, do we reinter them, do we schedule that bit because it’s part of a burial ground and
whatever else and allow them to develop the other side. It should never have been an issue, I don’t think. . . it’s unfortunate for the developer, but if he’s bought a plot of land that turns out to be a burial site, then tough, it should stay as a burial site. I know he’s lost his money, so what happens then? But maybe it should be that archaeology is done before this land is sold, you see what I mean? It’s always the issue isn’t it? Developers buy some land, the law is there for them to pay to have archaeology done, but if anything’s found, remotely interesting, it might be scheduled, it could be human remains . . . maybe they see it as the risk they’ll take, but what that’s doing is making developers, y’know, developers over here and archaeologists over here and . . . developers just see archaeologists as a hindrance. Human remains probably have a big role to play in that, ‘cause what . . . and it’s not just that, is it? If those remains are dug up, reburying them somewhere else is [laughs] besides the point, really. They had a perfectly good resting place in the first instance, but . . . who wants to live in a house that is then built on top of a burial ground; do you know what I mean? So then . . . but do they have . . . should that be law? For them to say? Do you see what I mean? Well, actually we built these houses and we’re selling them, should that be stipulation that . . . to tell the potential buyers that this was an Anglo-Saxon cemetery site? Some people are not going to be comfortable about that then and it goes back to that issue of ethics and whatever else, so I don’t know, I don’t think there are any answers, in all fairness.

47 K Do you think the Ministry of Justice is doing a good job at managing archaeological excavations of human remains?

48 D They’ve got, in all fairness, an impossible task and I think it could well come to a head, in the sense that, in all fairness development archaeology is covered because development archaeology is very, very controlled, professional trained archaeologists, they may not be trained in excavating human remains, but you’d imagine that there would be someone within that unit or they call on specialists that are, so it’s regulated in that sense . . . but what about community archaeology? Because development archaeology is dropping . . . obviously, we’re in a recession, so there’s less and less development going on, so there’s less and less development archaeology going on, community archaeology . . . as that sort of declines, community archaeology is on the increase, but those people aren’t trained, they’re not trained as archaeologists, let alone how to deal with human remains, so what happens then? If any community project found human remains, it would all stop anyway. It’s by-the-by, that’s just a proper burial, if you know what I mean? You come across a full burial; you can clearly see what it is. What about like I said, we found disarticulated human remains and it was only because one of our group is an ex-surgeon who knows bones, we were looking at . . . we’ve got that expertise, I could see it was a rib bone [laughs] I could see it was like a ball socket, do you know what I mean? But he could look at the bones and know exactly what he was seeing, but 99 per cent of community groups wouldn’t have that experience, so who’s regulating that? So that goes down to county archaeologists, but how can they govern everything? Do you know what I mean? There’s probably 50 projects going on in [redacted] at the moment, how can they regulate everything and so you talked about that thing about my background and training, and I’m an archaeologist, but the majority of the people I work with are not. I’m the one that’s training them, but only in the very basics; do you know what I mean? You’ve gotta [indecipherable], you’ve gotta do proper training, so you know, to go back to your point, how does anyone regulate that? They’re making the sort of . . . they’re the regulatory body, but they don’t know what’s going on
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| 56   | D                | Um . . . no . . . well, sort of in the sense that . . . well, I know what should happen and I know how it should be excavated or whatever else, so it prepares me for finding them and digging them up, but at the same time, it cannot prepare me for finding them, if that makes sense. It can prepare me for, like, how to go about what to do, but it can’t prepare me, personally, for that experience. We did actually find, on a dig this last summer, um, we found a load of medieval pottery, but then there was a big, what looked like a full intact bowl . . . um, y’know, purposefully buried within this pit we were digging and it had a bone sticking out of it and because it was quite fragile and we didn’t know what it was, we sort of did the [indecipherable] of digging around it and digging the soil out to excavate. Back in the lab, which is in my house, but . . . [laughs] . . . as I started to, sort of, y’know, just dig it out really carefully, out of the ground sort of thing, I then thought is this . . . is this a cremation burial? Is this a pot? Because that’s what it looked like,
y’know? A pot, ok, and with cremation, as you probably know, I’m sure, it’s only in modern times that a cremation is a proper cremation, turned into ash, dust, whatever. Prehistoric cremations, you can’t get the temperatures to get the bones to disintegrate completely, so you’ve still got, y’know, large chunks in there and sometimes big bones as well and that’s what I wondered, was it a cremation pot? And that gave me an uneasy feeling, y’know? I’m sort of . . . I wouldn’t say used to it, as I haven’t done that many, but I have worked on sites where we’re digging up cremations, burials and whatever else. It can’t . . . even now, it can’t still prepare you, the fact that I’m then thinking this could be like someone’s human remains and I’m digging it up, is a bit weird.

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<th>Do you think it’s a bit of a taboo to disturb the dead?</th>
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<td>Yeah, in the sense that, like I say, we’re disassociated, that most people, I think, see the dead as the dead, if that kind of makes sense. But obviously, you know, I’ve done so much research into so many different cultures, [redacted] [laughs], but this fact that you go right back into the classical world and you’ve got people who are murdered and they will cut digits off them, or noses, on the belief that if they’re not whole then they can’t come back to seek revenge, so you’re talking about something that’s been around for thousands of years and we’ve got this, like, very modern perception of who the dead are. We just said 200 years ago, in fact even 150 years ago, very, very different view on things, so . . . I don’t know, we see it, like I say, with this modern mind-set … but a lot of people within this modern mind-set still have that belief, “Ooh, there’s a curse” or we shouldn’t dig this up, um, and especially those, it’s difficult to call them pagans, ‘cause it’s not categorically true, y’know, there are a dozen different types of pagans who all get branched under one umbrella, as it were, but the ones that dress as druids and protest around stone circles . . . y’know, their belief systems, the spirits of the dead are still there, still within these sites and monuments . . . it is interesting though, [redacted] but it came up about this thing, he does a lot of dowsing, so he’s quite into spiritual energy and leylines and everything else and we’ve used dowsing on site and his main thing was why is it that archaeologists take the upmost care to dig stuff out of the ground and no care whatsoever to put it back. So, why is it, he said, you spend hours scraping away and then you dig and just shovel it all back in? Y’know, the point is, from his perspective, the archaeologists are looking for information, so you take that information out, but his point, what if it’s a spiritual site? You actually forget any human remains that are there, you’re actually not treating the site itself with any respect, so I’m not just talking about out in a field somewhere, talking about if we excavate Stonehenge. How much care was taken, y’know, in the recent Stonehenge Riverside Project, how much care was taken? Probably none, because we don’t think of it like that, do we? But pagans see those sites as spiritual places that those human remains exist within, so that’s never taken into consideration, I don’t think. We just say these are all mad loonies, dressed in bedsheets or whatever, that’s how the media perceive them or whatever else. But at the same time, the pagans don’t see it from an archaeologist’s perspective, I’m sure sometimes they do and they do work together and whatever else, but . . . y’know, public perception is they’re a load of loonies and their perception is they’re a load of destructive archaeologists and whatever else.</td>
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| 59 | K | Do you think there is any similarity between neo-pagans . . . their claims, to the situation in Australia and other places with a colonial past? Do they have |
Do you mean in terms of, say, Native Americans? I guess, in that sense, but then on the flipside... that archaeologist and that person from the public and that neo-pagan are no different, they are all the relatives of those people buried on that site, you see what I mean? Whereas Native Americans are a bit different, if you're not a Native American in that sense, however, the neo-pagans have got about as much connection religiously. I'm going to get shot now for saying this, but they are not... they are not the same pagans that were there 3000 years ago. Their beliefs are based on stuff that was made up in the 1700s or whenever [laughs] from people being interested in these sites, y'know? The antiquarians are making this cool again, to be into druidism and whatever else. Where's this stuff... what is it based on? And actually, if you looked to people who are actually more practising pagans and druids and whatever else, they've probably got much more of an idea that they're not the ones that do go out and share that publically, so it's tricky again, but at the same time, I don't think religion or beliefs or anything else should come into it, it should be about actually, y'know, we no longer have that connection to our land. Do we actually care about it in that sense? So you could think of green energy and all this other stuff is based on that... based in that sort of belief system, in the sense that those prehistoric remains we're digging up are very connected to the land. If we perhaps were still, from a spiritual or religious perspective, connected to the land, we might think differently but most of us aren't. So... y'know, this idea that the river and the land, the hill, have got spirits and whatever else... if we all still believed that, then the practice of digging up any site or human remains... should we do this or should we do that? I don't think it would be as much of an issue, do you know what I mean? It would be within our society's psyche almost... um, it annoys me in the sense that... who would go and dig up a churchyard now... we wouldn't do it. But why? Because we're allegedly a Christian country and that's a Christian site and they're relatively modern burials, but what difference is that to a 300 year old cemetery? A 500 year old cemetery? A pagan cremation cemetery? A Native American whatever... it's just bizarre and why in a Western, in our western society, why we see a massive difference is beyond me, really. You just wouldn't go and dig a churchyard up, would you, with burials in? But that comes to that point, when is... when is a dead person truly dead? Do you know what I mean? That we probably wouldn't say, "Well, they've been in the ground 200 years now, they're long gone, clear all that, we can start building houses on it".

Do you think time is a big deciding factor in deciding when is appropriate to excavate and display human remains?

Yeah, maybe. It's that perspective, isn't it? That would we, y'know, you find me a museum with someone from the 1920s or alright, that's probably flippant in the sense that there's still people alive that were in the 1920s, but go back to, I don't know, the Victorian period, there's probably no one alive from the 1800s [laughs] The First World War is a prime example, now that we're getting to that stage where, I don't even know if there is anyone left, no... I know that's in terms of finding them and whatever else, so has that gone out of the modern mind-set? But people will say "No, no, because my grandad fought" or whatever, yeah but your great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather was buried down there [laughs] and you stuck him in a glass cabinet! Do you see what I mean? So, how do you disassociate? When do you disassociate? Should we be having... should museums have people
from the 1860s on display? They wouldn't, I guess.

63 K Probably not.

64 D No, so 1700s . . . I don’t know what the answer is. What is the youngest human remains on display? You should know this! There’s one for you to find out! Yeah, but, you see what I mean? So I’d be interested to know. You’d imagine it’s gotta be at least 1500s?

65 K Do you think maybe that’s why Body Worlds kicked off such huge controversy? Because those were recent bodies put on display, these aren’t archaeological …

66 D Maybe, but then we’re talking about a society who, y’know, streams live an autopsy [laughs] I mean [scoffs], you make the case, I suppose, that that’s . . . y’know, from an education point of view, why is it? I’m never going to dissect anyone, so what the hell do I need to see that for? Do you see what I mean? It’s just a bit [sighs] . . . I don’t know . . . how can we expect, from an archaeological perspective, this whole issue of human remains to ever be resolved, or find any way, any mid-ground anywhere when we can do stuff like, y’know, putting a half de-fleshed horse on display or whatever it is they did and you know, human remains with the skin removed. Is that the thing you mean?

67 K Yeah.

68 D Streaming that tax driver’s autopsy, I mean . . . [sighs] It’s just bizarre. Keep me anonymous!

69 K Something that you hinted at before . . . this is a bit of a personal question, so you don’t have to answer it if you don’t want to, but do you have any spiritual beliefs? And do those, in any way, perhaps affect the way you see human remains?

70 D Not in that sense, I suppose . . . I see what you mean, in terms of that I’m not a Christian, so, you know, this whole idea that . . . but it’s difficult for me to say, as I’m not a Christian, so I don’t really understand the Christian religion, but given the basic explanation that you die, and you’re buried, and you go to heaven and whatever else, I don’t know how much anyone questions anymore is does disturbing that burial affect that spirit that’s up in heaven? I mean, it’s a very stupid question for me to pose because it probably doesn’t work like that, but I don’t know, and then it goes back to that point, well, if we are a Christian society still, go back to the Saxon remains from [redacted] they were Christian burials, we think, because they’re aligned east-west and they haven’t got any grave goods, it’s from a period when we should be Christianised, so fair enough, so does us bulldozing two hundred of them not affect the two hundred souls that are up there? Do you see what I mean? So my own spiritual beliefs maybe sort of sway things, but it doesn’t . . . I suppose it doesn’t, because if I were to excavate a Christian burial, I would still treat it the same way as, y’know, a pagan cremation burial, but I don’t tend to have any religious links to either of those. Do you see what I mean? So it doesn’t, in that way but at the same time, I can appreciate this thing about the earth and whatever else. You can’t, y’know, you can’t study prehistory like I do and not understand what people . . . people have seen that religion and humans link with the earth for a lot longer than we have in modern times, do you know what I mean? So . . . does that even answer that
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<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I think so.</td>
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<td><strong>72</strong></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>But no, from a purely . . . well, again, my belief system wouldn’t come into play through archaeology though, because that’s not, you know, you’re operating professionally, to professional codes and standards. I’m a member of the IfA, so I have to adhere to their standards, y’know, as do any archaeologists, we have . . . the law is the law, y’know, you’ve got codes of practices, you’ve got to follow them, regardless of your beliefs or whatever else. It’s judgement calls then, though, because why do you not need . . . maybe you do, what is classed as “You need a licence to exhume this burial?” Not a dog. Not a Bronze Age cremation [laughs], so, y’know, it’s bizarre really.</td>
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<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think maybe we get too hung up on human remains and perhaps the actual, physical objects that people used in the past are more . . . should be treated with a similar level of respect? Like you said with the site or the landscape, and how that should be treated with greater respect and that’s maybe what we’re missing?</td>
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<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Yeah, I think so . . . that’s that fact that everyone’s so bothered about 200 skeletons that you dig up out of a, y’know, a cemetery site, which we have to assume being Christian burials, that it’s a church. The church might have gone, we’re not aware that this is on a particular site, but if that’s gone, the confines of that cemetery from a Christian perspective were a religious, spiritual site, but our concern . . . y’know, it doesn’t respond to that, it’s just about those bones. No one ever asks that question and I suppose it’s linked back to that thing about does digging that up affect what soul, spirit, whatever, why is it just the bones? Is it not the thing that the bones were in? So should the coffin not be respected, if it’s still there? Then we think, well, they’ve dug a six foot trench to put that coffin in, is that not directly linked to your burial? Where does your burial . . . what are the confines of that? Now, I would guess, it’s however long the grave is, y’know, including the grave, the headstone, whatever’s in that grave, all that relates, from a burial perspective, to your burial. Should you then think, to be fair, maybe it should have a metre boundary around it, so maybe if there’s six graves, y’know and they go length ways and we’re saying a metre around, could you then disturb the ground a metre away and not affect . . . ? It goes back to that point, doesn’t it, that from a religious perspective, y’know, how much of those dead people is tied into that one site? So this whole issue of treating remains with respect could be irrelevant, in the sense that, well, if they need to exist, we don’t know, to pretend we do know is frankly annoying, that, well, as I always say, religion’s made up. All religions are made up. You can believe in it, that’s not the point but we invented them, otherwise go back 10,000 years and none of this stuff was around. Did they believe things then? In a 1000 years, I would imagine, that a lot of the religions are around today will have gone, or maybe 2000 or 3000 years, if we’re still around. But, y’know to think, I don’t know if we do or not, but just to think that, from a modern perspective, we think that, well, these prehistoric burials from 6000 years ago or whatever are not relevant to us anymore, ‘cause we do, otherwise cremation . . .</td>
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<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think, going back to the grave goods thing, that museums should, if they’re going to have human remains on display, should display them with</td>
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the bits and bobs that they were buried with?

76  D  Perhaps, but then that goes full cycle, doesn’t it? Some will say that we don’t want to display the remains, but they’ll display the grave goods and it’s down to, again, how much do you want to link and tie those in? ’Cause that’s like saying, well, we can show a coffin, going right back to what I said at the beginning, we can show the sarcophagus, but don’t open it and show the remains. Should we actually show the sarcophagus? It’s like showing the coffin, ’cause it’s not open, it’s fine. So should those objects be as revered as the human remains? Or are they objects? Again, who’s to say? It goes back to that thing, go back to prehistory, ’cause it is the unknown, which is a good starting point, really, in the sense that . . . what about grave goods then? How do we know what they were put in for? So imagine, like a chambered tomb or whatever, and there’s pots in there and there’s flint tools and there’s animal bones that were clearly . . . it’s meat that went in, are those offerings to the gods? Are they offerings to the people? What are they for? Some people have said, some archaeologists will argue that, the chambered tomb is basically a house for the dead and the food that goes in is for the spirits to eat that still exist in there, that belief that you die, but your spirit doesn’t go straight away, y’know, I spent time in [redacted] looking at just this sort of thing from a modern perspective, that you die and your remains are buried and then . . . y’know, seven weeks they re-inter them, then seven months, sorry, dis-inter them, clean them up, re-inter them, seven months, seven years and after seven years, then you’ve finally passed on. If they don’t do all these proper, strict, rigid rituals, it won’t move on. Maybe that’s what we still think prehistory is about, but we don’t take that into account, so should we really stick the flint axehead or the ceramic pot in a cabinet, as long as we don’t put the bones in? I don’t know.

77  K  Do you think that maybe heritage professionals, I’m including archaeologists and museum people in this, are just getting themselves tied up in circles?

78  D  Yeah, probably, and probably because there is no right answer. I don’t even know if there is an answer, well, there’s isn’t, all there is, there’s something that we’ll make a judgement call on and we’ll decide that’s the right answer and half the people will disagree and . . . do you know what I mean? The problem is that we just don’t know and there probably is no right or wrong answer, but I think most people are clear on what is not the right answer . . . do you know what I mean?

79  K  I’m backtracking now, we talked about pagans and their view of human remains, a word that comes up a lot in those conversations is “respect.” I was wondering what that means to you in terms of the treatment of human remains?

80  D  Hmm . . . it’s probably something that, y’know, exists on different levels, in the sense that, y’know, respect for the way that you excavate it, you excavate it carefully, is it . . . respect for the way you then handle them? Do you handle the remains carefully as opposed to chucking them in a finds tray [indecipherable], but it’s just that point really, that . . . if you don’t lose the fact that they’re not just archaeological finds, they’re actually someone’s remains, then that’s probably about as far as you can really go. D’you know what I mean? We’re not respecting . . . it’s funny y’know, archaeology is all about context and yet that’s the one thing that we don’t respect . . . there’s a nice quote there for you, look! But it’s true, if we were to pull a sword out of a section, [sharp intake of breath], y’know, or we placate . . . this whole thing
about metal detecting... there's another thing... are we not doing the same? We're taking the remains out and yeah, from a scientific, if you want to call it that, point of view, we're taking respect of the context, but from the ethics and everything else we're not, 'cause like I said, should they not exist in that site? Hmm.

| 81 | K | Do you think that the human remains debate and the arguments that go on is an important one? |
| 82 | D | It's tricky in the sense that, clearly it's important, erm... and, really, what else is there to parallel that? Other than losing sites to development, this whole issue of scheduling and whatever else, is probably the only other thing that, as a profession, we can fall out about, 'cause people have so many different opinions. Yeah, I think it's important, but it's down to that point that, as archaeologists, to say that we don't have to worry is perhaps not the right thing to say, but we don't, professionally, have to worry about anything other than digging them up, because we don't decide... we're not in charge of putting them in glass cabinets or doing this or doing tests, or whatever else. So that's the other issue, isn't it? To say it's an archaeological thing, it's perhaps more a heritage thing, isn't it? Well, archaeologists will dig it up, you know, you'll have the legal bodies that will decide whether it can be dug up, an archaeologist digs it up, most likely a scientist that studies them, as opposed to archaeologists, as we're not scientists and then curators and whatever else and then the public. The public have to be as liable... you know, if we're all having this argument about should they be put on display for the public, well, the public are really the ones that will decide that. Do they go... if they don't want them on display, then don't go and look at them! And then we won't need to have the debate because it's answered for us, but whilst the general public does want to go and see them, our debate will rage on, won't it? We can't... there'll be no answer, because you'll get so many people that will go and think it's a good thing and some that will think it's a bad thing, so you can't please both, but what is the way? Maybe like you said, um, replicas or photographs... or I don't know. |

| 83 | K | Do you think the public should be more involved in decision-making, in terms of heritage? |
| 84 | D | Yeah. Maybe. Again, it's that tricky thing isn't it because they don't have all the... the education and know-how and whatever else to make decisions, but that's not what we're talking about, the archaeological fraternity, the ones that make the decisions on how they're dug up and whoever else makes the decisions as to how they're displayed and whether they're dug up or whatever, the public... they're the ones that decide whether they're viewed or not, so... hmm. Maybe there should be a panel that takes two or three different people from all of those... and lock them in a room... you know, how they do with popes? Just lock them all in something until they decide and then when the smoke comes out, we'll know that it's all sorted! It won't be. |

| 85 | K | No, I suspect it's an area that we will never all agree on. |
| 86 | D | But that's another thing, when human remains are put into museums in cabinets, is that indefinite? I mean, why can't you say, well, alright, we would like to like to keep this locally, but we're not or... I don't know, we'll display these remains locally for six months in the nearest museum that's capable of doing so and then we’ll take them somewhere like London, for a...
wider view to see, it can stay in there for two years, in total, it can stay on display for two years, then it has to be reburied, so if you want to go and see it and you want to learn something from it, go. If you want to study it, study it. If you want to display it, display it and then it has to be re-interred. Is that an answer? I don’t know, because what’s two years? Why does it need to be re-interred? If it does, should it not be re-interred straight away? But that goes back to my point, should it actually have been dug up in the first place?

| 86 | K | Although most archaeological excavations are a result of commercial development, so there is an argument, I suppose, that this stuff is in the way and has to be dug up. |
| 87 | D | Yeah, and that’s prime at the moment with Richard III and that’s brought it far to the light and as much to our attention as possible . . . what about those remains? They’re gonna be reinterred, aren’t they? So . . . |
| 88 | K | And the public couldn’t see them. |
| 89 | D | So it doesn’t matter if he’s a king if he’s not a not a king, y’know, the human remains don’t take that into account. He wasn’t born a king; he was born a person like anyone else, if that makes sense, so why should he, as king, be treated differently to anyone else? And how do you know that an Iron Age bog body wasn’t an Iron Age king? |
| 90 | K | A very good point. What did you make of the Richard III excavation? Dare you go on record? |
| 91 | D | Um, it sounds like a stupid thing to say, but it doesn’t bother me, ’cause it’s not my period, it’s not an interest of mine, so . . . just like if someone said they’d found whoever, y’know, Boudicca’s remains are probably not the same thing, but if they found some Iron Age chieftain or Bronze Age or whatever, or they found some whatever, the rest of the public would be like, “Meh”, wouldn’t they? Because they’d be like, “Who the hell’s that?” But it’s the same point, that it’s like a media circus, I appreciate that, ok, he was the king of England, but . . . um, I don’t know. I went to, not long after they’d dug it up, we went to see . . . I was taking a group down to Leicester to go and look at the museum and the Roman site that’s there . . . we went to look at the exhibition as well, it had not been open long at all and they had to queue for ages, like 30 or 40 minutes in the rain and they got inside and they were like “This is rubbish, where is he? He’s not here!” It’s like . . . but y’know, you’ve followed it all on the telly, you know he’s not going to be there, but you thought he was going to be there and that’s all they were bothered about, seeing him. There might have been all sorts of artefacts in there and information . . . TV screens with this and whatever else, an interactive, and whatever else, but they weren’t bothered about that. They just wanted to see him. |
| 92 | K | Why do you think it was so important to them to see him? |
| 93 | D | I don’t know. But I think if there had been a big media frenzy about . . . y’know, the Amesbury Archer or Stonehenge Boy and he was on display, I’d think they would have had, not all of them perhaps, but from an archaeological perspective, they’d have had as much interest in seeing, if I’d said, “Oh, the Amesbury Archer’s coming to, y’know, [redacted], let’s all go and see it”, I think they’d be just as interested to see that because it’s like this person from the past and there’s that thing about saying, “I’ve seen it” and
maybe that thing about why old people go to saints and whatever, because that’s what you’re doing, it’s a similar sort of thing, it’s almost like pilgrim status, “Let’s all go down to Leicester and look at Richard III”. There you go. But we also, much more interesting, we went to look at the hole in the ground in the carpark and got shouted at by a security guard and it was like …

| 94 | K | So it was important to see the spot as well? |
| 95 | D | For them, yeah. But interestingly, that had a big tent over it, so you couldn’t actually see the physical spot where he was found, so not only could you not see his remains, you couldn’t even see his hole! But we saw the tent that covered the hole, that had contained . . . [laughs] |
| 96 | K | I didn’t know that . . . that’s very interesting! |
| 97 | D | The security guard shouted at us only because . . . it’s a private carpark and he probably gets 300 people every day going to look at his carpark, which probably just annoys him, but still … |
| 98 | K | Did you see the Richard III documentary? |
| 99 | D | No. That’s ruined that one, hasn’t it! |
| 100 | K | I just wondered if you’d seen it . . . |
| 101 | D | It doesn’t interest me, but then why should it? Because there’s an infinite amount of archaeology or history or whatever programmes on telly that I don’t watch, because it’s just . . . y’know . . . it’s the day job. It’s not my period and I don’t have any particular interest in it, other than from a professional point of view. I mean, I work on medieval sites but that’s . . . |
| 102 | K | Ok. How would you describe the experience of excavating human remains in terms of how it makes you feel? |
| 103 | D | Um, it’s definitely a weird one. You probably can’t really quote that . . . yeah, it’s not from a . . . not from a “Ooh, it’s a dead body” sort of perspective, ’cause yeah, y’know, I probably dig up hundreds of animal bones, so they’re just bones in that sense, aren’t they? You know, a rib bone from a sheep is not that much different from a rib bone from a human, in terms of digging it up, picking it up, handling it and whatever else, it’s still a bone. But I guess . . . it’s one of those things that makes you just step back for a minute and go “Ooh”, y’know? To say it’s a dead person is probably not right, is it? ‘Cause it’s not a dead person. It’s a dead person’s human, physical remains, whatever . . . but, yeah . . . I only know, really, because, as I said that . . . potential cremation burial from that summer that turned out not to be which I never did say, it wasn’t a burial at all, it was an upturned medieval jug, it wasn’t a bowl [laughs], but you couldn’t tell because of the soil, you know what I mean? Actually, it was just a jug, hollow, why it had got a bone . . . it turned out to be a sheep’s leg bone or something random in it and why that was in there, we don’t know, but, um, for the time that I thought this could be . . . that time . . . and it’s really the only time it’s happened, I had an uneasy feeling, is the best way to describe it. I don’t know why, but perhaps because it’s been quite a while since I physically excavated human remains, in the sense that it’s not really what I do anymore, most of my stuff is teaching and training and supervising community digs, I
still do some digging in there, but not on potentially sites of human remains and whatever else. Does that answer the question?

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<td>That does! This is a bit of an odd one: anyone who works with the remains of the dead, whether they be very recent or very, very old, have to position themselves somewhere on a spectrum, I suppose, that runs from absolute empathy with the remains of the dead to total clinical detachment. Where would you place yourself on that spectrum?</td>
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| Um . . . that way! [laughs] Definitely in the sense that, the respect of the remains . . . it’s irrelevant . . . age, religious beliefs . . . you don’t know. The thing is, that’s what’s hard for the public to appreciate, I think, when you’re on site, you don’t go “Ooh, that’s a man’s arm bone from the whatever period” or whatever, you just know that it’s human remains. It could turn out to be any age, you have a good idea if you know what site you’re working on, but you never can tell. So . . . I’d definitely be more towards the respect element, but that’s not just for people, I think if I found, y’know, an odd rib bone or whatever else, I probably wouldn’t feel that same manner because it kind of . . . it is disassociated from place, if that makes sense, ’cause the rest of it’s not there, so it’s clearly not from there. It’s just been disturbed over time. Last summer, I worked with [redacted] doing a test pit project in people’s gardens with students and when we worked in one garden, we found a dog burial, which was in a bin liner, so obviously, well, the household had said “It’s not our dog and we’ve been here ten years” or whatever, but it was in the way and . . . the annoying thing is, the bag went out of the section, so the bulk of it was in, but we couldn’t remove it, unless we dug into the section to get the bag, y’know what I mean? So we left it in-situ and tried to dig around it, which was interesting, but what we did is, I mean, you could feel, you could tell that it was just bones then, so it’s gone, the fact that it’s in a bin liner suggests it’s very modern. We still treated it with respect in the sense that we left it there, y’know, we got the bin liner and with nails, sort of fixed it to the side of the section, ’cause we couldn’t obviously leave it hanging, so we fixed it into the section and then when we filled our pit back in, we sort of filled around it, laid the thing back on and then carefully covered it back over. We dug a test pit, got what we needed and when it went back, that dog . . . I’m not going to say that you wouldn’t know that it’d been moved, but you wouldn’t, in the sense that it’s still buried in exactly the same place, in its bag, none of its bones were lost or whatever else. So . . . y’know, um, that was half a professional thing and half a . . . just because it’s a dog . . . it’s . . . it was the point that, I think, that dog was purposefully buried, was the issue, do you know what I mean? That this wasn’t just some random bones or it had died or whatever else, it was a physical burial, so it was treated with respect, in the sense that . . . that’s the right thing to do. From a professional point of view, from a humane point of view, perhaps. Now a lot of people would probably go, “It’s just a dog” . . . but, what difference does it make, in that sense? Y’know, it’s still the treatment of the dead and it was mostly, as I say, because it was clearly a purposeful burial and everyone there felt the same thing. That interested me, it was four or five of us, perhaps, and every single person, they didn’t even have to say, it was like an automatic response that we should respect this and what can we do. It wasn’t, shall we [indecipherable] out? It was how . . . what can we do to dig around this? I thought it was interesting that is generally people’s perceptions, but if I sat them all down in a room and asked them, they wouldn’t give me the right answer, because they don’t
know. We could all sit here and say, if we were to work on a site and then we found this burial, we’d know what we’d do. You don’t, y’know, not until you physically find it.

106  K  You made an interesting point about the public … something that I wanted to pick up on . . . what do you think they make of the work that archaeologists do?

107  D  Playing around in the muck, isn’t it? [laughs] What as a profession or . . . just as dig?

108  K  In terms of mortuary archaeology. Often, if you go on to the comments section of an online newspaper, you might see one or two, er, interesting opinions being expressed. Do you think the public is largely in favour of what archaeologists do?

109  D  Erm . . . yeah. Probably, again, because our perception at the moment is very biased because of the Richard III thing, because of the public attention that it’s difficult to know what they would make of, y’know, any burial that we might come across and can’t say that it’s a king in a carpark. It’s whatever. So, I don’t know what their perception would be on that, generally, but I guess most people would say, “Well, it’s a dead person, so you should treat it with respect”, but do they ever quantify what that actually means? I think most archaeologists, well, all archaeologists would say that they treat them with respect, but what does… quantify it, what does that mean? Y’know? It’s a tricky one with the public, it’s something that I would like to do more on, y’know, some sort of project that looks at this, because . . . you know, at the end of the day, that’s why I think the community groups that I work with, they’re . . . they’re prime, like guinea pigs almost, in the sense that they’ve got some archaeological knowledge, they’ve got loads of archaeological interest, but they’re still not archaeologists enough to be classed as public that would go to museums and look at it from a visitor’s perspective, y’know, so it would be interesting to see. And we did talk about, with the group that I’ve got at [redacted] erm . . . have you ever been to [redacted]?

110  K  No.

111  D  [Redacted] So our big discussion was, should we, er . . . they were asking us as a group, what if we were to put on an exhibition, a temporary exhibition, to display these remains. They all thought it was a good idea, probably because it’s local to them, do you know what I mean? But again, they all said, 10 or 15 of them thought it was a good idea, but obviously said there were going to be a lot of issues, but we don’t know what the public would make of that. But they’re blessed with having a museum and then a temporary exhibition in its own little room and you have to specifically go and enter that room to see whatever’s in there. So you could put something up to say this is what’s in there, I think it would be a really interesting . . . experiment’s not the right word, but y’know, ’cause you get such a flood of people that are not archaeology, I’m not going to say that they’re not interested, but they go there because it’s a nice site to walk around and whatever else. It’s got a nice coffee shop, which seems to be what people are bothered about these days, but it would be interesting to see what the public perception is, so you’d almost get so many different views, you’d get a museum’s perspective, you’d get an archaeology group’s perspective, you’d get the interested public’s perspective and then you’d get the general public’s
perspective AND you’re doing it within its own context. If you chopped all the trees down, you could probably see where its burial spot was, do you know what I mean?

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<th>You’ve probably covered this right at the beginning, but in your work with human remains, are there any examples that particularly stick out for you, for any reason?</th>
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<td>113</td>
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<td>Er, just that one that I said, that prehistoric cemetery site, with the female and the baby. That’s the one that always springs to mind, y’know? I always remember that when I went back, well, when I went back to uni afterwards . . . I remember my lecturer at the time saying that, “You’ll never forget that and that’s the thing to remember when you’re stuck at your desk, so when you’re inside and thinking, ‘Oh god, I’m sick of being stuck at my desk’, just remember that and it’ll keep you going”. It’s that thing isn’t it, you know that it’s a one-off and I know that I’ll never, ever see that again and I’ll probably never experience anything like it and that’s always the thing, the public’s favourite question, “What’s your favourite find? What’s the best thing you’ve ever found?” And I always answer that and they always go, “Meh” [laughs] “What about the gold?!” “No, no gold”. But that’s the thing isn’t it, ’cause archaeology to me is about people and what is more people than the people’s remains? So, it must y’know, really that should be at the top of the list? Human remains should be up there because they are those people that our profession is fascinated by and spends a lot of time studying.</td>
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## Appendix 24

### Interview with Marie and Christina

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<td>Can you tell a bit about your background and ... are you an osteologist or an osteoarchaeologist?</td>
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<td>Well, that’s the question.</td>
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<td>See, I would describe myself as a bioarchaeologist.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Ah!</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, and then for me, well, we had similar backgrounds, so we both did archaeology, as an undergrad, and then we both did Masters specialising. Mine at [redacted] was pure [redacted] and then I did a degree, well, a PhD with [redacted], um, looking at Roman and Iron Age people. The last year of my PhD I got a job with [redacted] to look at their [redacted] collections and then I did that for, oh, five years and then I was [redacted] and then I came back here.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Wow!</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>So, like [redacted], yeah, I did archaeology and ancient history to start with, then I was going to come and work here at the museum as an archaeologist, but when I graduated that was the first recession, so they laid off every archaeologist and then I thought, “Oh, drat! What am I going to do now?” because I don’t like being stuck in an office, I like being outside and it was actually a friend who saw the then only course that covered our topic, but at that point it was osteology, palaeopathology and funerary archaeology and it was split then between Sheffield and Bradford, so they utilised the two universities collections and strengths, so Sheffield had the anatomy and the dental school and then Bradford had the palaeopath collection because it’s got the Chichester skeletons with the leprosy, it had a better palaeopath/osteology side. Then I had . . . the joy of doing a dissertation, which was always very difficult, um, and [redacted]. So that was a really good learning experience for me, as much as for them, all I had been taught was that you needed to have an osteologist on site if you were doing a cemetery, so that the context you were providing on site would then help when it came to analyse afterwards, because there’s lots of things that we see that we have no idea of, because we weren’t there whilst they were being recorded, it then causes us problems here later on. So, I was fortunate enough to be there and then I met a lovely friend and colleague there and then went to work in [redacted] and then the [redacted] working on</td>
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different sites from different time periods, so that was a really amazing experience and then I came back to work on [redacted], which was then the biggest excavation of human remains, so that was when we all first met one another and at that time, that project was developer-funded and because it had such a large collection of skeletal remains, they’d never found anything on that scale, they had to rethink how they were going to record everything—

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<td>8</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>It was over 20,000—</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, there’s no sort of standards.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Find them, yeah.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I’ve been trying to finish this bloke off [points to skeleton] for two weeks!</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, we do outreach events for specifically, maybe for universities,</td>
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where they may teach a course, because another thing that’s over the years happened is that there was this sudden interest in osteology, but also forensics, that was the thing as well, that triggered a lot of courses and before we were really one and the same, so many years ago, I could have then gone out and done something that was forensic, because we were trained in the same way, but obviously there would be aspects that I wouldn’t have learnt, but you could do the basics, they then went diverging, so now you do forensic courses, or you do—

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<td>32</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>And in order to teach it you need to be forensically accredited.</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>So that’s, yeah, that’s sort of changed, but that meant that there was quite a sort of explosion of courses of people then teaching, but they didn’t have collections. Well, I think when I did it there was only Sheffield and Bradford.</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Well, I did mine [redacted] years ago, so there was a bit more, there was York, Southampton, London, Durham had just been started, Bradford and Sheffield—</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, ’cause Sheffield and that, they split, didn’t they? ’Cause originally they were joined, but they split. But of course, not all of them had, or have, very good collections for actually teaching practically, so in that instance, people are aware [redacted] we’re very lucky we’ve got a very good teaching collection, which is usually the disartic material and so then what they might ask us to do is, you know, they’re doing something particularly focusing on trauma or infection or teeth and because the teaching collection can sort of straddle all those different areas, we can then create a workshop for their students to come to us, so they can then have that practical experience of seeing and handling those remains with those diseases.</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>We’re very lucky with our teaching collection because it’s all the disarticulated, unstratified material that was excavated, now that doesn’t get deposited, so the opportunity to create a collection like that is pretty remote, so we’re incredibly lucky. So we have our research collection, like the ones they’re working on and then the teaching collection, is separate, so it can take a bit more rough and tumble, so we can use it for public outreach and things and so we’re not really, we don’t have to worry that [redacted], so we can manage the impact on our collections in that case [redacted]</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, that’s really interesting, but then that’s been also very interesting, as you were saying, with the impact of the cuts because a lot of the things that have been cut are things like archives in local museums, so you have this problem where field units are ending up becoming huge stores for things that can’t be deposited and if the archives are shut, they deposit with universities, so I’m now actually having to work with two universities who, only one of which is based in [redacted] to actually look at material from [redacted]</td>
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<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, because some of the universities, they want to have them because then it’s good for them to have them as teaching collections, but in other ways, that’s not good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, that does make our teeth go on edge slightly!</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, because if then you have never done a proper inventory, you’ve never done a proper assessment, they’re not marked, when they are used, even over like one semester, as it were, you will find that not everyone is in the same box that they should be and you’ve got muddling and if you do that every single year because you’ve got new people working on it, we all started off and didn’t know one end of a bone from the other, but you know, you’re given a box, the impact on that, so then if you do want to go and do other research, there’s real difficulty and problems then because if you don’t have even the very basic information to use, you have to start to try and then create that.</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>In the BAR about human remains and conservation, with the pictures of . . . it’s in like pile. Sorry, we’ve probably answered like four questions!</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>No, no that’s fine! In your opinion, why do we excavate and curate and study human remains? From your perspective, what’s important about that?</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Well, from our point of view, we’ve sort of come in at the end point, so for us, it’s because it’s urban development, so because of where we are, it’s because of the actions of [redacted] as a city, just constantly developing, and the changes in the policy in 1990 is that you then had to bring in archaeologists because we were losing so much of our history and then human remains didn’t really have a separate entity at that point, they just kind of became part of it, so they were then, at that point, just seen as artefacts. It was later on really, and probably as an impact of things that were happening in America that you then got that change in transition in what . . . what you could do with human remains, what they were, the ethics around them, who’s collecting them, who’s keeping them, what are they doing with them, that was a process that was a lot later. Initially, they were things that you would find, you’d always need a Home Office licence, because you were then disturbing human remains, but they probably weren’t sort of seen particularly within the realms of archaeology as something that was wildly different from anything else that they were having to uncover and reveal, it would all then, sort of be taken away.</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>They were really more interested in how it related to the grave goods and funerary practice, rather than the intrinsic value—</td>
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<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, rather than the actual person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>As an individual and a person in their own right, finding out about their experience and the culture that they lived in, but then also, I think more increasingly now, their value is, in terms of scientific value, is seen in [indecipherable] and stable isotopes, so people are more interested in them as a resource almost for looking at how diseases have changed over time and that kind of thing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>So yeah, the kind of sampling, the chemical analysis of them, so we’ve sort of . . . we would probably emphasise more on our macroscopic, ’cause our analysis would all be on what we can see, physically, what we can actually record, then now, like [redacted] said, it’s sort of gone to a different level because science then has developed the application of what we can do, in that sense.</td>
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<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>And that then impacts on how we manage our collections, so we have really, I would say, over the past five years, changed fundamentally how we manage our collections in those terms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, and also the sort of requests that we would get have changed in terms of what then people would be looking for, would again be using the data, and then maybe having time to go through more finite features that if you’re recording to put it on, you’re under the same, because [redacted] there would be maybe finite little fractures or different tiny lesions, whereas somebody might come and that’s a specific of their research, now recently, it’s much more about wanting to sample from them, knowing that they’re maybe from a particular time period or a particular group, they’re a particular age, they’ve got a particular disease, it’s then what you can extract, chemically really—</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Because they’re not like, interested in if it is, like the work I’ve been doing on [redacted] children, they’re not really interested in that [redacted] child’s experience or anything, or the funerary context, they’re just interested in the genomic information contained in that skeleton.</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, so it’s a different sort of outlook. I mean ’cause interestingly, in the past, the reports in relations to things like, you know, your specialist areas, we’d always just be in the appendix, with the animal bones and the pottery or something, so—</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Like in Jo Sofaer’s book, she discusses all that.</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, so really, it took time for them to come out of that and really populate whatever your monograph or story is that you’re wanting to say, was that . . . we’re seeing these changes in these people, this person had this particular lifestyle, so then you would try and put them back into the right sort of context, so they kind of came out of the appendix and moved into the main, main spotlight, so it has changed, but then we are also influenced by things that will happen, you know, overseas, so then a lot of things that changed were as a consequence of things happening with NAGPRA in the States, so that then came over here—</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, the DCMS—</td>
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<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>So then there was another change around—</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>And also, personally, is that, um, the reason . . . because we haven’t gone out and collected any of these people, they’ve all been, there is an archaeological research strategy as to why they’re being excavated, the amount of information they can then inform us about our past independent from all the other primary sources is so unique and valuable and that none of the remains are contested in any way, I mean really, we’ve never had any, any complaints at all.</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes! So even when we know the name, yeah, everyone’s got their name, we just don’t know everyone’s names, but when you’ve got coffin plates and you associate that with the remains, then when there was an interest also in like family history and trees, our data will have that we’ve got biographical information and will tell you, in terms of the site and the context number who that person is, so then we’ve had relatives who will come to say that they’re doing family research, that’s my great-great-great grandfather or great-great-great-great, but they are intrigued to know what we’ve then been able to learn, but then they’ve always been quite happy that they’re with us and they understood whatever the processes were that meant that their relative had had to be disturbed.</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Because everything we have is archaeologically derived—</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>It’s not that we’ve decided to take them out of the ground.</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, I mean, there’s things with some collections that are held, that I think personally should be reburied and repatriated because they weren’t collected in a conceptual way, but that doesn’t apply and I think also with the majority of society’s views is that they expect to see human remains in museums, they expect museums to retain them and that they actually want to know, the levels of research, because we’re able to be so transparent, particularly through social media and everything else now, I think people are quite happy and the only problem we’ve ever had is when, um, [redacted] and once we explained the situation, the person was fine and I think it’s having that transparency about why you have them, having an accurate policy, you know, so that people are aware, that actually a lot of potential issues that arise are gone because people know.</td>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, because we’re very open, it’s not that we’re doing everything behind closed doors and then because we do events where you can come to see us and then people can talk with and engage with you, then they feel happier as well and to be realistic, everyone’s in a city, nothing stays still, everything is always disturbed or destroyed and that’s something that’s happened, you know, from time immemorial.</td>
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<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Well, from the medieval period, clearing—</td>
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| 70 | M | People, when they stop and they think about it, sometimes if something does concern them, they then sort of realise that, “Oh yes, that’s the sort of thing that happens” or when you say the different means by which we have acquired these people that we look after, they’re sort of like, “Oh yes, we realise now, we understand”, but also the processes that would always go beforehand, so particularly if it’s a cemetery and often it’s the churches that want to go into their own churches or crypts or go, because
they want to build, they want to change, they can't remain static, so they are disturbing their own land area, but then to do that you will still then have archaeologists, you're still going to disturb the people and unless they are able for them to be reburied, either on site if it’s possible, but generally that’s not, they’re somewhere else, the potential is that they would come to us and so when people realise that, it isn’t because we’re sort of chomping at the bit to say that we want all these people.

| 71 | C | And when they do rebury them, it isn’t as if there’s a set process that’s consistent between samples, we’ve found that it’s very, very varied from multiple people, being kept as an individual, to multiple contexts being put into one - |
| 72 | M | Into one great big sort of pit, really. |
| 73 | C | Yeah, without any sort of identifiers, so if you did need to go and find them for any reason, it would be quite— |
| 74 | M | Yeah, you wouldn’t be able to find that one person, because we will work on a site and you will never excavate an entire site, it will be divided as to what can be archaeologically excavated and then what isn’t and if you’re again working on a site that has a large burial area or several burial areas, you’re working in association with a clearance company, so a clearance company will come in and you can literally, one side of the line, excavating it, individual bones, taking everything out as a context, you’ve then got a clearance company next to you just having to take out everyone *en masse* and then they’re being buried *en masse*, so two very different sort of processes and that, again, is something that when you say these sort of things are happening, because you know, they’re developing new hospitals or new buildings, but then people who might have concerns about why we’ve then got people here, they sort of prefer, in a way, the knowledge that someone has been lifted out that way and then come to us, rather than just being taken out and just sort of put *en masse* somewhere else, so it’s quite interesting sometimes when you talk to people, the things that they think about. |
| 75 | C | And also the way I think archaeological practice has changed so rapidly, that actually a lot of ethical issues and issues of consent and everything are dealt with even before the ground is broken now, whereas before I think a lot of contentious excavations and stuff, because none of that framework existed. And so I think actually, a lot of the problems we won’t encounter again because the profession has moved on. |
| 76 | M | Again, it’s usually one of those things that if it’s done behind closed doors or weird hoardings, that you know, people get upset or local historical societies. We had a call, didn’t we, that something was being developed and where it was being developed, their knowledge of their local area was that they may well have a burial ground there and they were getting concerned, but that should have been done before, but you know, it’s always good that people are out there, sort of aware of things, because although developers know what they are supposed to do, you will sometimes find people obviously trying to do things that they shouldn’t, so it’s good to have those societies that know their area very well and they can also maybe inform other people if they haven’t done their research properly, but again, that’s another good thing about us being here, people can contact us with things like that, so if they’re unsure of |
different areas and literally finding skeletons in attics or cupboards, they
 can then contact us with that, ’cause then like the Human Tissue Act, all
of those things that sort of changed and all the rules and regulations, you
get people who’ve had doctors in their family and then they’ve got a half-
skeleton or a whole skeleton, but they’ll be human and then they’re like,
“Oh what do we do”, so we can sort of help with things like that, which
aren’t sort of archaeological [laughs].

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| 77 | C  | In a way our curatorial practice is made simpler because we don’t have
  |    | anything that falls under the HTA, so we don’t have to have a licence. |
| 78 | M  | So yeah, we don’t have anything that’s less than a hundred years old. We
don’t have any soft tissues, a bit of hair sometimes, a few fingernails.
We’re just skeletal, so that’s really good, but then what’s good is that we
know people that do have a licence, and then have teaching collections
themselves so if you get enquiries like that where somebody’s found
something in a cupboard, you’re able to get them there because then
they’re able to utilise it if they’re doing like medical teaching, so it’s
something that they can use, yeah, so we sort of abide by all these
different rules and regulations that sort of affect us in different ways
[redacted] |
| 79 | C  | [Redacted] |
| 80 | M  | [Redacted] |
| 81 | C  | [Redacted] |
| 82 | M  | [Redacted] |
| 83 | C  | There’s that one lady, that one curator for the whole of Hampshire, for
archives— |
| 84 | M  | Oh yeah, when we did skeletons? She was trying to cover a vast area— |
| 85 | C  | All of Hampshire’s museums— |
| 86 | M  | And a lot of those then were being run by lovely volunteers, which is
fantastic, but then those people will have come from very different sorts
of backgrounds, so they can’t possibly be expected to know how you’re
supposed to look after everything. |
| 87 | C  | [Redacted] |
| 88 | M  | No, that’s it see, we’ve got that resource we can go to and then the
resource of literally, the boxes and bags and labels, the basic things that
you need— |
| 89 | C  | [Redacted] |
| 90 | M  | [Redacted] |
| 91 | K  | I volunteered in a museum for a while and we opened a box and the
skeleton had gone mouldy. I’d never seen that before. |
| 92  | C   | Oh no!                                    |
| 93  | K   | I didn’t realise that could even happen.  |
| 94  | C   | Crikey, that must have been a big clean-up job. |
| 95  | M   | Yeah, so again see, we’re very lucky because our store, [redacted] it wasn’t designed by any means for us or to be a store, but it just works really well because it stays at a constant temperature, so it’s not really, really hot, so they don’t get really brittle, it’s quite cool, it does occasionally get wet because unfortunately we’ve got every pipe it seems in the museum whizzing around, but it isn’t damp, you know, it’s not … they wanted to consider at one point putting our entire collection into the crypt of a church because they wanted to re-use a church that was no longer in use because it was consecrated ground, but of course if you go into those crypts, they are pretty grim and damp, so the [redacted] is great because it does not have that, so inherently you’ve just got that nice constant temperature and so once they’re then in the box and the bags, it stays a nice relative temperature and then they’re just moving in and out and it doesn’t seem to, we’re not faced with lovely mouldy— |
| 96  | C   | Yeah, we’re very lucky.                    |
| 97  | M   | So yeah, we are very fortunate, but that was just by chance, that space couldn’t be used for anything else, but it worked really well for us. |
| 98  | K   | For you, what do you think are the biggest challenges in terms of working with human remains? That can be practical or, whatever springs to mind. |
| 99  | M   | Um, I don’t know . . .                     |
| 100 | C   | Do you mean this as an individual or as a professional? |
| 101 | K   | Either.                                    |
| 102 | C   | So I think professionally it is the fact that the impact of the spending cuts on archives, is detrimental, that is a very serious worry because— |
| 103 | M   | Yeah.                                      |
| 104 | C   | And there are still collections where people don’t know where they are and now the cuts on jobs and the fact that a lot of museums are closing is a . . . although they have established professional routes for disposing of collections, which the SMA talk about, it’s still very worrying because it makes them more vulnerable in terms of maintaining the integrity of that collection, so if people want to go and sample Anglo-Saxons and the door is just left open to them and then five years later they’ve got no teeth left because they were all taken, it’s like kind of thinking of that because obviously it’s a fine line and once it’s gone, it’s gone and if it isn’t managed, it’s the management thing, I find— |
| 105 | M   | Yeah, the worry is that they either shut it down completely so that no one ever sees them, no one knows what’s happening to them or that, yeah, anyone can do it and I think that also, we were saying that more |
recently because of all these developments in science, which are fantastic because they answer questions that we’re very interested in and we’d like to know, but our concern then is that they are people, you know, we don’t know who they all are, but they were individuals that were living people, they are someone’s relative.

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<td>106</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>It’s interesting because they tend to call them specimens, whereas we would never, ever refer to them as specimens, they’re people—</td>
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<td>107</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>You call them people?</td>
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<td>108</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, so they’re never specimens for us—</td>
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<td>109</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted] but yeah, for us, you’ve got the pathological process, but we’ve got a person that’s got those pathological changes, that’s still that person—</td>
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<td>110</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I asked for the collagen back from a sample so that it was kept with that person, because it’s part of them—</td>
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<td>111</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>It belongs to them, yeah, but we were worried in terms of our role in caring for these people is that with these developments in science and particularly with DNA and the genetics—</td>
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<td>112</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I mean there are guidance, EH have done that <em>Science and the Dead</em>—</td>
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<td>113</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>But yeah, suddenly that’s taking us into a very different realm, and that’s a challenge for us, because that’s not our field and also the have different rules and regulations, so for them if they do any research they have to make their data freely available for every other geneticist that might want it, but they can mine that data and then they might find something that they’re looking for or they might find something else, but that could potentially be data relating to all of our people, so it takes us out to this wider sphere—</td>
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<td>114</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>So we have to, in a way, act in . . . because . . . they’re not recently dead, because they have no family and it isn’t actually an issue of consent, so—</td>
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<td>115</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>And we couldn’t get it anyway! [laughs]</td>
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| 116 | C | So we have that ethical concern, whereby we almost have to act as . . . as giving privy consent on their behalf, thinking about these things, whereas actually legally, we . . . it doesn’t exist, but we have created this . . . it’s for us, it’s part of our collection management and respecting them as an individual and ensuring that they . . . that their physical integrity is maintained as much as possible, but because they’ve been dead for so long, actually none of these considerations are pertinent, so when I talk to bioethicists about it, they find it really strange that I’m really concerned about someone who died 2000 years ago [laughs] But I go, “Yeah, but they’re all of our ancestors”, because we’re all genetically related to them, they’re in our care and we’re giving consent for something and in another sense, we have no idea how down the line that’s going to be used. And also, the fact is that we have to accept that we can control through copyright and through agreements with different researchers how their data is used and managed, but once it gets put in
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<td>117</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, you don’t have any control over it; it has a life, literally, all of its own.</td>
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<td>118</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>So yeah, if they discovered that one of the people in our collection had like, a gene that enabled them to be able to be resistant to the flu and it went in this genetic database and it was mined, that data was then mined by a health care company, is that we have no connection with that to control how that data is used.</td>
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<td>119</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, it’s sort of become devoid from us and it’s also then become devoid from that person, so it’s probably more us . . . more our construct of thinking of these as people—</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>It’s our ethical dilemma we’ve created! [laughs]</td>
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<td>121</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, and it’s our attachment to them, because you do get attached, so you feel responsible for them and then the individuals you record, as well, particularly, you have an even greater attachment to because you’ve really sort of got to know them because you’ve looked at them so closely, so you begin to get that sort of relationship with them and when you do know some of the names, like some of the people we know the names for, I know more about them than I do my own family! [laughs] Because you spend time with them, so yeah, it’s more our connection with them, as to how we feel with all of these other sorts of scientific developments charging on, you know, but I think it’s good that we are . . . that we raise those concerns because otherwise, as [redacted] was saying, people won’t see them as the people that they are, they will just see them as some sort of resource that you can just keep taking a little bit here and a little bit there and then we’re left with no integrity.</td>
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<td>122</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Because that’s how they view it, as a resource to be mined, rather than respected.</td>
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<td>123</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, and it’s sort of like, also one of the questions we would always ask is to what end do you hope to get a result and what is that result really going to tell you? Is there no other way we can do it? And is that really so terribly sort of vital because if something, we’re interested obviously in things like health and diseases and change of disease through time and hopefully some of those things might help research now in the future, but there might be some things that it’s just somebody wanting to test something, not necessarily to get something that we can then utilise as a bigger pictorial framework, It’s just that, well, you’ve got the teeth, you’ve got the bones, we just want to have that, so again, it’s trying to be a bit more stringent about why . . . what is the reason really behind why you want to do this project and destroy, you know, a tooth or an element of a person, so yeah, you get . . . you do get involved with them [laughs] Because, you know, although it’s classed as your job, you are caring for them in that sense, you care about them much more, because we said if we ever had to leave for any reason, we’d have to have some sort of counselling because we’d have separation anxiety [laughs] ’Cause you know, we see them every day, we’re part of them, yeah, just sort of get to know them, although they’ve all got lovely site codes and context numbers, they’re all sort of people you’ve got to know [laughs]</td>
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<td>124</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Is that how they’re all referred to, by their numbers?</td>
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<td>125</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, they are. So, when we’re searching on the database, the key things that we need are the site codes that tell us exactly where that is which also then helps us with dating parameters and then the context number, so that’s telling us all of those elements in, you know, that context, or that number, so that’s that person, but the biographical ones will also have the context number and then you’ve got the addition of the plate to tell you who they were. But you just sort of remember, you remember site codes, I remember site codes and numbers because you remember that person having something that seemed particularly interesting or, “Oh no, that’s [redacted] or [redacted] and [redacted]” so when you get requests from researchers and they give you the list of who they want to see and you’re writing out the site codes, it’s “Oh, oh”, it’s like the old familiars, yeah, you do, you get to know them and if you’re . . . you’re person who recorded the site or part of the site you then have that even greater affinity to them because you were there physically, recording, taking the bones out the box, so yeah, you get that sort of connection again. So yeah, we do. And I mean, they are lovely [laughs].</td>
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<td>126</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>They are and I think, with the work I’ve been doing recently, um, working with the evil geneticists [laughs] where they’re getting things like hair, skin and eye colour for me, stuff that I never imagined we would ever really be—</td>
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<td>127</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>That was always something in the fantasy realm, wasn’t it?</td>
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<td>128</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, so, kind of in a way, you get to know this person even more, even more detailed—</td>
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<td>129</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, you’re sort of, you are really sort of rebuilding and I suppose the reason why they have that distance and call things a specimen is because what they see is always such a small part, like a, it’s . . . to us even though we might see a tooth, I think because we’ve our training and what we do is very different in that we are seeing them as people and what we want to find out is about them as individuals and then as much about other aspects, so even if we’ve only got little parts we would still see that as a person, whereas I think the field that they’re in, is that they only ever see that little part, they never see the whole person, so their focus is very different and they want to take out from it is very different, so I think that’s again, a sense of it being a specimen or a resource as opposed to us seeing that person as being so valuable because of what they can tell us and the means that they can do it, but just then how we view them and our feelings about that and for them, so I think that’s—</td>
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<td>130</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>And actually it’s very embarrassing because my daughter will be [redacted] next month and she said “Mummy”, because I was talking about work and she said, “Now are these people alive or dead?” [laughs] And even my husband is like, “Is this someone . . . alive; are they dead?” Because we just tend to talk about them in a very—</td>
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<td>131</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Well, yeah, they’re just part of our lives, really. I mean death has been part of my life for over half my life now.</td>
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<td>132</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think working with human remains has changed the way you feel</td>
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<td>133</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>It always makes it fun at funerals . . . “What do you do?” [laughs]</td>
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<td>134</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>I don’t know, I think because in my personal life I sadly lost . . . well my father died when I was very young and then other people in my family had died when I was young before I sort of got into this field, so I’ve been aware of death and experienced people dying and death, so I would say that I wasn’t afraid of death and so . . . that may have also been another factor why I was drawn to do this subject, because I was always fascinated by history, but I was sort of drawn to cemeteries [laughs] and I was interested in reading those details that you might see in cemeteries, so I was intrigued by who that person, what was their life like and when did they live, so I’d be thinking, well, those dates what was it like to live then? So I think I was always interested in that and probably more than now, since having been in the field, you . . . you have that link more with death, so I would say that yeah, I wouldn’t say I was fearful of death and worried about it, whereas I have to say that people we’ll sometimes engage in because now, people are lucky in the sense that they don’t die maybe until people are older, they don’t have that sort of connection or exposure to it and so they’re probably much more fearful, death isn’t part of life anymore, whereas only a few years ago, really, it was all sort of part of it and people now tend to . . . don’t talk about it or don’t go to the funeral or you don’t see the person who has maybe died, so you’ve got that greater distance which I think again is sometimes when people talk to us and engage with us, some of those people with children, because children are fantastic because they seemingly have no fears or qualms and they want to know and touch something and pick it up, whereas the adults are the ones that are reticent, they’re the ones who are bit “Hmmmm, I’m not sure about that” or “Can I get anything?”, whereas children just love it. I did an event yesterday at the [redacted] and they were just fascinated, there was the Roman lady, you know, she’d lived all that time before and they were just amazed by it, but it’s good then you are sadly and inevitably going to die, it’s something then that people just don’t seem to talk about, so it’s quite nice, as well, that we can sort of introduce in as nice a way as you can, well this was someone that lived a long time ago, yes, they died and these are some of the things they had.</td>
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<td>135</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Also, their own personal life histories are so incredibly . . . so that’s the thing that really motivates you, finding out as much as I can about them and also, I think also, witnessing someone die really brought home to me the fact that what we look at, is part of that person, it isn’t them, there’s a big discrepancy between them walking around and them as a dead body, so that was really quite humbling because I think, and also, I think for us the ability to also use their experience to really inform about how we think about our past as well, so a lot of work we’ve been kind of doing on, like I’ve been working on [redacted] so it brings up the treatment of women in society and all sorts of things like that and all of that sort of experience is captured on her skeleton, but it is making, it’s disseminating that information in a way that isn’t, doesn’t kind of . . . that respects her experience, but also makes sure that it’s understood in that social and cultural context because I’ve . . . the Daily Mail have run a piece on . . . I did a bit on [indecipherable][redacted] and just the</td>
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comments were... I don't even know why I looked actually, I shouldn't have looked, that's my own fault, but you just think actually you've just completely missed the point, because the point is we're looking at people living in rural areas, do they have poorer health? And they're just ...

| 136 | M | We're trying to get a sense of people's lives. I mean, I do it myself, I don't particularly like present day, modern day times, I like the past, but yet, when I look at some of the lovely people that we have and you see the things that we're seeing, you just think the lives these people were leading were hard, horrible lives, they really had to suffer. I then have to check myself think "Well, maybe... I'm not too sure about that", but so it's good like that because also I think it makes people now, as well, which again I think is important, really appreciate what we do have, the hospitals we have, the facilities, the access to good food, health, all of those things because what we can starkly show as well, is the changes through time but then particularly at certain points we can do things in relation like status, so you can show, well, if you're living here to here, these are the kinds of things we're going to pick up in your health, what house you're living in, what food you're able to get, all of those things so that again is another really good way of bridging that gap between seemingly not being accessible because some terms that we might use, or if something seems a bit academic or scientific, we can sort of take it down a level where hopefully it's much more accessible to everybody and this is about a person or people and also what's good is that people can say, "Oh well, I broke my leg" or "I broke my arm" or "I had an infection", one lady actually told me that she thought she had tuberculosis and I was like, "Well, I think you need to go and see your doctor!"

Yeah, so again, it's sort of that association and that sort of link with the past and the present, sort of appreciating again, the changes that we have, yeah and just thinking about the lives of some of these people and also, what is interesting is that... 'cause obviously with the ethics, they are human remains, but it's do you as an individual feel that what totally and utterly represents you, or is you, is your skeleton? And that's... that was another thing with some people, it's sort of like, they were living, breathing people but it's the construct, do you think your skeleton is... you? I would hope if someone was able to find me when I'm a skeleton that they'd be able to learn about me but I don't believe that I am just my bones, there's something more, so again, that's another thing that's interesting when you're talking to people, is well what do you... think sort of represents you? So, it's that interesting thing as well, and how some people are very different and how something is very sacrosanct almost, but it's... it's intriguing because some people would be well, once then you're buried, it's in perpetuity and you should never be disturbed, but of course, that's not ...

| 137 | K | Do you have any religious beliefs, if you don't mind me asking? |

| 138 | M | Yeah, I believe. I do believe in heaven [laughs] and... God, well I suppose I'm not quite sure, but I do believe there is some kind of entity and I would hope that I would go somewhere nice and I have to say I do find myself thinking, you know, when I do die, am I going to meet any of these people? And are they going to come up to me and go "I was not that age, I did not have that disease. How dare you say that I had that disease!", so yeah, I do. I think there's something, because what I find |
really strange and because different people have died, close relatives and friends, is that I just can’t imagine that the world goes on without . . . how’s it going to go on without me? Does that sound selfish? But I know it does, but it’s like, I’ve experienced those people dying and so life does just carry on and that’s the strange thing, but yeah. I believe there’s something else. And I hope there is and I would hope that I would meet some of these people and then probably go “Ooh, yes, terribly sorry, I got that horribly wrong!”, and “Oh, you look like that!” because that’s the other thing we all do is, you look at them, you have your own picture of them, so it’s like the lovely gentleman we’ve got [redacted] and we know he was [redacted] now, in my mind, he is this rotund, jolly figure, but he may well not be, he could have been a really bad-tempered chap and so yeah, I have those sorts of things, but I do believe there is something else. I’m not a regular churchgoer, but I do like churches [laughs] And going into them and I suppose my thinking is . . . it’s a support mechanism and in times of stress or angst you . . . you need, or society, needs something to sort of help get through different things, but then I think that might be another, another facet of me that again is not so worried about dying because I think there’s other people out there that will hopefully come and get me, but it’s very interesting talking to people, different people’s beliefs or disbeliefs.

139 C I think if anything I’m probably more of a humanist, I think more than anything.

140 M Well, [redacted] had the [redacted]; he had the humanist burial didn’t he? That was really strange as well, he died suddenly in November, really cold and we went to the beautiful place where he was buried in the woods and you know, the person is dead, but both [indecipherable] and I, they’d sort of dug the grave, immediately went “Oh, he’s going to be so cold, it’s really cold in there!”

141 C And also, because he was a very rotund gentleman, we were like “That coffin’s never going to fit!”

142 M “Help me get out of here!” It’s funny the things that go through your head

143 C You’re like, is [redacted] in there? He’s short! It’s dreadful.

144 M Yeah, that first thought, “Oh, it’s so cold, he’ll be really cold in there” [laughs] but that was lovely though because for him, as well, and I think for us, it’s nice to know that he’s there and again, it’s not . . . you know that he’s not “there” there, but you could go to, or his family could go to the location is lovely and I think those things are important. I think it’s important for people to think that they can go back to somewhere to see someone or to see something, a part of that person that was there and that’s interesting, it’s like with [redacted], that was a burial ground but then they cleared it to create an open space, but then, you know, there was the different movements to have the open spaces, but then they’ve still got the grave markers sort of to the side, battling sort of between the two, but they are lovely spaces to go to for other people, so even if you haven’t got somebody there, there’s something really rather lovely about them. Hopefully they won’t build over those, as much as we’d be like “Ooh, that’s really interesting!” [laughs] Yeah, they are beautiful spaces.
| 145 | K | I think my last question is, have you ever worked with human remains that have made you experience an emotional response or do you look at each one in a scientific and objective manner? |
| 146 | M | Well, I wouldn’t say I was coldly scientific when I look at them, we know everyone has a name, but I have to say that when you know the name of a person, you . . . you have a different connection with them, whereas when I did some of the post-med ones, you know the names, so I got lovely people at [redacted], now you’re in the crypt recording them, you’ve got that lovely space and yeah, I found myself talking to them because if I knew who they were and what they did, you then sort of have that connection, so we hit like 2008 and hideous economic problem and one of them was [redacted] so I’m talking to this gentleman and saying “Oh, you’d be appalled at what’s going on” and then I’d apologised to [redacted] for not having read [indecipherable] and he lived in the house opposite my secondary school, so I was going “Oh, we were obviously meant to meet one another!” and then his second wife . . . when I then started to record her, there was this really strong perfumey smell and of course, I was all like “Ooh, I wonder whether she might be with me while I’m recording” and she had changes in her ribs, so it looked like, poor thing, she’d had corsets and then she’d had lots of children and I thought “Oh dear” and that must have all been rather uncomfortable, put her back and the perfumey smell went and then I went to give a talk at Bradford about them and there’s a gentleman up there who deals with aspects of decomposition, [redacted], and all the sorts of changes to the body and so there’s me going “And well, I think [redacted] second wife may have come to join me” and afterwards he was like “No, that’s decomposition” and I was like, but that’s phenomenal and that was really intriguing. |
| 147 | C | None of the others were like that . . . |
| 148 | M | None of the others had that and she . . . they’d all been buried in lead coffins, the church had been bombed and that’s how they’d rediscovered the crypts because all of them had got sealed in the 1850s and then they were put in ammunition boxes with their plates which wasn’t brilliant and then they got put in plastic boxes which was even worse and then they got put into conservation cardboard boxes, so I mean, she has been, you know, a skeleton in a box like all the others for over 50 years, I still think she came to see me at that point. Um . . . but yeah, I wouldn’t say, I mean we’re scientific in the sense that we know what we have to get from them, so we know we have to record different aspects such as age and sex, we know we have to measure you to within an inch of your life, so anything we can measure, so we know the applications and the methods we have to employ, but I wouldn’t say we were coldly scientific in that sense because I think as we’re going, we’re generating that sense of the person, the picture of them, you’ve got the complete skull, you yourself will have a sense of whether they would have had a nice face. |
| 149 | C | And I think that people who have experienced a horrific death, dealing with them is very hard. |
| 150 | M | Yeah, ’cause you think “Oh my god”. Yeah, so I think we’re aware of what we need to get for data but I wouldn’t say that we’re coldly scientific in that sense and also I think the way, that’s another thing as |
well that we find strange, we wouldn’t just hoik things out, you know and sort of throw things out, you are careful and that’s what we find strange, is that some people just don’t seem to have that natural empathy or instinct, it’s like my grandmother would know that if you’re packing a skeleton that you wouldn’t put ribs at the bottom and you wouldn’t put … you wouldn’t do certain things . . . it’s like you wouldn’t have to teach her

| 151 | C | They wouldn’t do it for a vase. |
| 152 | M | No, but there are some people, yeah, that’s it, and that’s the strange thing, some people just don’t seem to have that. |
| 153 | C | Or as I’ve had, let’s pack all the skeletons at the bottom and then all the important rocks on top, because they seem to think that you can stick them back together, I mean, yeah, you can stick a pot back together and it’s strange . . . that sort of mix or what you can or can’t do or what you can or can’t get. It puzzles you sometimes

I think it’s also having my daughter, that has, um, like being pregnant with her and also nursing her, I had um, a student recently who finished her [indecipherable] on breastfeeding and children’s health, she’s like “Oh yeah” [indecipherable] and I’m like, but those women must have sat for like hours, this is like the hours involved in . . . |
| 154 | M | It’s that association again, isn’t it, if you haven’t had it— |
| 155 | C | Had I not actually done that— |
| 156 | M | That’s it. It’s that sort of personal experience. |
| 157 | C | Also, there was a time when a friend of mine lost her son and he was only 6 weeks old and I went to his funeral and then after that I was just like “I can’t”, for about a month afterwards, I just couldn’t do it. |
| 158 | M | Yeah, different things affect you, yeah, but I suppose we can also, separate to a degree, that we’re then sort of happy to be with them all of the time. |
| 159 | C | I’m sure there’s some nasty people we’ve looked at [laughs]. |
| 160 | M | Oh yeah, well that’s it, not everyone is lovely, “Oh they’re lovely, they’re lovely, we love them”, yeah, human nature. |
| 161 | C | Murderers and stuff. |
| 162 | M | Well, the things that we see, someone perpetrated that on them, so they may well be someone that we’ve looked at and that’s another thing, you know, we’ve got people in the same box or on top of boxes and I’m there going “Well, I bet they didn’t really like one another in real life and they’ll be complaining now that they’re having to share a box or that they’re on top or with high status people”. We’ve got people who are very, very wealthy and then those from much poorer backgrounds who might be sharing the same shelf and you can imagine them being like “I’m not having that! I was buried in [redacted]!” Yeah, we have those
things running through our head. And I, particularly at one point, with [redacted], a very nice part of [redacted], and has always been and at one point it was like, well, we might not have them here because they might not come to us for scientific research, they may had had to be reburied, now they didn’t have the space within the church and interestingly as well the church isn’t so concerned about being able to rebury them within their own parameter.

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<td>163</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah. so they might not even be buried in the —</td>
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<td>164</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>In the [redacted]</td>
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<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>They’re buried out in like—</td>
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<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Like [redacted] cemetery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>In a trench. They just dig like a big hole or a big ditch and then they just go in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>So you come out, so a lot of people again, they paid a lot of money to be in some of those places, but you know, inherent snob in me, unfortunately, I can’t have the people in [redacted] buried in [redacted] cemetery, they just won’t, they’ll object, you know? And at least if they’re here it’s [redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Also, the thing that I find is when people have expressly wished for the church, to be buried within the church, so they obviously wouldn’t want be moved, or within the crypts because they wanted to stay there, but then the church, they’re all out in a big pit somewhere.</td>
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<td>170</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, that’s it and that’s what strange again is the actual, your religious body is making that decision, it’s not like, maybe sort of pressures, like that building opposite there may have to come down for a reason, but sometimes it’s the actual church itself, but then again, as I say, they can’t remain static because they’ve got to respond to the needs of the parish for them to survive and that then often means changing the spaces, but they don’t then have the space to accept the people back again, but I think yeah, [redacted] working on site now, but I think they are going to be reburied in a different part of the church, but then you see they’re not right in the heart of [redacted] they’re just sort of on the outskirts, so they’ve got a bit more land.</td>
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<td>171</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I was just thinking about the [redacted] who was excavated at [redacted], they knew that they were going to encounter his burial and then they informed, I think, the church in [redacted] because he was quite a high ranking—</td>
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<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Oh, it was in [redacted], wasn’t it?</td>
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| 173 | C | Yeah and he had written this incredibly important prayer book and things like this and they were like, you know, would you want him back? And they were like, “We’re fine, thank you” and so luckily, someone must have gone, “I’ll bet they’ll change their mind”, so they put him in a plastic box and did the location things so they knew exactly where he was in the trench and then, about three years later, they were like, “Actually it’s like the 500 year anniversary of his birth or something, we’ll have him
719

<p>| 174 | M | He had a lovely set of false teeth. |
| 175 | C | He did. |
| 176 | M | Yeah, it was one of the first sets of false teeth that we’d found on an excavation, yeah, but he also, bizarrely, had a very direct descendant and everyone’s a bit like, well, you shouldn’t really have a descendant that direct because the role that you have, you weren’t supposed to . . . [laughs] But that’s another thing that’s quite interesting sometimes, when individuals are found is, we look after their skeletal remains but because of the nature of some their artefacts that might be found with them, they can’t then be in the same box because they need different conditions, so the artefacts that are buried with them, they may be retained potentially somewhere like [redacted] because they might need to have different conditions if they’re metal or textile or leather, so you’ve separated them from those things that they either had themselves or felt were important to them or someone else put with them that was important to them, in that sense. At least if it’s an archive we’ve got them, what is sad though sometimes is that the individuals may be reburied, but the artefacts aren’t and they are then retained because they are of interest. |
| 177 | C | And they’ve discovered this quite a lot with pagan reburials, is when it’s pointed out that everything goes back, like as if you were doing a repatriation— |
| 178 | M | Yeah, but sometimes with other time periods, we don’t often find many artefacts, because it seems to be more earlier burial rites, but occasionally you’ll find things, but then that’s taken away. |
| 179 | C | Actually, because a lot of the Roman stuff I’ve got, they’re buried with a lot of things, but actually having it inside that box would be detrimental to both object types, like it would actually ruin both. |
| 180 | M | But at least then it’s within an archive, but it’s just, if you only had the one and then the person’s gone … |
| 181 | C | Like, I feel quite sorry for cremated people. |
| 182 | M | Yeah, they get taken out of the pot! |
| 183 | C | Yeah, they get taken out the pot, I mean I understand why, but it’s just . . . |
| 184 | M | That again, the applications that we have now are getting more and more refined, so it does enable people to do things without being destructive, because archaeology is a process of destruction: once we’ve gone in, trampled around and dug everything up, we have, you know, sort of destroyed it. We can’t put it back. But I mean like all the things with mummies, there’s so many things that they can do now where they can learn so much more because they can do the radiography or they can do the CT scanning, whereas before, particularly the Victorians, opening everything up . . . |</p>
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<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<tr>
<td>185</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Well, [indecipherable] 3D printed the stuff, didn’t he? He 3D printed all of the bones—</td>
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<td>186</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, different sorts of amulets and things that were on them, was that for the BM exhibition?</td>
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<td>187</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
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<tr>
<td>188</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>So it’s sort of things like that . . . that’s good then again, because you’ve got the different sorts of technologies that can then come into play, so that you’re not having to open things up like that, which would be [indecipherable] and then the only other way then is then destroying part of what you actually want to keep.</td>
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<td>189</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Rehydrated mummy tissues!</td>
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<tr>
<td>190</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, I know! [redacted]</td>
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<td>191</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>We get that with DNA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>So I was like, “Oh, that’s marvellous!” and walked out thinking “Arrrrggghh! What am I doing?!?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>193</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>And that’s what’s been so funny is that even over [redacted] as a discipline it’s fundamentally changed, curatorially it’s changed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>194</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>And then the questions and things that people ask or want is different.</td>
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<tr>
<td>195</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<td>196</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>[Redacted] And then the few cremations we had, but we are predominantly all inhumations, but I think one person, over the entire time I’ve been here, has come to look at those</td>
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<td>197</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>What, the cremations?</td>
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<td>198</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>I have tried. I have tried. We’ve not had funding for various reasons and for things we wanted to do.</td>
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<td>199</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Yeah, they’re funny aren’t they, ’cause no one, cos I mean Jacqie McKinley’s been the lady to do all the different things with them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>But next, once I’ve finished my list.</td>
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<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Then it’s the cremations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Then it’s the cremations.</td>
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Appendix 25

Interview with David

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<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah, that would be great.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>[Redacted]</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>How do you find the response to your work when you go into more contemporary issues, amongst the archaeological community? Do they think you should be doing that? Are they supportive?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Is that a specific question about the recent material?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Ok. Well, my stuff dealing with recent material has been interesting … I suppose at one level I would say that I’ve had, from the die-hard contemporary archaeology gurus, I’ve received a polite silence, um, from some of them. A lot of their work is very obsessed with non-deathy things. I’ve received some rather, shall we say, arrogant sort of senses of . . . perhaps, sort of people who have embraced the ethical arguments of the 1990s dealing with native communities around the world and tried to impose it on the British Isles. I’ve received a sort of arrogant, “This is stuff you shouldn’t be doing” type vibe. I wouldn’t say that I’ve had people say that as such, but I’ve had a strong vibe that this is something that is perhaps delicate. In practical terms, [redacted]. They were taking a very sociological, the interview, the subject of your research is a living person . . . it’s an ethical issue and the same and they were therefore taking the argument that we would need permission from the descendants or mourners of that child’s grave to photograph it and we had a negotiation about it at that point. So that didn’t actually go well, but . . . so I’ve faced it with colleagues. Contemporary archaeologists, I always say have shied away from death, rather ironically. The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Archaeology has one or two papers that touch on deathy topics, but they’re done in a very anon, funerary way, dealing with consumerism and deposits on the grave. Very legitimate topics, but I think not tackling some of the issues. So I’ve received a sort of sense that we shouldn’t be doing it, looking at the very recent dead, um . . . I’ve also received very supportive comments from contemporary archaeologists saying “Yeah, this is an extension of our politicisation of thinking about reburial and how we deal with the social context of funerary archaeology”. So I have received positive comments, but</td>
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an awkward silence, shall we say, about some of those issues. And also, I must say that I found myself quite beautifully sitting in a nice empty patch, between the anthropologists and the sociologists of contemporary death, who don’t ground themselves in data, in the way that archaeologists would and the, y’know, the great people like Sarah Tarlow and Harold Mytum, who really finished their work at the end of the 20th century and don’t come up to the present [redacted]. There have been some really interesting and exciting papers come out in recent years, like the study in *World Archaeology* about road . . . motorbike deaths on the Isle of Man, looking at the memorialisation of the Isle of Man’s . . . and it’s lack of speed limit and that valorisation of masculine death and that’s very interesting stuff and there are a few others papers, but often it’s very data light, it’s not grounded in what I would call the strengths of mortuary archaeology, as being able to deal with big data samples . . . and contextualisation, in terms of space and material. It’s very “Oh, here’s an illustration of one of the graves I’m looking at and now let’s talk about some theoretical concepts of death and social being in early to late modernity”. And you go, “Oh, ok”. That’s not really very archaeological in my mind, archaeology should be about exploring material and how the material world engages with us, not simply about using it in an illustrative way and despite their theoretical robustness, a lot of those studies end up being very passive in their use of material data and I suppose one of the interesting things about dabbling in contemporary archaeology I’ve faced, is how much they want to expand my theoretical introductions and reduce my actual data when I’m actually presenting it.

So there’s a very strong, I’d call it a very early 1990s archaeological theory, where you have to spend 95 per cent of your paper rehearsing theoretical debates and then you literally have two sites or two skeletons: “Here’s a skeleton”, you know? And it’s like “Isn’t that interesting? Let’s look at one long barrow or let’s look at two burial sites and isn’t it interesting that they’re all dead”, you know? And that’s somehow a philosophical insight. Um . . . so I’m being very dismissive, but I think my point stands, even if I’m being a bit polemic, that contemporary archaeology is an exciting field, some people just don’t know what to do with me and those that deal with death, there has been, [redacted] some people see the value in it for reflecting back on to other periods of archaeology, but I think most people don’t know what to make of it. Um . . . and a lot of the responses I get when I peer-review are “Oh, this is ethically problematic” or it’s “Expand your theory massively”, so you tackle all these other discipline’s agendas before you actually tackle any material which is actually quite disabling and I think if I was a postgraduate student trying to do this, I would find myself actually running up against some tough . . . a tough situation, [redacted] Or . . . [laughs] you know, not really, or just saying, being very traditional and extending the Harold Mytum approach and just record all the graves and just take them up to the present. So … and not really say anything that engages with those broader debates.

So actually, I think modern contemporary mortuary archaeology is actually a really new field, there’s been so little done on it that it doesn’t disappear up its own backside or doesn’t disappear into just counting graves and I think that’s a real . . . and when you talk to sociologists of death, as I do, um, they’re really excited by the natural strengths of mortuary archaeology in that field, they don’t see it as “Oh, we have to justify our case”. It’s already there. We already know how to record grave stones, we know how to . . . I’m not digging up modern cemeteries often, but, um, there’s already a robustness of theory, method, that we can bring to that interdisciplinary pond and swash ideas around. We shouldn’t feel we’re the poor man at the table and one of
the exciting projects that I’ve come across in contemporary mortuary archaeology, I like the work of Sian Anthony, who’s a PhD student at Lund University, but she’s a Brit and she’s externally supervised by Sarah Tarlow and Sian is doing . . . she was a contract archaeologist working on the creation of a metro station in a part of what had been a historic 19th cemetery of Copenhagen and they were digging through graves that were recent as the 1960s and 1970s and so she’s doing a project where the contemporary archaeology actually is about the above ground memorials and skellies. Most of it won’t be about that for ethical and many other practical reasons, but still, I think the way we . . . our approach to material culture, our approach to interrogating material culture in the modern world is very, very powerful and I think that hasn’t yet been fully realised and er, I think there’s many avenues and I’m sure I’m not the only one that’s doing it, but it still feels like it hasn’t been fully recognised and there’s a lot of exciting things we could do there, as well as the museological debates, as well as the heritage debates, as well as the politics of the dead debates . . . I think there’s a broader commenting on and interrogating modern society’s death ways, is a really fun area that I hope to continue to dabble in, whether it’s the cathedral work or the cemetery work or anything else, museums and so on. So I’m very excited about having a finger in that pie, but it is awkward, occasionally.

I’m still getting a sense of, particularly American scholars, who are “Why are you doing that? Why is this . . . ?” But undertakers I talk to, cemetery people I talk to, they get it. It’s archaeologists’ problem really, I think more, um, their nervousness of litigation or nervousness of perceived problems. I think if you actually talk to people about what you’re doing, I go to vicars, we did a churchyard survey in [redacted] that’s one of the projects I didn’t tell you about[redacted] and did a systematic churchyard survey and the vicar was very candid about telling me about things they do:

“Oh, I just knock down the gravestone and bury them when they’re dodgy”, because of course it’s health and safety and he’s allowed to . . . “Of course, we bury pets in the churchyard . . . oh yes, yes, little Tiddles, I put him in there, I know you’re not supposed to, but, you know” . . . all of his dogs and cats are in the churchyard.

I said “What’s this stone here by the church tower, it just says with chalk on it, ’Monty’”.

“Ah yes, there’s a story there, that was the dog of . . . the bell-ringer’s dog and you know, he wanted the dog buried where he could hear the bells because he loved the bell”.

So I said “Are you supposed to be burying dogs in the churchyard?”

“Well, no, not really”, but there it is. You know, that’s the response [laughs] Would you like to hear another animal anecdote?

9 K Yes, please.

10 D He’s a vicar of a number of different churches and he said “Well, you know, when you get to a certain age, [redacted], you know, when you have daughters that grow up and they want ponies, don’t they? And the ponies die and what do you do with them when your little girl says ’Daddy, we want to bury the pony in the churchyard’”.

I said “Yeah, that must be a difficult one” and he said . . . and I said, “What do you mean? You didn’t?”
And he went “Well . . . yes”.

“WHAT? You buried a pony in the churchyard?”

“Yes. It was rather awkward, we went on holiday and I had the church warden ring me up and say ‘Vicar, DEFRA are charging us a massive fine per day because you've had foxes dig up a pony that you buried in the churchyard’.”

That’s massive, I mean DEFRA, it's a . . . you have to dispose of livestock, you can’t just . . . you know? Blissfully disorganised chap, but I felt like I’m Louis Theroux! You know? I’ve just come to a churchyard to record a few graves and I’m Louis Theroux, listening to these kind of mad vicars. So my point would be these people are happy, they’re interested, occasionally you get people, when I’ve had students recording gravestones, you know, going “What are you doing?” but you explain what you’re doing: it’s respect for the dead, they’re not problematic. I can talk to you about some worrying moments on other projects, but on the whole, people are generally very positive and it's usually the archaeologists that have the issue with the contemporary stuff, more than people, as long as you explain what you’re doing and why and then people seem to understand it, you know?

| 11 | K | Do you think that stems from all the kind of kerfuffle over reburial and repatriation and now they’re nervy in general? |
| 12 | D | [sighs] I don’t have that breadth of insight, to be honest, as to what the general culture is. I still feel that things have come back from that brink a lot, in the last five, ten years, that people are thinking a lot more confidently about archaeologists as authorities, as voices that should be heard and have expertise in human remains, but also in mortuary archaeology and archaeology more generally. I don’t think . . . but there has been a lot of . . . “Ooh, you know, you shouldn’t do this . . . we shouldn’t be doing what we’re doing” and I suppose, I do find it from very . . . I’ve experienced it a number of times at conferences where I’ve been sort of seen as the ghoul by other disciplines, almost like the anthropologists.

I had one conference where I felt very awkward, a few years ago, a seminar, I had some very, the great and good of social anthropology there and some very interesting case studies in funerary archaeology’s interactions with present society and people talking about the first world war and museums and relics and people talking about, you know, Serbian mass graves and people talking about very fascinating stuff, Zimbabwe and . . . you know, all sorts of comments like that and I found myself pegged as the archaeologist who thinks they own their data and I . . . there was a representative from HAD there and they were very nice, but I got the sense that this was slipping into . . . I was being caricatured and I had to find myself very much arguing a case, you know, I said “We don’t feel we own human remains any more than you own villages in Uganda or wherever”. We don’t own them. We still feel we have . . . we’ve studied those remains and those remains are part of our story we’re telling and they have a legitimate right to.

The material is part of a story that is seen socially and scientifically as worth saying, so I don’t own the bones, any more than you own your subjects of interview, but you’re appropriating their words and we’re appropriating the skeletons’ stories for our own ends. We’re all appropriating. You can’t pretend you’re really telling the stories of Ugandan villages—I made that up—you can’t really pretend you’re doing that, you know, you’re not. You’re not. What kind of disingenuous approach to claim that you’re really speaking the voice of these people, you’re going there as a white, Western
male and stealing their narratives and packaging them in your theoretical framework, That's all we're doing, we're always pillagers, I mean, we're all pillaging something. That's what we do. We're extracting and re-engaging with it. I wouldn't put it as crudely as stealing, but I think it's a bit of a conceit to pretend that, even when we're being sensitive to local contexts, we're doing anything more than a much more subtle sleight of hand way of appropriating other people's stories. You know?

And I think . . . so I would say as long as we don't pretend that we're owning, physically, financially possessing, we are still, of course, all tainted by this, and don't pretend anybody isn't, just because you're an anthropologist, you know, you're somehow . . . you've gone through your post-colonial guilt and you're now telling the story of the underdog, we're all appropriating this and I must say, if I was going to be critical of mortuary archaeology still, we're incredibly, British mortuary archaeology is incredibly classist and elitist, isn't it? We're obsessed with kings, so we're still implicated in that, we're still implicated in that . . . we're in a class-riddled society, gender-obsessed society, still those issues dog us, but we're not any worse than anybody else because we're still trying to tackle those issues, but we're not from without, we're within that . . . embedded in that process. What have I said?! [laughs].

So I suppose, to sum up, I would say on that point, most professionals, there's projects, for example . . . to give you an example, there's a project I never finished, but I went to meet them, a pet cemetery company owners and I had a talk with them about possibly doing a piece of work on pet cemeteries and I still want to do that, but . . . just as an example for you, there was no problem, they understood, as long as I say . . . very few people literally think you're digging up graves. Most people think, I'm an archaeologist and I'm interested in the history of death, I'm fascinated by pet cemeteries and what they're telling us about changing attitudes to death, they get it because they're dealing with it on a daily basis. And so, from a contemporary point of view, there's no problem.

Answering your specific question about are people very sensitive, I think a lot of that doctrinal stuff dealing with reburial in other parts of the world has permeated into students' mentalities and into lecturers personalities and as Tiffany Jenkins work, as I'm sure you're aware, argues, it's almost this sort of post-colonial guilt immersion from an intellectual level that actually doesn't play out. Most of the people in the British Isles are aware of death, they want to deal with death, they're interested in death. I think we still do have an issue, a constant issue of some of the TV portrayals and so on. This almost fetishising skulls and bones, and I think is still an issue for us and that is perhaps more of a challenge on reflection, is trying to explain that we're interested in the tombs and the material culture, we don't need the bodies to talk about death and memory. They're a helpful addition, but they're not the only things. But I think most people understand it and they understand archaeology is a diverse subject and they don't see the term archaeologist and mortuary archaeology, they may not understand everything about it at first sentence, but they are open to archaeologists or involving archaeologists, it's more, I think, perhaps sections of the archaeological community who have a very clear idea of when the time divisions and period divisions work and about what mortuary archaeology is that have more . . . more of a concern, then perhaps the UK public, or at least some of the professionals I've at least talked to.

The only . . . I should say that one other example of this, this doesn't create a single narrative, it's different instances where I've been pigeonholed as
someone trying to possess human remains or only interested in burials of bodies. I would say that another interesting one that we didn’t expect was when my colleague, [redacted] it’s quite legitimate that they didn’t want to be seen to be endorsing a project that could be somehow to do with necromancy or anything like that and that did come across quite strongly and we reassured them that this was just a . . . [laughs] and even when we went there and we talked to historians there, they were very shocked by this title and other individuals at [redacted] nowhere else, nowhere else, all the other cathedrals were fine, apart from one, but I won’t tell you about them, they were weird for other reasons, but all the other cathedrals were fine with the project, they understood we were dealing with dialogues, literary and material dialogues, not literally talking to corpses and it was only [redacted] that had that problem and the way I did. I just said “You know these English professors, their use of language is slightly more flowery”, it’s metaphor and allusion, they don’t literally, unlike us, who would literally want to be talking with the dead . . . how can you possibly misunderstand that as literally wanting to speak with the dead? I don’t know, but I just said, “Oh you know these English professors, they think it’s perfectly ok to use these titles without clarifying exactly what we’re doing”. Just humour them. So there’s been a few little moments where I’ve thought I’m on the wrong page or with archaeologists themselves and with others, but often I find it’s archaeologists more than other people that I’ve dealt with, that don’t get it. Who don’t understand why I’d be interested in recent memorials.

| 13 | K | You said something interesting earlier about mortuary archaeology being classist . . . |
| 14 | D | At least its popular perception, but I think that we are embedded in that class issue, aren’t we? The dead are not equal, um . . . I find it very interesting—this is something I’m thinking a lot about myself and I’ll be interested in your perspective on it, about how the repatriation movement of NAGPRA on racial grounds may still be problematic and chronologically, we’re . . . shall we say . . . chronologically, we have an, um . . . there’s an issue . . . what’s the word . . . we’re chronologically prejudiced, I suppose, about the value we give human remains depending on how old they are and likewise we’re prejudiced about how sensitive it is on a chronological, rather than actually is anybody alive who cares about someone who died in 1880, but they are seen as more sensitive than someone from the Mesolithic or the Neolithic, but we have that issue.

But there is clearly a class issue, we’re obsessed with the status of individuals and we all wish we had been celebrities in the past, rather than as someone living in the muck, you know, the Monty Python “Nice bit of muck over here”! We don’t want to imagine ourselves being, you know, my ancestors most likely lived crap lives in various parts of [redacted] doing very little for anyone, which is probably why all my relatives have survived as such miseries and rightly so, because the past was horrible. I don’t want to live there, but people want to imagine that they were something exciting and that’s what family history is driven on. You know, the selling of family history is driven on the idea “Look at all these amazing ancestors: you could find out you were descended from murderers and . . . princesses and prostitutes?” You know? Captains, who led charges of the British army, all these kinds of fantastical, you know—“I never knew”—I never understand how I am descended as if that somehow tells you something about who you are. And of course, it is about that, it’s about identity.

So we have that family history obsession, but we want to up it, we’re all
descended from Richard III, we’re all descended from whoever, Julius Caesar, whoever it might be, we all want to be descended from someone important, even if they were a really horrible king who no one liked, so much so that they had to fight a battle to get him off the throne and they made sure he was buried in somewhere not particularly prestigious. Still, we want to be associated with that kind of unsavoury person and [redacted] the kind of mentality is, you can almost imagine people finding Hitler’s corpse, digging it up and reconstructing it and looking at his kind eyes and his sensitive little moustache and think about how nice it would have been to have . . . it’s horrific . . . and let’s face it, most of it, all medieval kings were arseholes, they had to be arseholes, they had to be brutal, they had to be killing members of their own family, they had to be brutal in so many, so many ways, we can’t even begin to understand, why, oh, why would anyone want to be finding affinity, emotional affinity. They can be interested in it, it’s a legitimate thing to be interested in, to study, of course, but to be interested on an emotional, personal level with any male or female aristocrat or royal, for me, it says something very worrying about modern society in my mind, part of celebrity cult and, you know, and so on, our obsession with the rich and famous and I’m sure I’m reducing it down in a simplistic way, but I think it is very . . . it’s absolutely counterproductive to what archaeology is about and the . . . [redacted] It’s not . . . I’m obviously sour grapes that I didn’t find those things, but we were all . . . elites are important for understanding past societies, they are not equal societies, but we are still, I think there is an unsavoury obsession with elites and with their traces and their actions, in funerary archaeology and I think that is often utterly destructive of the principles and visions that many of us have for writing about societies in a very new archaeology way, we’re interested in process, societies—how they change, how they adapt, big questions, macro questions. It’s counter to that, but it’s also counter to the contextual, society-based, understanding the processes and agencies of individuals of different ages and genders in communities, it’s utterly . . . urinating all over those kinds of approaches and theoretical developments and it’s . . . I have to say, it’s not just Richard III, it’s an easy target, but it’s pervasive in medieval art history, architectural history and medieval archaeology is particularly horrendous on this, this love of kings [redacted].

15 K [Redacted]

16 D [Redacted] They understood that I wasn’t having a go at their project, but the . . . but I think the very detrimental public consumption of these things. I don’t think all publicity is good publicity at all, I don’t think using single anecdotes to demonstrate how we discern pathologies or isotope studies, doesn’t . . . it may explain them methodologically, it may be all news is good news, but in terms of the broader principles of what mortuary archaeology is about, I think you cannot claim all publicity is good publicity. It is utterly detrimental to the broader narratives we’re trying to construct. Even Time Team is better than that, in terms of, they’ve never dug up one skeleton on its own, they always did multiple reconstructions, if you want to take it back to “Oh, [redacted], you’re just elitist”, no, even the most popular communication, the first series of Time Team, they were digging up an Anglo Saxon cemetery, eight, nine graves, reconstructions of multiple burials, all the other ones they’ve ever dig up, where they’ve involved skeletons, they’ve never just gone on about the high status, they always joke about Time Team, “Oh, it’s high status Tony”, but there is a population, there’s a society there, there’s some vision of a broader community there and I think that point alone is lost with these headline kings of bling, Prittlewells or Richard

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III’s or whatever it might be next, ice men, the individual in the past, these
celebrity dead or um, so I do . . . they’re part of the picture, of course, and
the rich detail of individual lives, bog bodies too, is interesting, but whether
we’re looking at royal necrophiliacs who love, you know, failed royals from
the middle ages, or we’re looking at people obsessed with bog bodies, I think
we have to say there’s something quite abhorrent about creating emotional
affiliations to bodies that even their own societies thought were complete
pricks and didn’t want them around. You have to think, come on, they can’t
have been anyone’s real ancestor if they were so embarrassing they thought
“Well, who are we going to chuck in the bog today? Oh, I never liked him,
he’s a good victim”. We don’t know the scenario, I’m being silly, but you
have a context where you do wonder . . . these are exceptional burials for
their time. Did anyone really buy into this grandiose funeral or is everyone
going “Oh, this is a bit embarrassing, look at what they’re doing now, they’re
killing five chickens, oh no . . . not a boat, please not a boat! Why are they
putting a boat on the pyre?” You know?

You can imagine that maybe these are so exorbitant that people were just
going, “pffft”, or they were just going . . . we perhaps valorise, like people
have criticised Stonehenge, where our meta-narrative of ancestors has
become to the point where we are becoming obsessed with past societies with
ancestors and it’s our obsession with ancestors and that everyone is obsessed
with ancestors and as someone who’s written about this, I am guilty of that.
I’m being self-critical here, likewise, you could argue we are . . . our classist
nature, the class-obsessed nature of mortuary archaeology isn’t simply
focusing on the rich burials or . . . it’s about the respect we have for the
statements those people were making or their relatives were making. We
almost buy into those statements as they were legitimising their power, this
burial would have been . . . people would have remembered this and
honoured this and I think that is often true, funerals did resonate down the
generations if a powerful person died and I think that argument I’ve made
can be made to sound convincing, but equally we have to admit that we’re
dealing with a nutter and everyone was going “Oh god, look at what they’re
doing now!” [redacted] Um . . . we’re happy to think of Margaret, Baroness
Thatcher’s funeral and think there were quite a few people that felt quite
awkward about that and in the same way that quite a few people felt
awkward about Lady Diana and all the other major funerary events that have
taken place in our society recently, in the last 20 years, but we often forget
that for the past because it’s not easy to find material traces of embarrassment
or awkwardness or just passive resistance, but also because, um, we like to
honour, we like to think that what we’re finding is kings with agency or
elites with agency making change, so . . . I think we have problems with class
and it permeates, and that’s just two of the ways—I haven’t really thought
about it properly, I’m sure there are other ways—it permeates the priorities
we give in displaying in museums, the priorities we give in media coverage,
but also the amount of money that comes to projects and the different way
we write about different burials and I think, you know, it’s . . . it does come
from our society’s obsessions with elites.

Sorry, that’s a bit negative, isn’t it? But it is an issue and gender comes into
this too, in so many different ways and ethnicity and race and all the . . .
whether we . . . the pandering of “We must be relevant to modern
communities” works very well until you’re dealing with remains that aren’t
seen by those communities as ancestral and then you’ve got all sorts of
interesting issues, I don’t know if you’ve followed up this St Helena
excavation of the slave cemeteries there [redacted] reflecting on that fact that
none of the modern people on the island see themselves, even though some
of them might actually biologically in part be descended from freed slaves, they don’t see themselves as that. That is not part of their ancestral history, so . . . and of course, because they’re blacks that “failed”—he says waving his hands in quotation marks for the tape—“failed” to survive long enough to get to the Americas, of course, black Americans can’t see them as ancestors either. Intellectually, they’re in the middle of the Atlantic and they “failed”, they were captured by other blacks or by whoever, sold into slavery, didn’t make it, the British Navy caught them, transported them and many of them were already dead or dying and were buried in these cemeteries, so they “failed”, their narrative “fails” to chime with descendant communities. They’re descendants of nobody. They didn’t breed, they didn’t get a chance to set up little homes somewhere free, you know, they died horribly, in atrocious conditions, so why . . . the question with that comes, if we’re doing community archaeology and being sensitive to local communities values and ideas . . . where’s our sense of the story of the people who are forgotten? The people that didn’t survive. Should we just honour those that were lucky enough to escape their horrific conditions to stay in Africa or go to the New World, what about those people who don’t have descendants, who don’t have stories to tell?

There’s all sorts of responsibilities there, as well, and so . . . I feel very strongly that this obsession with ancestry and family history and being resonating with local communities, while important should always be about challenging those communities about who they think they are, as opposed to what we might be able to tell you something different, um, so I haven’t got a solution for that, but I think that is a big concern for me, about making sure we don’t simply talk to local communities, because a) it’s not the local communities who may be the most important and if you look and say communities of, say, Jewish communities decimated, I can’t make it up, but Thessalonica, the Jews there now, if there are any, they are so few and they are not the direct descendants of those who were completely obliterated during the Nazi era and yet, of course, if you happen to be digging up a cemetery and you’re finding Jewish descendants, where would you go to find the local community? Because the local community couldn’t give a toss about the Jews there now, or some of them could, I don’t anything about Thessalonica, I’m making this up as an example but what on earth would you be doing as an archaeologist only talking to the modern secular Greek population of that city about what that means to them? That’s perverse. It can’t just be about the local people, it has to be other communities elsewhere, if we’ve got any social conscience at all, so . . . I think there are issues there.

I don’t know how that came from what we were talking about, but I think there were certainly concerns about what we’re trying to do, if we’re only talking about, we have to make our stories relevant to the present, but I don’t think we have to always go to the local community or to a simple national narrative to make those stories relevant and I think there should be other criteria we could judge how our projects are effective in communicating [redacted]. Do we really need that connection to make it relevant or are there other interesting things we can tell them about? So I suppose that’s my ongoing worry about how we make mortuary archaeology connect. Perhaps we shouldn’t be always worrying about it connecting in the way we want or we think it should do. It can be too doctrinal and too forceful in our attempts to connect mortuary archaeology into popular narratives or local narratives.

That was something I was going to ask you, actually, does mortuary
I mean, the easy cop-out is it depends on where, and who, and how … um, that’s the ultimate answer, isn’t it? It’s very … it’s going to be very localised and contextual, whether it should work as community archaeology at all, um, and the dead … um, Duncan has written very forcefully on this that we should not be sealing off cemeteries, all cemeteries should be for public view and even within the communities of people he’s interviewed, um, you know, at Oakington, people have very different responses within the same community to those remains. I mean, I can’t but agree with him, um, but skeleton … skeletons sell, they attract, they draw, um, but skeletons are also—how may I put … this idea just came into my head just now—they are a curse on an excavation or a piece of fieldwork because so much of what we do is about imagination, so trying to communicate a boat grave where there’s no skeleton of the sacrificed horses that are most likely to have been in the grave or the body, if we’re trying to get people to think about grave-robbing in the past because, you know [reddacted]. Very revealing, but the skeleton fixes the eye, it fixes the mind, the human body is ultimately our obsession today and it’s our obsession in the way we think about human remains, our popular books about human remains are always about skeletons and articulated remains. If we’re trying to get people thinking about cremation processes, trying to get people thinking about grave-robbing and trying to get people thinking about absence, they’ve got to use the imagination and trying to get people to think imaginatively should never be, should be an on-going process. So thinking about community engagement, getting them to think about what’s not there and what we can’t see is very important. So whether we’re dealing with gravestones, whether we’re dealing with acidic soils where there’s no human remains surviving … that shouldn’t stop us being community engaged using funerary remains, you know, it’s about capturing imagination and getting schoolkids, you know, everyone, to think about those remains.

So I think skeletons can be a curse, articulated skeletons can be a curse, but I don’t think … of course, so a) I believe it’s varied, it depends on the local community, but it shouldn’t also be just about the local community, b) um, even within the community there may be different diverse groups, different interested parties, different religious, different ethnic groups with different engagements, I don’t think we can always capture everyone’s imagination, but I think one of the things we perhaps should do, even when we have nice articulated human remains, is not to fixate on them, to try and get people to think about the funerals, to think about the intercutting of graves, the ephemeral, the nontangible. How would the site have looked because the skeletons draw you in … so my answer is “yes”, mortuary archaeology should be community engaged, shouldn’t be behind barriers, but equally, it can … it should be very imaginative, we should try and make people think imaginatively and use their imaginations in thinking about what are the various other issues that we can draw into to grab people’s attention and interest—what are the … rather than simply about, “Oh look, this one’s got bad teeth, oh, this one’s a woman, this one’s a little child; let’s use a higher voice and be very sensitive”, you know? A quiet whisper, you know?

Rather than talking about those individuals, try to keep people interested in the process, the social, the networks of obligation of attending funerals, the networks of obligation of feeding the dying person, get people to think about real societies and I think that is … I think … still, the curse of the skeleton, if you like. That fixing of a moment in time, a body that we can interrogate,
um, so . . . and many . . . the point is, if you’re trying to do a community archaeology project and you do have these skeletons, many of the most exciting stories won’t come out for a couple of years afterwards, so . . . it’s also disingenuous on that terms of what you can say at that moment of the grave is being excavated. Does that answer your question?

| 19 | K | I think it does. |
| 20 | D | Yeah. So, yes of course, we should be engaged with communities, but many different kinds of communities and let’s try and think outside the box about how we engage people, otherwise we just become obsessed with the grave and I think that is very morbid. |
| 21 | K | It made me think of the Richard III visitor centre, where they’ve— |
| 22 | D | I haven’t actually followed this, I’ve been kind of fearful of even looking! |
| 23 | K | I haven’t been yet, I really want to go— |
| 24 | D | Is it open now then? |
| 25 | K | Yeah. You can now go and I really want to see— |
| 26 | D | Oh god . . . |
| 27 | K | The preserved . . . the hole in the ground, basically, where he was shoved, because they project an image of the skeleton into the hole. It kind of fades in and out, in a very ghostly fashion. |
| 28 | D | Lovely! I must admit, I’m out of date with that. |
| 29 | K | It just strikes me as slightly bizarre, that people have to . . . I don’t know, it’s maybe like a pilgrimage for them, I don’t know, to go and see the hole. The very place where he was. |
| 30 | D | Have you been to . . . I mean they’ve redone it and I haven’t seen the new, redone [indecipherable] museum in Arhus, where they’ve got Grauballe Man and he is . . . he’s in the pit. He’s in the peat, so you can look down, the science stuff is above, on the gallery and you can learn about how they’ve discovered, how they’ve interrogated and you look down on him, into this dark wood chamber and then, disabled access or walking, you go on a ramp and down into that quiet space, so you can come right up to the glass case with him and sit around on benches and contemplate it, or you can look down at him from the living, from the science, from the world, on to his body from above, so he is . . . still . . . they’ve thought very carefully about space and this is obviously, I think this is filtering through a lot, archaeology museums thinking about . . . getting people to think about the burial space and how you imagine that subterranean, whether it’s bog or grave, you know, fantasising over the grave and that connection and the moment of discovery, which is very interesting. I think it’s a bit weird, but it’s an interesting . . . it is almost like going to a funerary parlour or, I don’t know if that applies to your case, but that just made me think about that, I don’t know if that’s the same thing at all, actually, but it’s certainly that interest: “Ah, this is how he was discovered”, this is how they were buried . . . this is how . . . whatever happened to him
happened to him, flung over a horse, all these different things that may have happened to him, you know, it is . . . it can become very myopic in a number of different ways, myopic in terms of broader narratives, myopic in terms of the corporeal obsession with the body. And I think we should always be challenging that as archaeologists, even if we’re . . . that’s only part of what we do. It’s an important part, but it’s not the only thing, I think it can become very much reeling off facts about, you know, tombs or skellies.

Do you think anything good came out of the Richard III project, because we’ve been rather negative, I suppose?

Sorry, I’ve been using Richard III as an example, that’s unfair [redacted] But if you’re talking about the Richard III one, I must admit I have got to the point where I had diversion and I just couldn’t watch any more of it and I know Mike Pitts has got a book out on it and all this kind of thing and that’s all good that it’s become a good study and I think the positive side is, looking at the Antiquity paper that Richard Buckley et al. wrote, um . . . I think they’ve tried hard to put this into broader context and to alert, on a city level, on a national and international level, Leicester, it’s narrative is a medieval city, town, and it’s broader archaeology, mortuary archaeology, and I think they’ve done a really intelligent attempt to pull that . . . pull ourselves away from Richard III. They never expected to find him, they never expected . . . they had a project, they thought good money to do something fun, they could ask some interesting questions and they made the mistake of actually finding what they were supposed to find. And you know, they can say anything else, but that has to be the truth. It has to be the truth!

And . . . what’s good come out of it, of course, Leicester’s doing very well in admissions [laughs] they’ve got a new visitor centre, it pulls money, there’s lots of levels of positive and it is a way into the middle ages and the middle ages is neglected in terms of modern national curriculum and so many other levels, it’s positive, in terms of raising our understanding medieval warfare, medieval battles, medieval royalty, there are a series of issues there and archaeological methods and techniques, it is a showcase for, but I have . . . then I say, I don’t think that person, I think that’s taken so much away from the story that people want to talk about, I mean, does it really tell us anything else, but that has to be the truth. It has to be the truth!

And . . . what’s good come out of it, of course, Leicester’s doing very well in admissions [laughs] they’ve got a new visitor centre, it pulls money, there’s lots of levels of positive and it is a way into the middle ages and the middle ages is neglected in terms of modern national curriculum and so many other levels, it’s positive, in terms of raising our understanding medieval warfare, medieval battles, medieval royalty, there are a series of issues there and archaeological methods and techniques, it is a showcase for, but I have . . . then I say, I don’t think that person, I think that’s taken so much away from the story that people want to talk about, I mean, does it really tell us anything that we didn’t already know? And I’m afraid that is the question that has been posed of medieval archaeology, or historical archaeology since the 19th century: what does this tell us? We knew what happened! We’ve got the historical sources. And I’m afraid, in the 21st century, we are proving our critics right. Again and again. If we are doing that kind of narrative, for every clever thing we say about the bones, we’re simply saying “That’s a bit of detail we didn’t know . . . we didn’t know if he fell off his horse before he was killed” or whatever, but it’s really absolutely the worst kind of history. And sometimes we are telling stories that don’t fit a single model of history and that is part of history, stories of kings on horseback or not finding horses, you know? But then we also have the story of what is the broader context of this? I do feel that that is lost. So I would say these sites and spectacular finds do detract, metal detector finds, the funerary remains or funerary contexts or hoards do the same thing. It’s not just about Richard III. I don’t know . . . it is good in many ways, showcase the value of techniques and I suppose, energising interest in particular historic cities and the rich other material remains they’ve had, I won’t question that.

Do you think media coverage of mortuary archaeology has increased in recent years?
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<td>34</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Um . . . I have no real sense of that. I’m actually quite detached from the media; I don’t follow it that closely. I would imagine it’s a steady stream and it’s diversifying in the way it’s being communicated and the discovery stories, I think the BBC, the way, you know, the move, the way in which people access news has changed and with it, archaeology stories have proliferated. I have no sense whether that is true more of archaeology than any other subject area, our knowledge of the latest cancer drugs or our knowledge of the latest traffic incidents, you know, that immediate news product that we can learn about from Twitter feeds, about who’s had . . . my local lollipop lady just got knocked over and got her legs broken the other . . . I wouldn’t have known that, it was in the next street to me, but I wouldn’t necessarily have known that before the internet and tweeting that, emergency services now are tweeting results: “Lady in her 40s taken to hospital with fractures”, so we know almost instantly what’s going on in our immediate environs, so I . . . yes, of course, the exposure’s gone up, but are people reading any of it, are they absorbing any of it? Is there any . . . yes, there is a general sense of it. You can go to the BBC website most days and somewhere in the corner of the front page is something about archaeology, somewhere, so yeah, of course it is, but I don’t have any sense, at all, any vision, of whether this is a real finite increase now of profile, um, beyond anything else, cos in 19th century newspapers there would be stories of another grave found in here or whatever, in the same way, so illustrated in the London news or whatever, so I don’t know what that really tells us. Global internet, those phenomena have made so many specialist areas more accessible, stories, but in terms of the way stories are reported—discovery, discovery, discovery—no one gives a toss if you’ve actually come up with a new interpretation of anything that’s been said before, if you haven’t discovered it. Yeah. It’s got to be a new . . . archaeology is about discovery. Of bones.</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Vampire burials are very popular, aren’t they?</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Yes, vampires, I mean the clichés that come back again. That cycle.</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What are your thoughts on displaying human remains in museums? Is there a value to doing that beyond furthering our knowledge of the past?</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Yeah. ’Fraid so. Lots of things, lots of things. At the very . . . the very peopling of the past. As I’ve said, skeletons are very seductive, they draw you in, I tried to make out that was a negative thing, but of course, that presupposes that there is a huge value to showing these remains. To communicate with these remains. I think they tell us a lot about the human past, um, they also tell us a lot about, they give us an avenue into mortality, I’ve written about this, you know, I think they are a way in a society, where we have a very closed-off experience of corpses in the real, even though zombies populate our television and murders populate every programme, um, I think real death is hidden and this is the way we access it by proxy. We look at the ancient dead to understand what might happen to grandma or what might happen to our kids and I think that’s scary and horrific and it’s because everyone’s concerned about, not less themselves, but about their—most people are concerned with something more than themselves—and they are thinking about their family and people they know and I think human remains in museums are a way of that. I don’t think if we actually overtly embraced that and started having simpering displays that try and get the audience to reflect on that will necessarily be better, but already Manchester Museum—last time I went to</td>
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Manchester Museum was when they had the bog body displayed, it was many years ago—um ... I haven't actually been back since, but I remember that, in the Egyptian galleries they had modern art, artists had produced caskets to get you to think about past and present in some sense, but I've seen that in other displays in other museums and I think that, getting people to think about mortality today is a major issue, a major social demographic changes in how we deal with death, these are not superficial issues, we have real starvation, real war, real things going on in the world today and people need to understand the consequences.

So ... you know, the terror, whether those are being flagged up in the way we communicate, I don't think we should, as I said, just to ... this isn't very coherent, I don't think we should be making our displays more . . . to get people to overtly reflect on their mortality, I don't think, that's not what I'm saying, but I think by the process of displaying those remains is having a long-term impact on our education and understanding of death, disease and the human condition and the issues we reflect on we deal with today in the modern world. Um . . . not always effectively, perhaps, but I think human remains are part of that narrative, so death tells us about the past and I think it tells us a lot about the present, it's about scientific and educational value. People will get offended by it and the issue is whether offence is really a bad thing, um, artists have their works taken off display all the time because someone objects, there's massive debates about whether that should take place, what is racist? What is sexist? What is this? What is just crap art?

You know, if you applied that to human remains you can go to museums and say “This is a really crap display” for practical reasons or for the disabled people who can’t see it or for the light blinding and for perhaps other kinds of reasons, so I think, of course, we have to be careful and thoughtful, but we’re never going to please everybody. But human remains should absolutely stay on display, in my opinion. They are part of our culture, they are part of our educational process, for understanding the human past and the human present. And the human future. So I think the question really has to come down on why, oh why, would you take any remains off display? The reason is . . . you have to come back to why have you got them on display, should always be reflecting about what goes on display, should always be taking things off display if they’re not fulfilling that function, but keeping the living safe from the dead is not perhaps a very intelligent way to go down. So I . . . [sighs] I think human remains should stay on display. On the whole.

Manchester Museum’s very interesting because they’ve just reduced the number of mummies in their Egyptian gallery, they re-did it, so I think there’s only three or so on display now, whereas they did have a whole wall of them—

I have a . . . I don’t care about that, actually on one level, but I have had an issue, which I’m writing about, about volumes. Some of the most powerful displays of human remains I’ve seen, again, take you away from the individual, take you to the population and, I can tell you some examples, the most powerful ones I’ve seen, is seeing a reconstruction of not a single grave, so many museums have a single warrior burial or weapon burial, single, wealthy female burial or give them a facial reconstruction, give them a name and there they are, there are the Anglo-Saxons, typical Anglo-Saxon and then you find out that they’re so atypical of the population, you know, but their just a typical burial and then you have displays of multiple grave stones. [Redacted] you go and see a reconstruction at the Sedgewick Museum I went
to, the grave field, an Iron Age grave field, boring pots of cremated human remains, one after the other. Power. BAM! A hundred pots, ten of them are full of cremated human remains or so, the rest are just pots, but they give you that sense of volume, community. A sense of society. I’m not obsessed with community, but getting you to think about the individual in relation to society, having three bog bodies on display is something very different from having one bog body, having fifteen mummies, may be, you’ve got to justify what you’re displaying so many, but . . . it does tell you something different. It’s not the same thing as having one on display, these are . . . my argument towards community is also an argument towards individuals, because to understand and celebrate individuals in the past, you need to see more than one individual [laughs] So it’s not just about my obsession with, oh, individuals is a cult of me and our modern individualistic society, to understand and respect individuality in the past, you have to see community, so these are not one or the other, but it is about volume, sometimes tells you stories.

Seeing one Roman coin is not the same as seeing as pot of fifty or a hundred or a thousand, there is something . . . quantity is a powerful communicative device. Having a museum display that can show you five different brooches and then you can pull out a drawer with fifty, not everyone wants to see those fifty and analyse all the details and I think that’s where museologists dumbing-down can miss a point, but the volume gives a . . . you can tell stories about production, exchange, you now, identity, about how people are using these brooches, the variations, chronology, so many stories you can tell and the same with human remains. If you reduce it down to “This is a typical Beaker . . . this is the Amesbury Archer”, whoopy-doo! So Amesbury Archer, he’s from Switzerland and he had a bad leg, right? But what about the other fifty Beaker burials from that area? That’s the story, isn’t it? That’s the exciting story for me.

So the new Stonehenge exhibition has three sets of human remains on display, I don’t even remember seeing one of them, but anyway, what on earth does that tell you about volume, you know? Neolithic long barrow? I thought one of the things we were told, taught as first-year undergraduates is that these are accumulative remains of multiple generations, piled into these tombs. So you have one guy, who looks like Dennis Quaid with a beard, as representing the Neolithic before Stonehenge? How perverse is that?! So, sorry, let’s get off Richard III and let’s have a go at Stonehenge! That doesn’t work. It simply doesn’t work on any level. So why are you doing that? Because we know how to do a facial reconstruction and we need a personality? Do you? Who says that? Who’s driving that Meet the Ancestors narrative of “We’ve got to have one body that you put the face on it?” No one needs that. People have imaginations. Why don’t you stuff a load of random bones in a case and say this is the mess that happens at the end of a Neolithic . . . part of a Neolithic chambered tomb?

I’ve seen that done at other museums very effectively and I’m not saying you have to do the same thing everywhere, but why do we have to have a facial reconstruction? It’s almost like a checklist, “Oh, we’ve got have a facial reconstruction”, everyone does it, you know? It’s like copying, you’ve got to have one, you’ve got have a facial reconstruction, how can you not have a facial reconstruction? So we can look an ancestor and for me, that’s the mess that happens at the end of a Neolithic . . . part of a Neolithic chambered tomb?
of all these coffins, that would be fabulous!”

“Wouldn’t it be a bit cluttered?”

Yeah, the hate of clutter. Clutter is good! Our houses are full of clutter, look at this office, we’re obsessed with clutter and yet we try and deny it for the past: “Let’s all make everything neat and iconic. People can’t cope with clutter, don’t want to put more than they can look at in five seconds in a case”. No. Clutter it up. Make it messy, because that’s exactly what gets people interested. Not every schoolkid will look at every object, but they may find something they like, you know? So you can have people coming back and talking about the remains and what they didn’t see, so they go back again. I think there’s interesting . . . I’m just trying to . . . airing some frustrations, I don’t have fully-formed, I’m not a museologist, but yes, we should display the dead and we should be doing it in increasingly different ways for different museums and we should be, thinking of the power of numbers. It should not be denied our obsession with reducing down to a few bodies: “Well, that’s enough; we don’t want to upset people by showing them too many corpses”. And you go to the Holocaust museum and the power of numbers is there in the most extreme way and you go to Auschwitz Birkenau and you see the power of shoes, the power of horrible bags with names on and that’s obviously a very extreme example and we’re not trying to tell the same story in a normal museum, but if you’re trying to understand Bronze Age society, how can you do it with two pots? You know? Or one skull.

41 K What do you think are the biggest challenges or difficulties in practising mortuary archaeology?

42 D The first thing that comes to mind is probably cost, you know, if you’re dealing with funerary remains now, the bewildering advances in scientific applications are brilliant, but also, disabling. Another one challenging is the division between physical anthropology/osteology and mortuary archaeologists and the kinds of narratives and questions they’re asking, I think that’s a great challenge, for us all, to overcome: to speak to the bone people and for the bone people to actually say anything because if anything, some of the bone people seem to be saying less than they did 20 years ago about social context and still ranting on about biocultural approaches, as if that’s somehow an innovation. I find it amazing. So, I suppose the challenge of specialisation, the challenge of cost of doing work, um, those are the two things that immediately come to mind and I suppose, I have to repeat, the challenge of trying to get people away from the idea of that we dig up bones, you know, and those many other types of material culture, landscape, that we can study within that rubric of mortuary archaeology. Yeah, I think that’s the simple answer, there’s so many challenges that we face, I suppose, there’s some of the things we face.

43 K Do you think there’s a problem with calling it mortuary archaeology, should it just be archaeology? Is it pigeon-holing it?

44 D We don’t have a journal for mortuary archaeology, do we? You know, mortuary archaeology or burial, stuff that involves funerary contexts or burials, whatever you want to call it, archaeology engages with those contexts. It still has the problem, I suppose that’s another challenge of it, we still have that, we are burial archaeologists or settlement archaeologists, material culture people or whatever, landscape archaeologists, we still have those divisions which are challenging. There is a problem with that, but I
would say that we are quite integrated into many other spheres of, you know, discussion and debate.

It does get segmented off and compartmentalised quite a lot, which is an issue, yes. So, I mean . . . but we don’t have a journal dedicated to it and all the mainstream journals take stuff that deals with burials, so if anything, we’re over-exposed and bled into many other fields. I suppose another, if you want me to be really opinionated, another challenge we face about mortuary archaeology and . . . is the curse of prehistory. Prehistory shouldn’t exist. There’s no such thing as prehistory. And I feel that, I can’t believe that we’re in the 21st century and prehistorians still talk about prehistory and dominate the narratives for mortuary archaeology and overtly and quite happily demarcate themselves off as the space for theoretical innovation and new analysis, being prehistory. They still value the Roman conquest as a moment where they’re no longer interested. And it doesn’t work both ways and I’m sorry, it doesn’t.

Contemporary archaeologists, late historical archaeologists, medieval archaeologists and Roman archaeologists, to different degrees, um, tackle prehistoric material in their excavations, in their fieldwork, in their thinking and I’m not sure prehistorians do it. They like to think they do it, but they really don’t. They’re really happy to have their conferences and their debates bracketed by the Roman conquest, on its more earlier side. And I’ve never seen a debate or a discussion of that, so I’ll throw that one in the pot, because I’ll immediately deny it and say it’s wrong, and maybe you call yourself a prehistorian, I don’t know, but er, I think there is a real issue, that the hegemony, if you like, of prehistory and burial archaeology, it goes back to the new archaeology and the studies of [indecipherable] and American prehistory and European prehistory, having some kind of self-appointed testing grounds for mortuary archaeology. It’s one that I’ve tackled and I know it’s one other people have tackled in their careers, as I’ve always seen the early Anglo-Saxon archaeology as a great testing ground for using burial archaeology to tackle [indecipherable] debates, as well as to touch on themes that are of wider relevance, but again and again, peer-review and debates, I am seeing it’s just the latest paper tagged on to an edited volume, dominated by prehistorians, for no other reason than they don’t know how to arrange the volume, other than chronologically, or they say, “Oh, it’s really interesting how you’re slightly behind in your theoretical approach, but it’s actually, it’s interesting that you actually use some evidence.” Yeah. That’s what we should all be doing. So yeah, I find myself very frustrated by that as a challenge, of how we, yes, mortuary archaeology is a term, or burial archaeology I think is even worse a term or funerary archaeology, I think mortuary archaeology is more inclusive because it can, but still, we have that challenge of it being seen as that separate, segmented area, but also the prehistoric-historic divide or divides between prehistoric and historic is still very tenacious and infuriating at times. And I’m not saying it’s only prehistorians who are to blame, medieval archaeologists have a ghetto too and you know, but I think, the more we talk across those period boundaries, the more we can get some conversations about what we’re doing.

45 K These are the last couple of questions and these are the more, sort of, personal ones. Do you have any memorable experiences of either excavating or handling or viewing human remains, for any sort of particular reason?

46 D Quite a lot, I suppose. Um . . . as I’ve said, I’ve been very detached from physical remains. Was that your . . . you’re asking about human remains are
I’ve been very detached from human remains. I did an undergraduate course using Anglo-Saxon skeletons and I remember pasting together bits of child skeleton’s skull with, you know, for reasons that weren’t really clear, um, but also, um . . . just trying . . . as working tools. I remember finding . . . one anecdote comes to mind is, finding in University of Sheffield’s studio training was going to the Outer Hebrides and we went to Barra and on the west side of Barra there was a cemetery on the headland, the sort of township cemetery, right on the headland, by the sea, and I remember, as part of our survey, you know, we had a break and went around cemetery and I had just done my osteology courses and I saw on the surface, because rabbits and sand and rabbits dig up the graves and I could see, and I can’t remember what it was, a human bone, coming out of the . . . and I picked it up and one of my colleagues had a go and was like “Put that back! Put that back!” And I was like, “I wasn’t going to take it away, but it’s already on the surface, so I thought I’d just have a look at what it was” and that was an interesting moment, thinking about . . . between archaeological students, how different attitudes are towards human remains and I suppose that one example made me reflect on how I was seeing it as material that I could identify, I didn’t see it as anything to do with a human person, at that particular point, I’ve fluctuated in my views on this ever since, but at that point, I was “Human remains, yayyyyy!” You know? I wasn’t trying to do anything strange with them or take them away, I wanted to look at them and I thought touching them was legitimate, since they were already well disturbed in that context. So that was an interesting moment.

I remember someone pick-axing through a child infant burial on an Iron Age site in France and all the awkwardness that caused, you know, mattocking off the surface and “Oh, look, there’s small bones”, you know? That was an interesting moment and then people obviously took a lot of time excavating around that and paying attention to that, but again, frankly, I wasn’t a dad at that point and you know, it’s just small human remains, it didn’t really . . . it doesn’t . . . human remains don’t necessarily touch you in an emotional way. I suppose another, so I suppose that would be the point, that often it’s amazing how oblivious we are unless our human experience . . . touches on . . . things like child death. It just doesn’t . . . you just don’t get it and I suppose, I would be really upset by that now, I think I would, when I went to Poulton and saw that infant burial, that was suddenly very different, now I’ve got [redacted] kids [laughs] compared with a 19 year old, who didn’t have a clue about anything, let alone children, you know really, really . . . you know, very different, showing you how you’re experiences as an archaeologist could be completely relevant, I’m sure everyone says that, but it’s still a point worth saying, you know, that as an anecdote of being touched by human remains, that’s an example. I wasn’t touched by human remains, but since I can reflect on, isn’t that interesting that I wasn’t, ’cause perhaps I should have been or maybe not. Different positions in where you are and your life.

I remember feeling a sense of nausea seeing Ginger in the British Museum, I felt something rather gross about the . . . I remember seeing it at about the age of 5, I remember seeing Ginger in a display case and feeling that there was something quite revolting about the stretched flesh over the bones, I don’t remember feeling any particular sense of “Eurgh, it’s a body, that’s disgusting”. I felt a strange sort of sensation in my mouth and stomach and I
don’t know what this is, other than a, you know, I remember that really early on, so I suppose, responses to human remains. I suppose … is the kind of thing that’s relevant?

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This is not in the right order. Frustrated at digging the boat grave and not finding any human remains [indecipherable], but knowing I was digging through spaces that may have once contained human remains. I’d like to foreground that absence that is sometimes as eerie as presence of human remains. That is very frustrating. Even recording gravestones, I’ve recorded loads of gravestones and dealt with groups of students recording gravestones, rarely do I read them, “read” read. My students spend a lot of time reading them, I read them, but I don’t think about them, you know? You’re in a mode of recording, recording, recording and then suddenly something BAM! Something hits you, but that’s not human remains, but . . . a story can hit you or just thinking through the implications of the ages or the relationships and then suddenly that gets you, it’s not about human remains, but that can suddenly just strike you. I can’t think of any single example, but . . . it can, and incomplete gravestones where there’s not a name of the partner or whatever, or seeing the number of different levels added on and seeing that they’re all dying young and realising “crikey”. So I suppose that’s more mortality, rather than skeletal. I’m sure I’ve got a few other examples I can tell you about … oh, yeah, excavating an Anglo-Saxon cemetery and having nighthawks on the site and being called to try and defend the site by the site director who had realised that people were in the trench, um, trying to look at the skeletons or remove artefacts from the skeletons and then having to—half awake, all of us—trying to get up and know what are we expected to do here, what is the . . . what are we doing to defend these skeletons, either stuff has been ripped and damaged or it hasn’t been, um, so I suppose that’s an interesting memory of human skeleton excavation was, just that sense of, are we actually going to have a fight with somebody, what are we actually going to do?

Because that’s not the only site I’ve been on that’s been night hawked, um, but that was . . . or was it just local kids who just decided at 6, at 5 am or 4 am to come and look at the skeletons? I think it more likely that it was night . . . someone who was planning to do something, but they never did any damage or they hadn’t got around to it, where they were obviously disturbed at the moment um, that there skeletons were found, so I suppose that was a . . . that’s not really do with mortality, that’s just a memorable impression of excavation or excavating human remains. Ah, I’ve dried up now . . . I’m sure I’ve come across remains in museums, obviously, um, feeling angry a lot more recently about the way things are displayed, feeling that sense of indignation at the idiocy of displays and feeling that personally on occasions where I need not do—“What on earth are they doing?”—and feeling a bit, sort of, sort of . . . on my high horse about, you know, bad displays or even stupid displays or, I suppose, that sort of angry art critic type approach to everything. I suppose there’s that, that comes through occasionally, but getting my kids to look at human remains, that’s interesting, that’s an interesting experience, my kids look at human remains quite a lot, I try not to encourage them, but they manage to pick up all sorts of gory things and er, trying to get them interested, that’s actually quite weird. I don’t say it’s emotionally heart-string . . . you know, heart-rending, but it’s kind of is a weird dynamic, of getting inter-generational engagement with human
remains and thinking through how that affects you. That’s all I can think of at the moment, so lots of individual moments of being detached and uninterested in human remains and then thinking, “Oh, that’s kind of touching” or “That’s kind of disturbing” or “Isn’t that annoying that they haven’t displayed that correctly” sort of a mixture of academic anger and emotional responses, I suppose. You know?

But I’ve never felt, sort of upset by human remains, as such, in any reflected way, but I’ve been told off about touching human remains or that interesting anecdote and you know, it has made me think ongoing dialogue about human remains, it’s never stopped me thinking about are we doing the right thing? Is this appropriate to even talk about this? Showing slides in lectures is always another moment of reflection, seeing students, that’s always, it’s never-ending, it’s not one moment, it’s always, how are people going to respond to this? You know, I’ve had to deal with, teach students who’ve just had bereavements and you know, do I just warn them? No. Don’t warn them. Just put it up, because they know what’s in the class, they know what it’s about, if they get upset they can come to me or just not attend the lecture or switch modules and, er, but you have those kind of feelings, what are people going to see this as offensive?

| 51 | K | Is that quite rare among students? |
| 52 | D | I think you take any student group and there are so many issues and I very quickly learnt as a lecturer that the whole population is constantly bereaved or ill because, you put any number of people in a room and there’s so many issues going on. I mean, I’ve had anecdotes, I remember one particularly awkward one, was a student who did raise the issue, said “I’ve got real problems with this, my wife has just died”, he was in his late 40s, a mature student, [indecipherable] “My wife’s died and I don’t know how I’m going to take this course” and I said “Look, what we have to do is talk, keep talking about it, if you don’t want to attend it, you’re welcome to leave at any point, but I’m not going to change what I’m teaching because it’s not about you” and unfortunately it just went bad, because I should have just told him to sod off into another course, because he just sat there with his arms crossed like this [mimes] the whole time, looking angry at every inference I made to funerary remains. So it just became, he ended up just wanting to take out some personal bereavement issues and I’m not an expert, I’ve no idea what he was going through and I don’t pretend to understand how horrible it must be in that situation he was in, but he . . . it came out in class, is the point, it came out in class as an issue with me and with the material. Um, not in a rational way, of course, at all, but it was an issue.

So I’ve had cases like that and cases where, I must admit, I have actually just been depressed beyond measure having just turned up for 9am to give a mortuary archaeology class and one of the mature students in the room, she’s got . . . I got there about 20 minutes early and she’s there and I go, I make the mistake of asking “How are you doing [redacted]?” and she goes “Oh, it’s not very good at home, I’ve got, of course, my husband can’t walk now and of course, I have to change the potty and of course, he can’t keep the food down and of course, the drugs we’re giving him are giving him all this . . .” and I’m [mocks collapsing into chair] by the time 9am’s there and I’ve heard this story of her dying husband and her caring for him and I go “OK! Bog bodies!” [laughs] You know? You sort of, actually, it occasionally does get me down. Not because of the archaeological material suddenly give me some stark, ontological moment of “Ah, why, why? Life is futile!” but because of the interaction with students and sometimes it’s just depressing, you know?
Um, cos there... there's real issues people are facing and then dealing with something very long ago seems... just rather, either superfluous or a little too much to mix in with that, I suppose. Yeah. Yeah, I think that's the...

| 53 | K | That's very interesting. Well, this is my final question, has working in mortuary archaeology affected the way you look at death in any way? |
| 54 | D | I have been relatively lucky... I'm not sure how I'm going to answer this, so let me do some stage points and see how it comes out. I've been relatively lucky as a person; I've not had to face too many deaths from people I know. I know people who died, but not actually to deal with death, so I feel... I'm probably a huge charlatan, um, in actually claiming any specialism in dealing with death in the past or the present, given how little, how cosseted I've been by society and by luck and circumstance in... dealing with dying and death directly, as yet. So... at one level, still to be tested, whether I will, when I face death... um... my own or other those of other people, I will still be able to deal with mortuary matters. I think that's the first point I would make, is that I've been very lucky and so a lot of... and on another level, I suppose, in the abstract terms, has... [sighs] another point I would make is that I feel, if I was going to make, in terms of dealing with death and mortality, sorry, is that what you're asking? Can you remind me? |
| 55 | K | Yes. |
| 56 | D | Is this on the right tracks? |
| 57 | K | Yes. |
| 58 | D | I'm trying to think through this very carefully because I don't want to... I want to give you a clear sense of what I'm trying to say. So on one level, I feel it's yet to be tested whether I will still be wanting to do this kind of work that is not skeletal, bony research, but is about funerals, memorials, which is somehow more distanced from corporeal death, but is still very much about studying how societies deal with mortality in many different dimensions. Will I still be confident doing that when I'm faced with bereavement and I'm facing my own demise? Will I still be happy just talking about this stuff, in an academic way? Will it change the way I write?

Another level, I think in the abstract terms, it's helped me to understand a lot of things about my own society, about some of the things I thought were arcane and aliens spaces, the funerals I've been to and crematoria are weird, odd, I don't... I didn't even understand the architecture, I must admit, as a non-church-going child, I found churches weird, but crematoria I find even weirder, you know, in terms of how the architecture works, so I felt that over the years, even recently I've learnt things that helped to understand what's going on in our own society's death-ways, but I wouldn't say it's necessarily touched me in any direct way and then, the third point is, the few deaths I've had to deal with, on a first-hand basis, I suppose, would distil down to one where I was the only person there, when someone died and then my involvement with the funeral, I was as a mourner... my involvement with the death and that process of that person then dying and my... my then engagement with the funeral made me realise how utterly ignorant I am, and still am, of how to respond, how to deal with it, how to feel, there's so much literature on being informed about choices of what you do and how you behave, well, not necessarily how to behave, but how to respond and how to grieve and how other, and empathy for other
people. I realised how my research hasn't made me any better equipped to deal with that situation, other than almost a humorous Peep Show style inner monologue about “Those flowers don't look quite right on the grave. God, what are they going to do now? They've got steps, they're going to try and carry the coffin down”, you know, that kind of [laughs] David Mitchell-style, sort of inner monologue, and I'm often infuriated with my own recommendation of the flowers to go on the coffin, for example, because they just didn’t bloody work and things like this and that petty detail but that was there, at one level, working away academically, about “What on earth is going on and isn’t this weird? And I’ve never liked that person over there and now I’ve got to sit here with them” and then the broader context. So to answer the question, in my way, I’m ashamed to say it hasn’t affected me much, it’s an abstract, academic thing, when it becomes more possible, will I want to continue having it as an academic thing? You know? Your hobby shouldn’t be your job. Is that . . . I mean, I don’t know. That’s the thing for me, that’s an on-going discussion I’m having with myself. Is there going to be a moment where, actually, someone close does die or I have to face my death and I think “What the hell am I doing writing in the abstract about this?” Could I write the same way? And could I do it in an academic, objective . . . I don’t think anything’s objective, but could I continue to do this? I’m not one of those people who have to handle skeletons on a daily basis, I have handled skeletons, they don’t really bother me too much, they’re dead, they’re not hurting anyone, um, but memorials affect me more, or as much, but it’s in . . . but I don’t think . . . I’m still as ignorant of mortality as anyone else and I think I’m still struggling with what to do and how to deal with people in those situations as much as anyone else. Yeah. I think that’s probably the most honest answer I can muster. There’s other nuances to it, but dealing with someone who died, it was messy, awkward, involved imbeciles and involved specialists and involved family and involved awkward decision making and that changed my view more than any of my research did about what’s going on with mortality, I suppose.

59  K  Wonderful.

60  D  Was that ok?

61  K  That’s answered all my questions. Have you got any thoughts or comments or anything you’d like—

62  D  I must admit, as I was answering this, obviously I was trying to think very actively about things that you might . . . that might be different for you to hear, I wasn’t trying to say . . . obviously I was trying to be deliberately polemic at a few points about my views on prehistorians or osteologists or Richard III, that I’m sure you will have heard before, but I wasn’t trying to be deliberately different from other people you’ve talked to, but I was trying to think of what you might not have heard of and I was trying to skirt over some of the more established lines of thinking, so I would put that as a qualification, when I’m talking about, um, some of the things, of course, the values of some of these methods and some of these approaches, I’m not questioning, but I was trying then, assuming your knowledge as a postgraduate student of all these matters, assuming that shared knowledge, so that you can jump on to the areas that might not be things that you’ve heard of or if you have heard of them, at least you’ve heard my . . . you’ve seen one take on them from me. Um, beyond that, I’d be really interested to see how you . . . negotiate quantitative and qualitative comments in this process, how you, you know, you’re sort of able to give individuals who’ve answered your
questions their take, but also, you shouldn't shy away from that 99 per cent said that they're happy with their museums and they laugh every time they see a skeleton or whatever it might be [laughs] You know? You keep those general perspectives, it doesn’t just become a series of quotes and I’m very intrigued by how you’re going to write this.

So am I! [laughs]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

I’ve got two anecdotes quickly, would you like to hear them?

Yes, please!

I’ll do them quickly and then you can always follow up if you ever want any more information, if you think they might be useful. One is about student pride: I remember excavating a cemetery, a prehistoric burial site and being so proud of my student because what happened was they’d lifted the skeletal remains and I was there. I was left to mop up the logistics of the site and my student was cleaning out the bottom of the grave fill and she started seeing things that we . . . and she, well, she spotted basically, a collection of very small shale beads that would have gone on armlet around an immature Bronze Age crouched burial and nobody had noticed them. The expert archaeologist, the people who had been given, in a fashion that annoys me still, the more experienced diggers being told to lift the bones, and she was just doing the grunt work of clearing out the bottom and we plotted them as much as possible and they were from the area of where one of the wrists, or they could have been around the neck, and they’re unique for that area.

So, the idea that digging human remains, it often fills you with a sense of student pride, things that are spotted, there’s embarrassing moments, where things get screwed up, mattocks go through skeletons, um, but there’s also that sense of this a moment where a student can prove themselves, and gain confidence through a discovery, not of the remains themselves, but something extra, so that was something . . . an anecdote that I thought might have . . . may have a point for you about how it’s not only about who gets to dig the skeletons, but it’s about who doesn’t get to dig the skeletons who find the exciting things, you know, er, and that speaks a lot about the strange hierarchies of archaeological digs and how people get singled out as good diggers and not. I was always singled out as the nerd who was no good at digging: “Don’t give him anything interesting”. Definitely, definitely, I know it was happening, probably well, well-deserved, as well. I assure you! Um . . . but, you know, my point is, there have been there’s been some interesting finds that you don’t expect or come after you think the dig’s over.

Another point I’d raise is survey and the gravestone memorial can throw up all sorts of interesting . . . ah, I’ve got another one after this one, sorry! Just
quickly. They’re very different stories . . . implications. Graveyard survey, coming across a 20th century grave and finding a wedding ring on the surface and this was, we were surveying 15th February, so the day after Valentine’s Day and finding a wedding ring or . . . I’d say an engagement ring or wedding ring on the surface, just beneath a few leaves and stuff on a gravestone, no accidental loss this, modern deposition . . . for whom on that gravestone. It’s for three people on the gravestone, this is their mother’s ring, this is . . . what is the bloody story here? You know? And what do you do with this now that we’ve found it? So we just . . . we told the churchwardens, so we left it there. And they can make the decision and we ceded the decision to them whether they want to retrieve that and keep it in the church or what they want to do, but I said it’s there, we found it, interesting questions it raises. So the reason I tell you that one is . . . unexpected, nothing to do with burial, nothing to do with human remains, yet powerfully emotional, personal, ethical, what the hell do you do? We informed the church wardens that we found this and this is where it was. Perhaps we shouldn’t even have done that, I don’t know. But it was a very difficult thinking through of what to do with that discovery of an artefact that’s very recent, probably a day old, you know? So . . . maybe it’s there because they hated the person and they didn’t know what to do with it and they didn’t want it anymore or was it because they loved the relative or was it someone who offered them marriage? You never know. Who knows?! So there’s all sorts of stories there, so I thought that would be a really interesting one for you and I’m sure I had another one that suddenly came to me, my mind and . . . it’s gone. Oh, so many! But I’ll give you another one.

Imaginary bodies. What do you do when you’re doing a site tour and dowsers are in the party you’re showing around the site at [redacted] and they go, in front of 50 other people who are happily listening to you telling them about the Bronze Age barrow you think you’ve found and who’s under there, there’s this weird spectacle guy in a mackintosh, you know, and you go “Good, good, what do you think is under there?”. “Six monks who were killed at the battle of [redacted], they’re buried under there”.

I said, “That makes sense ‘cause we’re not far from [redacted]”, quite a way from [redacted], “Oh, that’s alright, well now we don’t dig, we’re going to stop the dig now”, I said “We’re going to stop the dig now, thank you very much, thank you, thank you”. I said “That’s it, we won’t be digging next year because we know what’s there”. How am I supposed to respond? You know? I was put in a real bad positon and I was trying to not be sarcastic, I didn’t want to be rude, but what am I supposed to say, I’ve just taken them on a whole site tour: “I know what’s there”. Yeah, course you do. So . . . dealing with fringe is always another issue, how to deal with, you know, I’m not very good at it, is the answer [laughs] You know? I’m not very good at respect for other people’s views: “You’re talking bollocks, shut up!” I didn’t say that, but I did make light of it and you know, I thought I was right to; it was unfair of him to do that. He could have taken me aside and given me his view, he didn’t have to say it in front of everyone, as some kind of “I know what’s there”, so I’m sure I had some other fun anecdotes for you, but there’s some, that’s more than enough.

73 K They’re great, thank you very much.
## Appendix 26

### Interview with Daniel

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<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>So my first question is about your background and what you do here at the museum?</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Ok, so I’m the [redacted] and I have been in post for three years and before I came here I was at [redacted] and I studied [redacted] I did my PhD there, worked in the university museum there, so that was how I got into museum side of things, um . . . I was, and am, a kind of what you’d call a classic Egyptologist, I [redacted] wasn’t particularly interested in mummies [redacted] obviously, that comes with the territory, certainly for the last . . . well, for the last hundred years, [redacted], to communicate them effectively to the public and to make them accessible to researchers, such as yourselves, so it . . . it’s kind of like, I like to call it professional enthusiasm, so you have to respond to what people want to know and people want to know about pyramids and they want to know about mummies, they don’t necessarily want to know about [redacted], erm, so I’m responding to people’s enquiries, I think is the bulk of my work, is responding to people’s enquiries, whether it’s about loans, people want to borrow things for an exhibition, or they want some information for a school project or an undergraduate essay or for a PhD thesis, making the collection accessible and answering as best I can questions about ancient Egypt.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Does it get a bit wearisome then, if there are [redacted] objects in the collection and people are only be interested in mummies? Does that frustrate you?</td>
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| 4         | D       | It does a little bit, [redacted] but . . . I think, in general, I’d like to think there is now more interest in other aspects of the collection than there was, so it is balanced out, so of course I don’t mind answering questions about mummies, but there are only so many questions that can be asked, so if there’s a technical question about sampling, I can say that, [redacted] If it’s something as you’re asking about, the perception of mummies, then I’m happy to talk about that, but between those things, there’s not that many questions that can be asked, really. Actually, interestingly, something I’ve noticed recently, there is more interest in the coffins the mummies come in, there’s been an interest in the containers, that’s been a general trend in Egyptology, so you know, if you list all the . . . to be fair, if you list every enquiry we get, a small number are about mummies themselves, there’s another chunk about coffins and masks and perceptions . . . perceptions of ancient Egypt, including mummies, but actual mummies themselves are not that . . . are not that demanding in terms of enquiries. It’s an interesting way to think about it actually, I’ve never done any numerical listing, but that’s in terms of research enquiries I get, you know, by email, ask someone who works on the gallery how many questions you get about mummies and that
would be disproportionately higher and I’m probably going to be anticipating a question you’re going to be asking later, [redacted] I only get research enquiries really about mumified remains, but it’s still a popular issue and as an example of that, in a year’s time, [redacted] So . . . in answer to your question, do I get frustrated? No. Is the honest answer, because the job, in general, is an extremely satisfying one and if I happen to be talking about mummies quite a lot, despite having not really had a background in mummies, I don’t mind that.

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<th>5</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Why do you think they are so popular with the public?</th>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Oh, that’s the $64,000 question! Mummies are human beings, and I think mummies in museums provide that . . . [sighs] allowable interaction between the living and the dead and there is something about ancient Egypt that I find quite interesting, that . . . there are people, anecdotal evidence, people come into the gallery and they don’t believe the mummy [redacted] most people in the 21st century don’t have any first-hand experience of corpses, so that’s a bit of a revelation and because mummies are kind of used in the same breath as werewolves and vampires, we know that werewolves and vampires don’t exist, so we assume that mummies aren’t real, so . . . there’s this kind of exotic, there is definitely the exotic, I mean you can read this in literally dozens of books, um, what is it about mummies, and after having worked here for a few years now, I’m forced to conclude that . . . I mean there’s all kinds of orientalising and sexualised narratives about mummies and what they represent, honestly, there is an element of, I think this is the most important, mummies are different from other dead people, because usually dead people are losers, because people die because they’re sick or old or have some terrible accident, they lose at the game of life, we feel sorry for them, but mummies, we know enough about ancient Egyptian religion to know . . . we believe, Egyptology believes, but read Christina Riggs book about this, she disputes this, we believe that we know enough about ancient Egyptian religion to know . . . the Egyptians wanted their bodies to be preserved, so, if you see a mummy that’s 3000 years old, it has succeeded in doing . . . the Egyptians have succeeded, we believe, what they wanted, which was to preserve the body in a lifelike fashion and there are some of the royal mummies in Cairo that really look like people who have fallen asleep, they’re quite incredibly lifelike preservation and we’re a bit jealous, so mummies have kind of succeeded at that, whereas we’re used to thinking of dead people as losers, mummies are winners and we’ve got a little bit of ourselves that are envious, because we’re envious that chances are in a year after we die, we won’t be preserved.</td>
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<th>7</th>
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<th>That’s an interesting answer, I’d not thought of mummies in that way.</th>
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| 8 | D | Because people have asked that question before and until I’d read that particular book, I’d never thought of it that way myself, but um, I mean it’s the preservation thing, mummies, what makes a mummy a mummy? Well, it’s not a skeleton, a mummy is a preserved body, whether it’s a bog body, which is sort of a mummy, or a Peruvian mummy, or an Egyptian mummy, but Egyptian mummies are the classical, because of popular culture, the mummy is from Egypt that’s what most people will tell you, most British people. I mean there’s a whole huge body of literature about, um, perceptions of mummies and how you can really see the figure of the mummy changing in nineteenth century literature into films of the early twentieth century when it becomes this kind of malign, malign influence, certainly early on, talking about the eighteenth century even, the nineteenth
century, the mummies are romantic figures, these things change, change very much, they’re all very romantic, but it depends on your interpretation, I suppose.

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<th>Does the collection only consist of mummies or do you have skeletons?</th>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Good question! We have [redacted] complete mummies, by which I mean complete human bodies which are either wrapped or unwrapped, but are fleshed, you might say. There are a small number of skeletal remains and then part of mummies, like heads, and hands and hair, sections of hair, um, it’s not like archaeology, where I think without exception, that’s all skeletal remains, but then that gets into another debate about Egyptology and how Egyptology feels quite privileged and kind of patronises archaeology because we’ve got mummies and they’ve got flesh and it’s much better, but I mean, there is a competitive . . . there is a competitive edge there, you know, you go to a museum and what’s on display? “Oh, it’s just a skeleton”, “it’s not a mummy, you feel a bit short-changed, um, and then there’s another, there’s another element, in which, I’ve got a picture . . . I don’t have a picture to hand, basically we were loaning a mummy to an exhibition in [redacted] and there was a bit of a cock-up with the loan agreement and basically the case they had created for the mummy was too small and it was a bit fraught, but the mummy was meant to go in its coffin and we agreed we would just send the lid of the case and not the mummy, which was not in great condition, but in fact, I think, there was no adverse reaction from the general public because a coffin, still with the gilded face and the hieroglyphs on and human-shaped, that ticked all the boxes for a mummy for most people, so people didn’t feel short-changed not seeing a body, they . . . because that’s the kind of iconic image of the Egyptian mummy with the wig and the gold face and the collar and hieroglyphs and the hand staff, all of that was met, all those expectations were met, so that again, what are generally people’s expectations of mummies? They want, yes, a wrapped body, I remember myself, being five years old and going into a museum and expecting the mummy would be like Mum-raa out of Thundercats and being disappointed when it had, like, dirty bandages and it had a mask on, I was really disappointed, um, it didn’t look like Christopher Lee in The Mummy film with swathes of white toilet roll bandages, so expectation are very important. And the popular imagination is one thing, people still get surprised when they come into museums and the reality, well, the little bit of reality that we have doesn’t match their overall expectations.</td>
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| 11 | K | [Redacted] |
| 12 | D | [Redacted] |
| 13 | K | [Redacted] |
| 14 | D | [Redacted] |
| 15 | K | [Redacted] |
| 16 | D | [Redacted] So . . . I mean that’s into a general thing, what is it about faces? And what is it about Egyptian faces? Well, they’re recognisable so they get used a lot in publicity material, um, [redacted] And again, there’s an interesting body of recent research, um, about the rights of people who visit [redacted] as a person and make pilgrimage to [redacted], they should have a right to have access to [redacted] and they would definitely say they, it’s a |
personalised connection, in a way you don't have with the other mummies on display[redacted] though the paintings are beautiful, I mean they're recognisable living individuals, but they don't have names, so they're less personalised, they're wrapped, you can't see, although you have this really nice portrait, they don't have the same effect as an unwrapped body that's quite well-preserved. Again, I'm not sure if that entirely answers your question.

| 17 | K | I think so. So for you, are human remains objects or people? |
| 18 | D | People, I would say [redacted] the bodies of people are people, coffins are objects. Yes. |
| 19 | K | Does that feel a little bizarre putting a mummy through a scanner? |
| 20 | D | It does! Especially when the scanner says “Hold your breath . . . breathe away!” that never seemed to get old. Um, that has its own problems, because we use a scanner in [redacted] and although we use it after hours, you go through, in through the Accident and Emergency ward, so you, you turn up with a gurney with a crate on it that looks suspiciously like a coffin and you know, you say “Oh, I'm just bringing in some equipment”, that is a little odd and it elicits a lot of interest in the hospital. Medical professionals come in and even on their time off they’ll come in and watch a mummy scan, but I mean you could do a study just in the presentation of mummies and CT scanning because it’s kind of thought of as a magic wand to kind of wave and then suddenly it becomes quite clear what’s inside the wrappings, a lot of the time it is, a lot of the time it’s not, um, you can’t easily tell how mummies, how the individuals that have been mummified died. You know? It’s not like, it’s not like an autopsy. You can’t say with certainty because often the flesh that would preserve the evidence of the cause of death is not preserved to a good enough degree, unless as has happened on a couple of occasions to my knowledge, there’s a cracking great injury on the head and you can say for sure, this is how someone died. But no, we always refer to them by name, if it’s known, um, and try and be as respectful as possible and it’s very interesting in a hospital setting, the staff there are almost more careful with mummies than they are with living patients because, just because living patients, we are flesh, we can get jiggled around on a trolley a bit, but a mummy doesn’t have the give, as it were, so you have to be extra careful. Yeah. |
| 21 | K | Do you think the digital representations of mummies could ever replace putting mummies on display? |
| 22 | D | No, no. I don’t think so. Although I’m always very keen to emphasise, there’s always a place for digital, to see under wrappings that we will never remove, so for example, I can show you an example, we had the CT scans of some mummies showed quite clearly that there were, that there were objects within the wrappings, now nowadays, there’s no circumstances under which we would unwrap a mummy, as was still being done in the mid-1970s, so your only way of seeing under the wrappings whether to check for injury or mummification techniques or objects under the wrappings that has become standard now and in some cases, here’s a good example, we took this mummy, um, to the hospital, again wrapped, fully wrapped, pretty much wedged in the coffin, couldn’t remove it, very heavy, a 1970s x-ray of the chest area showed there was stuff going on there, until we’d uncovered these objects in much greater detail and in fact this popped up, and we’ve now |
been able to 3D print that, an object that you will never be able to physically touch, can now be isolated on a high-res 3D scan and printed, so you can see, and it’s probably made of wax actually, the original, and it’s kind of gone gloopy at the back, that would be rein that’s sticking it to bandages, but um, in answer to your question, no, I think the real thing, the “real thing,” is the most important thing, seeing a real mummy and that issue of authenticity because that’s what makes a museum a museum, we have the real objects, we have the, you know, the genuine samurai sword that was used, we have the genuine dinosaur bones, we have the Egyptian mummy that has come from Egypt and was a living, breathing person 2500 years ago. It would not be the same with just an interactive, yes interactives can support the interpretation of mummies as people, and let us understand something about the lives of those people, so witness the current British Museum exhibition about Ancient Lives, New Discoveries, but the digital wouldn’t be good on its own, just on its own, because it’s got no reference point in the gallery. I mean, you could I suppose say, well, we’ve got [redacted] mummies, they’re all in storage, you can just see them digitally, but if you offered no opportunity to see the mummies themselves, then I think the public would be very disappointed, yeah.

| 23 | K | Why do you think the public feel the need to see the real thing? |
| 24 | D | I think there’s a little bit of the touristic sense of you’ve got to have done it, you’ve got to have physically seen it. It’s not enough to say you went to see a photograph of something or I went to see a scan of something and there is nothing like that personal connection like looking into the face of [redacted] and seeing and kind of communing, whether you believe you are or not, you’re communing with someone who died 2,600 years ago. It’s that curiosity and curiosity is not satisfied by any other means than looking, because we’re visual animals, we want to see, we are voyeurs, ultimately, we want to see that and that is why, again, that’s one of those big over-arching questions, why bring mummies back to the UK? Why are there so many here? Well, because there was an interest, there was a curiosity, a morbid curiosity possibly, in mummies and it didn’t do, just to come back and tell stories about the mummies you had seen in Egypt, you want to bring a mummy back and say “Here is the mummy!” and show you friends and unwrap it and examine it and scientifically investigate it, um, whether that is a good thing or whether we should be doing that is another issue, but people, I can’t imagine that people will not be curious. And mummies particularly, satisfy a particular type of curiosity that almost nothing else in a museum can. I’m not biased at all, but . . . I mean really, short of dinosaurs [redacted] I guess this has always been true, but especially now when you feel that the world is a mess and you don’t know what you’re getting and people know the price of everything and the value of nothing, you want to go to a museum and see a genuine object [redacted]. But, I can vouch for the fact that the mummies in the museum are real. And that will never cease to be an attraction to people, not in my lifetime I would imagine. So that’s good, because it keeps me in a job as an Egyptologist! [laughs] But there’s something special about Egypt, if and again, being quite honest and slightly off topic, if you brought a well-preserved . . . [redacted] it’s not ancient Egypt, Egypt is mystery, advanced technology, this kind of exotic sexiness, it’s got a sexiness all of its own, um, it’s weirdly, Egypt is familiar but it’s exotic and, you know, you talk about, historical figures, figures mentioned in the Bible, conceivably you can go to Cairo and see Rameses the Second. And he’s well-preserved and we’re sure as we can be that it is Rameses the Second and is he the pharaoh of the Exodus. What kind of other category of objects,
by which I include mummies, can do that? What category of things? So we don’t have any royal mummies, we think, in the collection, but still that genuine personal encounter between living people of all age, from two years old to ninety year old visitors, that connection, you cannot do digitally and it will always be, always be something, as far as I can see, that people want to come back to. So we will always have mummies on display, at the moment, looking forward, personally I think that.

25 K Do you think the display of mummies then achieves something more for visitors than just educating them about ancient Egypt?

26 D Yes, there’s something else. [Redacted] that educates people on the process of how to do it and it’s something that museums are maybe not entirely comfortable with admitting, yes, there is another element. I wouldn’t say entertainment, I mean, honestly I don’t believe we’ve got mummies on display for entertainment, but there is something beyond education, call it thought-provoking or . . . to stimulate debate. We have the mummies, we can’t change that, we have the mummies, they’re not going to be returned to Egypt because there is no call that has been articulated and this is a point that Christina Riggs makes very well, there’s not been a view expressed in an organised manner from Egypt and I don’t think there will be in the foreseeable future, but we have the mummies, of course there are certain criteria that have to be met in terms of conservation, to preserve these things for the future, that’s our key concern, but at the same time, we’ve got them, better to show people that we have some, [redacted] and say, this is what happened when people died in the past. Do it in a respectful way, try and explain who the people were if you can and use digital technologies, you have museums whose responsibility is to, as best we can, explain these people in the terms of the sources we have. But yes, it’s beyond education, it’s something saying “Here is a really wonderful resource, we’re so privileged to have these remains, let’s try and use them to understand the past”, as a kind of kick-starter to understand the objects in the gallery and I think the objects, to phrase it definitely, I think the objects make more sense with the mummy in the gallery, if I’m honest. I’ve never formulated it like that before, but that’s a good thing about interviewed like this, because you’re put on the spot and you have the luxury of thinking about something, rather than answering emails all the time. Um . . . it’s an immense privilege, I should emphasise that again, it’s an immense privilege to be, a kind of steward for these, the remains of these people, I mean yesterday we took samples from [redacted] in an attempt to extract DNA which will be, we hope will be a forthcoming news story, and that sense was really upon me, that the mummy, that the skeletons are not on display, um, we had to remove a tooth, it’s something quite personal. There aren’t endless numbers of mummies that you can do that for, this is really exceptional case where there were two mummies found together, claimed in the hieroglyphic inscriptions to be [redacted], so you’ve got like a genetic relationship stated, so a research question to test with DNA analysis, so again, I emphasise again, it’s a finite resource to have mummies and we’re kind of duty-bound to make use of them in the most responsible way we can.

27 K [Redacted]

28 D [Redacted]

29 K You mentioned “respect,” what does that term mean to you in terms of the
treatment and the display of human remains?

30 D Um, respect to me means interpreting what we know of ancient Egyptian culture, so the covering of the body, um . . . bearing in mind this was the mummy [redacted], as far as we can tell, the Egyptians would have understood the need to respect . . . respectfully cover parts of the body from what we have depictions, I’ll again be honest, it’s in response to modern notions of respect, which may be different, but modern sensibilities have got to be taken into account because we don’t have ancient Egyptians walking around, we have modern people walking around and so there is a tendency to defer to modern ideas of respect. I mean, what does the word respect mean? We could have a big philosophical debate about that. The general majority view of what is the right thing to do, to make things like the display of human remains, um, palatable. To make it easy to interpret, of course you’re still exposing the face, the head, the shoulders and the feet, but there’s quite a big fixation on hands, [redacted].

31 K Are you in favour of display of displaying human remains personally?

32 D I don’t personally have qualms, I know previous curators have had qualms, um, I personally do not have a problem with having a mummy respectfully displayed and by respectful I mean, appropriate to what our modern and as far as we can tell ancient understandings of decorum are. I’m not, no, opposed to that.

33 K And do you have any memorable experiences of handling or viewing human remains yourself?

34 D Yeah, I mean, going to take mummies to the hospital to be CT scanner, you know, again, I think it’s a privilege to be able to interact, to have the chance to interact with a person who’s long dead, but you know, you have their remains which deserve respect, so I do remember particularly moving the mummy of [redacted] on to a hospital trolley, I mean she’s very light, but again, that sense of privilege and responsibility was there. My first, my first encounter with mummified remains I do clearly remember was in a museum in [redacted] when I was at school and kind of a work experience student when I was 16 and I opened one drawer and there were some mummified remains in there and I can’t remember which, maybe animal mummies, maybe parts of human mummies, not complete mummies, but the drawer had a fragrance, of mummy, eau de mummy! I’ll never forget that, the fragrance is much the same, it’s not unpleasant, but it is to do with the preservative embalming fluid, well it may have been fluid, it might have been spices and things. So I remember that. Yes.

35 K Have you ever experienced an emotional response towards the remains you curate?

36 D Yes. Yes. I would have to say yesterday! When we were taking, we had to remove a tooth from one of the skeletons [redacted] and . . . the teeth were loose, but a dental colleague, someone who’s very trained in this had to perform this operation and you know, I don’t like the idea of living people’s teeth being pulled and that was, that was . . . I definitely had an emotional reaction to that. Um, which was quite besides the fact that we were getting scientific information from it, um, and it was a clinical procedure being carried out using the highest grade conservation techniques, just the idea of it did register somewhere on my emotional scale. I couldn’t tell you what the
emotion was, but it was concern say, concern for the mummy. Beyond knowing that the mummy, the skeleton itself was not damaged per se, but it depends on what your interpretation of damage is.

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<th>Has working with the remains of the dead affected the way you perceive death yourself?</th>
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| K | Excellent question. Um . . . yes, an example a few months ago now, I went to the funeral of a friend's father, who was not an old man, he was in his late 50s and I just . . . the funeral was in St Helens and I got the train here to go attend a meeting about scanning CT scanning and visualising scans and . . . again, just with the timing it did make me think differently about death because I’d come from a very, the juxtaposition of coming from you know the funeral of someone you know and then really coming into the museum where you’re usually quite, quite . . . emotionally detached, that did make me think about death and mummies in a different way. Um, I would say in general, I think of mummies in terms of ancient Egyptian archaeological remains and there is a removal there, but in this instance, there was connection, which I’ve never linked before and that’s between the recently deceased and the ancient dead and it did make me think about . . . yeah, the responses, the immediate responses people would have had in the ancient past at a funeral, say. I did make that response, but I’d not made it as clearly as I did then because of the immediacy of the physical coming from a funeral straight into discussing mummies in a professional way. Um, but you know, the key part of being an Egyptologist is essentially doing anthropology in ancient Egypt and you’re always trying to get into the minds of the ancient Egyptians as modern anthropologists do for living cultures, so . . . working with mummies has made me think about modern responses to death and likewise modern responses to death have made me think about ancient, the ancient reality of death, so I would like to conclude by saying that I would like to think I’m a socially aware anthropologist of ancient Egypt. And of course it helps working with objects and with mummies, whereas maybe colleagues who are just in teaching positions don’t get that hands-on experience.
## Appendix 27

### Interview with Mark

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<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Can you tell me a bit about yourself?</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Within the context of archaeology? Or within human remains as well?</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Both, anything!</td>
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<td>I’ve been involved in archaeology in one way or another for over 20 years, um, that started off as kind of voluntary stuff when I was a teenager, um … I had my kind of first exposure to human remains probably in my early teens anyway, but that was because my grandparents were museum curators anyway, so … you know, and these were remains within cardboard boxes in the back of the museum type of things, so you know, the curiosity of a teenager. Um … did copious amounts of voluntary stuff, work experience with various commercial companies before university, university degree, second university degree, both of those focused on forensic anthropology, forensic archaeology, human remains, um, biological anthropology, basically the study of the … study of human remains and also, what are called taphonomic processes, so how they react once they’re in the ground. Um … 80 per cent of that has been with modern humans, 20 per cent with kind of past humans, so past species of humans. I then spent the vast majority of my working life within commercial archaeology, of which probably about 30 per cent has been spent dealing with cemetery sites and with human remains in one context or another, because you don’t just find them in cemetery sites, you find them randomly at the top of ditches, at the bottom of ditches, in post-holes, so usually, you know, most sites I’ve worked on there’s been some sort of human material on it. Um, sometimes it hasn’t been planned for because it is just within, as I say, ditch fills, most of the time it’s known about because you are dealing with an aspect of the cemetery sites. Um … I’ve personally supervised the running of several large cemetery sites, with excavations of large cemetery sites, the last of which was in East Anglia and that was an Anglo-Saxon cemetery site and around 400 bodies came out of that. So I’ve … I’ve seen, worked with, human remains in both a museum context, an academic context, both as an excavator in the ground and also as a supervisor of people excavating human remains and that’s basically my nutshell career.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And you’re doing a PhD aren’t you?</td>
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<td>Oh yeah, I’m also doing a PhD into human biomechanics which does utilise the usage of human remains as, um, my population study, both archaeological and palaeontological, so, oh yeah, and [redacted] So bones have a lot to do with my life [laughs].</td>
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<td>K</td>
<td>So I assume you enjoy it?</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>Yeah, I very much enjoy... human musculo-skeletal anatomy is pretty much one of my fundamental cornerstones of my specialisms, I suppose, um, and otherwise kind of... tipped my academic stuff towards it, if not necessarily within modern human populations, but looking at archaic paleoanthropological... you know, palaeo, very, very old stuff, but then when you work within the UK commercial sector, it’s all archaeological or, let’s say early modern, right up to the middle of the twentieth century. So yeah, yeah, it took me a long time to get there, the PhD... it’s the subject area I’ve always wanted to disappear into. I’d never, ever call myself an osteologist though, I don’t know. To me, osteology is just one of... it’s a major point, but it’s just one of my bits and pieces.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Did you ever want to go down the forensic route?</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>No, no, not all. Um, during my undergraduate degree, my thesis was using modern homicide cases, specifically where there was blunt-force trauma and we were trying to create something called fracture maps and fracture mapping. So in that context, I had to work with the medical-legal centres in Sheffield, York and Bradford, um... and then tried to take what we learnt there and apply it to an archaeological context. So that’s kind of the only time I’ve kind of come into the sphere of influence of the actual workings of the forensics, despite the fact I did forensic archaeology as my undergraduate module, but it was basically because it was either that or history of technology or something like that and because I did want to do everything bone-related, even though the forensic aspect was not a major kind of draw for me. I mean, it is interesting, but... not really.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>And how have you working on this site, has it been interesting?</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, I mean it’s... it’s not the most interesting cemetery site or collection of burials I’ve worked with, but then it’s not the most mundane either, I mean, the context is always amusing. Um... I mean this one is slightly... I’m trying to think what stands this out from the others... I suppose because a lot of the cemetery sites I’ve dealt with have been on the edges of urban development, this is probably one of the more urban sites, so therefore the quality of the some of the upper burials—and by that I mean, you know, how they’ve survived modern intrusions is a lot less because you know we have, first and foremost the ambulance foundations which do kind of barrel their way through a vast corner of it and then you have all the services as well, so they’re kind of, by their nature, kind of knocking things in half, so that, we had a couple of examples where, you know, you had the service trench, you had a head up this end and a pair of legs on the other side of the trench, so... um, in that case, there’s a lot more of that, which I suppose makes it more interesting in a stratigraphic sense, but I mean, I haven’t seen anything that’s kind of made me go “Wow” yet. We’ve had some pretty major robust kind of individuals come out of it, it’ll be interesting to see what they glean from it, um... and then taphonomic-wise, I don’t know if you saw the... [redacted] brain... his root brain?</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>It’s a work of art!</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah, it is. It’s kind of amusing because you can actually see the four hemispheres, you can see the two sides and the front and back lobes, so...</td>
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but you know, as a . . . it’s a good site, it’s not a great site, it’s a good site. For quality and for, you know, interesting individuals, you come on to some sites and you do find some pretty kind of amusing skeletons that just . . . are amusing, you know? Subject B said he’d found some pretty amusing skeletons! I mean interesting, in the sense, you know, hyper-robust, massive individuals, or people who have had particular kinds of ailments, not . . . not particularly rare considering the age of the cemetery, being kind of ish medieval, having kind of what we assume are female burials and neonate burials, of which we’ve had one so far, but then we’ve had a whole kind of range of early juvenile and early infant burials which, you know, just kind of feeds into the growing demographic information of high infant mortality within the medieval period, so it is interesting in that respect, but er, yeah, no, no amputees yet, or anything . . . you know sometimes you get, sometimes you get stuff like that. Yeah. Interesting.

15 K Has it been a challenging site?

16 M Challenging in terms of methodology or in any particular way? Um, not really. The methodologies we follow are mostly standardised. The challenge maybe is the fact that it’s an urban cemetery again. I don’t know how well you saw [redacted] multiple five, six, seven, eight individuals within a really a 2 by 1 metre area or something like that, I suppose the challenge comes when we look at it sequentially, are these individuals going into a singular burial, are they going in within a close, kind of, er, time unit, or are they going in over multiple years? Um . . . but then that’s kind of one of the questions, one of the basic questions you’re looking to answer, is you know, usage, not just spatial usage of the site, but also temporal usage of the site, is it . . . are particular areas being used really, really intensively and then moving on or is everything being used and then they’re going back and using everything? Um . . . so the interactions have been the challenging aspect to it. As with every other aspect, no, not really. I mean, well there’s been no particular . . . there’s been no particular overt time pressures, either. Um, I mean, yeah, [redacted] obviously been worried about time pressures, but that’s him as the supervisor, whereas, I don’t know, you might have to talk to the other assistants or the other people on site who aren’t actually supervising whether they’ve felt pressured to get things out, challenged to actually get remains out quickly, but I personally haven’t felt that, um, and [redacted] for his part, hasn’t . . . apart from part of his supervisory nature, he’s not a “Rar!” stand over you and tell you to get it done. I mean, if you want something done, he will tell you, but he won’t be kind of standing over you, enforcing it, really. So, you know, a challenging work environment, no. Quite straightforward, really. Challenging stratigraphic environment, archaeologically? Er, yes, more so. Challenging to my mental standing as an archaeologist? No.

17 K What does best practice mean to you in terms of excavating human remains?

18 M Best practice? I think for me, it’s making sure that you remove the remains in a coherent . . . I want to use the word “professional”, but I don’t mean professional as in, we’re kind of looking at these things and being all reverent and gushing towards them, but professional in the way, um, as you have excavated them yourself now, you can, I don’t know how you feel, but even after, two decades of dealing with human remains, I still get irked when I’m excavating human remains and I go too hard and I take off . . . or you break it or something. You break a long bone, or you break
something. To me, that’s not necessarily desecration of the individual and therefore, um, going against best practice, it’s more going up against best practice that I should have the ability to know when to put a bit more force into removing the dirt, I should know where this bone ends or doesn’t end [laughs] I’m in the mid-diaphysis and I know there’s a bit more, but you keep on trowelling and then you just kind of trowel away the . . . one of the ends bits. So to me, best practice is making sure you are . . . you are excavating them within your experience, within your knowledge level, so . . . I mean, I suppose everyone is their own worst critic, aren’t they? Whereas I would not expect, nothing personal, I would not expect you as first or second or third time excavator of a skeleton to excavate it to the same standard and the same speed as I would expect myself to do it, but just because your skeleton has bit more kind of dirt around it, I’m not saying that to me . . . it’s still being excavated well, you know, within your knowledge and your experience levels, I don’t believe best practice should entail the covering up of human remains. Um . . . but then that comes back to my personal belief of what human remains are to the wider audience and the wider culture which is that I don’t think they are something that that should necessarily be shielded away from human view, um . . . to . . . to blame the Victorians, just to go off on a major tangent [laughs] No, the whole idea of isolation, of isolation from death, visceral isolation, I don’t think . . . we necessarily need to isolate them from the public. I’m unsure exactly why we put up netting, um, along our hoardings, but at the same time have large public display boards that say we are excavating human remains here. If we are excavating human remains here and we’re telling the public about them, as long as they know they are there, it’s up to them, if they don’t want to stare at them, then they don’t have to, you know? It comes back to personal . . . their personal responsibility, as well, I suppose. I have heard arguments saying that we need to shield them and I’m not sure whether this is based in law or anything, we only have to shield them when we’re lifting them, which again, I think is even more . . . you know, absurd, really. So yeah, covering up, I don’t think that’s . . . for me that doesn’t necessarily have to be part of best practice. As long as you’re going in there and you are, you’re showing . . . you’re showing a certain amount of awareness of what you’re dealing with. Ok, yes, they are an archaeological resource, they are a form of data, they are, you know, a treasure trove of information from . . . but still, because we carry around with us this little thing called consciousness and there’s also this, part of this is empathy, the empathic nature of us being able to project our thoughts into those of others, you know, as long as you are aware of what you’re excavating and you’re not thrashing around with your trowel and you’re not overtly damaging them beyond what they have been by taphonomy, by modern . . . modern intrusion. So, to sum it up, I think best practice is . . . it’s awareness, it’s being aware of what you’re there to do. Um, both as an archaeologist, less so as a contractor towards a client, but most importantly as maybe a, showman is wrong, as a presenter towards the public of human remains and that, you know, human remains are not the gory, gruesome thing that should be shut away, forever and a day. They are part of life. That’s best practice. A bit wordy and bit all over the place.

19 K So when you’re excavating human remains, are you excavating a person or an archaeological artefact?

20 M Ah! Both. Yes, it’s both. I don’t think you can be an archaeologist without imagination and part of imagination is being able to put yourself in the
shoes of others. The thing about archaeology is, definition-wise, the study of past cultures through their material remains. One of those material remains is, you know, human remains. The thing is though, those human remains are actually the past cultures who created those material remains in the first instance, so at both the same time, you are excavating the material remains of a past culture, but you’re also excavating those individuals within those past cultures and ok, I don’t know about the vast majority of other archaeologists who necessarily deal with remains, let’s say human remains, but not homo sapien. I mean, I still . . . despite the fact, I’ve excavated individuals 120,000 years old, so Neanderthal [indecipherable] and I’m not going to treat them any differently from one of the bodies we have outside because they’re a different species, because I have this ability to, you know, empathise with this individual and put myself in their shoes and try to imagine the landscape, the culture, the environment they’re living with, albeit with the material remains I see around me. I therefore kind of approach the excavation of an individual as both an individual and what they can tell us about the society they lived in, which again, comes down to the fact that I’ll try my damndest not to, you know, break the skull whilst I’m lifting it and I’ll try my damndest, like I say, not to trowel away half a long bone or something like that. So both.

21 K You’ve kind of already answered this, but do you think human remains have a value beyond furthering our knowledge of the past?

22 M Yeah, basically to re-iterate, the individual can tell us about their life and the individual is part of a population that can tell us about, you know, a population they live with, um . . . the context can tell you indirect measurements environmental information, but then also I think human remains, next to sodding great large standing Roman buildings, because I think the public perception, the public imagination of archaeology is either stupidly large Roman buildings or building foundations, or it’s human remains, so I think from that point of view, as an educational tool as well, to actually educate people about archaeology and about peoples who have come before them, be it medieval York or be it Bronze Age Molton or Bronze Age North Yorkshire or be it Palaeolithic Spain or something like that, there are a massive great educational tool.

23 K What do you think are the biggest challenges or difficulties in excavating human remains?

24 M Well, there’s the . . . well, this question could have several levels or in my mind it can have several levels. If we started at the fundamental logistics of excavating human remains, there’s always challenges. If you’re lucky to have a body that’s laid out supine and extended, so on its back and laid out straight, then if you’ve got a knowledge of human anatomy, then you know where the head is, you know where everything is going to be, that’s absolutely fine and it can be quite a straight forward process. Challenges arise if they’re in different kinds of anatomical positions, if they’re multiples, um, if all of a sudden you find there’s a neonate with it, if, you all of a sudden you find there’s something called a coffin birth as well, which is where you usually have a pregnant individual buried and the state of decay kind of pushes the foetus out of the birth canal, so you kind of have little bones as well, as well as big bones. They can present their own challenges. I can also interpret that question as well as the meta challenges, let’s say, that exist within the excavation of human remains within an archaeological excavation for which again, if it’s an academic one, then
usually, everybody’s quite happy for you to take days, if not a week to excavate a single individual. That comes down to half days and hours for commercial sites and to me, that is the biggest challenge to excavating a human body . . . not necessarily the act of excavating itself, but the considerations and questions you can get from external forces, such as the contractor, even your site supervisor . . . clients, because in the wonderful world of archaeology, we’re usually, let’s say at a tertiary level at best, so you know, you have client and then you have a sub-contractor who’s doing all the groundworks and then we’ll probably, sometimes we’ll be contracted to the sub-contractor, but sometimes we’re contracted to the client, so it’s trying to . . . it’s trying to portray to them, in the first instance, despite the fact that archaeology has been part of the planning process and a legal part of the planning process since 89/90, contractors, you know, excavation units, builders, still don’t seem to have grasp on what it is, what it entails and what their responsibilities are. And that becomes magnitudinally more frustrating when you’re dealing with human remains because whereas you can just dig half a ditch and pretty much the information you’ll get from it will be the same as digging the whole ditch, you can’t do the same with a body.

That comes back around to what you perceive you’re actually digging with and if you perceive it’s just part of an archaeological record, it’s just information, then hell, even if it’s just information you should still be digging the whole damn thing. Even if you think these are . . . there’s still an essence of humanity within these bones, then you should be digging the whole thing. Whether because we’re dealing with them face-to-face, we have a certain . . . I hate to use the word connection . . . I dislike anything that’s too kind of . . . what’s the word . . . I can’t say airy-fairy . . . spiritually connected to it or whatnot . . . yes, you know, are bones the container of the soul? Well, yes, no, I don’t know. We’re all energy aren’t we? But as soon as you kind of go up the hierarchies of the subcontractor, subcontractor, client, ladder, they seem to kind of. I don’t know whether it’s just from my point of view they seem to shed their personalities and take on the . . . take on the role of the company they represent and this is one of the things I kind of gleaned from your information, does professionalism strip you of personality or personal involvement with them? I think it shouldn’t do, which is, again, comes back to my whole idea of, my thoughts about shielding bodies from view, I think that’s just hyper-professionalism, utilising emotion to be professional but it’s not really, because in the end I don’t think you’re really doing anyone a great service by shielding these things, by basically obscuring knowledge. Likewise you see, you know, your client sitting or standing on the trench edge with sunglasses or whatnot and they don’t seem to have a blind idea what you’re dealing with, to them it’s an impediment to the construction of what . . . an impediment to why they’re there, be it to clear the ground of rubble or waste, of which archaeology is necessarily classed as, because we’re an impediment to the construction of X, Y, Z. So, I think they become the biggest challenge and it’s trying to, I mean, I pull my hair out when I run sites, actually trying to get people to understand why you are there and what you are there for and even contractors still think you work for a university, which is perhaps, just one way of kind of summing it up, is they don’t have any idea that you are actually being paid for this, so therefore, you know, add to that you have a knowledge base that you’re working on, you have experience and you’re getting paid, you know, within the structure of the professional organisations, that you are actually a professional, just because I’m digging dirt, doesn’t mean I’m thinking
about what that dirt’s doing or where it’s come from.

So yeah, yeah it is, the biggest trouble, the biggest challenge is actually making the client and the contractors that you’re working for aware of what you’re excavating and that, you know, you don’t often know, you don’t always know that things are going to be there, you don’t know what state they’re going to be in. Um . . . ok, yes, you might be able to excavate two skeletons perfectly within a day, but in some cases, that’s not going to be possible and there are going to be situations where you’re going to have to look at this. But that’s the problem with archaeology as well . . . contractors, builders, they work towards timetables and budgets, but timetables and budgets are based on known quantities. The problem with archaeology is, yes, you can quantify it and you can say, yes a person can shovel 1.5 tonnes of sand a day, but then, not all sites are pure sand, you know, clay takes longer to shovel and oh look, there’s a human body as well that we have to deal with. So yeah, timetables and budgets, they can be utilised as a baseline, but . . . you know, they need to be aware that flexibility needs to be built into project designs at a much earlier stage and be much more prevalent, especially when dealing with cemetery sites and sites where you know you’re going to get a large quantity of human remains. I don’t know if [redacted] mentioned anything about how this site has worked and timetables and how he’s interacted with the client, with the line managers, this whole thing that yes, we do have remains, I do not know where they are going to be, I cannot tell you where they’re going to be, you know you’re going to dig your trench and put up your foundation, we do not know where there is going to be another body: “Oh, look! There’s a skull sticking out there”, but unfortunately, there might be four or five other individuals. So . . . yes, the challenges of excavating a human are quite straightforward if you have the knowledge to do it. The challenges of excavating a human within the context of a commercial archaeological dig can be frustrating and I think the client is often the biggest impediment, the biggest problem.

In that case, do you think the developer plays a role in determining best practice?

I would say the developer and the cost and time implications that the developer puts on an archaeological contractor will, at some level, even thought it might not be readily admitted by the archaeological company that’s carrying it out, by the supervisor necessarily running the site or the excavator who’s lifting it, will play a part in the quality of the excavation of that individual. Yeah . . . when people turn around and say, oh, it’s just an evaluation; we don’t need to do it to such a great quality, I think that’s irksome as well. Um . . . [laughs] the whole idea about an evaluation anyway, versus an excavation, is that you should still be getting the same information out of it, just with an evaluation you use the information differently. You’re still . . . be it a ditch, human remains, or even the burial of a cow, or dog or anything like that, the quality and the time that it takes you to go into excavating that cow burial, it takes to put that half-section through a ditch, should be no less for an evaluation versus an excavation. Um . . . and sometimes time pressure on evaluations are greater than they are on excavations. Usually excavations, they’re usually budgeted a bit better for . . . what’s called contingency, contingency in both terms of time and also, budget-wise. Um, saying that, saying that, yeah . . . it’s down to the supervisor and also their line manager, the project manager, to really kind of tell the client that it’s not in their best interest to rush these things.
Um . . . 'cause at the end of the day, to put it into words that they can understand, they've been granted planning permission by a local authority, one of the conditions on that planning application is archaeological evaluation, archaeological excavation, archaeological intervention, if we are not doing these things properly, if we are not getting the information out of it fully, then quite frankly they're not fulfilling that planning condition and . . . even though I've never seen it done, they can be fined, stopped, pulled off site, they can have their planning permission pulled. Um . . . but again, would it ever that far? Because the interests of . . . the greater economy, you know, these people are being put to work, this is good, this is . . . yeah, people would say it's all about balance, it's balance, but sometimes you can actually turn around and say, well, sometimes it's not the be all and end all about having these things whacked out quickly and cheaply. Yes, you can use utilise methodologies to spend less time recording them, but still get the same amount of information, hence why we're using the rectified, you know, we're taking digital photos within a flat plane, as opposed to planning, some would argue that's quicker, slower, slower than actual hand-drawn plans, but that's personal preference.

| 27 | K | Have you ever had any difficulties with the public? Is that ever a challenge? |
| 28 | M | Um . . . only once have I ever had any difficulty with the public in respect of human remains and that was from . . . don’t get me started on druids and neo-pagans! That was actually from that quarter, but then they didn’t want us excavating the site at all, regardless of the human remains. I think the human remains were just an added . . . they just bumped it up another magnitude . . . the horror, the horror of you actually excavating and removing these individuals. Um . . . they . . . I don’t think they had a point because I personally think modern-day paganism is coming from completely the wrong, you know, I don’t think they have any connection to what we were digging, ok, we were digging Bronze Age burials and Bronze Age burial mounds. Um . . . and I honestly don’t think there’s enough evidence to ascertain the religious beliefs, ok, you can get an idea of the religious beliefs, hell, that’s why we’re digging these damn burials for, um, you know, the day-to-day religious practices of these individuals. To then say that you’re following them and you have a direct connection to them, um, that’s the only time and that’s just one site out of hundreds, really. 99.9 per cent of all people who have ever taken an interest in archaeology and human remains have been interested, which then comes back to the whole thing about then why should we shield them away from it? The vast majority of individuals are interested, I mean, they know they’re going to be looking at a dead body, it’s not . . . it’s not the most gruesome representation of a dead body that they could possible see, you know? [laughs] I could be a grumpy old man and say you see worse on TV. |

| 29 | K | Do you have any particularly memorable experiences of excavating human remains for any reason? |
| 30 | M | I do, I do. And this kind of comes back to my professionalism and my caveat before I even tell you this story is that this was only the second burial I had ever, ever dug. So going back to my previous questions about the state of professionalism . . . anyway, years and years ago, I did, um, I did another site in er, East Anglia, another Anglo-Saxon burial site, actually, um, and er, it was the third phase of this kind of development. The previous two developments had this kind of great massive doughnut cluster of Anglo-Saxon burials, a couple of hundred, around these really
large central splodges, no idea how I managed to actually dig this central thing, I think it was just right time, right place, and I just showed an enthusiasm, like "Yeah, I've just come out of a degree in osteology, I know what I'm doing!" Um . . . so I actually spent two weeks taking down this 2m by 1.5m sized feature, just taking out alternate quadrants and recording the section and then you kind of end up with a section as you go down and, er, it was kind of a Thursday before . . . or was it Wednesday? No, I think it was Thursday, actually, before an Easter holiday, so . . . you know, it was Good Friday and we were finishing that day, and [laughs] I was told by the supervisor, you know, found nothing, probably about a metre down, found absolutely nothing, said "Oh no, we've got to get this out, we haven’t really got the time to faff around with it anymore". So this is one of my experiences that leads into my belief now about being forced to do things, so he said "Just whack it out with a spade, just whack it out with a spade" and literally, the first shovel of the spade, I went in and basically took off this individual’s . . . I think I clipped it just below the nose, so I took off the maxilla, took through the head, took through the nose and took off the front of the skull as well, so, you could just see this . . . this . . . so apparently, there was this . . . somebody . . . the people at the far end of the site heard this "Bugger!", as I hit this kind of thing as I'm down this metre hole and it’s just, “Argh!” So that’s memorable for perhaps the wrong reasons! [laughs] But yeah, it was only my second ever, actually it was my second and third because it was a double inhumation, so, but that turned out to be . . . so yeah, the cemetery was Anglo-Saxon, so 1900 years old or whatnot, but these two individuals were Bronze Age, so they were kind of 3000 years plus. So that was a bit annoying, so yeah, two perfectly preserved individuals, but one of them lacked a face. I think that’s my most memorable, but it’s kind of experiences like that that do lead into . . . you know, you’re never, ever going to push me again into excavating a human burial quickly and, you know, I’m going to try my damndest to keep it intact. Yeah.

<p>| 31 | K | So did that bother you because— |
| 32 | M | It bothered me on two levels. One, because I’d spent two weeks going down and finding absolutely nothing and . . . I’m bothered about it more, looking back on it, with the experience that I’ve gained cumulatively after it, the fact that, it wasn’t a formative experience, it means that I will never . . . I will never be pushed into speeding up doing something like that again. So it bothered me in the fact I . . . I . . . rushed into that last little bit, but then, and what I suppose is professional naivety, really, at that point in my career. Um . . . but then, I suppose, at an emotional level, if you’re going to kind of kibosh human remains, the one element you don’t really want to muck around with or hit is . . . if you want to say the soul is contained within the consciousness and the consciousness resides in the head, then you know, by all levels of Greek philosophy, Judaic philosophy, Buddhism, Islam, you know, it’s desecrating, it’s desecrating the place of the soul, I suppose. Even though . . . but you know, I am quite happily atheist, you know? I think it’s more of that empathic thing, really. I don’t really relish the thought of me lying in the ground and having my face taken off by a shovel, that’s probably what it comes down to, whereas I’m quite happy to be totally and utterly excavated nicely and stuck in a box and maybe polished and put on a museum shelf, that’s totally fine with me, um . . . and maybe that does inform how I approach these things. |</p>
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<td>33</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Are some human remains easier to excavate than others? And you can take that question in any way that you like.</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Er, um, yes. If they’re lying on their back and . . . they’re straight out then they’re perfectly easy, if they’re multiples or if they’re in odd positions, then no, so again, it’s context specific.</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Have you ever excavated human remains that were a bit gungy?</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Um . . . did a . . . did a couple of days on sites in the old metropolis of London where you have kind of cottage-cheese consistencies of material that you’re going through to get to the bones. But I must admit, one burial out of all the ones I’ve actually done, that’s the only one and again, it didn’t bother me too much, I think because I’d come at it from . . . by that point, I’d a done a fair few, I’d been excavating in the commercial sector for a couple of years, so, um . . . yeah, not necessarily desensitised, I think I would have probably affected more if I were slightly younger. Well, I started my professional career when I was 22, so you know, I think most of my emotional foibles would have been quite happily entrenched by then, you know? It’s not like I was doing it as a teenager or something, but no.</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Have you ever experienced an emotional response whilst excavating human remains?</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>An emotional response? Um . . . um . . . if . . . if an emotional response can even be classed as something like going [laughs] “Ah, poor thing” or feelings to that extent, then yes, but that’s, er, coming back to your first question about what stands out about this site, I’m just thinking about it now, is that this is the first site and this is kind of blurring the boundaries between the personal and the professional, this is the first site, excavation I’ve done of human remains—so a human cemetery site—I’ve actually excavated since having a daughter and . . . coming across juvenile remains and juvenile remains that I know because of my knowledge that are of a similar age at death to my kind of, four, five months old daughter . . . that was my “Ah, poor thing” kind of response. Um . . . before then, my emotional responses to human remains have been purely one of . . . you know, empathic thought, what was this individual doing? How did this individual live? How did they end up in this context if it’s been a non-cemetery based context? So . . . going back to the earlier question, what stands out about this site, well, it’s the first site I’ve excavated since becoming a father and on this site I’ve excavated juvenile remains of a similar age to my daughter, so . . . you know, I have had, what you would call, yeah, “an emotional response”.</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>What are your thoughts on giving human remains nicknames?</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Human remains nicknames? Um . . . I’m not too worried about it, I don’t think you’re necessarily desecrating the dead by naming them, but then that comes back to my own personal . . . I wouldn’t be upset if I was looking down from on high and my remains were being . . . you know, given a name, given . . . it depends what it was, actually. Depends on what’s happening with my . . . I mean, throughout my experience and I don’t know if [redacted], will maybe pick up on it, um . . . you know, you have individuals, you know, “Banana Boy” was one, because of just the way...</td>
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it was curved in the ground, um . . . most recently one of the larger individuals on this site was differentially called Jeff Capes/Hulk Hogan just because he was massive and just a huge, huge individual.

Um . . . I think these things, these things are fine, yeah. As descriptors, really. It’s all about the context you’re utilising them within. I mean, I’m not . . . I would roll my eyes and probably tell them to stop doing it if I found that . . . I mean, on several sites we have found human remains, we’ve found animal remains, you know, this is me using my imagination, if people started mixing the two of them, started putting goats heads on to human remains and took photos and stuck them up on social media. Um . . . I don’t know if there’s further questions, but I don’t even have a problem with human remains being posted on social media, as long as they’re being utilised for an educational purpose. If you are having, if it’s . . . if you have full excavated human remain, it’s . . . it’s . . . the photo, you know, if it’s the person who’s been excavating and they’re in the photo too or even, if it’s the photo that you take at the end where you’ve got your scales, you know, I don’t have a problem with that, with them going on, because again, and it’s a medium of education, um, you’re not doing anything that’s, you know, in my mind, deemed as disrespectful to it. You know, you’re not . . . you’re not sticking baubles in its eyes or you’re not sticking a party hat on it, or you’re not, you’re not changing its skull for one of a goat and posting that on Facebook because, you know, you’re utilising it as an educational tool, you’re not mocking it, you’re not . . . and again, that comes back to how I would like to be treated, as well, so I’m happy to be displayed with a red and yellow metre rod next to me . . . yeah, I don’t necessarily want a party hat stuck on me though.

41  K  Do you think it’s important to take into account the wishes of the deceased, as far as they can be ascertained?

42  M  Blimey. As far as they can be ascertained? Yes. But then, we’re dealing with . . . the only wishes we can necessarily ascertain are, I think, are modern, basically Christian burials or, um, modern Islamic or modern Jewish, or modern- basically the religions we have at the moment, that exist in the world, the burial practices that exist within them. If within the practices of those religions, there are tenements that say we shall not display, well, I suppose in Islam there is, you know, you don’t the display the human, I mean the human image is not part of their artistic culture because it’s against the teachings of Mohammed, so I think if it was an Islamic burial and we’re digging an Islamic cemetery site, then yes, you’d have to be careful about what . . . I . . . having never dug Islamic remains I’m quite intrigued now as to whether . . . does even the presentation of an Islamic body within a publication report, does that even go against the tenements of Islam? But that’s going way off tangent, but when it comes to 90 per cent of the stuff you deal with is going to be Christian and there is nothing within Christian theology that says you cannot display human remains, so in my mind, that’s fine. That’s fine. When you start dealing with contexts that we know are pre-Christian, so Roman, Bronze Age, Iron Age, um, Palaeolithic and beyond, I don’t . . . I don’t see a problem with it because we do not know enough and again, if you’re not hanging baubles off it, if you’re doing it within a context of education and respect, you are realising that these are humans, this is what you might end up as one day, then I think it’s fine.

43  K  Ok, last question; has excavating the remains of the dead affected how you
perceive death in any way?

| 44 | M | Um . . . yes, it’s made me more aware of how death is perceived within the culture I live in and also, the people who I know who are non-archaeologists, um . . . it’s never, it hasn’t changed the way I’ve wanted to be buried or handled in death, I . . . the means of . . . the means of funerary rite that I would like to be subjected to isn’t even allowed in this country anyway. Have you heard of excarnation? So, sky burials? That would be really, really amusing [laughs] That automatically gives you, well, it depends, on what you believe is then done with the disarticulated, dismembered remains, are they left to flitter and decay or are they collected up and put in a secondary burial rite? I haven’t quite decided on that yet. |

| 45 | K | There’s still time. Hopefully… |

| 46 | M | There’s still time. But the excavation, the remains themselves, have never been an issue and you know, I’ve shown family members around cemetery sites as part of open days and whatnot and they’ve seen human remains. I think then what’s changed is my perspective of how we deal with the recently dead and to me, I have no . . . I’m not fearful of the recently dead, if you want to put it in those contexts. I’m not afraid of a dead body. I’m not afraid of a fully-fleshed inanimate person who once had life coursing through them and to me, to be denied, to be denied access to that is a greater travesty than being able to see it. To me, it’s disrespectful that I haven’t been allowed to view a recently dead member of my family because it was against the wishes of the professional, or against the advice of the professional. It was against the wishes of the society and the congregation that she belonged to. I suppose what I should of said is at least tell you the story, basically, my grandma died about ten years ago, and the last kind of five or six years of her life, she became a member . . . a Jehovah’s witness and the fact was she went through a painful decline, as well, it wasn’t a sudden death, so she’d waste and she was on a respirator at the end of it and she wished to die and that’s fine, but the fact is that when she did die and when we . . . were then not allowed to view the body, we were not allowed to see her, um, from my point of view, she died when I was coming back to see her and I would have liked to actually have visited the body and actually, you know, said my farewells in that respect, but you know, the wishes of the Jehovah’s witnesses community that she belonged to didn’t want that, but that irked me.

My close family didn’t see why I wanted to see it, as well, see her, as well. And that irked me as well. Whether that’s just the development of my personal understanding of death because of the job that I do is probably a little difficult to tease out, but I think it’s made me more accepting of the fact that, you know, dead people exist, dead people are part of life, you cannot, you should not isolate people from the dead. It’s . . . you know, you read about sort of medieval law, we don’t, at least not to the great extent of, we don’t have these great transitional phases in our lives, we don’t have these liminal phases of death where, you know, we’re not going to be haunted by the dead if we do something wrong, which then opens up a great . . . it should be a freeing force for us, you know ok, this is our scientific consciousness maybe coming to the fore and we know everything, ok, maybe we don’t, but we now have this ability, this freedom to actually say no, I want to see my . . . the body of my grandmother, I want to go and see the bodies of my ancestors, I want to go and see the bodies of the people who have inhabited this space with me, but a thousand years ago.
So I think that’s what’s been changed by doing this job. But then, even calling it a job is a bit of a weird thing as well [laughs] But yeah, one of many factors that have led to the consciousness that sites before you, trying to answer these questions. But yes.

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<td>47</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Is there anything that you would like to add? Any other thoughts?</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Any thoughts? I would . . . I don’t know. Anecdotally and my feeling is, that human remains within archaeological contexts should be treated a bit more . . . carefully. Yes, they are a means to gain information, but they are individuals from the culture and they are individuals akin to ourselves so therefore do demand a certain level of respect. Saying that, the certain level of respect, I think …</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Do you think they’re treated too much like other—</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>I think it’s one of these weird things, that at one end, from a professional point of view, we treat them with a bit too much reverence, we shield them away from people, we don’t allow them to be gazed at by others, which I think is nonsense. Yet, at the other end, we have these impacts of time and cost put on us by the contractor which can, I believe, but it’s only anecdotally, can lead to lower quality of excavation and therefore recording. Where it kinds of tips into disrespect for them is again, a personal thing. I think it’s just starting, it can just start to tip into that, so I’d like … I’m very interested in seeing the totality of your thesis and seeing whether there is, you know, a kind of general feeling across the industry, that maybe policy could be better enacted that says, look, more time needs to be dealt with human remains, you cannot rush them, you need to look at them coherently, you cannot just say, “Oh, that’s fine, this is an evaluation, this is this level, we have time, we have cost constraints, we won’t do this, or that’s fine, leave it as that, we’ll pull it out like that”, or “Come on, just get these out, it doesn’t matter if the bones break”, you know? I think that can be looked at more and if you start to gather a body of evidence that says, “Look, we do have a problem with this”, or there is a perceived problem with this and then maybe start a conversation—a conversation, in that great political usage of the word—that gets people to say, “Well ok, maybe we are treating them a bit . . . disrespectful at this end of the spectrum”, then maybe we can address looking at them at that end of the spectrum as well. Take down the hoardings and whatnot. Yeah … it would be interesting to see what conclusions you come to. Whether there is a . . . this too professionalism/not professional enough interaction with human remains, which I think there is, at one end, we’re being too professional, this kind of hyper-professionalism about sealing off the view, but at the other end, hoiking them out quickly. Yeah.</td>
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Appendix 28

Interview with Kirsty

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<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>So could you start by telling me a bit about your background in archaeology?</td>
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<td>K</td>
<td>Ok . . . is this particularly in relation to human remains?</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Um, so the archaeology I do is mostly, um, looking at mortuary and funerary practices in prehistory, [redacted] I've also done, I guess I've always been interested in the ethics of display and use of human remains [redacted].</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>And how often do you come into contact with human remains?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Not very often, actually. Um . . . [redacted] we've got one of the biggest collections of human remains, um . . . when we excavate, if I happen to have any and then, not on a daily basis. Probably only a couple of times a year.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>For you, are they people or objects?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I would say people. But, um, I can see how objectification does happen, as well, particularly if you've just got isolated bones, for instance. Um . . . so I know that lots of people will talk about specimens, for instance, um, it's actually interesting as well, speaking to colleagues, because obviously we've got a big skeletal collection and many of them see them as individual people, rather than just evidence of pathologies, which is really interesting.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>You mentioned the ethics of display, what are your thoughts on display?</td>
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| 10        | K       | It's a tricky one and I don't think there is a right or wrong answer, but I think, I'm quite concerned that when human remains are put on display, they are treated with a certain amount of respect and dignity. Um . . . I think there's a certain value in displaying human remains and I know that, for instance, Mel Giles and Howard Williams have written about how displays in museum collections, for instance, get people to think about death and encounter mortality in quite a removed sense. I think that's quite an important motivation for displaying human remains as well, because it reminds us that we are mortal and again, it breaks down some of those taboos around death, but at the same time, it should be respectful. And I think if there are issues over ownership or over display, then those stakeholder claims need to be listened to. In my experience, say for instance with the Lindow Man exhibition [redacted], it was more a case of, what...
they wanted was communication and input, rather than actually stopping
the display. So I think there’s a lot to be said for communicating and
keeping people on-board, rather than shutting them out of the process.

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<td>11</td>
<td>KC</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>[redacted]</td>
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| 13 | KC | So, do you think mortuary archaeology has a role to play beyond furthering
    our knowledge of the past? |
| 14 | K  | Yeah, that’s kind of partly what work I’ve been doing. It’s getting at . . . so,
    I think for some people, death is a really problematic topic and in
    archaeology we get to deal with some amazing evidence, stories about the
    past which I think can really engage people, but they’re engaged . . . but it’s
    not in a close, it’s in a very distant, it’s very removed from their own
    experiences, so they can . . . [redacted] and it’s not something they’ve ever
    encountered or have to encounter, but it’s a way into starting to think
    about mortality and death, and dying. It gets them thinking and it gets
    them talking about death, even if it’s not their own death or their own
    mortality. So I think that’s a step and I think it will work for . . . it doesn’t
    work for everyone, I think it needs to be someone who . . . it needs to be
    someone who’s interested in the past anyway, or interested in different
    cultures or whatever. I think for some people it could be really useful. |
| 15 | KC | Do you personally have any memorable experiences of excavating or
    viewing human remains? |
| 16 | K  | Excavating or viewing? Um . . . yeah, I guess the most prominent was
    [indecipherable] [Redacted] excavation . . . um . . . [redacted] that’s one
    that I excavated myself and I can just remember being just inches away,
    and just kind of wondering who they were and how they got to be there,
    and I guess lots of people have reported this, but you sort of feel a sense of,
    um, protection over them: guardianship, stewardship, while you’re
    excavating, so it’s . . . it’s a really interesting relationship and I will call it a
    relationship, even though obviously it’s not because they’re dead, but it
    does affect you in particular ways, um, yeah . . . so that’s probably the most
    prominent. I’ve been on other excavation sites, last year, or I think it was
    the year before, I was digging in [redacted] where they have lots of infant
    burial remains and again, there was . . . it was a totally different experience,
    but yeah, again, it just struck how everyone was just quite . . . quite
    respectful, but at the same time, quite scientific about it as well, so we’d be
    analysing the bones and recording them, but at the same time, recognising
    what this was, a person. |
| 17 | KC | Do you find, um, either yourself or people that you’re working with, that
    there is a different response between excavating adults and children? |
| 18 | K  | I think it depends on the individuals involved. I personally didn’t find it
    any different, um, but I know . . . there’s someone called Janet Fletcher
    that was running the site and she gave a talk [redacted] about excavating
    infants and she’s noticed different reactions in people, but it depends, I
    think, on who they are and it often depends on their own histories, I think,
    if they have children themselves, they seem to have a different reaction to
    people that haven’t. So maybe if you ask me again in a year, I might have
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<td>19</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>Ah, this is your first?</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yeah, I might change my mind, but at the moment I don’t really personally find any big difference.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>Do you think working with the remains of the dead has affected how you perceive death in any way?</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I think it’s certainly desensitised me to it, a little bit. It’s definitely made me, kind of, a lot more accepting of mortality, I think. It makes it much more tangible and a reminder that we are here, but for a short time.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>Do you have any other thoughts that you’d like to share with the world, anonymously, about working with human remains?</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I just think they’ve got a lot to offer, a lot of information and I think it’s a shame if that were to be inhibited. I think at the same time there is a balance there, it doesn’t hurt to, you can study something and still be respectful and I think it’s important that the results that we study are disseminated as well. I think it’s a shame when human remains are used or kept and studied, but the information never really gets out there. I don’t think that happens very often, but I just think it’s an extra thing to bear in mind.</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>What are your thoughts on reburial of human remains?</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I think that’s a really difficult one. I think it’s a whole can of worms, it depends on the context. I think, if you got . . . if you had someone that was a direct ancestor and their relatives wanted them reburied, I guess there’s a certain case, um, I think with the pagan issue it’s a bit more problematic because it’s not an accepted view. Obviously they’re not their direct ancestors, but at the same time, I don’t think their voices should be . . . should have no place, their voices have still got a place. I think when you, yeah . . . I don’t know . . . at the same time, I think, at least with . . . I think it’s problematic if you’ve got a lot of human remains and they just sit in a cardboard box and never get studied and nothing ever happens to them. They may as well be reburied. I think it’s really difficult, because, I guess, burial is as much about the living as it is about the dead, so if you rebury them, who are you doing it for? Is it for the dead or is it for the contemporary community? Does it actually serve a purpose? Um, yeah, I’m sitting on the fence a little bit. I think the automatic burial after two years is an issue, but I guess that isn’t actually the case in reality, you only have to apply for a permit to keep them longer and you get it. But yeah, two years isn’t a lot of time to study anything. But then, yeah, I think if it’s only going to sit in a box and never be studied, then it may as well be reburied. But yeah, it’s a difficult issue.</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>I don’t think there are any really hard and fast answers to any of these questions! And what do you think about screening excavations?</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Oh, I don’t like the idea, actually. Um, I think it, firstly, creates a barrier between the public and the excavation. I think there should be warnings and there should be notices, but I think the public should be able to look, if it’s safe to do so and it’s not the middle of a construction site. Um . . . er,</td>
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Duncan Sayer’s kind of talked about this at length about how the putting up of screens is a barrier and that actually, people are interested and yeah, I would say that I don’t like the idea of screens, but at the same time there should be a warning about what people will encounter, but it probably depends on where it is as well, if it was right on the side of a high-street then people wouldn’t have a choice to see anything, that different, I think people should have the choice whether to see the human remains or not, but there should be a choice not to, so automatic screening. I guess, negates that choice, but screening might still appropriate if there’s a way in to look if that’s appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>29</th>
<th>KC</th>
<th>Do you hold any religious beliefs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>No, not really. My mum was Catholic and my Dad was atheist. He’s now Muslim, which is really weird. Um . . . I guess, it’s more of a sense of a belief in a kind of the natural order of the world, what goes around, comes around, you all kind of end up as part of the same earth eventually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>Do you ever have any qualms about excavating human remains?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Um, no, not really, I guess. I know lots of people that do and I know some people who started out thinking it was really exciting and then now they don’t really like doing it. Um, but yeah, I think it’s kind of part of what we do as archaeologists and as long as it’s not being done in vain or just for the sake of it, then I think it’s . . . that’s ok.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 29

Poulton Project Skeleton Manual

Skeleton Manual
Part I – In the Field

Editor: Ray Carpenter

Seventh Edition
Second Revision - May 2013

770
Copyright
Notice

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Editor’s Note
As Editor, I take full responsibility for this document. Everything correct belongs to Steve and/or Carla; the mistakes are all mine.

Ray Carpenter
May 2013
1 Introduction

Ray Carpenter & Steve Crane

This Skeleton Manual is a stand-alone companion to the Poulton Research Project Site Manual [Emery, 2005]. It provides a detailed handbook for the treatment of human remains at all stages of the archaeological process. It is in two parts: ‘In the Field’ and ‘In the Laboratory’. This, Part 1, covers excavation and cleaning. It focuses on the types of human remains that have been found to date at Poulton, together with the procedures developed by the Poulton Research Project to handle these remains. It is not a general guide to the processing of human remains.

1.1 Legal and Ethical Considerations

The overriding principle is that human remains must always be treated with respect, care and dignity. It is a privilege to be allowed to excavate the remains of another human being. We adhere strictly to the code of ethics published by the British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology [BABAO Code of Ethics, 2010].

There are important legal restrictions on the excavation and subsequent processing of human remains. This is an area where the legal situation is currently under review by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), and may be subject to change in the near future [MoJ, 2011]. Excavation at Poulton is at present licensed by the Ministry of Justice under the terms of the 1857 Burial Act.

1.2 Overview of Human Remains at Poulton

Most of the human remains found at Poulton are from Christian inhumations dating to the medieval period. This manual concentrates on the processing of such material. However, some cremations from much earlier periods have also been found (see Section 4) and it is always possible that material from other epochs will be found in the future.

Human bones found at Poulton can be classified into two categories:

a) Articulated Burials: where bones are still recognisably in place in the correct position. A single grave may contain the remains of one or more individuals. Each articulated burial is assigned a skeleton number.

b) Disarticulated Bones: where bones have been disturbed and cannot longer be associated with an individual burial. Disarticulated bones may be found completely out of context (for example, where they have been disturbed by ploughing), or in the fill of an articulated burial (for example, where that burial disturbed an earlier one), or deposited in a specially dug charnel pit. Disarticulated bones are identified by year of excavation and the context in which they are found.

Note: A skull is always treated in the same way as an articulated burial, even if no other bones can be associated with it.

1.3 Disarticulated Bone

Where disarticulated bones are found in the fill of an articulated burial, they should be cleaned, and bagged as disarticulated human bone from the grave fill context. If there is any doubt whether bones belong to the skeleton or not, bag them as part of the articulated bones and let the Human Remains Team resolve the issue.

Where significant quantities of disarticulated bone are found in their own charnel pit, they should be cleaned, photographed and recorded as part of the standard context sheet for the fill of that pit. In any other situation, they do not need to be recorded in detail, but should be treated as ordinary finds and placed in the finds tray for that particular context.

A disarticulated bone may be of special interest, for example, if it shows some medical abnormalities or if it appears to have been deliberately deposited in a disarticulated state (for example, material in Neolithic long barrows). In this case, ask the supervisor if special procedures are needed.
Animal bones are common at Poulton and care is needed to differentiate them from human bones, particularly where the remains are fragmentary. Guidance is given in [Brothwell, 1981: 36-43] and [Bass, 1995: 309-317]. If in doubt, treat the material as human and let the Human Remains Team resolve the issue.
1.4 Articulated Burials

The diagram below gives an overview of the process for handling an articulated burial.
2 Excavation

Ray Carpenter & Steve Crane

When bones are first discovered in the ground, it may not be obvious whether they are part of an articulated burial or disarticulated. The area should be carefully cleared to discover the extent of the bones and to try to identify the edges of the grave cut.

Once it is clear it is an articulated burial, obtain the following:

- **Skeleton number** – from the Skeleton Register.
- **Context numbers for the grave fill, skeleton and grave cut** (preferably in that order) – from the Context Register. (The fill and the skeleton itself are assigned separate context numbers, as they represent distinct archaeological events.)
- **The skeleton’s ID/photographic tag**.

Ideally, a skeleton should be excavated in a single day to minimise damage. Avoid starting late in the day. If it is not possible to complete the excavation in a day, cover the skeleton overnight to keep it damp.

Graves must be excavated stratigraphically (deposit by deposit in reverse order of deposition) and in plan: they must not be sectioned. They must be excavated by hand and the work kept scrupulously clean as it proceeds. Great care must be taken to recover all of the bones present in as good a condition as possible; this directly affects the quality of the post-excavation analysis.

| **Gloves MUST always be worn when excavating a skeleton (and whenever else bones are handled), to minimise contamination that might compromise future DNA analysis.** |

2.1 Cleaning *In-Situ*

The skeleton must be carefully cleaned prior to recording, using a variety of tools such as a leaf trowel, small paintbrushes, dental tools and wooden sticks. The cleaning of small bones such as hands, feet and ribs can cause disturbance and it is often best to excavate only the minimum amount of soil necessary to show their position. Do not excavate any soil from cavities within the skull (eye sockets, ears and jaw) as this can damage the bones. If the soil is hard, it may be lightly sprayed with water to help soften it.

Individual bones may not always appear where you expect them! This may be a feature of the original burial, or due to later disturbance or deposition of disarticulated bone.

*Note: Be aware that a grave could contain multiple burials, or that the remains of a foetus could be present with (inside) an adult skeleton.*

Any metal nails that are found during excavation should be treated as potentially *in-situ* coffin nails. They should be left exactly as found and their positions recorded.

2.2 Recording

Digital photography is our preferred method of recording a skeleton *in-situ*: it is both rapid and accurate. The traditional approach of site drawings of skeletons at 1:10 is time-consuming and often inaccurate.

2.2.1 Planning

The skull, pelvis and long bones of the skeleton should be recorded precisely on the plan of the grave cut (at the usual 1:20 scale). This will enable the photographs (see below) to be accurately located in relation to the site grid.

2.2.2 Context Sheets

Each skeleton should normally have at least 3 associated context sheets:

- **Standard cut-type sheet for the grave cut** – see worked example in Appendix C.
- **Standard fill-type sheet for the grave fill** – see worked example in Appendix D.
Specialised skeleton sheet – see worked example in Appendix B.

However, in the event of multiple contemporary burials, there may only be one cut context sheet and one fill context sheet covering several skeletons.

If the remains of a coffin are found, this should have its own context sheet.
Detailed notes on filling in the skeleton context sheet are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Code</th>
<th>POU/CHF/ followed by the last two digits of the year, for example, POU/CHF/12.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trench</td>
<td>Number of the trench containing the burial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Grid</td>
<td>The south-western grid co-ordinates of the 5-metre grid square in which the grave is situated (if the grave spans more than one 5-metre square, give the SW co-ordinates of all the squares).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeleton No</td>
<td>Unique skeleton reference number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeleton Context</td>
<td>Context number of skeleton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave Cut Context</td>
<td>Context number of the grave cut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave Fill Context</td>
<td>Context number of the grave fill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shade bones present</td>
<td>Shade all the bones which are present in the grave. (Note: this may have to be updated as the bones are lifted.) Indicate any breaks in long bones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Sketch the attitude of the skull and limbs in relation to the pelvis and spine. Define the orientation of the burial by indicating the end of the grave at which the head is placed (for example, W).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prone</td>
<td>= face down, lying on the front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supine</td>
<td>= face up, lying on the back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>= laid out in approximately straight line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexed</td>
<td>= leg joints bent by &lt; 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crouched</td>
<td>= leg joints bent by &gt; 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracted</td>
<td>= knees hard up against chest (foetal position)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td>Note the condition of the bone, For example, well preserved, friable (crumbly), weathered. Disturbance by roots, animals, erosion, etc. should be noted and also shown on the sketch plan (see below). Truncation (cutting away by a later feature) – where skeleton is truncated, indicate on bones diagram (above) and on sketch plan (below) with truncating context features. Post-mortem damage (for example, breaks in long bones, crushing of skull) should be noted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Description</td>
<td>Pathology – any evidence of disease and/or ante-mortem fractures of the bones. At this stage, it is only possible to identify obvious pathologies, which should be briefly described. More detailed study of pathology will be performed during post-exavation analysis. Shroud/Coffin: Presence – indicate if there is any evidence for a shroud (for example, pins) or a coffin. If a coffin was present, then define: Type – For example, wooden (nailed), wooden (dowelled), lead, stone. Context No – number assigned to coffin Any other points of interest (for example, assemblies of stones) – any other aspects of the burial which may be of interest or are unusual, for example, associated burials, female with foetus in place, or any other complex burial situation. These should also be shown on the sketch plan (see below). Of particular interest are assemblies of stones, which have been found in several burials, predominantly around the skull. These should also be photographed before and after lifting the bones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratigraphic Matrix</td>
<td>List all the contexts which come immediately before and after the skeleton context in the Harris matrix. Those below (before) the skeleton context will include the grave cut context. Those above (after) the skeleton context will include the grave fill context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Samples</td>
<td>List the sample numbers and where they were taken from (see Section 2.3.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch Plan</td>
<td>Draw a sketch of the burial (with the skeleton in simple outline only), including its relationship to surrounding layers, features and other burials, associated finds and grave goods. Ensure the plan is correctly oriented to the site grid. Note: This is not a substitute for accurate plans!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels &amp; Co-ordinates</td>
<td>Wherever possible, the grid co-ordinates and levels of the skull, pelvis and ankle(s) should be measured: the positions of these points are shown on the bones diagram above. Other points may be measured, for example, if any of the ‘standard’ locations is not present or if the skeleton is in an unusual configuration: in such a case, indicate the points which were measured on the bones diagram. TBM = Temporary Bench Mark Height BS = Backsight to Temporary Bench Mark IH = Instrument Height (TBM + BS) FS = Foresight to point of interest RL = Reduced Level of point of interest (IH – FS) Measure the overall length of the skeleton (as an approximation to the stature of the individual, if the burial is extended).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Finds and Small Finds</td>
<td>Any finds associated directly with the burial (but not general constituents of the grave fill such as building rubble, which will be recorded on the fill context sheet). These finds will often be treated as Small Finds and assigned their own numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Nos</td>
<td>The drawing numbers of all plans which show the skeleton (see Section 2.2.1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Photos</td>
<td>The ‘film’ and ‘frame’ numbers of all the photographs which show the skeleton (see Section 2.2.3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>A brief interpretation of the burial as a whole, including comments about the coffin, grave and grave goods (if any). The estimated sex and age should only be recorded where this is obvious or where the person completing the sheet has some expertise in this area (otherwise it can be a good source of amusement for the post-excavation team). More detailed analysis will be carried out by the Human Remains Team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorded By / Date</td>
<td>Name of person completing the form and date completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checked By / Date</td>
<td>Name of supervisor and date form checked.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.2.3 Photography

The photographs are the primary visual record of the skeleton. Photographs should be taken as soon as possible after the skeleton has been exposed. The usual site guidelines for photography apply, but in addition:

- If the bones are well preserved, then they can be cleaned with a small sponge and water to improve definition. If poorly preserved, a fine water spray may achieve the same result.
- However, skeletons are not to be repeatedly wetted and allowed to dry; this damages the bones. Photographs of the entire skeleton should be taken from not too oblique an angle and from the feet end of the grave where possible.
- Close-up photographs should also be taken of any abnormalities, particularly if the bone is fragile and may be damaged on lifting. Any stone assemblies associated with the burial should also be photographed.

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Each photograph must show the skeleton context and skeleton number. Specifically, the skeleton’s ID tag should be clearly visible in all photographs. When dealing with multiple burials, ensure that all the ID tags are present and clearly identify the correct remains. Digital photographs should be taken and their ‘film’ and ‘frame’ numbers recorded on the skeleton context sheet.

2.3 Lifting and Bagging the Skeleton

Once the skeleton has been cleaned and all recording completed, it may be lifted.

2.3.1 Equipment

1. Skeleton number, context numbers of skeleton and fill
2. Finds tray for any finds within the fill
3. Trowel, small tool, picks, etc.
4. Plastic bags for bones and other finds. The number of bags required and their sizes depend on the number of bones surviving and their dimensions: there is no point using large bags for the remains of a very young child. Potentially, up to 8 large and 12 medium bags might be required for a complete adult skeleton (see Section 2.3.3).
5. Permanent marker pen
6. Large boxes or trays for transporting filled bags
7. Skeleton context sheet, in case it needs updating during lifting, for example, if more bones are found

2.3.2 Procedure

When in doubt, ask the supervisor!

1. Work systematically through the skeleton, as defined in ‘Order of Lifting’ below (Section 2.3.3.).
2. Choose an appropriate size bag, write on the outside the skeleton number, skeleton context number and description of bones, for example, ‘SK 102 (1503) Right Arm’.
3. Using the tools, fully expose and undermine the bones, gently lift, carefully remove any large clods of attached earth and place bones in bag. If the soil is hard, it can be lightly sprayed with water to help soften it. As many fragments of bone should be recovered as possible.

Notes:

a) Don’t scrape the bones, or attempt to remove earth from holes (particularly from the skull!).
b) Don’t forget the epiphyses on juveniles & infants — these may resemble small stones!
c) If possible, lift the skull and mandible together as a single piece.
d) Skulls must always be supported by both hands and never picked up by the eye orbits—the weight of an ear-filled skull should not be underestimated.
e) Long bones should always be lifted by both hands to avoid breakage.
f) Beware of vertebrae or other bones which may be fused by disease. Do not try to separate them.
4. If additional bones are found during lifting, update the diagram on the skeleton context sheet.
5. When each bag is full, seal it (if possible) and place gently in a box.
6. Any finds within the fill should be placed in the finds tray. At the end, transfer the finds to their own bag and label it with the fill context number.
7. Gently trowel over the area where the skeleton laid, in case there are further small bones or finds.
8. Fully excavate the grave cut and record it on its own context sheet.
9. Transport the filled bags to the washing tent.

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2.3.3 Order of Lifting

There is no ‘correct’ order, but a suggested order is given below (maximum bag size is indicated by L = large bag [46 x 33 cm], M = medium [28 x 20 cm]):

1. Right hand (M)
2. Right arm (L)
3. Left hand (M) – if the hands cannot be easily separated, then bag together
4. Left arm (L)
5. Right foot (M)
6. Right leg (L)
7. Left foot (M) – if the feet cannot be easily separated, then bag together
8. Left leg (L)
9. Skull and hyoid cartilage (L)
10. Mandible (M) – only if easily separated from the rest of the skull, otherwise bag together
11. Loose teeth (M)
12. Sternum & Manubrium (M)
13. Right Ribs (M)
14. Left Ribs (M)
15. Right Clavicle & Scapula (M)
16. Left Clavicle & Scapula (M)
17. Pelvis including Sacrum (L)
18. Vertebrae (L)
19. Miscellaneous loose bones (as necessary)
20. Finally, lift the skeleton ID tag and bag it with the skull (or the largest bone if no skull)

Notes:

a) If the loose bones are definitely not associated with the articulated skeleton (for example, a third femur), then they should be bagged separately and labelled as part of the fill context rather than the skeleton context. If there is any doubt then they should be treated as part of the skeleton.

b) The terms left and right above mean the siding of the items as in life. Hands/arms, and sometime feet, are often crossed as part of the ‘laying out’ process and the left hand is often on the right side of the skeleton and vice-versa.

2.3.4 Environmental Samples and Other Organic Material

Environmental samples can tell us about the overall environment at the time of the burial (for example, from pollen and snails), as well as about the individual (for example, food remains and kidney stones).

The supervisor will determine whether or not environmental samples are required for each skeleton. This will depend on the needs of the research programme and the likelihood that organic material has been preserved. If required, they should be taken from some or all of the following areas:

- Skull
- Neck
- Chest
- Abdomen
- Pelvis

The usual guidelines for environmental samples apply, but in addition:

- Sample size is 1Kg.
- Sample numbers and locations are entered on the skeleton context sheet.
The excavator should also be aware of other material which is associated with the skeleton and which should be retrieved if not specifically included in environmental samples. These include:

1. Kidney, bladder, sinus and gallstones. These resemble small pebbles and are therefore difficult to recognise.

2. Hydatid cysts, produced as a reaction to the tapeworm parasite, can be found in many regions, most commonly in the abdomen, thorax and cranium. These are normally of a thin calcareous nature and roughly spherical.

3. Biological material – stomach contents and coprolites. These may contain cereal fragments, seeds of food plants and the eggs of intestinal parasites. These are most likely to occur in waterlogged deposits and hence are rare at Poulton.
3 Post-Excavation Cleaning

Ray Carpenter & Steve Crane

Much of the material in this section comes from [Anderson, 1993] and [BABA Code of Practice, 2010]. Excavated human bones need to be cleaned, both to prevent them from going mouldy and to aid post-excavation analysis. Although some sources recommend dry brushing as a means of removing soil, this is generally ineffective with the clay soil typical of Poulton: instead, the bones must be washed. Bones must not be treated with any sort of chemicals. In certain circumstances, broken bones may be glued together on a medium term basis using HMG acrylic adhesive B72. This adhesive may be safely removed with solvents. For short term use (such as photography), 3M Scotch® Magic™ Tape may be used.

Note: Bones should only be glued for specific research purposes (for example, reconstruction of a fragmented skull), and with the prior agreement of the Human Remains Team.

Gloves MUST be worn when cleaning a skeleton (and whenever else bones are handled), to minimise contamination that might compromise future DNA analysis.

3.1 Skeletons

Wash the bones before the clay soil dries out completely, otherwise it becomes too hard. The bones should be carefully washed in lukewarm water using a soft toothbrush, without being soaked, in the same way as other finds. If there are incomplete and/or damaged bones, soil can be carefully removed from the broken ends using picks or other fine tools, but great care must be taken to avoid damaging the bone. The skull may fall apart when washed (often it is only the soil inside which holds it together), but as long as all the pieces are saved this is not a major problem. The facial bones in particular are very fragile. Care should also be taken not to remove any deposits from teeth.

When changing the water, ensure that small bones and bone fragments are not thrown away. Change the water frequently and always before starting a new skeleton.

The bones should now be laid out to dry in clean trays lined with newspaper and with the original bag (which is the only form of identification) turned inside out so that it can dry thoroughly too. Do not overload the trays; ensure the bones have plenty of ‘air’ around them. If required, use two or more trays. In that case, ensure that each and every tray contains either the bag or a label which identifies both the component and skeleton. The bones should now normally be transferred to the bone cabin for drying and further processing. If this is not possible or practicable, transfer the trays to another secure location with a fairly consistent and moderate temperature. Do not leave the bones in direct sunlight or apply artificial heat.

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4 Cremations

*Steve Crane*

A cremation consists of the burnt remains of a human body. In most cases, only fragments of bones remain. The average human body reduces to about 3kg of ash, but it is rare to find this quantity. The bone are often be fragmented (sometimes deliberately) and is very fragile.

Burnt bones are not necessarily human: animal bones may be found on their own or mixed with human bone. However, unless it is obvious that the bones are animal, they should always be treated as human bone during excavation and recording, leaving differentiation to the post-exavcation phase.

Although smoking is not permitted on site in any case, this ban is particularly important when working on cremations, as tobacco ash can easily contaminate the cremation material.

4.1 Cremation Pits

Most cremations will have been deposited in a small hole in the ground, known as the cremation pit. As with inhumations, the burial should be excavated stratigraphically (that is, deposit by deposit in reverse order of deposition) and in plan. Where a vessel is found containing the burnt bones, then the backfill round this vessel will be excavated first: on the other hand, if the cremation pit has simply been backfilled with the ashes, then they will be treated as a fill. Cremated bone is very fragile. Every effort must be made not to break it during excavation, as this makes identification more difficult: frequent dampening of the soil can make it easier to lift the bone.

All deposits removed from cremation pits should be treated as environmental samples and will be processed later to remove all the burnt bone, carbonised wood and other materials. Where a vessel is broken or the soil is disturbed, great care may be needed to ensure that all the cremation material is recovered.

Sometimes the pit will contain grave-goods, which may or may not have been burnt together with the body. The fill may also contain nails and fragments of carbonised wood, which may be from a coffin or the funeral pyre. All of these should be collected along with the pit fill and noted on the appropriate context sheet(s).

Special finds such as jewellery should be recovered separately and treated as ordinary small finds. They should also be noted on the context sheet of the fill in which they were contained.

4.2 Vessels

Any vessel (or urn) containing burnt bone is assigned a separate context number and the contents left intact for later off-site excavation. The vessel must be completely exposed before any attempt to lift it. Sometimes there will also be cremated bone outside the vessel; such bone should be collected as part of the cremation pit backfill.

The cremation pit may also hold other vessels which do not contain any bone. These are also assigned individual context numbers and their contents left intact as they may have contained food offerings to the deceased. Again, they must be completely exposed before any attempt at lifting.

Extreme care is required if a vessel is broken, to ensure that none of its contents are lost. It may be helpful to bandage the vessel to provide extra support. If the vessel is badly smashed, then it may have to be excavated *in-situ*.

4.3 Recording

An overall plan at a scale of 1:10 should show the general areas in which bone fragments are found, together with larger individual fragments and the locations of vessels and other finds. However, there is no need to plan every bone revealed during excavation.

Digital photographs should be taken.

An appropriate standard context sheet should be completed for each of the following:
- Cremation pit (cut) – one sheet
- Each layer of fill in the pit – one sheet for each layer
- Vessel(s) containing ashes and accessory vessels without ashes – one sheet for each vessel
In addition to the context sheets, a separate cremation record sheet should be completed, providing a summary of the contents of the burial. See Appendix E for a worked example. Detailed notes on filling in the cremation record sheet are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site Code</td>
<td>POU/CHF/ followed by the last two digits of the year, for example, POU/CHF/12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trench</td>
<td>Number of the trench containing the cremation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Grid</td>
<td>The southwestern grid co-ordinates of the 5-metre grid square in which the cremation is situated (if the cremation spans more than one 5-metre square, give the SW co-ordinates of all the squares).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context No</td>
<td>Context number assigned to the bone; this will be either the number of the pit fill (if unurned) or the number of the cremation urn (if inurned).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cremation Pit Context</td>
<td>Context number of the cremation pit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill Context(s)</td>
<td>Context numbers of all the fills of the cremation pit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vessel Context(s)</td>
<td>Context numbers of all the vessels in the cremation pit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Inurned / Unurned            | Inurned = bones contained within a vessel (may also be bones outside the vessel)  
                                | Unurned = no bones inside a vessel                                                                                                          |
| Level at Surface             | Level at top of the cremation pit (in metres, to nearest cm).                                                                               |
| Level at Base                | Level at base of the cremation pit (in metres, to nearest cm).                                                                             |
| Sketch Plans                 | Draw a sketch of the cremation, including its relationship to surrounding layers, features, associated vessels and finds.  
                                | Ensure that the plan is correctly oriented to the site grid and that the co-ordinates of the grid squares are shown. |
| Note: This is not a substitute for accurate plans! |
| Additional Description       | A written description of the cremation pit and its contents.  
                                | Note any discoloration of the sides of the pit suggestive of burning or scorching. Interpretative comments should not be included here, but under ‘Interpretation’ below. |
| Vessels                      | Number of vessels in the cremation pit, the material of which they are made (pottery, glass, wood, etc.), their condition (whole, broken, crushed, burnt, etc.) and a description of each vessel. |
| Material Outside Vessels     | Note type and quantity of any bone (burnt or unburnt), or other significant material such as charcoal and slag, found in the fill outside of any vessels. |
| Record maximum size of bone fragments prior to lifting. |
| Stratigraphic Matrix         | List all the contexts which come immediately before and after the bone context in the Harris matrix.  
                                | Those below (before) the bone context will include the cremation pit context.                                                             |
| Environmental Samples        | List the sample numbers assigned to the fill(s).                                                                                             |
| Associated Finds & Small Finds | Any finds associated directly with the cremation (but not general constituents of the fills such as bone and charcoal, which will be recorded on the relevant fill context sheet). These finds will often be treated as Small Finds and assigned their own numbers. |
| Plan Nos                     | The drawing numbers of all plans which show the cremation.                                                                                   |
| Section Nos                  | The drawing numbers of all sections which show the cremation.                                                                               |
| Photos                       | The ‘film’ and ‘frame’ numbers of all the photographs which show the cremation.                                                             |
| Interpretation               | A brief description of the cremation as a whole, including comments about the bone, vessels and finds (if any).                               |
| Excavation Method            | Cremations should be excavated in plan; give reasons if any other method was used.                                                           |
| Excavation Tools             | List all the tools used in the excavation.                                                                                                  |

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### 4.4 Post-Evacuation Treatment

The processing of cremated bone (including the emptying of vessels) is a specialised task which would normally be performed by external experts. See [Brickley and McKinley, 2004: 9-13], [McKinley and Roberts, 1993: 7], [Brothwell, 1981: 14] and [Mays, 2010: 311].
5 References and Bibliography

The most important reference book for anyone with a professional archaeological interest in human remains is [Brothwell, 1981]. [Mays, 2010] is also essential reading. For those with a more general interest, [Stirland, 1999] is an accessible and affordable introduction.

Anderson, S., 1993

BABAO Code of Ethics, 2010

BABAO Code of Practice, 2010

Bass, W.M., 1995

Brickley, M. and McKinley, J.I. (eds.), 2004

Brothwell, D., 1981

Emery, M., 2005
Poulton Research Project Site Manual (v0.2). Poulton.


McKinley, J.I. and Roberts, C., 1993

MoJ, 2011

Stirland, A., 1999
Human Bones in Archaeology. Shire, Princes Risborough.

White, T.O. and Folkens, P.A., 2005
6 Appendices

A  Bones of the human skeleton
B  Skeleton Context sheet: Worked example
C  Standard Context sheet for Grave Cut: Worked example
D  Standard Context sheet for Grave Fill: Worked example
E  Cremation sheet: Worked example

Note:  *The pro-forma sheets are always being revised and those in current use may differ in detail from those shown in these appendices*
Bones of the Adult Skeleton

from [Mays, 2010: 2-3]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skull:</th>
<th>28 (including mandible &amp; ear ossicles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hyoid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinal column:</td>
<td>24 (7 cervical, 12 thoracic, 5 lumbar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sacrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coccyx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoracic cage:</td>
<td>24 (12 pairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sternum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pectoral girdle:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clavicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scapula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelvic girdle:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pelvic bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limb bones:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arm bones:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humerus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ulna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrist/hand:</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carpal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metacarpal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phalanx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leg bones:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Femur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tibia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fibula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankle/foot:</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tarsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metatarsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phalanx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 206

In addition, there are a variable number of small bones (sesamoids) embedded in the tendons of the hands and feet.

Although this list shows the ‘standard’ number of bones in an adult skeleton, extra bones are not uncommon, for example, 13 rather than 12 thoracic vertebrae, or 6 rather than 5 lumbar vertebrae. Detailed descriptions and photographs of all the bones can be found in [White & Folkens, 2005].
Appendix B – Skeleton Context sheet: Worked example
Sketch Plans
Dimensions, cardinal points, co-ordinates, context nos, grave cut, position of associated finds and burials, position and nos of truncating features, areas of disturbance

Levels & Co-ordinates (in metres, to nearest cm)
Show points on skeleton diagram overleaf:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>FS</th>
<th>RL</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>14.82</td>
<td>116.06</td>
<td>14.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td>116.69</td>
<td>14.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>14.70</td>
<td>117.58</td>
<td>14.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall length of skeleton: 1.88 m

Associated Finds & Small Finds (with Nos)

Plan Nos:

Photos (Film):  
Photos (Digital): DS6 Frames 47-50

Interpretation

Est Sex: Male
Est Age: 30+

Recorded By: [signature]  Date: 2/08/11  Checked By: [signature]  Date: 12/08/11

Skeleton V2_15  24-Jul-2010

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### Appendix C – Standard Context sheet for Grave Cut: Worked example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poulton Research Project</th>
<th>Context Record - Cut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordinates: 120°E / 10N</td>
<td>Site Code: POU/CHF/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length: 1.75m</td>
<td>Trench No: I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width: 0.65m</td>
<td>Context No: 856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description (Sketch plan and section overleaf):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Shape in plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Break of slope - top</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sides (* to vertical)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Break of slope - base</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Base (flat, convex, concave, tapering)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Definition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Recut context no.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Method of excavation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ovoid shaped cut tapering from the E.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sharp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 10° off vertical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Not perceptible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Flat, sloping towards E.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. E-W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Indistinct cut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Trench</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of Group</th>
<th>Context Nos:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stratigraphic relationships</td>
<td>Stratigraphic Matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filled by: 855 855 859</td>
<td>855 857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same as:</td>
<td>This Context 856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuts: 672</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Interpretation (with reasons): |
| 1. Date of cut |
| 2. Origin |
| 3. Function |
| 1. Assumed medieval but no specific dating evidence. |
| 2/3. Typical grave cut. |

| Plan No: 203/204 | Section No: 166 |
| Photos (Film): Film 7 Frames 27+28 | Photos (Digital): D17 Frames 23+24 |
| Recorded by: SAC Date: 17/08/2002 | Checked by: RJC Date: 15/08/2002 |
Appendix D – Standard Context sheet for Grave Fill: Worked example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poulton Research Project</th>
<th>Context Record – Fill/Layer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordinates: 120E / 10N</td>
<td>Trench No: I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length: 1.75m</td>
<td>Context No: 855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width: 0.65m</td>
<td>Thickness (max/min): 0.40 / 0.35m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour (Visual): Greyish brown</td>
<td>Texture (e.g. silty-clay): Clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency (e.g. soft/firm/plastic): Plastic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coarse components (% and approx. size in mm.):
- Modew 5mm: 19%, Charnoz 5mm: 19%, Sandstone 10mm max: 2%

Description:
1. Carve fill surrounding skeleton 103 (858)
2. Truncated at E by possible ditch feature (816)
4. Not waterlogged
5. Bone well preserved
6. Trowel, leaf trowel, e.picky
An initial court of clay, followed by clay to depth of c. 5 cm.
Fill below this similar in texture but more moist.

Stratigraphic relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratigraphic Matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>856</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation (with reasons):
1. Date of deposition
2. Circumstances of deposition
3. Origin
   - Assumed medieval
   - No specific dating evidence in this context.
4. Function
   - 2/3/4 Typical grave fill (no burial or bound) on site.

Finds:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Find</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>CE</th>
<th>A Bone</th>
<th>Clay Pipe</th>
<th>Glass</th>
<th>Iron</th>
<th>Other Metal</th>
<th>Wood</th>
<th>Leather Plastic B.M</th>
<th>H Bone</th>
<th>Flint</th>
<th>Plaster Coin</th>
<th>Slag</th>
<th>Shell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Small Find No: 46 | Sample No: 46 / 47 / 48
Plan No: 203 / 204 | Section No: N/A
Photos (Film): Film 7 / Frames 16 + 17 | Photos (Digital): D17 / Frames 1 + 2
Recorded by: JTC | Date: 12/08/2002
Checked by: SM | Date: 16/08/2002
**SAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-ordinates:</th>
<th>Site Code:</th>
<th>Site Code:</th>
<th>Context No:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120E</td>
<td>POU/CHF/</td>
<td>O2</td>
<td>TR I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description** (including sketch with relation to grid peg and/or other feature)

![Sketch](image)

**Interpretation** (continued)
Appendix E – Cremation sheet: Worked example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poulton Research Project</th>
<th>Cremation Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Code:</strong> POU/CHF/02</td>
<td><strong>Context No:</strong> 927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trench:</strong> I</td>
<td><strong>Fill Context(s):</strong> 927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SW Grid – E:</strong> 105 <strong>N:</strong> 35</td>
<td><strong>Vessel Context(s):</strong> —</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sketch Plans
Dimensions, cardinal points, co-ordinates, context nos, position of associated vessels and finds, position and nos of truncating features, areas of disturbance

![Sketch Plan Diagram](image)

### Additional Description
Cremation pit has been cut into another 'pit’ feature (cut = [914], fill = [915]). This other feature contains no trace of cremation material, but two small pottery fragments were found - perhaps related to cremation? Sides of cremation pit almost vertical, but no signs of burning.

### Vessels
Number, material, condition, brief description, contents

No vessels.

### Material Outside Vessels
Fill is approx 10% human bone, fragments up to 2cm long. All bone is calcined. Significant amount of charred + chipped wood. No animal bone?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratigraphic Matrix</th>
<th>Environmental Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>928</td>
<td>915</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fill is entire context of pit (i.e. all of context 923)

Cremation V2.06 28-Feb-2004
Site Code: POU/CHF/02  |  Trench: T  |  SW Grid – E: 105 N: 35  |  Context No: 927

Associated Finds & Small Finds (with Nos)
None (but see under ‘Additional Description’ re. pottery fragments in surrounding context)

Plan Nos: 301 + 303  |  Section Nos: 127
Photos (Film): Film 12 / Frame 23  |  Photos (Digital): DIG / Frames 7 + 8

Interpretation
Unburnt cremation of possibly >1 human individual. Cremation took place elsewhere and material brought here for burial, possibly in vessel whose remains found in 915?

Excavation Method:
Plan / Other

Excavation Tools:
Leaf Trowel / Trowel

Risk of Contamination:
Low / Medium / High

Recorded By: RJC  |  Date: 7/5/2003  |  Checked By: SAS  |  Date: 8/5/2003