

PAMELA C. SAUNDERS M.A.

The Religious Influences in Funerary Practices in the Parish of Sheffield -  
1843 to the present

Abstract

**THE RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES IN FUNERARY PRACTICES**

**IN THE PARISH OF SHEFFIELD**

**1843 TO THE PRESENT**

**PAMELA C. SAUNDERS M.A.**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
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**Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the relationship between funerary rituals and religion in the Parish of Sheffield in order to shed light on present day customs and practices. In the past, most studies have attempted to relate religion and ritual from the base of changing belief systems; this present investigation analyses the means whereby the secular nature of funerary customs is brought into a vital relationship with the sacred by the rites of passage of death, and their associated myths and legends.

The study is divided into three principal areas of research covering pertinent general and specific aspects of funerary rituals. The first section sets the central core of the research upon a more general foundation of relevant literature, and an overview of funerary rituals and religion. A résumé of the history of Sheffield and the laws of burial and cremation then places the study into both a wider and a comparative context of time and place. The research then centres on a study of current funeral practices in Sheffield: the Sheffield funeral trade; the influences of religion upon death rituals in relation to the city; the people of Sheffield who experience these funerals, and the places of committal available to them. The research draws on its primary database of 67 respondents from representative religions, complemented by selective databases covering non-specific mourners, religious representatives, and associated trades, services and professions.



Aspects of continuity and change, which include 'green' funerals, 'Natural Death', multi-ethnic accommodations, and the revision of funeral liturgies, are set out in the final section. In this the study concludes that the prime function of the religious funerary ritual in a secular society is the provision of continuity and order in services that best reflect the needs of the mourner and acknowledge the life of the deceased.



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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction and Methodology**

#### **1. General Introduction**

This project aims to explore and extend knowledge of the effects of religious influence upon the parishioners of Sheffield in an historical manner by investigating aspects of continuity and change in their funerary practices. The Parish of Sheffield has been subject to change in format and character over the prescribed period, 1843 to the present, as have its parishioners. The project takes as its knowledge base that found and highlighted by the unpublished M.A. dissertation: Saunders, P. C., “A Last Rite of Passage: Current Funeral Practices in Sheffield”, Sheffield, University of Sheffield, 1992.<sup>1</sup> That, in its turn, sought to develop and extend knowledge gained during an initial study: Saunders, P. C., “The Final Rite of Passage”, Sheffield, Totley-Thornbridge College of Education, University of Sheffield Institute of Education, 1975,<sup>2</sup> conducted as a final dissertation for the Certificate in Education. Indeed, research into the customs and traditions of funerals has been continuous since the instigation of the initial study in 1973, and this present study benefits from the resulting large database of pertinent knowledge. The major M.A. study investigates the common funeral in the City of Sheffield in terms of place, and by studying change over time, highlights predictable trends as it investigates the continuum of exhibited funeral patterns. In doing so, it identifies religious influences and restrictions over a wide time span, up to and including the time of presentation. This present study now seeks to extend the very limited academic knowledge concerning religion and death rituals in England by the further study of funerals in Sheffield, the city selected once again for reasons of geographical and demographical familiarity.



## **1.i Place and People**

The city has been the geographical home of the researcher for 30 years and the site of all post-secondary education, family life, worship, work and social activities. An accumulated database of knowledge concerning community and people has been absorbed over this considerable period of time: a fund of knowledge that could not have been gained merely by temporary visitation for any research purposes. Previous research ensured that the existing database of knowledge was expanded and consolidated; interests and employment have provided opportunities to add to this fund of knowledge. Teaching in church-aided schools, both Anglican and Catholic, led to gaining the trust and confidence of responders: singing in churches and cathedrals has given opportunities in experience and contact which might otherwise have been difficult to establish. Full advantage of these opportunities has been taken; Sheffield is a known environment both geographically and demographically. Personal acquaintances, work colleagues, friends and family are readily available to contribute support, material, and their own wealth of knowledge of place and person, so extending any existing knowledge-base.

Again, the 1992 study was submitted in part requirement for the degree of M.A. in Local History, Literature and Cultural Tradition, Division of Continuing Education / Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, (CECTAL), University of Sheffield. The Centre, now 'The National Centre for English Cultural Tradition', is a research institution which acts as a national repository for material on language and cultural tradition. 'NATCECT' is well regarded and has an excellent reputation, with comprehensive research facilities and special collections which were used to support research into the customs and traditions of

the Sheffield funeral. This present study again utilises these archives, supporting the main focus on cultural tradition, that is, how tradition itself operates within any culture whatever its composition, such as urban or rural, and male or female. Tradition involves beliefs and practices or customs, handed down over time, and bound up with continuity within a community. The community may be small, as in a family or friendship group, or it may be a larger group, as in a village or a religious community, or in clan, tribe, town or city. Custom is seen as a deeply ingrained habit, though not always over a lengthy period of time, although in tradition there is some historicity. Again, tradition is not seen as pure; it has changed over time, but though superficial aspects change, the deeper structure remains intact.

Further, as stated earlier, the City of Sheffield was used for previous research in this field. It was considered that any development or continuation of that work could best be performed by utilising relationships explored and developed for the previous two studies: indeed they were seen as essential to the success of the study. Experience gained by living and working within the city for such a lengthy period of time was thus seen as a vital factor in the growth and development of this ongoing project.

### 1.ii Parish to See

The Diocese of Sheffield has, what its second bishop, Leslie Hunter, termed, a 'Parish Church Cathedral'<sup>3</sup>. The size and shape, format and history of the old parish might lend itself well to any focused study. However, this project has not limited its research to that area of land that originally formed the old parish. Geographically, the study extends its



range to mirror the changing shape and structure of the parish as it divided and grew into a new See. Thus, research can better encompass an investigation of change over time, incorporating salient contributing factors. It will be shown that 't'owd church', an expression used by many citizens, is a respected and loved institution, which is meddled with at one's peril. The people of Sheffield view the Cathedral and its establishment as 'their' parish church: the Provost as 'their' vicar. Again, it will be shown that a population forced into citizenship does not readily adopt the expected patterns of city life. Thus, research into the religious influences in funerary practices in the Parish of Sheffield takes the developing parish as its base-line and encompasses changes within that parish.

### **1.iii 1843 to the present**

It will be demonstrated that the date of 1843 is not selected at random. This was the date of the town's incorporation as a municipal borough, an event of significance for the town, its parish and its population. Indeed, the timing of the instigation of this research, 1993, coincides with celebrations to mark the centenary of Sheffield as a city, although its parish church did not become a cathedral until 1913.

## **2. Research**

Much of the research is primary, utilising transcribed and annotated tapes as well as the photographic recording of evidence. Careful and extensive 'minutes' document evidence that could not be recorded by other means. Research also includes the investigation of secular and religious archives, that is, both civil and ecclesiastical; secondary research of

published and unpublished works was continuous and ongoing. The practical research covers all known and available relevant people and places.

## **2.i Previous research: 1975**

“The Final Rite of Passage”, unpublished Cert. Ed. dissertation, Sheffield, Totley-Thornbridge College of Education, University of Sheffield Institute of Education, 1975

Observations of disparate yet linked family funerals between 1960 and 1970 prompted this initial, unpublished study of the common British funeral. Research covers urban, suburban and rural practices and seeks to investigate three aspects of the funeral:

- Connections of religion and rite
- Differing behavioural patterns
- Customs and trends

The study is wide-ranging and comprehensive in nature and place yet necessarily limited in its concept and scope. Sources are generally of a secondary nature; personal experiences adding pertinence and relevance. Some photographic evidence to support secondary evidence is included. Common behaviour patterns are found which depend in part on the type of community involved: open and closed communities displaying dissimilar behavioural practices. The study is concerned with funerals in the United Kingdom as a whole and has no particular focus of place, although much of the research is conducted in the City of Sheffield or in South Yorkshire.

The coverage of the study in terms of subject matter, customs, trends and place engendered a lasting and keen interest resulting in long-term research that has continued to the present time. The subject matter has always aroused a predictable fascination in



others, and a need to recount personal experiences and views. Observations, explanations and opinions have been volunteered. Detailed and pertinent responses have been readily obtained. The 'taboo' subject of death has an associated practice - the funeral. It is this practice which has prompted a strong insistence on verbal participation. Interviewees and respondents have often used their participation in research of funeral practices as a stepping stone to the more guarded subject of death.

## **2.ii Previous research: 1992**

**"A Last Rite of Passage' - Current Funeral Practices in Sheffield", unpublished M.A. dissertation, Sheffield, University of Sheffield, 1992**

This study investigates the common funeral in Sheffield by looking at three particular districts of Sheffield, selected for specific and pertinent research. The study is comparative: a comprehensive coverage of patterns of behaviour is placed within a geographical context which includes an overview of practices within both Britain and the industrial West. The main body of the study comprises five chapters which present the accumulated information in a sequential manner. The first section covers definitions and general background, funerary lore and a related historical overview. The second section looks at Sheffield itself before turning to the three areas of the city chosen for specific research. The theme of 'place' is extended by an investigation into the facilities used for funerals within that area of study. Current practices in Sheffield are covered in the third section which is extensive. The issues and problems encountered/identified during the study are then discussed; these include topics of finance, religion, and secularism, sexism, stillbirths, multi-cultural societies and grief. The last section deals with potential funerary

trends within Sheffield. There is particular focus on take-overs, pre-payment plans and secular services, that is services which have no religious foundation, as well as the established church's counter-attack of grief management. The study utilises much primary research, and includes transcribed taped material and photographic support as well as transcribed extensive 'minutes' of interviews. Maps, charts and graphs provide relevant support and the study is accompanied by original tapes and collected material.

### **3. Project 2001 and SAFEC**

The previous studies were concerned with the same principal theme: the common funeral; the second was a development of the first in that it concerned itself with place and custom. The projected observation of change over time was thus a feasibility. The careful focusing of research that was required for the second study meant that much information concerning death and funerals was absorbed but set aside as not pertinent to the project. Primary and secondary research continually highlighted religion as a fundamental factor in funerary customs. It was feasible and necessary to include some of this information within the main body of the 1992 study. However, it concluded:

**'...this study identified areas for further investigation that the stated focus precluded. Past and present funeral practices connected with organised religion constantly presented themselves as worthy and attractive issues in their own right. The matter of Jewish burial practices, past and present, is a restricted and conservative field, yet there is a wealth of available local material that could be incorporated into religious-practice research. The past restrictions placed upon burial by the established community gave rise to sectarian practices within other congregations that served to further isolation and separateness [sic]. The investigations conducted for this study identified the enforced burial practices of Unitarians. Rights to a Christian burial and how these were accommodated within the city is an unexplored facet as are present practices that do or do not accommodate the multi-cultural element within the city; in this study these have merely been identified for comment. All these issues are potential fields for further study within a working brief of religious influences in funeral rites.'**<sup>4</sup>



The scope and nature of this project involved considerable planning before any attempt at research was started. The overall concept was formulated and potential fields of research identified. Much use of previous research was made; its recent documentation eased the formulation of hypotheses and research concepts. The collection of ephemera and newspaper cuttings, which had been instigated for the 1975 research and extended for the 1992 study, formed the foundation of **SAFEC: the SAUNDERS FUNERAL EPHEMERA AND CUTTINGS** collection, a resource that is fundamental to this present research. Details of SAFEC are contained in Appendix C.

Initial topics for the project were set to include:

- i. Previous academic research
- ii. A primary focus on the religious restrictions and influences in funerary practices
- iii. The development of religious attitudes to funerary practices in an historical manner
- iv. Research to include Jewish, Unitarian, Roman Catholic, and Anglican practices as well as others that might be highlighted by the research
- v. Research on current practices in Buddhist, Muslim and Humanist/secular arrangements
- vi. The extension of past research into current funerary practices embracing main religions and denominations [see iv above]
- vii. Further research into methods of committal, focusing upon the religious influences and implications
- viii. The identification of trends in funerary practices with particular reference to religious influences
- ix. Associated research into past and present funerary traditions, beliefs and customs
- x. The inclusion of relevant and appropriate literary evidence of a secondary nature

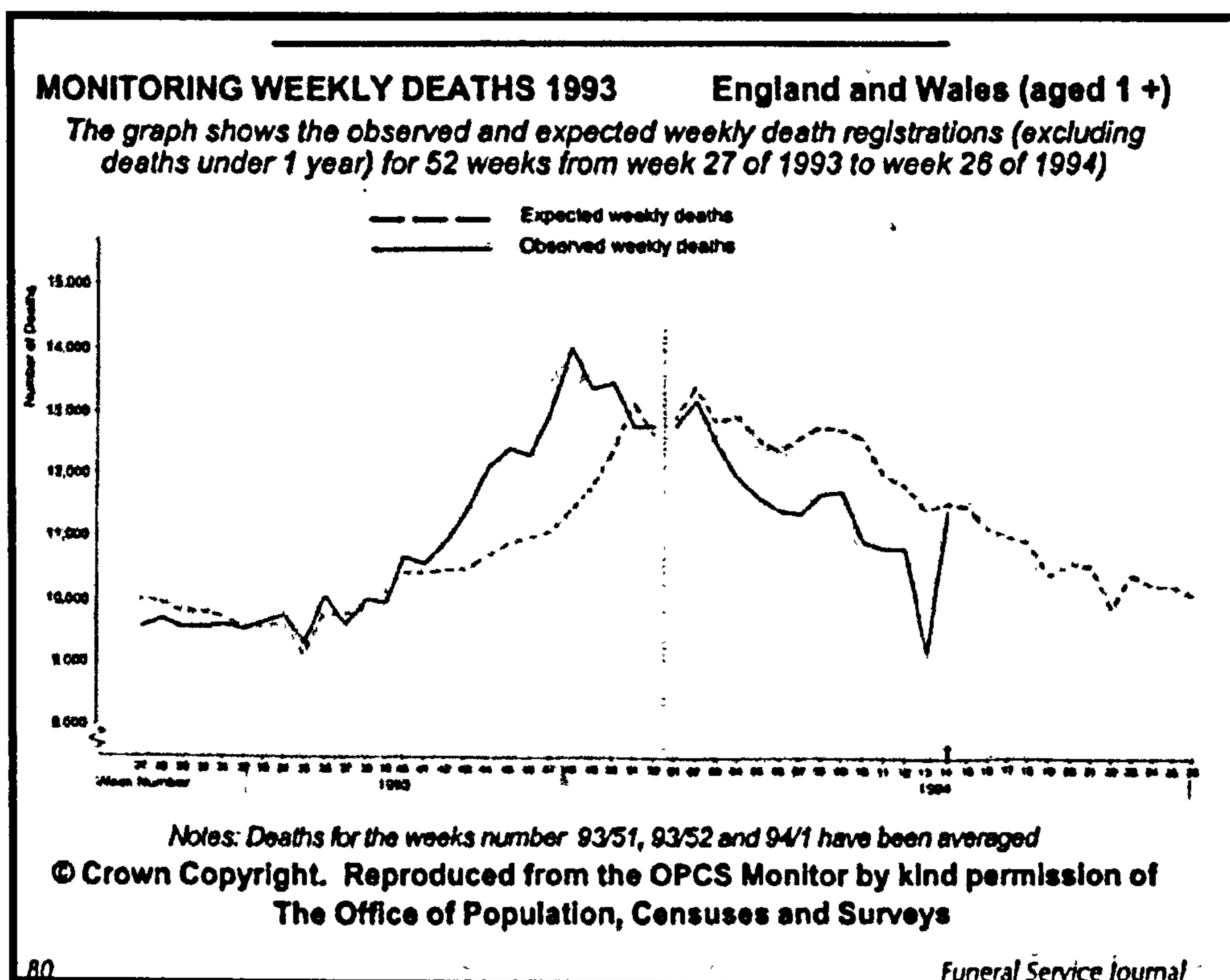
The timing of each section of the plan was of particular pertinence. An awareness of the funeral director's annual work load led to the adopted practice of requesting interviews in their slack periods: a request in the summer was more likely to be successful than one in



November or December. The Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys produce an annual chart monitoring observed and expected weekly deaths. Mortality figures are also available in 4-week periods in the Funeral Service Journal, which are compiled from the Registrar-General's Returns.

**Chart 1.i**

**Graph to show observed and expected weekly death registrations**



Similarly, it was considered polite to avoid contacting any clergy or religious representatives during a potentially busy spell: Easter, Christmas, Ramadan, Yom Kippur are examples of festivals to avoid. For this, a working knowledge of the existence and timing of such festivals was necessary. Secondary library research highlighted unknown or unfamiliar festivals, and particularly, their own importance in a religious calendar.



### **3.i Circumstances**

An outline scheme of work was set up that was initially planned to commence in the early autumn of 1993. At that time, the traffic and road management in the city of Sheffield was greatly disturbed by roadworks to lay down tracks for a rapid-transit system, Supertram. Daily research in local newspapers, in preparation for the study, identified an unexpected circumstance of particular relevance to the project. It was reported in the 'Star', on July 6 1993, that human remains had been found on the Supertram route. They were under the roadway outside the Cathedral, which was the old parish church of St Peter and St Paul, Sheffield, and their existence was unknown before the Supertram project. Test drillings had identified what could be 'a few remains', and permission obtained to exhume these remains, under set conditions, with subsequent re-interment in a current burial ground.

**'Century-old graves lying in the heart of the city centre are to be unearthed and the bodies reburied to make way for Supertram. Church authorities have given the go-ahead for removal of the graves which lie under Church Street, next to the cathedral precinct....plans were approved by the Home Office....Supertram chiefs do not expect any opposition to the plans...'**<sup>5</sup>

This event was followed up, and was the subject of considerable research, part of which involved a literal, 'behind-the-screens' visit to the exhumations in the company of the Provost of Sheffield. Thus there arose the chance opportunity to gather primary evidence about early burials in the parish burial ground.

### **3.ii Planning**

The format and scheme for the current project were devised to maximize the use of any previously collected unused data, which, in itself, prompted the subject of this study.

Successful research techniques were to be utilised again, and strategies formulated which

might delete problems and improve the quality of primary research. The basic topic of 'funerals' had now been studied in depth for some three years, and at a lower level for the previous 20 years, during which time both the first and the second studies were presented. The initial planning for the study, as set out in the previous section, would appear to have encompassed any circumstantial eventualities; after all, was not 'The Funeral' subject to slow and stumbling change: ever dependent upon major factors of influence? It was not foreseen that any chance circumstances could or would affect the presented project. However, as has been shown, such circumstances did occur, namely the publicised exhumations in the city; the extensive research for this study identified certain relevant factors that were unforeseen at the initial stage of planning, the scheme of which was then revised to accommodate such concepts and information: flexibility was seen to be of prime importance and all research was to be conducted from an open position.

The work was planned to be presented in 11 chapters, preceded by an Introduction and Methodology, these chapters to follow a structured sequence. Firstly, an overall view of death and funerals was to be investigated and set out in three apparently discrete yet interrelated chapters:

- the literature of death and funerals
- the rituals and traditions of death
- religious aspects in funeral rites.

Next, the study was set to focus on the 'Parish of Sheffield', starting with relevant aspects of its history and an overview of the current and appropriate laws of burial and cremation. The following four chapters were seen as the core of the study, where the Sheffield funeral was to be the subject of close examination:



- the funeral trade
- the religions and rites of the Sheffield funeral
- the people of Sheffield and their funerals
- the places of these services and committals

A penultimate chapter was then included: to investigate ‘personal’ and ‘green’ funerals, which were strongly promoted by a vocal and publicity-minded minority. These had indeed been covered, albeit briefly, in the second study:

‘The recent book on funeral management by Walter [ ....] dwells at length on the need for greater personal involvement..’<sup>6</sup>

and:

‘The DIY Business...All respondents interviewed answered in the negative when asked if they had any knowledge of privately-arranged funerals. Sheffield’s cemeteries and crematoria staff reiterated information given for the first study, namely that:

“The only rules we have here are that the body MUST be in a coffin. You don’t need undertakers, but you must have the death certificates. You could do it yourself: build a coffin, put the body in, bring it here in a van. We don’t get that, but you could.”

Sheffield is a conservative, traditional city. The population generally are reluctant to employ change let alone to introduce without prompting such a radical step as a DIY funeral...Statistically, there is likely to be such a funeral in the future within the city boundaries. There is no evidence of one having been conducted. They cannot be seen as a positive trend for the future.’<sup>7</sup>

During the period of the present research it was evident that the ‘personal’ and ‘green’ movements had become more forceful and had indeed already been of limited influence in funerary practices at the time of the instigation of the study. The Benefits Agency leaflet D49, from April 1993 stated:

‘Most funerals are arranged by a funeral director.’<sup>8</sup>

and

‘If you wish, you do not have to hold a religious service. You can design your own non-religious service.’<sup>9</sup>

This leaflet was available free of charge at several local outlets that might be available to the newly-bereaved, including the Medico-Legal Centre, where inquests are held, and any

DSS leaflets outlet. However, it offered little advice on how to cope without a funeral director, and has many references to ‘your chosen funeral director’; ‘the funeral director will need’ and ‘the funeral director will be able to help you’, this last implying that such a personage is likely to be employed.<sup>10</sup> Yet, by February 1999, the Benefits Agency Leaflet D49 had been revised thus:

**‘Funeral Arrangements: The Options**

There are few legal controls governing the disposal of a body in the United Kingdom. The only requirement is that the death is certified and registered and the body properly taken care of, either by burial or cremation.

Burial is virtually free of regulations; individuals can be buried in almost anything and almost anywhere. All that is required is a death certificate signed by a doctor and a certificate for burial from the registrar of deaths. It is quite possible to perform a ‘do-it-yourself’ funeral and published advice is available from the Natural Death Centre ... Most people choose to entrust the organisation of a funeral to a professional funeral director. They do so partly for reasons of convenience, at what is generally a stressful time, but also to ensure that the remains of the deceased are disposed of with dignity and propriety.’<sup>11</sup>

Thus, assumptions are made, and attitudes taken, by the Communications and Customer Liaison Branch of the issuing Benefits Agency, concerning the potential lack of dignity and propriety in a DIY funeral. The Which Consumer Guide on funeral management: *What to do when someone dies*, by Paul Harris, notes:

‘...most people feel the need of professional help at this time, and it is still rare for a funeral to be carried out without the services of a funeral director.’<sup>12</sup>

However, Harris includes a five-page chapter on ‘Arranging a funeral without a funeral director’:<sup>13</sup>

‘It is [...] perfectly possible to arrange the whole funeral yourself; there can be considerable snags and difficulties, but with knowledge and determination, these can be overcome.’<sup>14</sup>

Aspects covered by this chapter are:

- Arranging the funeral
- Cremation



- Burial and coffin
- Waiting for the funeral
- Funeral transport
- Burial at home
- Funeral management schemes

Thus, there was ample evidence to justify the inclusion of ‘Personal Funerals’ as a separate chapter of this study. Finally, Chapter Twelve of the project revisits all the related aspects of the study, focusing on observed evidence and the projected trends of continuity and change in the religious influences in funerary practices in the Parish of Sheffield, 1843 to the present.

#### **4. Fieldwork**

The primary fieldwork involved the inauguration of the various databases; these were to be the sources of information for analysis in the core of the work and it was decided that four databases, of differing importance and size, were necessary for this study. Initially, a ‘Faiths’ database of the major and minor religions and denominations identified in Sheffield, with associated contact details, was compiled. This information was then incorporated into the ‘Representatives’ database, noted below. The second, principal, database was concerned with respondents who had been involved in funeral arrangements or who had relevant knowledge of funerals. This database was subdivided into two sections, the first of which consisted of information gathered from respondents who were selected by virtue of religious belief, association or affiliation, and who had participated in planned interviews. The second section consisted of data gathered by the random sampling of visitors to burial grounds and Gardens of Remembrance who were willing to participate

in the study. These two groups were approximately the same size, and termed 'Respondents / selected' and 'Respondents / random' within the 'Respondents' database, enabling the information gathered to be presented as comprehensively as possible. Thirdly, information given by professional and amateur representatives of those involved in the Sheffield funeral, such as religious representatives and their faith affiliations, incorporating the Faiths database noted earlier, as well as funeral directors, florists, monumental masons, legal representatives, musicians and artists, was gathered within the 'Representatives' database in this study. Fourthly, places of service, ritual and committal were to be investigated, and relevant data recorded in the 'Places' database. The format and content of these databases are listed in Appendix A.

**Table 1.i**

**Table to show the composition of the databases**

<b>DATABASE TITLE</b>	<b>COMPOSITION</b>	<b>NUMBERS</b>	<b>COLLECTION METHOD</b>
<b>1. Faiths</b>	religions and denominations faith communities		directories
<b>2. Respondents / selected</b>  <b>Respondents / random</b>	mourners / attenders at funerals– <i>selected by religious belief</i>  visitors to burial grounds <i>random selection</i>	Total = +/- 125	planned interviews / questionnaires  random interviews / questionnaires
<b>3. Representatives</b>	religious representatives funeral directors professionals associated amateurs		planned interviews / questionnaires
<b>4. Places</b>	churchyards cemeteries/ burial grounds crematoria /gardens of remembrance	selection all all	planned visits

#### **4.i Building the Databases**

Separate questionnaires were compiled to build those databases involving interviews.

These questionnaires are included in Appendix B. Most potential respondents within each



separate database could be interviewed locally; it might be necessary to travel to others, and for yet a third category, to request a postal or telephoned response. It was then necessary to prepare a working timescale for most interviews, on the basis laid down in the initial plans. Thus, funeral directors and associates were to be approached during the summer months and religious representatives at one of their 'slacker' times. All representatives were to be approached during the first year of the study, and from an early time-base, so encompassing holiday arrangements and periods of unavailability. Opportunities were to be taken to arrange opportunistic interviews under any of the categories. It was considered proper and expedient that chief mourners not be approached within too short a time of their bereavement. Friends and acquaintances of the mourners could be approached more speedily, and were likely to be able to recommend a suitable date for an initial approach to principal mourners. Associated clergy were also seen as potential intermediaries.

Acting upon the responses obtained in previous studies, it was apparent that the actual time of day for the initial approach was of great importance. All impersonal approaches were to be made, by telephone, during the mid-morning period. This timing had produced the greatest degree of co-operation. Likewise, a bright, sunny day for the approach found potential respondents in an optimistic mood. Acquaintances could be approached at any known convenient time or circumstance. It was also seen as imperative that any date/time offered by potential respondents be accepted if this were at all possible, or that several times/dates be offered to them if they were more flexible.

All potential respondents were told of the academic nature of the study: phrases used were 'I'm at Sheffield University doing postgraduate research, looking at funerals in Sheffield. I was wondering if I might come and see you sometime to talk about.....?' Many respondents were most interested in which university was meant: all were assured that their contribution was essential for the validity of the research. Many wanted to know what they could possibly offer that could be of value. All were able to be reassured on that point. It was helpful if an intermediary could be named: 'John Doe said you might be able to help'. All interviews were seen as confidential and not for publication: this basis was carefully put to all respondents from whom an interview was requested. Upon a first meeting credentials and identification were offered. Given the subject matter, style of dress was seen of some importance: it was considered courteous that dress be neat, inconspicuous and seemly.

#### 4.i.a. Interviews

It was decided that some planned interviews could be taped, using a small 'Sony Professional' system. The experience of the second, major study had shown that most professional representatives were fairly happy that their comments be recorded, and some respondents also might agreed to this recording of their information. Thus, the small tape machine was brought out of a briefcase, after the questionnaire notebook, and the request that the interview 'be taped in case I miss noting any of your comments'. Some respondents were wary, so the machine was slipped away with an 'it doesn't really matter' aside; others were fascinated by the smallness of the gadget. However, it was very noticeable that many respondents made their most valuable and pertinent contributions



after the tape recorder had been put away. The majority of the representatives were happy that all the interview be recorded.

#### 4.i b. Funeral attendances

Attendances at funerals was considered to be useful primary evidence. Past circumstances could be used as reference points, as could attendance at any funerals during the course of the project. Recent employment as a primary music co-ordinator at a Roman Catholic school in the city had been the cause of necessary attendance at many of the requiems held at the church adjacent to the school. Mourners and priest frequently requested that the children sing at the service, and ability and experience as a singer led to requests for solo contributions. It was not unknown for there to be two such attendances per week.

Membership of church and the Roman Catholic Cathedral choirs also meant that funerals were attended in a serving capacity. To these experiences were added those funerals which were attended as a mourner or friend. It was also statistically likely that attendance at funerals would be necessary during the project. All occasions could be minuted afterwards, and any potential respondents contacted after a seemly time-span.

It was considered possible that mourners' contributions be gathered on the day if relationships were secure and that there was no possibility of offence. Any attempt at such gathering had to depend on circumstance. Thus, attendance at a family funeral for an elderly gentleman, during the first year of the study, prompted many unsolicited contributions from those who knew of the project and attracted the attention of those who overheard. It was most interesting to be made aware of the need for an opportunity to

speak about aspects of that funeral, and why things were as they were. Even chief mourners spoke freely and could be led to offer contributions on any of the topics of interest. It was considered most inappropriate for there to be any photographic or recorded evidence gathered on such occasions. A visit could be made to the burial ground or crematorium afterwards, even on the day itself, and photographic evidence of tributes and place acquired.

#### Funerals attended / observed: places

- |                                      |                                |                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| • City Road Crematoria               | Sheffield Bereavement Services |                |
| • Hutcliffe Wood Crematorium         | Sheffield Bereavement Services |                |
| • Grenoside Crematorium              | B&C Funeral Services           |                |
| • Cathedral: St Peter and St Paul    | Church of England              |                |
| • Cathedral: St Marie                | Roman Catholic                 |                |
| • All Saint's Church, Ecclesall      | Church of England              | Evangelical    |
| • St Gabriel's, Greystones           | Church of England              | Evangelical    |
| • St John's, Abbeydale,              | Church of England              | Traditional    |
| • St Matthew's, Sheffield            | Church of England              | Anglo-Catholic |
| • St Mark's, Grenoside               | Church of England              | Evangelical    |
| • St John's, Park                    | Church of England              | nominal        |
| • St Theresa's, Manor                | Roman Catholic                 |                |
| • St. William of York                | Roman Catholic                 |                |
| • Millhouses                         | Methodist                      |                |
| • Bents Green                        | Methodist                      |                |
| • Cemetery Road                      | Baptist                        |                |
| • Seventh Day Adventist, Nether Edge |                                |                |

In addition, the many places and situations attended both in this Britain and abroad, including North Wales, Liverpool, Cardiff, Hereford, London, Essex, United States of America, France, Greece, Italy, and Croatia.



#### 4.i.c. Exhumation attendance

The circumstances surrounding the timing of the study and its coincidence with the need for mass exhumations within the area of the study have been set out earlier. It seemed possible that primary evidence about past interments in the old parish burial ground might be gathered. Consequently an interview was arranged with the Provost of Sheffield who gave his support to the project, and offered the help of his office should this be necessary. Acting upon his suggestion and information, interviews were set up with Rogers and Howe, legal representatives to the Cathedral, and with Turner and Townsend, the firm contracted to build Supertram. Given the Provost's personal recommendation, Gareth Owen, of Rogers and Howe, was most co-operative; it was considered necessary that formal permission was given to conduct research into the exhumation findings. This being granted, Neil French, representing W. K. Woolgar, Project Manager, of TTPM, offered all co-operation. The exhumations were contracted to Kenyon Emergency Services, a firm which was then part of the PHK group, which was itself to be incorporated into SCI, an American-based conglomerate, as noted in Chapter Seven of this study. Paul Needes, the PHK operations manager, and Dr Val Tate were to discuss the provision of information. A research request was set out, aspects to include:

1. Numbers of remains exhumed
2. Evidence/assumptions: Age/sex of individual remains
3. The following information about burials was sought:
  - Evidence of vaults
  - Coffin remains: wood; lead-lined
  - Numbers of coffins per grave space, if evident
  - Shroud or garment evidence
  - Coffin ornamentation
  - Artefacts: jewellery; articles
  - Religious symbols
4. Position of artefacts in relation to remains

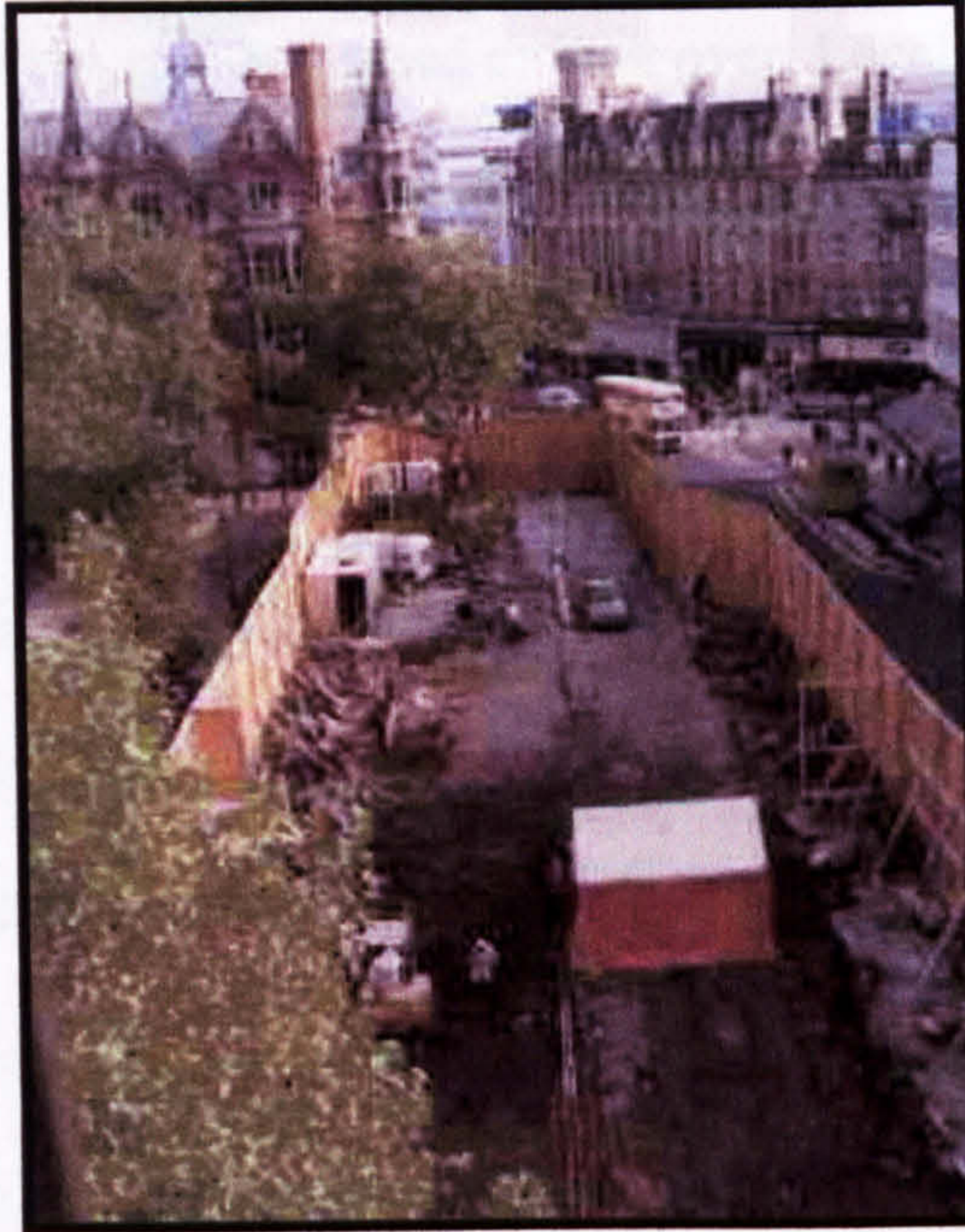
In due course exhumations commenced, some time after their original timed start of August 23, 1993. Kenyon Emergency Services felt unable to be of assistance and the request for a personal visit to the exhumation site was refused: the research did not warrant a pass being issued, and no one could countermand that decision. On October 9, 1993, the Provost enquired after the research. On being told of the situation an invitation was issued to accompany him, as his personal guest, onto the site. This visit was accomplished within ten days, and the site manager, Paul Needes, was helpful and informative. The visit was as lengthy as required and most useful. There had been adverse reports about the method of exhumation in the local paper and it was considered unwise to take either camera or recorder onto site. It was speedily apparent that there would be little information gathered that could add to the research. There was little evidence of coffins, apart from some depositum plates, and no vaults excavated. Nevertheless, negative information has its own worth and this was documented accordingly. Subsequently TTPM forwarded a copy of the filed report from PHK, and promised to send details of a further exhumation, again within the parish, that had proved necessary. In all 343 remains were exhumed at the original site. More have since been found and the exhumation of these carried out. All exhumation screens set up for the Supertram operation came down by Monday, June 7, 1994. In January 2000, foundation work in the Cathedral Hall car park, in preparation for major building extensions to the Cathedral Hall, led to further bodies being excavated. There was no public response.



### **1.i Exhumation screens:**

#### ***Sheffield Cathedral***

The site should be shielded from public view. In the city centre it became necessary for the tent-like structure to be erected to prevent the scenes of the categorising of remains to be exposed to telescopic camera lenses and general public view.



The Local Authority's consultative representative, John Batley, MIEH, MIOSH, General Manager, Bereavement Services, was also consulted and interviewed at his offices at the City Road cemetery. He had been involved in recent exhumations in Sheffield and was the custodian of pertinent photographs, some of which were offered for inspection. During the course of the first year's study knowledge was made available of fairly recent exhumations in both the north and south of the parish which produced recognisable artefacts. These involved St Philip's, now demolished, St Mary's, and the Bright family mausoleum at Hollow Meadows.

#### **4.i d. Churchyards and Burial Grounds**

The database of the burial and scattering grounds found in Sheffield formed part of the central core of the study. Sheffield has both disused and operational burial grounds; some are owned by the city, and are the old 'corporation cemeteries', another, a disused private cemetery and yet others that are owned and managed by religious groups. It was necessary



to be as aware as was possible of all grounds, in use, disused or built over. Local archival material and maps, particularly those listed under the 'Primary Documentary Sources' of this study, proved a useful and fairly reliable source of information, and the researches of others helpful in indicating potential sites.<sup>15</sup> Church and religious archives pointed the way to grounds long since unrecognisable as burial grounds, which were then identified by map reference. As the recent exhumations have shown, any records kept are potentially incomplete and must be seen as unreliable. Cathedral records are vague: it was not considered necessary that they be otherwise. For many centuries, churchyard burial spaces were re-useable, bones being removed to charnel houses, which were usually the crypts of churches and cathedrals.<sup>16</sup>

'Not only are exhumations common throughout the world.... they may be increasing, due to the need to re-use existing burial grounds, particularly in urban areas.'<sup>17</sup>

Few records were kept in the past and those pertained to internal 'within-the-walls' interments. The introduction of grave markers and memorial stones created records within themselves, and it is only in more recent times, and in particular with the introduction of corporation grounds, that any records were kept in a more meticulous way. This means that records are available for most of the time-span encompassed by this study. Yet knowledge exists of 'disappeared' burial grounds, such as an original Jewish burial ground, set unusually within the city walls. Brown writes, in the 'Sheffield Jewish Journal', in 1975:

'We can all lament the passing of Bowden Street Cemetery whose quaint existence in the town centre reminded us that our community had a history dating back well before the archives which are preserved in a safe deposit box at the Midland Bank.'<sup>18</sup>





*1.ii 'A little known cemetery'*

'The Jews Old Burial Ground on Bowden S<sup>t</sup>, off Fitzwilliam S<sup>t</sup>. The ground was bought about 1800. Surrounded by fields then. It is enclosed by high walls.' Tatton, 1929-1932<sup>19</sup>

Ballin, a local historian with access to a variety of records, writing in his work on the history of the Jewish people in Sheffield, contradicts Tatton's handwritten manuscript, stating that:

'The Bowden Street cemetery was a parcel of land comprising some 220 square yards. The lease was signed on 3 August 1831....'<sup>20</sup>

Brown continues, in his article on the Jewish burial in Sheffield:

'We have speculated ... that pre 1830 there was a Jews Burial Ground at Watery Lane a patch now covered by the complex of buildings round the Infirmary [sic].'<sup>21</sup>

The old Infirmary is presently a car park.

A local society, 'Friends of the General Cemetery', is restoring one of the city's oldest grounds and has proved invaluable in sharing accumulated knowledge. They issue three newsletters per year as well as an interactive and attractive website: [www.fogc.org](http://www.fogc.org).<sup>22</sup> The current annual subscription is £5.00. Sheffield Libraries have produced and issued a 'Local History' newsletter, and the many 'local history' societies in and around the city are an excellent source of information concerning old grounds. All relevant burial grounds, either in use or disused, were visited during the period of study.



**Burial grounds visited:**

- **General Cemetery      1836**
- **Darnall                    1859**
- **Burngreave                1860**
- **Norton                      1868**
- **Burncross                 1877**
- **Woodhouse                1879**
- **City Road                 1880**
- **Intake                      1880**
- **Tinsley                     1882**
- **Handsworth               1901**
- **Crookes                    1910**
- **Abbey Lane                1916**
- **Ecclesfield                1920**
- **Shiregreen                1927**
- **Wisewood                 1934**
- **Stocksbridge             1950**
- **Beighton                  1967**

Additionally, the old burial grounds of Woodhouse, Handsworth, Attercliffe, Wardsend and Loxely, as well as both the old and the new Jewish Cemeteries at Ecclesfield, and the disused Jewish Cemetery at Walkley, were explored. Additionally, Birtin cemetery, at Oughtibridge, which is the cemetery for Bradfield Parish, was explored, particularly as it was referred to by so many funeral professionals. Again, research concerning the churchyards of the old Parish of Sheffield was essential. Following initial planning, the following churchyards and religious burial grounds were investigated:

- **St Peter and St Paul, Sheffield Cathedral**
- **St Mary's, Beighton**
- **St Nicholas, Bradfield**
- **Christ Church, Dore**
- **All Saint's, Ecclesall**
- **St Mary's, Ecclesfield**
- **St Mary's, Handsworth**
- **St Joseph's, Handsworth, Roman Catholic**
- **St Mary's, High Green**
- **St James', Norton**



- St Michael's, Rivelin, Roman Catholic
- Upper Chapel, Sheffield, Unitarian
- Underbank, Stannington, Unitarian
- Quaker burial ground, Stannington
- St Mary's, Walkley

For comparative reasons, the Victorian cemeteries of York and Bradford Undercliffe, both still in use and well-maintained, were visited, as was the heavily-publicised Carlisle Cemetery. Particular evidence was sought in the burial grounds concerning the religious influence in funeral patterns; the evidence was likely to be the place of burial, memorial carvings or engravings or in the layout of the graves. Additionally, the cemetery and crematoria buildings were the subject of research regarding religious symbols. Research questions included:

- Did burial start at the favourable south and east sides, leaving the 'devil's' north until the last?
- Were there Christian symbols?
- Were the Muslim graves correctly aligned for that faith?
- Were there symbols particularly associated with Catholicism evident in their portion of the cemetery or in their own cemetery at Rivelin?
- Were there unusual or unfamiliar religious monuments or symbols?

The task was wide-ranging; evidence would largely be photographic, and documented as to place and interpretation: such evidence is included in SAFEC and listed in Appendix C.

Of particular importance was to be the verbal evidence given by cemetery staff concerning the accommodations made for people of differing faiths; given their helpful co-operation the identification of the various sites was simplified. It was anticipated that the following examples of religious language and symbols were likely to be present:



Christianity:

- Book
- Butterfly
- Church window: carved/engraved
- Cross: memorial in form; carved; engraved
- Crown
- Dove
- Gates
- Hand, finger pointing upwards
- Ivy
- Lamb
- Lamp
- Lilies
- Palms
- Passion flower
- Sculpture: angel; cherub; Our Lady; Christ
- Wording: 'IHS'  
'RIP'  
'Rest in Peace'  
'Grant to eternal rest....'  
'Sacred to the memory of ...'  
'Re-united'



*1.iii Symbol of Christianity*

Specific Roman Catholic:

- Sculptures
- Specific wording: 'Eternal rest grant to ...'  
'Of your Christian charity ...'  
'Pray for the repose of the soul ...'

Muslim:

- Alignment
- Script: Arabic / Punjabi
- Mound

Jewish

- Star of David
- Menorah: seven-branched candlestick, symbol of a spark from the flame of God: the soul of man
- Ewer: water jug for washing priest's hands: a Levi's tomb
- Hands in blessing: Priestly tomb
- Shofar: Ram's horn, to be blown by the Messiah



*1.iv Hands raised in blessing*



#### **4.i e. Crematoria**

Here the practical research was expected to be simpler. Crematoria are recent buildings with a well-recorded history. Sheffield has three, including a private crematorium established in 1999. Primary evidence was sought from crematoria staff concerning the arrangements that are made or can be made that accommodate the many faiths now found within the city. All the Bereavement Officers working in Sheffield were helpful to the project, several of whom had also been willing respondents in the 1992 research. In addition to the Officers based at City Road Cemetery and Crematoria, staff and technicians working at both City Road and Hutcliffe Wood Crematoria were of the greatest assistance, particularly during the several cremation observances and tours of their premises. Again, the Cremation Manager and technicians at Grenoside Crematorium were helpful and co-operative.

#### **4.i f. Courses and conferences**

Courses and conferences were attended to extend the existing knowledge-base:

- a. **“Funerals - and how to make them more personal”**: conference  
19 and 20 March 1994  
Barhaugh Hall, Kirkhaugh, Alston Cumbria  
Organisation: Welfare State International - Engineers of the Imagination  
*Sessions:*
  - i. Guided walk:  
Tour of Carlisle Cemetery, Woodland Burial Ground and Crematorium  
Leader: Ken West, Bereavement Services Manager, Carlisle City Council
  - ii. Introduction: Canon Bill Hall, Chaplain to the Arts and Recreation
  - iii. Why Ritual? Revd. Geoffrey Steel, Lecturer in Christian Worship
  - iv. Why Art? John Fox, Artistic Director, WSI  
Lorna Graves, artist  
Caroline Menis, Sheffield-based artist
  - v. Discussions
  - vi. It's Your Funeral
  - vii. Changing Attitudes



This course was 'advertised' in the holiday section of the 'Sunday Telegraph' :

**'Death in the afternoons'**

**'Guests ....will visit cemeteries, crematoriums [sic], graveyards, war graves, barrows, cairns, and other "dead" centres in the vicinity....Discussions will include Victorian funerals, memorials and symbolism, and woodland and sea burials.**

**"We're taking the weekend to look at different ways of dying," enthuses the spokeswoman. "Funerals are very neglected, and we've got wonderful things like hand-painted biodegradable Swiss coffins to look at."'<sup>23</sup>**

There were no barrows or cairns but there was a body of 40 people. As the May 1994

**'Funeral Service Journal' put it:**

**'The wide spectrum of attendees included those caring for Aids victims, gay and lesbian counsellors, Art Development workers, a mature student taking a PhD in funerals, two clergymen, an ex-miner working for Holywell Centre for Psychodrama... and people who had suffered from bereavements made worse by insensitive treatment at the hands of professionals in the funeral trade...'<sup>24</sup>**

Present also were the manager of a private crematorium and the representative of a coffin manufacturer. Not only were the organised sessions rewarding in terms of research but informal gatherings and mealtimes proved of equal value. Acquaintances were made which have been cemented by further unsolicited contact and much information given by those who had studied 'the funeral' in great depth, often for professional reasons. Literature purchased led to a greatly extended and useful Bibliography; a chance telephone call to track down an American publication led to an awareness of a forthcoming conference, organised by the National Funerals College.

**b. The Future of Funerals Options for Change: conference**

**June 11, 1994**

**Tavistock Place, London WC1**

**Organisation: The National Funerals College; Pilot Educational Project**

**Speakers and subjects included:**

- **Lord Young of Dartington, Director, Institute of Community Studies:  
Introduction and address**



- Bernard McHale, Superintendent and Registrar, Solihull Cemetery and Crematorium: The role of Local Authorities in funeral arrangements
- Trevor Hunnaball: of Hunnaball Funeral Services and President of the NAFD: The role of funeral directors in funeral arrangements
- Carole Lambert: Administrator, NABS: Bereaved families and funeral arrangements: options for change
- The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell: Bishop of Basingstoke and author: The role of the clergy in funeral arrangements: options for change
- Dr Tony Walter: University of Reading and author: Why death is in the news again

**c. The Social Context of Death and Dying 2nd International Conference**

September 15-17, 1995

University of Sussex

Organisers: Julie Dunk, Glennys Howarth, Peter Jupp, Lyndsay Prior, Stephen White

Speakers and subjects included:

- Stephen Collins, University of Bradford: English Epitaphs
- Douglas Davies, University of Nottingham: Death, Gender and Religion
- Philip Gore, Goldsmith's College: The Funeral Industry: embalmers and embalming
- Elizabeth Hallam, University of Sussex: Gender Relations and the deathbed
- Vanessa Harding, Birkbeck College: Burial on the margin: distance and discrimination
- Margaret Mitchell, Glasgow Caledonian University: Sudden death incidents
- Bernard Smale: The social construction of funeral ritual in contemporary England
- Jenny Hockey, University of Hull: Approaches to Death Ritual
- Clare Gittings: One Man's Grief in 17th century England
- Tony Walter: University of Reading: a New Model of Grief
- Victoria Thompson, University of York: Death, Loss and the Past in the Icelandic Family Sagas
- Ralph Houlbrooke, University of Reading: Public and Private Stuart funerals
- Pamela Saunders, University of Sheffield: Funeral Practices in Sheffield

Present at this conference were many academics involved in the field of the culture and traditions surrounding death, including Gillian Bennet, CECTAL, University of Sheffield: cultural traditions surrounding death; Shirley Firth, of Southampton University, cross



cultural and religious approaches to death, and Anne Eyre, Westminster College: death ritual in Malaysia.

#### **4.ii Archival and Literary Research**

Two main types of archives were used: the Local Archives which are city-based, and all those of a religious nature. Additionally, the archival resources of museums and their collections of artefacts, particularly those of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, with its magnificent examples of funerary art, were invaluable. In Sheffield, the Anglican Cathedral has deposited all its archival material in the Local Archives, but this is still undocumented, and therefore entails more careful and analytical research. Early material is lodged at York, dating from the time when the parish church was in that diocese. Each church and/or religious body has its own registers and records. Many are limited, as the functioning body is only recently established. Others, such as those of the free churches, go back further. All relevant archives have particular importance in establishing the existence and history of burial grounds and burials. Sheffield Record Office publishes

Family History Guides:

1. Census Returns
2. Monumental Inscriptions
3. Bishops Transactions
4. Parish Registers
5. Copies of Parish Registers held by other Record Offices
6. Nonconformist Registers
7. Parish Register from Sheffield Cathedral

Their Guide No. 8 lists registers of burials in churchyards, chapelyards and cemeteries that are held by Sheffield Archives. Access to these registers is by Xerox, microfilm and microfiche. For church registers after about 1900, original registers can be studied. Burial



entries in Bishops' Transcripts are also available. Where the burial ground is still in use, recent registers are still held by the managing body. For instance, All Saints, Ecclesall is still in use: the local archives contain registers up to 1950.

The Local Studies Section of Sheffield Libraries and Information Services is a long-established centre with an excellent record in availability of material and helpfulness of staff. Its premises are small but well-filled: material not on show can be obtained from stacks at regular, publicised intervals during the day. It has access to a wide range of material and is aware of material that is stored at the Archives. There are cuttings files which pertain to many subjects; local histories and pamphlets; books; maps; photographs; associated documents and back copies of newspapers on fiche or film. Copies can be obtained, for research purposes, of most of the material. Whilst there is no computer database, physical searches are possible and likely to be productive. As in the previous major study this library was utilised for many aspects of the research.

Literary research utilised several valuable resources; notwithstanding the excellent resources of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition and the main University library, as well as Sheffield's Central Library and interlibrary loan system, a valuable study week was held at St John's College, Oxford, and membership of the Bodleian Library taken out. The College Library was also the source of interesting documents and manuscripts. Again, membership of the British Library, both before and after the move to Paddington, meant that rare manuscripts could be studied, including the magnificent Durandus work noted in the Bibliography. A rare work, Puckle, 1926, lost to the British



Library in the bombing of the Second World War, was finally found in the Bodleian Library. Additionally, the British Library Document Supply Collection at Boston Spa was visited for periods of lengthy research, and the University interlibrary loan system used to obtain theses and volumes. The Crookesmoor Library (Law), part of Sheffield University, and the Law Society Library, Sheffield, were primary facilities in the collation of the relevant laws of burial and cremation. Additional information was accessed by STAR and CD-ROM, as well as via the internet.

#### 4.ii.a Unpublished exhumation reports and photographs

These documents are seen as secondary fieldwork evidence. These are available for the 1993 exhumations at Church Street and West Street; others are known to be in existence.

#### 4.ii.b Journals

Subscriptions were taken out and copies obtained for the following journals during the research:

- 'Funeral Service Journal' (Independent)
- 'Pharos International' (cremation)
- 'Funeral Director' (NAFD)

These journals contained information that prompted further aspects of research by continually monitoring the funeral business, predicting trends and reporting pertinent business and financial matters.

#### 4.ii.c Newspapers and Periodicals

Sheffield has two local newspapers, the 'Star' and the 'Sheffield Telegraph'. These were collected daily and/or weekly as applicable. In addition the 'Daily Telegraph' and the



'Sunday Telegraph' were obtained for the full duration of the research period. It became apparent that these two national papers would serve as an initial indicator of funeral trends and offered a wide range of funeral news. Nationally, the 'Daily Telegraph' has been purchased since 1959 and is on subscription. It has a style that is appropriate: news items are reported in depth and with an acceptable level of written English: few national items of potential, relevant interest are missed. Additionally, it includes 'features' which market recently published works and, more pertinently, it contains a daily feature, 'Peterborough', which is quite likely to close with a choice snippet of news, novelty or humour connected with death matters, or perhaps an item will include all three aspects. A separate section of SAFEC contains the 'Peterborough' items. All are very short, all are pithy and all reflect the constant focus of this study: what people do. After a three month trial of the other nationals during which time very little reference material was printed, subscriptions to these papers were stopped, but individual copies collected when there was the likelihood of relevant coverage of the subject. The 'Radio Times' was obtained to check on published broadcast items: such items were recorded. Additionally, acquaintances contributed pertinent published items. The Local Studies Library has a limited collection of relevant cuttings concerning local events: research led to the knowledge that this collection was of moderate use: no collection could be termed 'complete'.

Papers covered during the research period:

- 'Star'
- 'Sheffield Telegraph'
- 'Gazette' - free distribution
- 'Sheffield Journal' - free distribution [now ceased]
- 'Yorkshire Post'
- 'Times'



- ‘Sunday Times’
- ‘Daily Telegraph’
- ‘Sunday Telegraph’
- ‘Independent’
- ‘Guardian’

From the complete range of printed media publications on the open market the criteria employed were quite subjective: chosen publications could not indeed be described as ‘representative’ or ‘statistically significant’. They were fit for the purpose, and had proven worth. From 1998 until the present, copies have been collected if they had pertinent contents. Local ‘free’ publications have been used such as the ‘Gazette’, a weekly tabloid published as a résumé of the previous week’s ‘Star’ and designed to attract regular subscribers. Other free publications are the local advertising magazines with little journalistic content: these contain useful regular items. One such is ‘Grapevine’; published monthly, it contains the regular advertising feature: ‘Death Matters’. This is ostensibly an interview about someone’s thoughts on their own death; the questions each month are similar but include a little variation. For example:

- What do you think you’ll die of?
- How old will you be?
- How would you spend your last day?
- What will be your last words?
- Do you want to be buried or cremated?
- Is there anything you want buried with you?
- Whom would you like to attend your funeral?...

However, the opening paragraph explains who this month’s person is, what they are marketing and contact information. The July 1999 edition includes an advertising article selling memorials. ‘Westside’ is another free magazine, again with advertising features of relevance. Items from other publications have been collected on an intermittent basis:



these have often been voluntarily offered by those who know of the study. None are ever refused: if they are considered worthy of inclusion by another then the article fulfils the selection criteria. A comprehensive list of sources is included in the SAFEC Appendix C.

#### **4.ii.d Broadcast News and Programmes**

Research has been restricted to land-transmitted television channels and BBC 2, 3, and 4 radio stations: some programmes have been recorded. These are included in SAFEC, and listed in Appendix C. As with newspaper items, knowledge of a forthcoming programme is frequently volunteered by those who are aware of the study and unsolicited recordings made and offered. The collection includes radio and television tapes from the broadcasting authorities when particularly interesting programmes have been missed or a tape proven faulty.

### **5. Data selection - reference groups**

As noted earlier, the core of the study involves people and their responses to funerals. Therefore, the selection of possible representative respondents is seen as significant; the choice of whom to ask must be deliberate and planned, although opportunistic encounters have their own value. In addition to the databases of respondents and representatives, further resource lists were established of fellow researchers and academics, bereavement workers and hospice employees who were willing to act on a consultative level.



## **5.i Respondents: Religious representatives**

Previous local respondents were to be used wherever possible. However, some clergy had moved or were otherwise no longer available. Again, research now required a wider field; the maximum available: no religion or denomination was to be neglected or ignored. This then entailed a careful gathering of a database which included all major and minor religions and denominations found within the city. Religious guides and Directories, City guides and University resources were utilised. The most recent Sheffield Citizen's Guide is dated 1990; it has not been published recently due to financial restraints. However, it did contain a useful starting point from which to build a frame of reference. Of the 28 Roman Catholic churches listed, including the Cathedral, some are particularly pertinent in that they are placed within the area of the old parish of Sheffield. It was planned that research here would commence with the University Chaplaincy, include clergy at St Marie's Cathedral and also include clergy at Mother of God, Abbeydale Road, a church where the clergy made a Catholic contribution to the very first study. Additionally, clergy working at the Polish Centre, Ecclesall Road, were to be approached for a pertinent cultural/religious contribution, and known clergy at Our Lady of Beauchief and St Thomas of Canterbury, Meadowhead and also St Joseph's, Handsworth were to be consulted, as were the priests at St Theresa's, once the place of the researcher's employment.

The Church of England section in this Guide is as comprehensive. Known clergy at the Cathedral, including the previous Provost, had promised their co-operation, as had the vergers. Prebendary Canon Jane Sinclair is a member of the Church of England Liturgical Commission. The vicar of the Anglican church of St Gabriel's, which figured so strongly



in the previous major study, was again to be approached for specific information, and the priests at St Matthew's, Calver Street, a place of regular personal worship, approached for precise information about Anglo-Catholic rituals. It was also seen as essential that, within given denominations and religions, the varying practices encountered were to be studied.

Again, employment within the last few years at several schools with a predominantly Muslim population, and many teaching staff of Asian origin, has been the source of excellent and co-operative contacts. With reference to Muslim burials, which are stated in the BA D49 leaflet to 'need special local facilities',<sup>25</sup> a copy of the report from the Commission for Racial Equality, 'Muslim burials: a policy paper' was obtained and the Commission consulted with reference to any additional requirements or needs that were or were not being met. Faith communities, religious leaders, clergy and teachers in the database thus included:

Church of England	Cathedral:	Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul The Very Revd Michael Sadgrove, Provost The Very Revd John Gladwin, past Provost, now Bishop of Guildford Revd Canon Jane Sinclair Revd Canon Christopher Smith William Ross, Head Verger
	Traditional:	St. John the Evangelist, Abbeydale Revd Vic Filer Revd Wilfred Hudson Revd Brian Cranwell
	Low Church:	St John, Park Revd Clive Kemp
	Evangelical:	All Saints, Ecclesall Revd Canon Dr. Peter Williams Bob Chapman, churchyard information
		St Gabriel, Greystones Revd Pedr Beckley



		Anglo-Catholic: St. Matthew, Carver Street Revd Mark Wakely
Roman Catholic	Cathedral:	Cathedral Church of St Marie Fr Brian Stocks
		St Theresa, Prince of Wales Road Fr Brian Davies (now at Wombwell)
		Our Lady of Beauchief and St Thomas Fr Mark McManus
		Mother of God Mgr William Kilgannon
		Polish Centre Fr Andrew Pyster
		St Joseph, Handsworth Fr Thomas White
Methodist		Carver Street Revd Jonathan Kerry
		Woodhouse Revd Brian Bullick
		Bents Green Revd Edward Curliss
Baptist		Cemetery Road Revd Chris Ellis
United Reformed		Central United Reformed Revd Frank Beattie
Congregational		Hillsborough Tabernacle Congregational Church Revd Martin Hill
Pentecostal		Elim Pentecostal Central, Campo Lane John Mirfin
Greek Orthodox		St Matthew, Carver Street Nigel Gotteri



Unitarian		Upper Chapel, Norfolk Street Revd Geoffrey Usher
		Underbank Chapel Revd Ernest Baker
Quaker – The Religious Society of Friends		Friends Meeting House Faith Roger
Hebrew Congregations	Orthodox	Wilson Road (now at Psalter Lane) Judy Ballin: Burial Society Teddy Isaacs, historian
	Liberal (small cong.)	Ranmoor Church hall Shirley and David Lee
Muslim	Sunni - Deobandi	Islamic Centre, Wolseley Road Imran Nazir Surriya Chaudhry
Sikh ( including Khalsa)		Gurdwara – ‘Sikh Temple’ Ellesmere Road North P. Thandi
Buddhist	New Kadampa Tradition	Gyaltsabje Buddhist Centre Nether Edge Kelsang Shenyen
	Friends of the Western Buddhist Order	Sheffield Buddhist Centre Glossop Road Su Siddhi
Humanist		Gordon Sinclair, Hoyland

It was also considered essential that representatives/respondents of faith communities be drawn from the wider field outside Sheffield: a broader palette would thus emerge for comparative analysis.



## Religious Respondents: National

- 1 Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell, Bishop of Basingstoke: author: *The Liturgy of Christian Burial; Hell and the Victorians*; personal and private interviews graciously given and assistance offered.
2. Revd Dr Peter Jupp, Stamford, National Funerals College, United Reformed: interview, advice and responses graciously given.
3. Rev Geoffrey Steel, Lecturer in Christian Worship: Ushaw College, Durham; RC member International Liturgical Commission; involved in developing funeral rites: graciously granted several personal interviews and provided an excellent resource and reference bibliography.

### 5.ii Trade Representatives

This section of work was subdivided into selected categories.

- Funeral directors: including their trade associations
- Transport: Carriage ‘Mesters’
- Florists
- Artists
- Monumental masons

#### 5iii a Funeral Directors

Whilst a small but representative sample of funeral directors was researched during the previous studies it was considered essential that the range and scope be widened for this current project. It was anticipated that those firms which were part of a larger group might not be co-operative, a circumstance previously found: one central spokesperson would initially speak for all member firms. For this study, all the established firms approached agreed to participate and were asked the same set of questions concerning their clients and their particular trade, as tabulated in Appendix B. One firm, Peace Funerals, new to the trade, and to Sheffield, was willing to provide printed information only.

### **Funeral Directors: Respondents:**

- **B&C Funeral Services, Suffolk Road, Sheffield**
- **John Fairest Funeral Home, Penistone Road, Sheffield**
- **John Heath & Sons, Earsham Street, Sheffield**
- **H. Keeton, Highfield Lane, Handsworth; Beaver Hill, Woodhouse**
- **G. & M. Lunt Ltd, Camping Lane, Sheffield**
- **C. Pritchard & Son, Swallownest**
- **Sheffield & Ecclesall Funeral Services, Eyre Street, Sheffield**
- **Peace Funerals, Gleadless, telephoned interview and printed documents only**

### **5ii b Transport**

**One local ‘carriage mester’ was the subject of previous research: H Keeton of Woodhouse. A ‘carriage mester’ is the local term for a firm/personage that maintains a fleet that can be hired by others, particularly smaller firms. Further research found no others. Firms that were part of a group were questioned about the supply of additional transport, its style and livery, and was there a central fleet. Research questions, tabulated in Appendix B, included current availability of funerary transport, its make and properties. Material for this research was initially found in the various trade journals. A particular interest was taken in the growing fashion for horse-drawn hearses, their availability and cost. Research was undertaken to find out if this fashion had reached Sheffield.**

### **5ii c Florists**

**All funeral directors were asked if they provided flowers, additionally, several florists were approached for information about the market for funeral tributes, the style of tributes and the popularity of the various entries in the catalogues offered. Personal experiences of ordering floral tributes were added to the appropriate database.**



#### **5ii d Artists**

Several artists were interviewed for the purposes of this project.

1. Lorna Graves, Hunsonby, Cumbria
2. Caroline Menis, Sheffield
3. John Fox, Artistic Director, Welfare State International, Cumbria
4. Caroline Scott, Glasgow
5. Lorna Moone, Saltburn

The first three artists exhibited examples of their work, two on cardboard coffins and another using a variety of media at the 'Funerals' conference in Cumbria attended by the researcher. The opportunity presented itself for interviews which were graciously granted.

#### **5.ii.e Monumental masons**

All previous respondents were consulted again to search for requirements and references to religion in their commissions, and their premises visited for primary evidence.

Previous respondents:

- G Paramore and Son                      Abbey Lane, Sheffield
- Fidler Bros                                      Intake, Sheffield
- James Lindley and Sons                      Worrall, Sheffield

In addition the following remaining firm was consulted:

- Hopkinson Memorials City Road, Sheffield; High Street, Staveley, Chesterfield

The Hopkinson showroom and works at Staveley were visited, and all the stages in the manufacture of memorials from the large slabs of the various stones observed.

#### **5.iii Legal Consultants**

The following were consulted in person: expertise in a specific area is noted.

- a. **Professor Geoffrey Woodroffe**  
**Funeral Ombudsman**  
 Director of the Centre for Consumer and Commercial Law Research, Brunel University:  
 Consultant to: European Commission  
                   Office of Fair Trading  
                   Consumers' Association  
                   National Consumer Council
  
- b. **Professor Michael Green**  
 Professor of Forensic Pathology, University of Sheffield  
 Consultant Pathologist to the Home Office
  
- c. **Gareth Owen**  
 Rogers and Howe, Sheffield  
 Legal representatives to the Cathedral Church of SS Peter and Paul, Sheffield
  
- d. **Vivienne Wild**  
 Principal Lecturer in Law  
 Huddersfield University  
 Tax, Wills and Probate
  
- e. **David A Smale**  
 F Inst. BCA (Dip)  
 Editor "Resurgam", the Federation of British Cremation Authorities  
 Editor: 'Davies' Law of Burial, Cremation and Exhumation'
  
- f. **Stephen White**  
 Senior Lecturer  
 Cardiff Law School  
 University of Wales  
 College of Cardiff  
 Sphere: Laws of cremation

#### 5.iv **Mourners and Attenders**

Two separate databases of respondents were set up:

- 1. Mourners who were responsible for funeral arrangements and could be questioned concerning any religious connections, forms of service, celebrations or rituals.  
  
 These numbered 67 in total.



2. The above database, now extended to include random sampling of visitors to graves, memorial gardens and scattering sites, as well as to the graves for the interment of ashes. These respondents were questioned on the choice of burial ground, style of memorial or any form of ash disposal. This database had a final total of 124 respondents.

### 5.v Musicians

Pertinent representatives were consulted in several categories:

Organists	Churches
• John Shaw	St Mark's, Grenoside
• Alan Eost	St John's, Abbeydale
• Andrew Wilson	St Matthew's, Sheffield
• Alan Barker	..
• Andrew Linn	..
• John Ibbotson	St Gabriel's, Greystones
• Ron Law	Holy Trinity, Millhouses
• Peter Hackett	St James', Norton [Sunday]
• Alan Smith	Cemetery Road Baptist
• Bob Johnson	St John's, Abbeydale and freelance
• Geoff Edwards	St John's, Ranmoore
• Anthony McCarthy	All Saints, Ecclesall
• Graham Wilkinson	Hallam Methodist

Organists	Cathedrals
• Tim Broughton	Sheffield Cathedral
• Simon Lole	..
• Mark Pibus	Sheffield Cathedral
• Neil Taylor	..
• Hugh Finnegan	St Marie's RC Cathedral
• Peter Hackett	Synagogue [Saturday]

Choristers	Various and many
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## 5.vi Authors

There were several opportunities to consult directly with pertinent, published authors.

Their co-operation and interest was valued.

<u>Author:</u>	<u>Example of publication; extended list in the Bibliography</u>
Nicholas Albery	<i>The Natural Death Handbook</i> , London, Virgin, 1993
Gillian Bennett	<i>Traditions of Belief</i> , Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987
Douglas Davies	<i>Cremation Today and Tomorrow</i> , Nottingham, Grove Books, 1990
Shirley Firth	'Approaches to Death in Hindu and Sikh Communities in Britain'; 'Cross-cultural Perspectives on Bereavement' in Dickenson, D., and Johnson, M., (eds) <i>Death, Dying and Bereavement</i> , London, SAGE/ Open University, 1993
Clare Gittings	<i>Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England</i> , London, Croon Helm, 1984
Michael Green,	<i>Dealing With Death</i> , London, Chapman and Hall, 1992
David Hey	<i>A History of Sheffield</i> , Lancaster, Carnegie, 1998
Jenny Hockey	<i>Making the Most of a Funeral</i> , Richmond upon Thames, Cruse – Bereavement Care, 1992
Ralph Houlbrooke	<i>Death, Ritual and Bereavement</i> , London, Routledge, 1989
Glennys Howarth	<i>Last Rites: The Work of the Modern Funeral Director</i> , Baywood Publishing, Amytyville, New York, 1996
Mary Illingworth	<i>How to Direct Your Own Funeral</i> , Bristol, Bookstall Publications, 1993
Peter Jupp	<i>Interpreting Death, Christian Theology and Pastoral Practice</i> , London, Cassell, 1997
Julian Litten	<i>The English Way of Death</i> , London, Robert Hale, 1991
Geoffrey Rowell	<i>The Liturgy of Christian Burial</i> , London, Alcuin Clubs/SPCK, 1977
Julie Dunk and Julie Rugg	<i>The Management of Old Cemetery Land</i> , Crayford, Shaw and Sons, 1994
Jane Spottiswoode	<i>Undertaken With Love</i> , London, Robert Hale, 1992
David Smale	<i>Davies' Law of Burial, Cremation and Exhumation</i> , 6th ed., Crayford, Shaw and Sons, 1993
Tony Walter	<i>Funerals and How to Improve Them</i> , London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1990

## 6. Final Evaluations

During the course of the project it became clear that the subject of funerals is now subject to open comment and debate. The several television programmes and series have done



much to bring a greater awareness and openness to the ritual. Far from being a taboo subject, the English funeral is marked by an increase in interest and fascination. The initial study, Saunders, 1975, was seen by many as having a strange and somewhat odd focus, with an interest in the methodology of such a project. The second study, Saunders, 1992, again caused interest which might be termed a 'morbid fascination'. However, by the completion of this current, 2001, project, the general awareness of the subject matter has promoted a wealth of unsolicited contributions, so greatly aiding the selection of relevant material. Yet, if funerals are now an acceptable and even interesting topic for light conversation, the subjects of religion and death still promote reticence in potential respondents. The methodology of research in these areas has continued to demand circumspection and tact.

## **7. Chapter Arrangement**

The information thus gathered is arranged into eleven chapters in a logical and functional order. The chapters can be arranged into three distinct sections, thus:

<b>Section One:</b>	<b>Religion and Death Rituals</b>
Chapter Two:	the literature to support the study
Chapter Three:	death rituals
Chapter Four:	how religion affects these death rituals
<b>Section Two:</b>	<b>The Sheffield Funeral</b>
Chapter Five:	setting the historical scene where the funerals under investigation take place
Chapter Six:	how the law affects these funerals in Sheffield
Chapter Seven:	the funeral directors who undertake the funerals
Chapter Eight:	how religion can influence the Sheffield funeral
Chapter Nine:	the customs and traditions of the mourners of Sheffield who need the funerals
Chapter Ten:	the places of committal chosen by the mourners of Sheffield

<b>Section Three:</b>	<b>Continuity and Change in the Final Rite of Passage</b>
<b>Chapter Eleven:</b>	trends in funeral customs
<b>Chapter Twelve:</b>	continuity and change over time in the Sheffield funeral: a way forward in religion and rite

## **Chapter Two: The Literature of Death**

This brief, but comprehensive chapter, in opening the project, incorporates three subdivided sections, following the schema of the study. An analysis of the studied literature moves through a section about ritual passage and deathways to the publications used concerning the history of the Parish of Sheffield. Next, essential legal material used in the research is laid out, followed by the available practical guides and environmental and 'Natural Death' issues. This second section concludes with an overview of relevant trade journals. Publications concerning bereavement are then considered as is significant research. A bibliography of representative yet varied relevant Literary works is included in Appendix D. This chapter sets the project firmly in an academic and investigative field, so establishing a solid baseline for comparison and evaluation.

## **Chapter Three: Ritual Passage and Deathways**

The third chapter identifies western funerary practices, and studies their origins. The four sections are subdivided in a sequential manner, progressing from the substantial opening section concerned with anthropology, sociology and eschatology towards relevant culture and custom. Next, the second section approaches the fields of early recorded English deathways and burials, and the introduction of cremation as the most popular method of body disposal. The third section investigates the churchyards and their history before turning to the emergence of the cemetery movement. The closing section focuses firstly on



the Victorian 'celebration' of death, with its apparent expense and show of opulence before concluding the chapter with subdivisions concerned with costume, monuments and grave designs.

#### **Chapter Four: Religion and Burial Rites from Early Western to Contemporary**

The fourth chapter investigates the influences of Judaism and Christianity on the Western final rite of passage, from Biblical times through to the present day. It is subdivided historically into five sections, and concludes with a short section concerning the changing Anglican rite.

#### **Chapter Five: The Parish of Sheffield - 1843 to the present**

The three subdivisions within this chapter cover relevant aspects of Sheffield's history and establishment as a city with a Parish Church Cathedral. Its topography, geography and demography are set out so to establish the city in terms of size and place. The Parish is then assessed in historical terms. Anglican incumbents and episcopates are studied and the chapter closes with an analysis of religious divisions and differences, past and present.

#### **Chapter Six: The Laws of Burial and Cremation**

Relevant laws of burial and cremation are set out in this chapter: the accuracy date is presently set at May 2001. Many of the funerary practices that are studied in this project are and were subject to prevailing statutes, instruments and bylaws. Again, it is common that a practice be stated as 'necessary', 'required' or 'essential' when this is not the case; rather the practice is convenient and therefore common. Given this situation it is deemed

essential that true and accurate statements regarding actual law be set against belief statements. The relevant laws so set out cover both England, and Sheffield in particular. It should be noted that the exact wording in statutory provisions is presented here in **bold type**.

### **Chapter Seven: The Sheffield Funeral Trade**

This section is subdivided into four sections starting with an historic inspection of the early burial guilds and the introduction of funeral furnishers. This opening section is also concerned with the amalgamations within the funeral industry, and the functions and politics of the relevant trade associations. A second section looks at religious preferences and the objects of choice before the chapter turns to other aspects of the funeral trade: mourning accessories, hearses and embalming. This chapter closes with an investigation of funeral supermarkets, pre-need planning and profit.

### **Chapter Eight: The Sheffield Funeral - Religion and Rite**

This substantial chapter is seen as the core of the study: it is set out in three full and comprehensive sections each covering a pertinent and contained aspect of religious influence in the rites and customs of the Sheffield funeral. The first section is concerned with the last rites and offices offered to the individual; the subject of organ donation and religion is a third sub-section. Next, the study turns to an investigation of the liminal period following death: the viewing of the body, wakes and vigils, before setting out in a comprehensive third and important section, the Sheffield funeral: place, service and committal.



### **Chapter Nine: The Sheffield Funeral - People**

This chapter is divided into two sections and sets out a major part of the study, tabulating the responses of the respondents to research questions concerning the customs and traditions of the funeral in relation to its religious influences. Firstly, the chapter is concerned with identifying the mourners before turning to an analysis of their customs and rituals in relation to any religious influences.

### **Chapter Ten: The Sheffield Committal - Places**

This chapter is a comprehensive investigation of the burial grounds and crematoria in Sheffield. It is subdivided into three sections: burial grounds, crematoria and memorials. Each section receives significant attention, setting out the findings of the research utilising the various and extensive databases.

### **Chapter Eleven: Natural Death and Personal Funerals**

Here the attention of the study is turned to the concept of 'Natural Death' and the care of the dying. Aspects of 'Living Wills' and 'Advance Funeral Directives', of particular pertinence to the sick and dying, are included in the first section. The second section looks at interesting and novel coffins and shrouds and DIY funerals. The chapter closes with a section concerned with bereavement, counselling and 'Alternative' funerals.

### **Chapter Twelve: Continuity and Change**

Finally, the project is drawn to a conclusion in Chapter Twelve, which revisits the aim of the 1992 study, which was to study change over time in the common funeral; to highlight

predictable trends in needs; to look at the continuum of funeral patterns and to identify changes and trends in funeral patterns as they are presently exhibited, <sup>26</sup> thus linking the three ongoing studies in their investigation of the final rite of passage. The study reaches the conclusion that, although efforts are made to make the religious funeral more approachable and to have greater meaning, the prime function of the religious content in the Sheffield funeral is the provision of strength and continuity appropriate to the needs of the mourner in a service that best reflects and acknowledges the life of the deceased.



## Notes

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17. Bradfield, J. B., *Green Burial*, London, Natural Death Centre, 1994, p.84

18. Brown, D., "Where on earth are they buried?", 'Sheffield Jewish Journal', no.115, September 1975, p.8
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20. Ballin, N. D., *The Early Days of Sheffield Jewry 1760-1900*, Sheffield, n.p., '5746', 1986, p.6
21. Brown, p.8
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23. 'Sunday Telegraph', January 22, 1994, p.13
24. 'Funeral Service Journal', May 1994, p.67
25. *What to do after a death, D49*, 1993, p.21
26. Saunders, 1992, p.12

### **Illustrations**

- 1.i **Exhumation screen: Sheffield Cathedral: Cathedral Church of St. Peter and St Paul**, 'Star', October 15, 1993, p.4
- 1.ii **'A little known cemetery'**: Bowden Street Jewish Cemetery, sketch and text, Henry Tatton, [Sheffield] Vol. II, n.pl., n.p., n.d., n.p., Local Studies Library, Sheffield
- 1.iii **Symbol of Christianity**: researcher's own photograph, York Cemetery
- 1.iv **Hands raised in blessing**: the tomb of a Cohen, a priest. The researcher's own photograph, gravestone or Matzevah, removed from Bowden Street Cemetery and re-erected in the Jewish Cemetery, Ecclesfield



## **Chapter Two**

### **The Literature of Death**

#### **1. Introduction**

Whilst the majority of research carried out for this study is of a primary nature, pertinent supportive secondary research has been continuous since 1970, when experiences and observations at two disparate family funerals, in 1960 and 1970, prompted the initial study of 1975.<sup>1</sup> The approach to the collection of secondary evidence has changed over time: there were few publications on funerals and ritual in 1975, whereas now deathways is the subject of an increasing number of publications devoted specifically to that subject. Aspects covered are as wide-ranging as possible: one can buy a volume dedicated to ‘having a good death’; another on planning one’s own ‘green’ DIY funeral; watch documentaries about styles of funeral; research the customs and traditions of death, including studying for an M.A. in the social sciences of death; associate with colleagues and interested parties at national and international conferences; find out about Britain’s historic burial grounds and churchyards; relate religion to deathways, and even indulge in gentle fictitious and factual humour to lighten a terminal illness. Pathology and forensic pathology are the subject of best-selling novels: factual aspects of pathology and the work of the coroner are also available, and are up to date. There are many publications on social work and death; grief-management receives increasing attention and secular and religion-based publications offer consolation and support. Death, as a concept, makes frequent appearances in published and broadcast news: because it is a universal circumstance a ready audience is available. The subject of ‘Death’, and its necessary associations, is omnipresent in media publications: the collection of funerary ephemera is now a matter of choosing which may have greater pertinence, where once any such material

was carefully gathered on the basis of scarcity. Given the ever-increasing availability of published works with a funerary focus, and an associated widening range of supportive literary resources, the literature included in this study has been subject to selective criteria that reflect the main aspects of research. Categories for inclusion comprised:

- rites of passage: comparative and particular
- religion and rituals of death
- the history of the Parish of Sheffield
- legal aspects
- the funeral trade: history, function and funding
- the Sheffield funeral
- alternative and green funerals
- related research
- help for the bereaved

The literary research thus selected for this study is here briefly presented sequentially: the ordering of the sections reflecting chapter order.

### **1.i Ritual passage and deathways**

Chapter Three, 'Ritual Passage and Deathways', is a presentation of secondary research on aspects of the final rite of passage, which serves as a base from which to analyse current burial rites. The works of prominent and relevant sociologists: van Gennep,<sup>2</sup> Hertz<sup>3</sup> and Durkheim,<sup>4</sup> established texts in the field of ritual, are studied, as are anthropological works on ritual by Humphreys and King,<sup>5</sup> Goody,<sup>6</sup> Metcalf and Huntingdon,<sup>7</sup> Bloch,<sup>8</sup> and Bloch and Parry,<sup>9</sup> to set the rites and practices of funerals in Sheffield into a wide context. Collected editions of papers have been referred to, as has the unpublished 1992 M.A. dissertation on the Sheffield funeral, 'A Last Rite of Passage', Saunders, Sheffield, 1992.<sup>10</sup> Research into the customs and folkways of death rituals has been an essential aspect of this study, for the accumulated base of evidence is the foundation of any interpretation of primary evidence. Secondary



sources range from Hazlitt,<sup>11</sup> Udal,<sup>12</sup> Puckle<sup>13</sup> and Bendann,<sup>14</sup> to Firor,<sup>15</sup> Puhvel<sup>16</sup> and Bennett.<sup>17</sup> Research into the history of burial has been enlightened by the work of Richardson,<sup>18</sup> whose reasonings underpinning the dread of a pauper's funeral are noteworthy. Here indeed one has a functional taboo. The study of cremation: its history and practice, includes references to Davies' research into cremation in Nottingham,<sup>19</sup> and conference papers and journals issued and published by the Cremation Society. Churchyards practices and rules are laid down in various publications: the requirements and their observance are noted, as are the differences between churchyard management and cemetery practices. Research into the foundation of cemeteries and burial grounds has been greatly facilitated by the unpublished research of Rugg, now of the University of York Cemetery Research Group.<sup>20</sup> Her unpublished thesis on the Cemetery Companies is both singular and pertinent. The 'great Victorian celebration of death' is documented: Curl's works are noteworthy: inclusion of some material considered essential.<sup>21</sup> The concluding but lasting consequences of death: the monument, memorial and epitaph have been subject to selective inclusion in this study.

## **1.ii Religion and burial rites**

There are four types of religious publications that are of particular interest to a study of religion and ritual:

- a. general information about both the history and the current status of any religion
- b. service orders: procedures that have been used / are now recommended /are intended
- c. aspects of a religion and its attitude to death rituals
- d. ephemera of an informative nature and collectables: these include leaflets, guides and postcards.

### 1.ii.a General information

Published information about a specific religion can be subjective or objective, as in any other sphere. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the two approaches and use each with discrimination. Of particular note is the second edition of Smart's inclusive and highly relevant work on the world's religions, particularly his highlighting of recent developments in developing systems of belief.<sup>22</sup> Again, Gilley and Sheils' volume on the history of religion in Britain encompasses a wide range, extending from Celtic and Roman practices, through Anglo-Saxon Christianity, Dissent and Nonconformity, Catholicism and Judaism, to 'religious pluralism'<sup>23</sup> in Britain: an analysis of the many religions and sects which make up Britain's religious life at the end of the twentieth century. Parsons' Open University basic textbook on religious pluralism, diversity and tradition in Britain from 1945 contains in-depth studies on Christianity, Anglo-Jewish communities, the 'major-minors' of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh, as well as Pentecostal and 'New Religious Movements', with separate bibliographies to point the way to further readings.<sup>24</sup> Of particular note, Wolffe, in his contribution 'The religions of the silent majority', covers folk religion, used here in a specific sense as 'part of a long-standing folk tradition', and the 'invisible religion of the English': the established Anglican Church of England.<sup>25</sup>

Works on the history of Christianity, the main religion to influence funerary practices in Sheffield, have been included in the secondary research. Barlow's constitutional history on the English Church from 1000 to 1066 is a well-researched and lengthy volume covering the history of the two provinces: London, later Canterbury, and York.<sup>26</sup> Further general information on English Christianity between 1688 and 1791 is documented by Rupp,<sup>27</sup> whilst the period of 1920 to 1990, covered by Hastings, includes salient references to the Diocese of Sheffield, the specific area of research.<sup>28</sup>



Of great pertinence in this research has been the study of the Canons Ecclesiastical of the Church of England, in its various editions. The Canons are the rules governing the life and worship of the Church, and date from 1603. The Introduction to the 1969 edition, by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, states:

‘The Canons printed here have been promulgated and have the force of law ... it is not a complete statement of the law of the Church of England.’<sup>29</sup>

The use of different editions of the Canons in research for this study is of particular importance, for they set down changes within the rules that govern: church music,<sup>30</sup> burials,<sup>31</sup> and services in private chapels,<sup>32</sup> thus enabling the study of change over time, and some of the reasonings behind current Anglican practices. Such changes are noted in Chapter Ten of this study, ‘The Sheffield Committal – Religion and Rite’. Statistics for church attendance and membership have been obtained from the Statistics Unit of the Church of England, Church House, London: the Archbishops’ Council.<sup>33</sup>

Judaism has received considerable depth of study: it is seen as the religion which underpins Western religious practices, and the foundation of Christianity. Foher, in his *History of Israelite Religion*, gives a solid base to any further study.<sup>34</sup>

Helpful background information on denominations and faiths has been collected; knowledge of world religions has been gained through Smart<sup>35</sup>, Hinduism: religion and family life, have been studied using texts by Sen<sup>36</sup> and Ross;<sup>37</sup> Sikhism through the works of Field<sup>38</sup> and McLeod,<sup>39</sup> and Haneef’s informative volume ‘*What everyone should know about Islam and Muslims*’ contains a comprehensive guide to the workings of that religion.<sup>40</sup> Isichei’s work on Victorian Quakers gives excellent

background information,<sup>41</sup> and Stock, in Cox, provides a concise but comprehensive paper on The Religious Society of Friends. He states:

‘This paper addresses the subject of Quaker funerals and burial procedures by combining doctrinal, historical, and archaeological evidence ...’<sup>42</sup>

### 1.ii.b Service Orders

*The Book of Common Prayer* gives the ‘Order for the Burial of the Dead’: it contains passages that are well known to most who acknowledge membership of the Church of England, and indeed anyone who attends English funerals, either in person, or through broadcasts and films:<sup>43</sup> The service consists of psalms, a lesson, statements of faith and prayers.

However, the 1662 prayer book makes no mention of a coffin around a body. Rather, reference is made to a ‘corpse’ before interment and a ‘body’ when laid in the ground. There is a portion of the order for the corpse to be made ready for the grave; this from the era of parish coffins and winding sheets. ‘Order for Burial’ is short, much of the funeral liturgy being removed from the prayer book at the time of the Reformation, as noted in Chapter Four, section 4.i, of this study. The prose is often likened to poetry, and is memorable and evocative. *The Alternative Service Book, 1980*:<sup>44</sup> ‘Funeral Services’,<sup>45</sup> omits ‘poetry’, using modern versions of familiar words and word patterns, but contains additional forms of service.

A history of the liturgy of Christian burials is set down in Rowell’s volume *the Liturgy of Christian Burial*.<sup>46</sup> This is a carefully documented treatment of the subject and, although subtitled: *An Introductory Survey*, it is a comprehensive work when used as a reference for this study, although Rowell writes:

‘A fuller study of Christian burial rites as they have developed historically would undoubtedly .... enable the text of particular prayers to be traced in detail.’<sup>47</sup>



The Methodist Service book: *The Burial or Cremation of the Dead*<sup>48</sup> bears a marked similarity to that of the *Alternative Service Book, 1980*: a similarity which is unremarkable given the current state of the potential union of Methodist and Anglican denominations.

Masses for Christian Death: Funeral Masses and Anniversary Masses, for use by Anglo-Catholics and high Anglicans, are contained in both *The Weekday Missal*, and *The Sunday Missal*.<sup>49</sup> The Roman Catholic funeral rites were reformed and published as the *Order of Christian Funerals* in November 1990,<sup>50</sup> mandatory from Easter, March 31, 1991. Histories of the Roman rite include Rutherford's *the Death of a Christian: the Rite of funerals*.<sup>51</sup>

Greek Orthodox services have relevance in Sheffield: there is a community that worships regularly at St. Matthew's Parish Church, the foremost Anglo-Catholic church in the Diocese.<sup>52</sup> Services used can be those laid down in the *Orthodox Prayer Book*,<sup>53</sup> or in the *Funeral Service for Lay People*,<sup>54</sup> which is translated from the Greek original. Another faith, The Society of Friends, known as the Quakers, adopt funeral procedures that must be considered the opposite to the funerary rituals of the Greek Orthodox. In celebratory Quaker funerals, procedures are guided by *Quaker Faith and Practice*.<sup>55</sup> These are guidelines set up at Meetings: the guide is not mandatory.

Jewish laws and traditions concerning the dead, funerals and mourning are indeed complex. A guide to these is included in Felder,<sup>56</sup> which contains Hebrew versions of the text, and also in Rabinowicz.<sup>57</sup> Rabbi Lehrman has written an accessible volume which the publishers, via the jacket cover, recommend for the use of adults and children alike.<sup>58</sup> In this volume, mourning customs are carefully explained, and the

reasonings and biblical references behind practices are given. The work of Rabbi Lamm includes approachable descriptions of Jewish death rituals, including a section entitled 'The Funeral Service and the Interment'. Study of this particular volume sheds light on other writings that might otherwise be considered obscure.<sup>59</sup>

A useful ground base for religious requirements and procedures can be found in *Dealing with Death, Practices and procedures* by Michael and Jennifer Green.<sup>60</sup>

### 1.ii.c Religions and Death Rituals: aspects and attitudes

The majority of primary research in this study has, as its foundation, an established database of prior knowledge, in many cases knowledge gained by previous primary research, such as Saunders, 1992, and the accumulated knowledge gained during continuous research since 1970. Funeral customs of medieval times are recorded in Gittings,<sup>61</sup> which contains excellent information and analyses of late medieval funerals and faith. Roman Catholic and Anglican practices are investigated and commented upon, as are dissenter burials.

Primary research within the multi-ethnic population of Sheffield, with its diverse religions, benefited from previous study of minority religions in general. Irish's<sup>62</sup> volume on ethnic diversity in dying, death and grief is a collection of writings on cross-cultural and specific aspects of deathways. It includes Jewish, Buddhist, Islamic, Quaker and Unitarian belief systems, whilst the Henley series of books on caring for Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs and their families is written in a constructive and practical way.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, other Western societies have been studied for comparative beliefs and practices. In particular, reference has been made to Lysaght's paper, 'Visible Death: Attitudes to the dying in Ireland'<sup>64</sup> which contains much



valuable and relevant material on Catholic funeral rites and attitudes to the dying.

Although Sheffield has a significant Catholic population of Polish extraction, many have Irish forebears, and maintain both Irish connections and traditions.

Practices and beliefs concerning cremation are added facets in this strata of supportive research, and religion is a considerable factor in cremation research. Jalland contains useful material on 'Funeral Reform' and the 'Cremation Debate'. Indeed, he sees Victorian burial excesses as continuing 'a cultural practice which can be traced back in various forms through the centuries'.<sup>65</sup> Davies' work is a most comprehensive study on Christian, particularly Anglican, liturgy and cremation. He also includes some of the history of the Church's attitude to cremation, and the legal history, as well as clerical and lay views on cremation and concludes with a suggested service order that lacks the confusion currently noted when using both the *Alternative Service Book*, 1980, 'The Funeral Service', and 'A Form for the Interment of Ashes'. He notes:

'In symbolic terms these two services present a potential confusion. In the funeral service the body is committed to be cremated in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection, while in the subsequent rite the ashes are also committed to the ground in sure and certain hope of the resurrection. In other words, both the fire and the earth are ritual moments of committal: the same things happen twice.'<sup>66</sup>

In this present study, ritual and symbolism are seen as interrelated. Research into religious signs and symbols used historically or currently has found several sources of information. Bradford's Undercliffe Cemetery Company add information about graphic symbolism to their resource pack. The delightful *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments*, a translation of a fourteenth century manuscript, and printed in 1843, the start-date of this study, has a chapter: *Of Cemeteries and other Places, Sacred and Religious*.<sup>67</sup> It has particular pertinence in reflecting the manner of thinking on the subject at that time, although here the symbolism is ritual.

Whilst much of the research for this study has concerned religions, or a specific religion, once unfamiliar secular funerals are now achieving a higher profile. There is a growing general awareness that there is no requirement for a religious service, although the concept of no service at all, simply an arranged delivery of a body at a cemetery or crematorium, is neither understood nor accepted by the general population. Literature on the subject of secular rites is sparse: the subject may be included within the body of a work as it is in that by Gilbert, subtitled *A history of the secularisation of modern society*.<sup>68</sup> Here he writes briefly on the secular way of death in a sociological manner. The small book published by the British Humanist Association: *Funerals Without God*,<sup>69</sup> sets out Humanist principles and relates them to funeral practices. The largest body of literature explored and used on secular deathways in this study is within the 'Natural Death' or Green Death' areas of publications. Gill and Fox have produced a novel work: *The Dead Good Funerals Book*,<sup>70</sup> and *The New Natural Death Handbook*, is a volume referred to by those who seek an enlightenment and advice;<sup>71</sup> it is particularly recommended by those seeking a satisfactory Pagan funeral.

#### 1.ii.d Leaflets and ephemera

A selection of those offered and available is contained in SAFEC. It includes church and crematoria guides; histories; guidance leaflets; codes of practice; funeral planning advertisements, and postcards and gift cards of churches and memorials.

#### 1.iii Relevant history of Sheffield

There are several recent, pertinent publications on the history of Sheffield. Of particular note and importance is the three-volume work, *The History of The City of*



*Sheffield*,<sup>72</sup> which covers a matching timespan to this study, although the published work's scope ceases at publication, in 1993. Hey's recent work, *A History of Sheffield*,<sup>73</sup> sets the city into an historical context, from the Iron Age to 1998. Hey's early volume, *The Village of Ecclesfield*<sup>74</sup> also has particular relevance, for Grenoside, once part of Ecclesfield parish, was one of the three areas of Sheffield selected for study in Saunders, 1992. Other works studied include Armitage's *Chantrey Land*,<sup>75</sup> Hawson's *Sheffield: The Growth of a City*<sup>76</sup> and several of Mary Walton's publications. Walton's works are varied, approachable and comprehensive, such as *A History of the Diocese of Sheffield*.<sup>77</sup> Of notable interest are the growing selection of 'nostalgic' publications that have a dedicated district and mainly consist of photographic essays with linked text. Churches and their history take up a large percentage of these publications. *The History of Sheffield Jewry 1760-1900* is informative; it is in typescript and very approachable:

'1868 The joyfulness of Simchas Torah apparently got the better of Mr. Harrison. He was expelled for six months for bringing a mouse into the synagogue, it being deemed an insult to the Chazan Bereshit and Chazan Torah.'<sup>78</sup>

We are left to ponder on the age of the said 'Mr. Harrison'. Here, the initial title date could be seen as misleading, as the first date noted in the text for Jewish residency in Sheffield is 1774. The Local History Societies have also been consulted and their publications used as secondary research. Old maps, particularly the 'Godfrey Edition' of 'Old Ordnance Survey Maps' have been useful in carrying out primary research of old burial grounds and churchyards.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, these maps show such detail that one can assess the housing density and land usage at a specific time, thus adding to any historical field of reference.

## 2.i Legal Material

For the purposes of this study, *Davies' Law of Burial Cremation and Exhumation, Sixth Edition*,<sup>80</sup> is seen as the definitive authority amongst the works that have been used, in conjunction with reference to *Halsbury's Statutes and Statutory Instruments*,<sup>81</sup> which has been explored in order to set *Davies'* given, relevant, sections of Statutes into their total context. Halsbury is a primary source, *Davies'* a secondary. *Davies'*, as it is known 'in the trade', is a work that gathers together and sets out any relevant laws that are considered to be the concern of professionals working in the disposal field. It was first published in 1956, and written by M. R. Russell Davies: the *Davies* in any edition's title.<sup>82</sup> The 1956 work had, as its base, the previously published *Law of Burials, including all the Burial acts and official regulations, with notes*, by James Brooke Little, which itself was first published in 1888.<sup>83</sup> A current *Davies'* is kept to hand in the technical area of crematoria and cemetery offices: it is treated with respect, even though it might appear a bit battered through repeated consultation.<sup>84</sup>

The other works used in this aspect of research have been the guides written by Polson and Marshall,<sup>85</sup> Green,<sup>86</sup> Harris,<sup>87</sup> and Bradfield<sup>88</sup> for their reading and interpretation of relevant laws and regulations: it is common to believe advice that is published, as though the written word has an independent legality. Advice must be based on research of the highest order, and this study notes that any available advice, whether an official Agency guide or a well-intentioned, published offering, could affect behaviour and action. The results of inaccurate and conflicting advice cannot easily be reversed; incorrect information might prevent a desired form of interment, such as a burial within one's own property: exhumation and re-burial are complicated procedures, and the act of interment is commonly accepted as permanent.



## 2.ii Practical Guides

Publications on the practical management of dying, death and disposal multiply.

Those used in this study are here subdivided into three sections:

- leaflets and booklets, listed in SAFEC, Appendix C
- death and disposal management
- 'green' burial, DIY, and personal funerals

### 2.ii.a Death and Disposal Management

Following the television documentary series, 'The Long Goodbye', a three-programme series about death and bereavement on Channel 2 in 1999, relevant information was published on the BBC Education section of the Internet, the Web, under the title 'The Long Goodbye', and is still accessible on:

[www2.bcc.co.uk/longgoodbye/whattodo.shtml](http://www2.bcc.co.uk/longgoodbye/whattodo.shtml). Whilst electronic information is

becoming more widely used, traditional methods of communication are still the norm for the majority of the population, and never more so than when dealing with death and bereavement. As will be shown, when death occurs people turn to the known, the familiar, the common. 'I'll look on the web' is a novel concept for most. *A Practical Guide to Coping with Death*, published by television's Channel Four following a programme, 'In with Mavis', shown in July 1992, took the form of a booklet of 47 pages.<sup>89</sup> A booklet of similar size and format was published in 1993 by the Benefits Agency: *What to do after a Death: a guide to what you must do and the help you can get*.<sup>90</sup> The Which Consumer Guide, *What to do when Someone Dies*<sup>91</sup> is similar to the two previous booklets in that it contains 'what to do' information, but here it is written in a journalistic/features style, complete with three coloured photographs on the front cover. Legal, healthcare and religious information on death management are dealt with by Jennifer and Michael Green in their volume, *Dealing with Death*, which

includes an Appendix containing information about helpful organizations.<sup>92</sup> Polson and Marshall's *The Disposal of the Dead*<sup>93</sup> considers its market to be the professional: doctor, coroner, police, funeral director and workers in the field. White adds a little humour in his practical guide for the dying: *To prepare you for your own demise*. The chapter: 'Laughing at Death' is a series of jokes and puns.<sup>94</sup>

### 2.ii.b Green Burials, DIY, and Personal Funerals

'Green' funerals, that is, the style of funeral that proponents judge to be environmentally correct, attract a small number of publications. One could surmise that the next style of burial will be 'organic'. The Natural Death Centre is a base for such works and several cited in this study come from that stable. *Green Burial*, by Bradfield,<sup>95</sup> is a DIY guide to the laws of organising a burial without the aid of the professionals, particularly if the grave is to be in the back garden or under a patio.

The small book by Mary Illingworth: *How to Direct your Own Funeral: A Practical Handbook*, prompted by the author's experience of trying to arrange a funeral, adds new aspects to the fund of knowledge, particularly the instructions for making burial boxes and 're-usable coffins'.<sup>96</sup> Jane Spottiswoode, a contributor to this study, has written her story of a DIY funeral that she arranged for her husband: *Undertaken with Love*.<sup>97</sup> This work adds gentle humour to a story that is wry with pathos and truth. *The Dead Good Funerals Book*<sup>98</sup> contains some basic information about funeral history and present requirements and procedures, before moving on to the major purpose of the book: choices and change, under the auspices of improvements and alternatives. One reads of lanterns, painted coffins and how to assemble a cardboard coffin. Tony Walter's *Funerals And How To Improve Them*<sup>99</sup> was an early starter in this field of the personal funeral. It is comprehensive, and accessible to all, containing both



sketches and photographic illustrations. Each book has its own style; all in need are served.

### *Three Front Covers: Three Approaches*

#### **2.i Humour** **'Undertaken With Love'**



#### **2.ii Novelty** **'The Dead Good Funerals Book'**



#### **2.iii Tradition** **'Funerals And How To Improve Them'**



#### **2.iii Trade Journals**

There are two relevant journals published, 'The Funeral Director Monthly', the official journal of the National Association of Funeral Directors, which is a trade organisation for independent businesses, and 'Funeral Service Journal', which is for the funeral industry generally. Funeral directors who subscribe to the second journal are likely to be members of FSC, the Funeral Standards Council, or SAIF, the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors. These journals not only inform their subscribers of news, developments and innovations, but form part of the collection of literature that supports this study.

#### **3.i Bereavement Publications**

As with religious/secular publications, here there are considered to be two aspects of investigation for this study:

- dying and death management



- bereavement

### 3.i.a Dying and Death Management

Often, dying and death itself are linked in a publication. Thus one has the Kübler-Ross offering, *On Death and Dying*:<sup>100</sup> a guide on the management of the terminally ill. Shneidman, in *Death: Current Perspectives*,<sup>101</sup> includes contributions from the great and the less-well-known: C. S. Lewis; Geoffrey Gorer, Philippe Ariès and Cicely Saunders are some more familiar to the English researcher. Dickenson and Johnson link all three aspects : *Death, Dying And Bereavement*.<sup>102</sup> Their contributors again include those familiar to the English researcher: Ariès, Firth, Walter; the work includes literary offerings: John Donne, Philip Larkin, Leo Tolstoy, Dylan Thomas, Simone de Beauvoir and Wordsworth are some of the familiar authors quoted. For those based in Sheffield, Heller's contribution, 'Personal and Medical Memories from Hillsborough' is poignant. Tony Walter's work, *The Revival of Death*, is written from a sociological point of view and also serves as a guide to the thought and behavioural processes in death, dying and bereavement.<sup>103</sup>

### 3.i.b Bereavement

A forerunner in bereavement offerings for the professional is the small volume by Hockey, *Making the Most of a Funeral* and published by Cruse – Bereavement Care.<sup>104</sup> It is the result of a survey in 1989/90, in Sheffield, about the experiences of recently bereaved people and their clergy; the research was instigated by Revd Brian Cranwell, of the Sheffield Branch of Cruse, who was a respondent in Saunders, 1992, and is still a most helpful source of up-to-date information on Bereavement Care, both within Sheffield and nationally. The available literature, both for the bereaved and for ministers, councillors, family and friends, is growing. Bel Mooney's volume



*Perspectives For Living, Conversations on Bereavement and Love* is based on two series of BBC radio productions. Published in 1992, it bears the modern stamp of ‘we can talk about death.’ Melancholy and shared grief are essential components in Mooney’s work.<sup>105</sup> The work, *Kaddish*,<sup>106</sup> is also seen as a bereavement-style publication.

### 3.ii Significant Research

There is an increasing amount of potentially relevant research results available; it was considered necessary therefore that selective criteria be established for the inclusion of significant research in this study, without adopting any value-judgements on the worth of any research. Thus, research cited should be:

- concerned with religion and death
- concerned with death
- concerned with disposal
- concerned with burial, churchyards and burial grounds
- concerned with cremation and crematoria

Research consulted includes both commissioned or funded work, such as Davies’ *Cremation Research Project*,<sup>107</sup> based in Nottingham, which involves ‘central issues of personal identity, social custom and religious practice’ and academic studies: unpublished dissertations and theses on relevant or linked issues. Rugg’s thesis: ‘The Rise of Cemetery Companies in Britain 1820-53’<sup>108</sup> is of particular importance to this study; Rugg and Dunk are the authors of the funded *The Management of Old Cemetery Land: A Report of the University of York Cemetery Research Group*.<sup>109</sup> This report includes definitions of six types of cemetery landscape: these definitions are applied in this study.

- A. Modern lawn
- B. Memorial lawn, first class
- C. Memorial lawn, second class
- D. Semi-open space

- E. Open space
- F. Wood/scrub

The report: *Reusing Old Graves: A Report on Popular British Attitudes* by Davies and Shaw<sup>110</sup> was funded: it contains the results of a survey conducted by Nottingham University for the University of York: Institute for Research in the Social Sciences. It is considered recent and therefore has value for this study when reflecting on current issues.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, there are now wide-ranging published works on funerals and rituals. Many are worthy of study, for it is in the understanding of the attitudes and approaches of others that one may best increase ones own awareness of the subject matter. Again, familiarity with current and past academic research is an essential element in this study of funeral rituals in Sheffield.



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## Illustrations

- 2.i **Humour:** Spottiswoode, J., *Undertaken with Love*, London, Robert Hale, 1991, front cover
- 2.ii **Novelty:** Gill, S., and Fox, J., *The Dead Good Funerals Book*, Ulverston, Engineers of the Imagination, 1993, front cover
- 2.iii **Tradition:** Walter, T., *Funerals and How to Improve Them*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1990, front cover

## Chapter Three

### Ritual Passage

#### 1. Introduction

‘In recent years, death has received new attention in the west. After three generations of silence, our mortality is again a topic of discussion. Seminars, courses, and television talk shows on death and dying are commonplace, where not so long ago they would have been considered in bad taste. Psychologists, sociologists, theologians, physicians, and social critics have all contributed to this new awareness.’<sup>1</sup>

As Saunders states, ‘Death and funerals could be said to be fashionable. .. Religious writers in funeral studies are finding a growth market.’<sup>2</sup> However, she found that ‘publications on British funeral practices are still rare...’<sup>3</sup>

#### 1.i Anthropology, Sociology and Eschatology

‘If a frank concern with the way that we die is a relative novelty, an interest in the death rites of exotic cultures is not.’<sup>4</sup> *Celebrations of Death*,<sup>5</sup> Metcalf and Huntington’s anthropological cross-cultural study of death rituals which also covers sociological and religious aspects of death, continues to play a central role in the continuing debate about deathways, and they state, ‘ ... there is today a widespread desire to examine the nature of our institutions.’<sup>6</sup> The authors insist that their text remains the only general and integrated treatment of the subject whilst acknowledging the sharp criticism it generates.<sup>7</sup> Their work is based on a three-part structure: the relation between ritual and emotion, the political significance of ritual, and the universal in symbolism. It also links and balances seminal interpretations of death rituals from differing continents and epochs with pertinent and very relevant sections on American and European death rites, using:

‘outstanding cases that provide striking illustrations of the major themes.....our interest in these cases lies in the details of cultural practices relating to death and the treatment of the corpse.’<sup>8</sup>



However, not all British funerals are the same, and there is considerable overlap in the construction of any community labelled 'British'. Does one mentally refer to the academic intelligentsia, the baying yuppie or the self-labelled middle classes? Is 'British' the decaying mining community or the relatively stable Northumbrian hill village? Is 'British' a Cornish holiday community or a northern, revitalised steel city? Indeed, is 'British' a demoralised community found in urban centres, depressed city or town housing estates, or Knightsbridge wealthy? Yet, one must agree in principle with Wilson, in Metcalf and Huntington,<sup>9</sup> in that 'one must wear black'. It will be shown that subdued wearing apparel is still the norm at British funerals, and black is often preferred for 'family'.

Whilst it is appreciated that, as Metcalf and Huntington state,

'Anthropologists have, of course, no special understanding of the mystery of death',<sup>10</sup>

the very nature of their studies of 'human beings and their way of life,'<sup>11</sup> other cultures, and appropriate reflections and theories have pertinence in this present study. Bloch and Parry, 1982 are seen by Metcalf and Huntington as 'giving the fullest treatment of mortuary rites in general'<sup>12</sup> since their own book, 1979: however, Metcalf and Huntington consider that it is written from the basic conception that ritual is a form of social control. Indeed, Bloch and Parry state that death rituals operate *a)* as a disaggregation of the individual from the collectivity and *b)* as a re-establishment of society requiring the re-allocation of roles the deceased once occupied.<sup>13</sup> The basic premise that 'notions of fertility and sexuality often have a considerable prominence in funeral practices'<sup>14</sup> is the underlying concept behind this volume which focuses on the significance of symbols of fertility and rebirth in funeral rites.

For, as Sumner states, implying the ongoing and essential nature of ritual:

‘Ritual is something to be done, not something to be thought or felt.’<sup>15</sup>

The relationship between an individual and society as set out by Durkheim<sup>16</sup> was approached from a sociological standpoint rather than that of the anthropologist. His theory:

‘focused on the integration of individuals into communal life..... within this theoretical framework, the event of death is an important but difficult topic that brings to the fore the ambiguities and contradictions of human social existence and definition.’<sup>17</sup>

Anthropology and Sociology are closely linked: the theme of secondary burial was the subject of an essay in 1907 by Hertz<sup>18</sup> in the *Année Sociologique*, a journal produced by Durkheim and his students, whilst van Gennep, who was familiar with the Durkheim ‘school’, published his *Rites of Passage* soon after.<sup>19</sup> Saunders accepts the significance of an anthropological outlook;<sup>20</sup> she also acknowledges the importance of both van Gennep and Hertz in her analysis of funeral customs. As Saunders states in her initial overview of rites of passage:

‘Rites of passage affect us all. ... A rite or ritual of passage refers to a ceremony, which denotes the transition from one defined status in life to another.’<sup>21</sup>

This 1992 outline of rites of passage covers the rites of baptism, social puberty, coming of age and marriage before relating observances to the British, and particularly the Sheffield funeral.<sup>22</sup>

Van Gennep subdivided the ‘rites of passage’ of man into rites of separation, transition and incorporation. He found, in funeral ceremonies, rites of separation to be ‘few in number’, transition rites have a duration and complexity, and rites of



incorporation into the world of the dead extensively elaborated and assigned the greatest importance.

‘These three sub-categories are not developed to the same extent by all peoples or in every ceremonial pattern ... in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated.’<sup>23</sup>

In this present study, observances and gathered knowledge of the Sheffield funeral are compared with van Gennep’s study of his data and the degrees of importance he finds of the rites within his tripartite structure. It will be demonstrated that the relative prominence of rites within a tripartite structure of the Sheffield funeral differ from that identified by van Gennep, in that preliminal or separation rituals are seen to have the greatest importance, closely followed by postliminal or re-aggregation rites, whilst liminal, or transition rites, have relatively little impact within the city.

**Table 3.i**  
**Ritual in Sheffield**

<b>rites of passage in Sheffield</b> <i>A tripartite structure based upon a van Gennep model</i>		
<b>PRELIMINAL</b> <i>Rites of Separation</i>	<b>LIMINAL</b> <i>Rites of Transition</i>	<b>POSTLIMINAL</b> <i>Rites of Incorporation</i>
Rituals of purification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• washing</li> <li>• anointing</li> </ul> Taboos Superstitions Transport of corpse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to chapel of rest</li> <li>• funeral cortège</li> </ul> Choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funeral director</li> <li>• notices</li> <li>• coffin</li> <li>• flowers</li> <li>• shroud</li> <li>• committal</li> <li>• refreshments/ wake</li> <li>• cemetery / crematorium</li> <li>• grave site</li> </ul> <p><i>Preliminal rites have prominence in the Sheffield funeral</i></p>	Deceased: Extended stay in coffin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapel of Rest</li> <li>• Reception in Church</li> <li>• vigil</li> </ul> Mourner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• period of mourning</li> <li>• social life suspended</li> <li>• following of a dress code</li> </ul> <p><i>Mourning is seen by van Gennep as a transitional period which is entered through rites of separation, and the lifting of mourning is achieved by rites of reintegration / incorporation.</i></p> <p><i>Liminal rites are few in Sheffield</i></p>	Deceased: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• incorporation into the world of the dead</li> <li>• funeral ceremonies</li> <li>• equipping the dead for his journey</li> </ul> Mourner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funeral meals / food</li> <li>• wakes / celebrations</li> <li>• commemorations / memorials</li> <li>• rites of reintegration into society</li> <li>• lifting of mourning</li> </ul> <p><i>Rites of re-aggregation are relatively prominent in the Sheffield funeral</i></p>

Saunders also refers to Gorer, whose work *Death, Grief and Mourning*<sup>24</sup> was a consequence of a survey of the then current funeral practices in Britain. The questionnaire used covered such questions as: 'Do you believe in the Devil?' and if there were signs of mourning at 'the house'.<sup>25</sup> Gorer looked at the 'pattern of dying' and its changing nature; aspects covered by Saunders in her own researches.

In his paper, *The social construction of funeral ritual in contemporary England*, presented at the 1995 International Conference of Death and Dying, Smale presents a funeral as existing in a social location:

'The ritualised disposal of the dead is a negatively eventful act whereby significance is determined by avoidance of incompetence. Each unique funeral is the outcome of negotiation between 'naive' mourners with events to manage, and experienced directors with services awaiting hire. Both parties aspire to 'bring off' a potentially damaging ceremony in which style, propriety and dignity are constantly scrutinised. .... Directors, collectively, present their activities within an unstated 'tradition', a framework within which an assumed authenticity is confirmed.'<sup>26</sup>

## 1.ii Culture and Custom

A study of the culture, customs and traditions of a Sheffield funeral must be viewed from a broader base for any such study to have significance. For the purposes of this study and its presentation primary evidence has been sought and gathered from both Europe and the United States of America: offerings of personal recollections have been frequent and ongoing, and observations and interviews on funeral customs have continued for nearly thirty years. This has been an ongoing study. Deathways can be studied in urban communities, rural village and hamlet or evidence gathered from isolated habitations. There is no shortage of evidence for the observant researcher. Many branches of available literature have been explored to add to secondary evidence. There appears to be a well-served and growing market for nostalgia, particularly the recent past, that is, in one's lifetime. Stroud, Gloucestershire, and Gloucester itself, are centres for such publications. Sheffield's recent past is the



subject of photographic essays compartmentalised by area and compiled by local history societies and their like, and include sections on churches and churchyards. These publications are marketed in local newsagents and one's photographic inclusion in a volume is passed on by word of mouth.

Folklore, customs, traditions and beliefs have been the subject of relevant publications. One such is Hazlitt's fascinating '*Dictionary of Faiths and Folklore: Beliefs, Superstitions and Popular Customs*' (1905), based on Bourne's *Antiquitates Vulgares* (1725).<sup>27</sup> The sections on 'Death', and 'Funeral Customs' imply a population steeped in customary ways and superstitions. Hazlitt refers to acknowledged eschatologists: we read of Lupton,<sup>28</sup> writing on visible omens of impending death; the traveller and writer, Misson,<sup>29</sup> who collected his observations on customs of the people, and of Sir Thomas Browne,<sup>30</sup> writing thus:

'Sir Thomas Browne, in his "Urne-burial" observes, that "the custom of carrying the corpse as it were out of the world with its feet forward, is not inconsonant to reason, as contrary to the native posture of man, and his production first into it."' <sup>31</sup>

Hazlitt writes on tombs and reminiscences; there are sections on 'Ceremonial Usages, Scotland, Ireland and Abroad', as well as 'Suppers'; most of these sections are comprehensively annotated, with examples of 'Wills', and culminate in 'Poetical References'. In the 'Death' sections the general reader is entertained by accounts of:

- the Seizure of a Dead Body for a Debt
- the Death-Howl
- Death-Omens
- the Death Rattle
- the Death Watch

Again, Baker<sup>32</sup> catalogues relevant folklore and customs pertaining to mirrors, bells, opened doors and clocks. Sykes notes that:

'The continuance of customs reflects the human need to develop and maintain a pattern of existence.'<sup>33</sup>

As Bennett states:

‘On the subject of the dead there is, of course, a very long cultural tradition.’<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, Saunders, 1992, includes a substantial section on literary references to folklore and customs in her chapter ‘Rites of Passage’.<sup>35</sup> Puckle,<sup>36</sup> Bendann,<sup>37</sup> Litten<sup>38</sup> and Penny<sup>39</sup> provide observances and insight into given reasonings for customs: much of the written folklore is repetitive and of a secondary nature. Puckle, in *Funeral Customs*, writes in his Foreword:

‘.. almost all our present usages have their origin in stupid pagan superstitions.’<sup>40</sup>

Primary published evidence is to be found in the increasing number of graphic publications that seek to feed the parallel growing interest in death rites, such as Wilson’s *Awful Ends*, a British Museum publication,<sup>41</sup> which is a ‘lighthearted anthology of funeral inscriptions, both real and fictional’<sup>42</sup> and, more recently, Cox (ed.), a CBA Research Report for the Council for British Archaeology.<sup>43</sup> Although comprehensively illustrated with black and white photographic evidence and tables, all in a style and manner commonly found in such a work, the volume’s front cover consists of an A4 sized colour reproduction of *The Doubt: ‘Can these Dry Bones Live?’* by Henry Bowler (1854). This could therefore be considered an attractive and marketable publication.

Hole, in the preface to the second edition of her volume *Traditions and Customs of Cheshire*, first published in 1937, contends that:

‘Tradition is a tough plant in north-western England .... It will probably be a very long time before all the ideas and habits ... and all the legends... are quite forgotten and gone for ever.’<sup>44</sup>

According to Hole, death is a ‘real occasion’: one of the ordinary, everyday events of life. She lists many beliefs and customs with this preamble:



‘Death and misfortune were often heralded by little signs and omens which struck terror into the hearts of those who saw them.’<sup>45</sup>

- Apple-blossom in the autumn – death to the owner of the tree
- Bird tapping at a window – an ominous sign
- Sudden cracks in wood or furniture, known as death-raps
- Bats and frogs in the house – death or calamity
- White crickets - calamity
- Making a will meant death - soon
- Bluish flares over damp ground – corpse lights – a grave warning
- Balls of blue light leaving a churchyard to enter a house where someone lay ill
- A limp corpse foretold another death

Likewise, Hole has gathered a telling collection of death customs for the north west:

- The passing bell kept away evil spirits – the soul had a chance to escape
- At the moment of death, doors and windows opened to allow the soul free passage
- Mirrors covered – to protect the soul
- A dish of salt placed on a corpse – demons were afraid of salt
- Touching the hand of the corpse – it had strange powers
- Coffin must be carried to the grave clockwise
- The dead are dangerous – avoid churchyards at night
- Carrying a coffin over any ground establishes a right of way<sup>46</sup>



### **3.i Burying Lane, Ecclesfield, Sheffield**

‘There was a belief, unfounded, that the route frequented by burial parties became a right of way.

‘Corpse Ways’ and ‘Burying Lanes’ attend to this belief [sic].<sup>47</sup>

Whitlock echoes this belief in his documentation of funeral customs and beliefs:

- passage of corpse established a right of way
- corpse never left alone
- corpse never left in the dark – so a vigil or wake
- corpse must be touched
- coin placed in the mouth – to pay the ferryman
- salt on breast – to protect against demons
- coffin goes feet first
- unlucky to pass in front of the coffin
- passing bell tolled to send off soul and to protect against evil spirits
- custom used to be to toll *before* funeral
- corpse carried around church – sunwise - three times<sup>48</sup>



On the theme of ‘mirrors’, Barber keeps to a more familiar ‘explanation’:

‘... fear of the corpse is virtually universal .. Mirrors do have a place in the folklore of death... lest the face of the corpse be reflected and bring about another death.’<sup>49</sup>

Writing about wakes, Ó Súilleabháin explains:

‘The waking of the dead is a very ancient custom throughout the world. Extant accounts of wakes in Europe go back almost a thousand years... In the old days, as now, food and drink were a necessary feature of wakes.’<sup>50</sup>

Merrill lists some funeral customs of Derbyshire which appear to be specific to that area: a funeral garland for an unmarried girl was carried in procession and then hung in the church. Garlands can be seen in Ashford-in-the-Water, Matlock, and Trusley.<sup>51</sup>



### **3.ii Funeral garland**

‘When unmarried women were buried their companions carried “garlands” made of wreaths of flowers – emblems of youth and purity.’

Garlands were hung up in a conspicuous place in memory of the deceased.<sup>52</sup>

Peate theorises that the basis of folklore is man’s lack of knowledge of the order of the natural world:

‘Naturally, much of this lore was related to the elemental areas of life, to the ‘mystery’ of birth and death .... The beliefs and customs relating to death provide one of the richest veins of folk lore.’<sup>53</sup>

Peate recounts his collection of predominantly Welsh beliefs and customs in the form of anecdotal tales:

- the tale of the ‘caught’ and motionless feet foretelling death
- the tale of the ghostly carpenter making a coffin at the time of a death
- the belief that coffin shavings must be placed in the coffin or Death will come to collect those left out
- tales of wakes with candle, singing and tale-telling<sup>54</sup>



### 3.iii 'DOOM'



From ancient times, and in most parts of the world: obsequies have been accompanied by loud noise to drive off lurking evil spirits.<sup>55</sup>

Welsh funeral customs, as noted by Owen, include that of a sin eater and of male relatives carrying the bier.<sup>56</sup> Hazlitt writes of sin eaters:

'... in those villages adjoining to Wales, when a person dyed, there was notice given to an old sire.... repaired to the place where the deceased lay, and stood before the door of the house, when some of the family came out and furnished him with a cricket, on which he sat down facing the door. Then they gave him... a crust of bread, which he eat; and a full bowle of ale, which he drunk off at a draught. After this, he got up from the cricket and pronounced, with a composed gesture, the ease and rest of the soul departed..... an old custom at funeralls to hire poor people, who were to take upon them the sinnes of the party deceased ..... when the corpse was brought out of the house, and layd on the biere, a loafe of bread was brought out, and delivered to the sinne eater, over the corps, as also a mazar bowle, of maple, full of beer, (which he was to drink up,) and sixpence in money: ... whereof he took upon him all the sinnes of the defunct..<sup>57</sup>

In his paper, 'The Sorrow of All People',<sup>58</sup> Gwyndaf refers repeatedly to a past 'custom' whilst making unequivocal statements that such a 'practice ... is not followed today,' for example: the placing of objects in a coffin.<sup>59</sup> The paper is largely written in an emotional style in the present or future tenses with categorical statements: 'the family doctor will be called; the mourners will gradually make their way back to the chapel for the *te claddu*: funeral tea; there is much talking.'<sup>60</sup> However, he lists and repeats many of the 'premonitions, portents or prognostications of death in the Welsh tradition,' with one less familiar: that of 'the sound of hymn-singing in the sky directly above the home of the person about to die.'<sup>61</sup>



Firor includes aspects of death beliefs in her study annotating folkways in Thomas

Hardy.<sup>62</sup> On death she writes:

'The major part of our ceremonial of death and burial is a survival of a primitive cult based on the fear of the dead kinsman<sup>63</sup> ... our ceremonial of burial contains survivals of two distinct cults of the dead, one based on the love of the dead kinsman, the other, far more primitive, on the fear of them.'<sup>64</sup>

Firor notes:

- coins on the corpse's eyes to pay their passage to the next world – superimposed on the primitive belief that the metal in these coins would prevent evil spirits seizing the soul
- the burial of the unbaptised in the northside of the churchyard
- telling the bees of a death
- feeding the bees funeral food
- opening doors
- expelling all animals
- killing any animals that stay in to watch the corpse
- feasts
- turning mirrors
- use of corpse-related articles in medicinal cures
- the passing bell to frighten off evil spirits waiting
- suicides buried at crossroads

The notion that crossroads play a significant role in death beliefs is echoed by Puhvel in his well-documented study when he states:

'..the darker, more sinister side of the crossroads tradition... manifested itself in dishonorable or self-protective burial on that location .... The practice of burying suicides at crossroads... in past centuries [was] prevalent in Britain.'<sup>65</sup>

The crossroads symbolism is noted in Douglass' study *Death in Murélagu* concerning funerary ritual in a Spanish Basque village, where the mattress on which the death occurred is known to be burned at a crossroads. Beliefs were held that are common to other societies:

'Death is not always fortuitous or unpredictable. Various signs may presage an imminent death.'

These signs include :

- a rooster crowing at night
- the howling of a dog
- mass bells coinciding with the chiming of the church clock<sup>66</sup>



Folklore concerning plants is included in Udal's volume on Dorsetshire beliefs:

'Certain plants when in flower have an evil significance..... Dorset folk give ready credence (to the) numerous omens regarding death..'67

As Bennett states:

'Belief in occult forces is both endemic and ancient, one of the most enduring matters of interest.'68

For, as Smith writes in Dorson (ed.) *Folklore and Folklife*,:

'The final transitional rite is that of the funeral, with its rigidly stereotyped gestures of respect and mourning for the deceased. In a good number of societies... these behaviors are accompanied by such reintegrative practices as getting drunk, singing, and telling funny stories. Life must go on.'69

Indeed, Whaley comments on ritual in the introduction to *Mirrors of Mortality*:

'...the literature on the subject has become immense... countless articles .... Most are characterized by the belief that it is essential for modern man to restore somehow an equanimity in the face of death.'70

Many of these reported rituals have also been the subject of primary evidence.

Observations and gleanings in varying communities have been used as a base from which to compare customs noted in Sheffield. Curtains, or 'blinds', are still drawn on the morning of a funeral both in the family house and the neighbouring community in many North Wales towns and villages. Now that few are laid out in their own homes the practice of coins on the eyes, ostensibly to hold them closed, appears to have ceased. In Buckley, Flintshire, the local midwife was always called to lay out, that is, until she was forced to stop this neighbourly service for 'hygienic' reasons. In Buckley the cortège of a local person still pauses at appropriate places: the deceased's own house, or their place of employment. Passers-by are also still seen to wait in silence until the funeral procession has passed, with gentlemen removing their hats. In this large village, now a commuter base for Merseyside, vehicles still allow free passage to the cortège. Mirrors were turned in a Mynydd Isa, Mold, house five years

ago with the comment: 'It's for respect'. In Phoenix, Arizona, traffic is legally obliged to stop for a cortège. A resident stated, 'It's compulsory but you just do it anyway. It would be disrespectful not to.'

Current practices and ongoing traditions are well reported in journals, newspapers and magazines. The closing paragraph in Peterborough in the 'Daily Telegraph' has been an excellent source of current funereal humour and events. This newspaper is particularly regular in reporting newsworthy items of eventful / strange / idiosyncratic funerals, interments and disposals. Local newspapers deal in more factual reporting; they are careful not to offend. National papers do not operate under the same constriction. Broadcasting media are an excellent source of information, presented in a way that is deemed to be marketable. Funerals of national importance are televised, though some are dealt with more discreetly than others. Tragedies are certain to receive coverage. Patterns of funeral behaviour can be identified with any given set of circumstances. Scenes of the leaving of flowers at the death scene or pertinent place are relayed nationally: Bradford, Hillsborough, Dunblane, Omagh; all inform and guide populations in developing patterns of behaviour and evolving customs. The incredible field of flowers at Kensington Palace following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, took this evolving behaviour pattern to its extreme. Conversely, a local tragedy will see a small gathering of floral tributes at a death scene. Mourners need to do something, immediately.

Again, funerals from around Britain show distinctive behaviour patterns. Walking behind the hearse is common in Ireland; in Buckley, Flintshire, mourners still walk behind a wheeled bier if the family are 'local' and the interment is to be in the churchyard. Black horses and Victorian-style hearses make their appearance in



celebrity-style events; used indeed for the funeral of a young child whose parents had fought valiantly to keep her alive, using media publicity to fund-raise for treatment abroad.

International deathways can be explored via the visual media, although only the most important or emotive are likely to be newsworthy. Thus one can experience the tragedies of Africa, Italy, Israel and the Muslim world. American state funerals are exposed to all: comparisons are obvious. A radio series on deathways and religion can be usefully employed to occupy the required 'religious' spot: it is likely to attract adequate audience figures. 'Junk mail' provides information on death products such as pre-paid funeral plans and insurance. The medium of film has recently opened channels of thought in funeral services: *Four Weddings and a Funeral* showed the effective nature of personal readings.

## **2.i Early Deathways and Burial**

The English funeral has its known origins in the thirteenth century when masses were said to shorten the time that a soul spent in purgatory. As Saunders found:

'The more masses, the shorter the time. Endowment funds were established for just such a purpose: indeed some funds were set up to provide masses 'in perpetuity'. The endowment funds grew to enormous proportions, and saying the masses took up much of the priests' time. Therefore chantry priests were employed for the sole purpose of saying, or chanting, masses for the souls of the dead. The poor felt that this was a great injustice: money should not be able to procure less time in purgatory. Therefore guilds were set up; by pooling funds sufficient monies could be made available for the poor to have their own chantry priests, and so the souls of the poor be not at a disadvantage. The chantry priests performed their chanting in created 'chantry chapels'.<sup>71</sup>

Saunders notes that these guilds 'organised and serviced funeral processions'. Litten points out that most guilds were fairly small. Of one, he notes:

'the membership of the little company of four men and four women who, in 1379, could afford to provide only a candle to burn during the daily mass at the church.'<sup>72</sup>

Although the endowments were surrendered following the Chantry Act of 1547, the



guilds continued to function as parochial funeral clubs, maintaining all the necessary equipment: hearse, coffin, pall, cloaks, candles and stools. Saunders continues:

‘..parish coffins went out of favour in the time of pestilence and plague. ... By the late 16th century a wealthier population began to demand more of the elaborate trappings associated with the College of Arms. The guilds had to look outside for furnishings... Eventually...clients went directly to trade themselves.’<sup>73</sup>

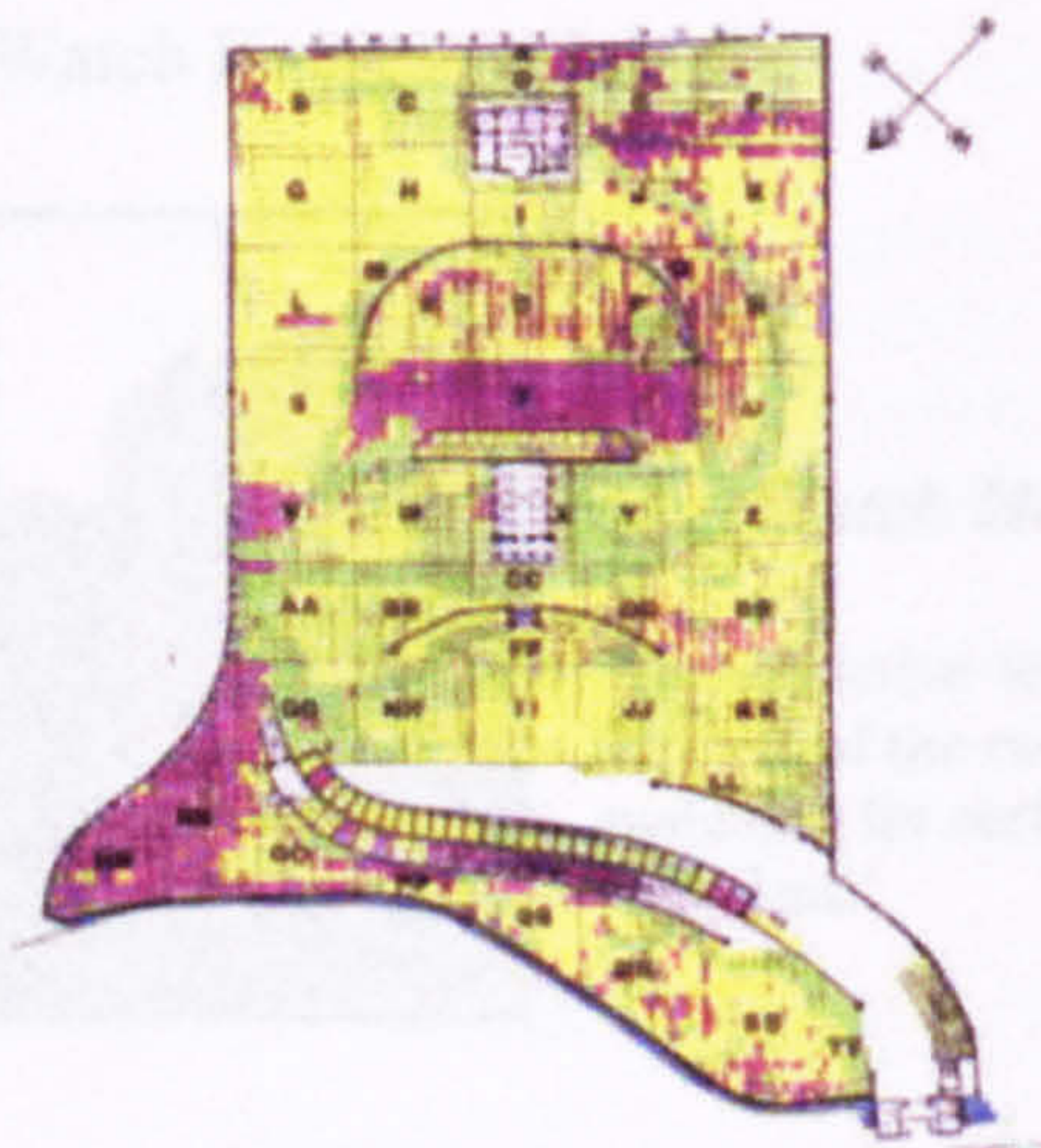


**3.iv Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal in the funeral procession of Queen Elizabeth, 1603**

The burial clubs and a decent burial became even more necessary: a pauper’s funeral meant a common, or public grave:

‘ ... the Friends of Sheffield General Cemetery ... have found a public grave with 109 bodies in it.’<sup>74</sup>

Such graves were left open as a pit until sufficiently filled: a greater occupancy meant a greater income. Open graves were attractive to the bodysnatchers.



**3.v Utilisation of grave plots**

Plan of the unconsecrated part of Sheffield General Cemetery: pink sections are public graves

‘The process by which the corpse became a commodity is shrouded in secrecy.’<sup>75</sup>

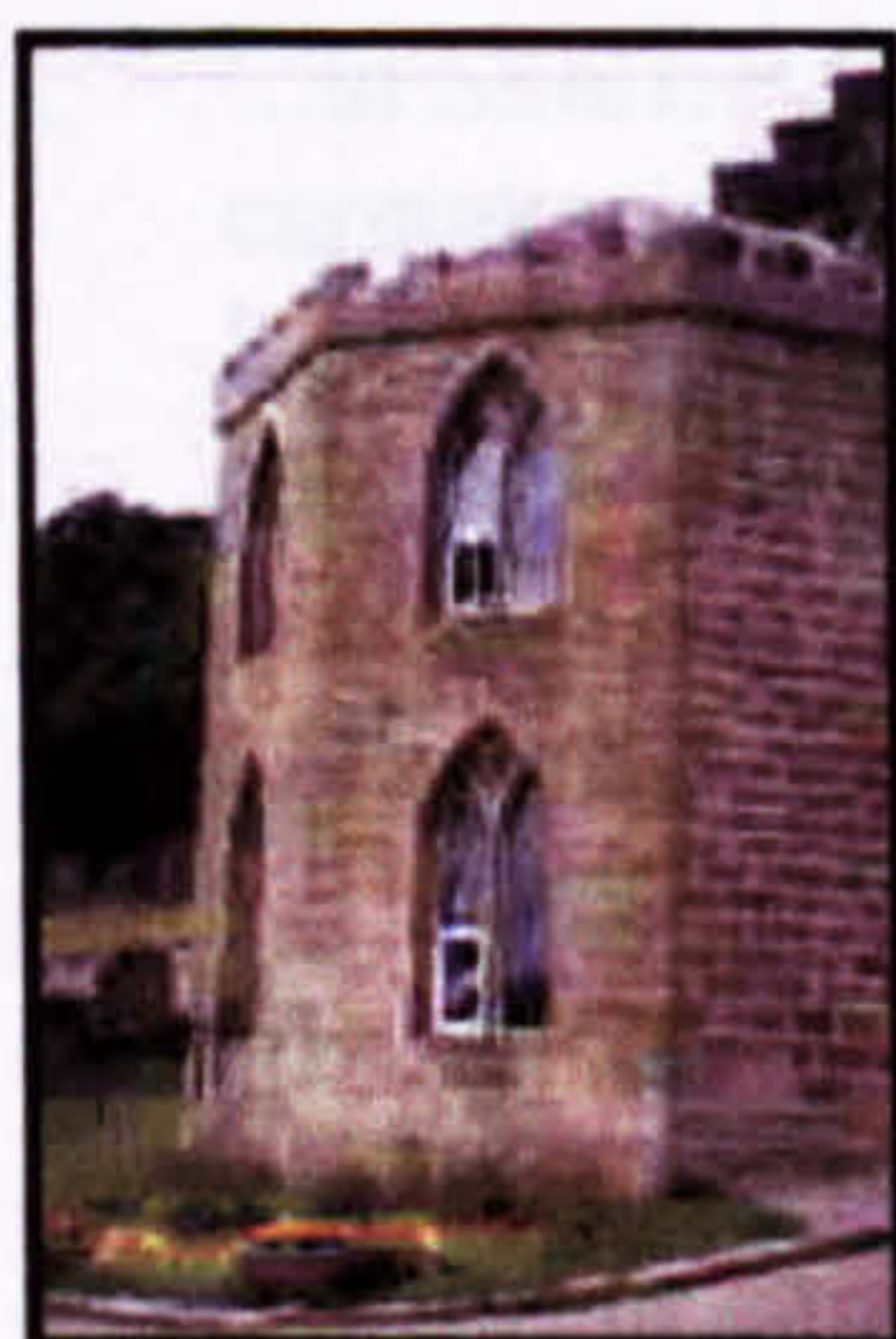
So begins Richardson’s comprehensive account of facts and suppositions concerning bodysnatching and the **Anatomy Act of 1832**, events which have repercussions at the



start of the twentyfirst century. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries grave robbing was a profitable occupation: the destination of the corpse was the dissection table. Medical education was in its infancy and could not be served by the only legal source of bodies, the gallows. Not only were newly buried corpses vulnerable to snatching but murders were committed to furnish anatomists with their requirements, a practice known as ‘burking’.<sup>76</sup> Anatomists carved up the cadavers and sold them to students: a profitable undertaking. The body did not constitute property and could not be stolen. Body stealing was a safe occupation, and, given the pit-type burial of the poor, an easy one.

‘Freshly-filled graves meant that in general the digging was easy..’<sup>77</sup>

The robbers used wooden shovels and a concealed light; watch was kept. The graves were carefully filled in afterwards; a sign of a good workman. Bodysnatching was detested. Jewish graves were particularly vulnerable: their practice of quick interment meant fresh, valuable flesh. Those who could afford it used stout coffins in deeper graves. Watches were kept until the decomposing corpse was no longer attractive and Watch Houses were built.



### ***3.vi Watch House at St. Nicholas, High Bradfield***

‘The attractive Watch House at the church gates was built in 1745, where the families of the recently buried could watch over the graveyard to prevent body snatching for early medical research until decay rendered each corpse worthless.’

Reform was necessary: the Anatomy Act of 1832 provided a new, legal source of corpses: the pauper. As Richardson states:

‘..a new bill was introduced to parliament, passed with little opposition, and remains the basis of modern law on the subject. It recommended that instead of giving hanged murderers, the government should confiscate the bodies of paupers dying in



workhouses and hospitals, too poor to pay for their own funerals. What had for generations been a feared and hated punishment for murder became one for poverty.’<sup>78</sup>

Death in the workhouse; death on the parish, was to be avoided at all costs. Burial clubs were set up, collections made and the nineteenth century poor strove for a respectful burial, without specifying what would constitute a disrespectful one. The anxiety and need for a ‘decent’ funeral is still expressed; the hatred of a pauper’s burial lost in folk memory. As Richardson says:

‘the full meaning of a pauper funeral has entered the sphere of myth...cloaked in silence...the memory went underground of a fate literally unspeakable.’<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, Davies, on disposal, states:

‘Where in response to such an inquiry the Registrar is informed that the body has not been disposed of, he must, unless informed that it is being held for the purposes of the **Anatomy Act, 1984** (previously **Anatomy Acts 1832 and 1871**) or **Human Tissue Act 1961**, report the matter...’<sup>80</sup>

The act is still in force. It was not, however, a total success. As Richardson found:

‘parochial authorities had strong objections to the dissection of their dead poor, and either failed or refused to co-operate.’<sup>81</sup>

Public hostility against the act was widespread. Richardson found such hostility:-

‘..in Sheffield in 1835, when the anatomy school was entirely demolished after the caretaker’s wife, being violently beaten by her husband, shrieked ‘murder!’ and set off a long-brewing riot. The demolition expressed in traditional form a hostility which was also found in political meetings concerning the Act’s repeal, held in the town that year.’<sup>82</sup>

The Anatomy Act was followed in 1834 by the reformed Poor Law which had proposed that all poor relief be given in the workhouse.<sup>83</sup> This proposition resulted in many new workhouses being built. These were not popular; the poor were fearful and aggrieved.<sup>84</sup> Paupers are now given a respectful funeral, paid for by the Local Authority.<sup>85</sup> That the medical schools receive more than sufficient bodies by donation ‘to medical science’<sup>86</sup> does not remove the dread of a pauper’s destination. Money is hidden, carefully labelled: money stored in the house to avoid dying a pauper, and



money pressed into relative's hands "for my funeral." <sup>87</sup> The need to store money is well-known to thieves who target the vulnerable elderly. Funeral pre-payment plans would seem to use this dread as a marketing strategy:

- **Peace of mind knowing everything is taken care of and the arrangements secure – *Golden Charter***
- **You'll have peace of mind, knowing all the arrangements are made and paid for – *Chosen Heritage***
- **The peace of mind is priceless – *The Dignity Plan***
- **Provides peace of mind for your family – *Dignity Personal Funeral Plans***

'Dignity' and 'peace of mind' are carefully chosen words: the funeral directors know their market.

## 2.ii Cremation

'Nearly three quarters of all Britons are cremated... This dramatic shift from burial to cremation, especially since 1945, marks a major social ... change in customary behaviour.'<sup>88</sup>

Crematoria are within reach of the majority of the population, and it could be said that the struggle to reform the British burial system has been successful. Roger Arber, in his editorial letter in 'Pharos International', Winter 1997, the official journal of the Cremation

Society of Great Britain, writes:

'The cremation rate in Britain stands at approximately 72% and unless a law is introduced prohibiting burial, which is inconceivable, there is only a finite amount of expansion left in the movement in the sense of people who can be cremated.'<sup>89</sup>

People exclude themselves by religion, positive choice or geography; it is difficult to be cremated if one lives in a remote region: travel problems for family and community may mean that burial on land or at sea are the only practical alternatives. The booklet produced by the Cremation Society *What you should know about cremation* includes a neat précis of modern cremation practice. It includes the statement:



**‘Although most people choose to have a religious service, it is not necessary. Those wishing to have a non-religious service may obtain details from the National Secular Society...’<sup>90</sup>**

**Cremation does not require any service, neither does a burial. A body can be delivered to the crematorium, suitably coffined, and the ashes either collected, or left for scattering by the crematorium’s usual method. Some ashes are never collected nor instructions given for their disposal. The Cremation Society’s booklet gives straightforward explanations of procedures:**

- **the coffin is received into a committal room**
- **the name plate is checked**
- **an identity card is attached until cremation**
- **cremation usually occurs that day – there are no chilled storage facilities**
- **coffins are not opened**
- **the coffin is cremated – not re-used**
- **two witnesses may be present by arrangement**
- **the ashes are ‘withdrawn’ – raked out**
- **metal is removed – such as pins from bones – metal joints**
- **ashes are reduced – crushed**

### **3.i Churchyards**

**A churchyard is:**

**‘ ... the area around a church where the dead are buried. Topographically, the churchyard is part of the religious landscape as well as being part of the physical and historical landscape..’<sup>91</sup>**

**There is evidence that humans have buried their dead for over 50,000 years. Many old churchyards occupy land with previous uses such as a Romano-British burial ground, or perhaps a site with pagan origins.**

**‘Roman law specified that cemeteries should be located well away from residential areas and places of worship and the earliest Christian churches of the Roman and Anglo-Saxon period in England were not usually the focus of a burial ground. The Christian tradition in the medieval period, or at least the eighth century AD, was to bury the dead close to the church in an area consecrated as a churchyard.’<sup>92</sup>**

**The churchyard may indeed be sited on a prehistoric burial ground, with a circular or rounded outline. The Romans and Normans preferred rectangular shapes. Berwick,**



Sussex, has a Saxon barrow in its churchyard. The Britons were slow to embrace Christianity in a wholehearted way and preferred to 'hedge their bets'; the Christian missionaries were instructed by Pope Gregory I to convert pagan temples to the new religion. Stone crosses were erected, often known as teaching or preaching crosses.<sup>93</sup> The faithful wished to be buried around these crosses where they had listened to the teachings. Christian burials have followed the European tradition of west-east orientation with straight, extended legs, not curled in the foetal position.

In 752 AD, permission was granted by Pope Stephen II for there to be churchyards around churches. These were the initial graveyards, wood being a favoured material for any cross or memorial, even though it rotted. Its continuing popularity in English burial grounds and churchyards should be noted.



### ***3.vii A favoured material for crosses***

This gently decaying example of a wooden cross is to be found in the churchyard of St. Barnabas, Parish Church of Bradwell, Derbyshire: a rural community.

There are several such examples in this peaceful environment.

The standard amount of enclosed church land, from the tenth century onwards, was one acre: hence the expression 'God's Acre' for a churchyard. Given a centralised church, the south and east sides of the churchyard were the preferred burial sites, the north sometimes being used for the unbaptised, strangers, stillborn children and paupers. Intramural burials were for the ecclesiastics or the privileged. The churchyard has been used as a market place and for distributing justice; for children's games and for inquests. Highlights of usage were the fairs and feasts, drinking ale



brewed in the church house, and dancing, but that away from the graves on the south side. Its entrance might be near mounting blocks or under a lychgate. Child states:

**‘The main entrance to many churches is under a roofed structure called a lychgate... the name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *lich*, meaning corpse or body. The Prayer Book of 1549 required the priest to meet the deceased at the entrance to the churchyard and there conduct the beginning of the burial service.’<sup>94</sup>**

Saunders noted:

**‘Just as there still exist rituals connected with death that can be traced back to the old *prior culture*, so funerals themselves attract similar beliefs. One of the oldest is that of the place of burial. The first sites to be used were on the south and east side of the churchyard, and the very last, the north. This was the Devil’s territory: within the shadow of the church. .... the coffin needed to be carried in feet-first or the soul was imperilled. The clergyman took over at the lychgate: only the holy, the baptised, could pass through this entrance. There was a shelf, a resting place, within this gate; it served the burial party as they waited, and it was also a place where the body could conveniently be inspected, to ensure that the shroud was made of wool, to comply with an old law, of 1678, designed to protect the woollen industry.’<sup>95</sup>**

Of the times and practices, and of the parish of Blaxhall, Evans writes:

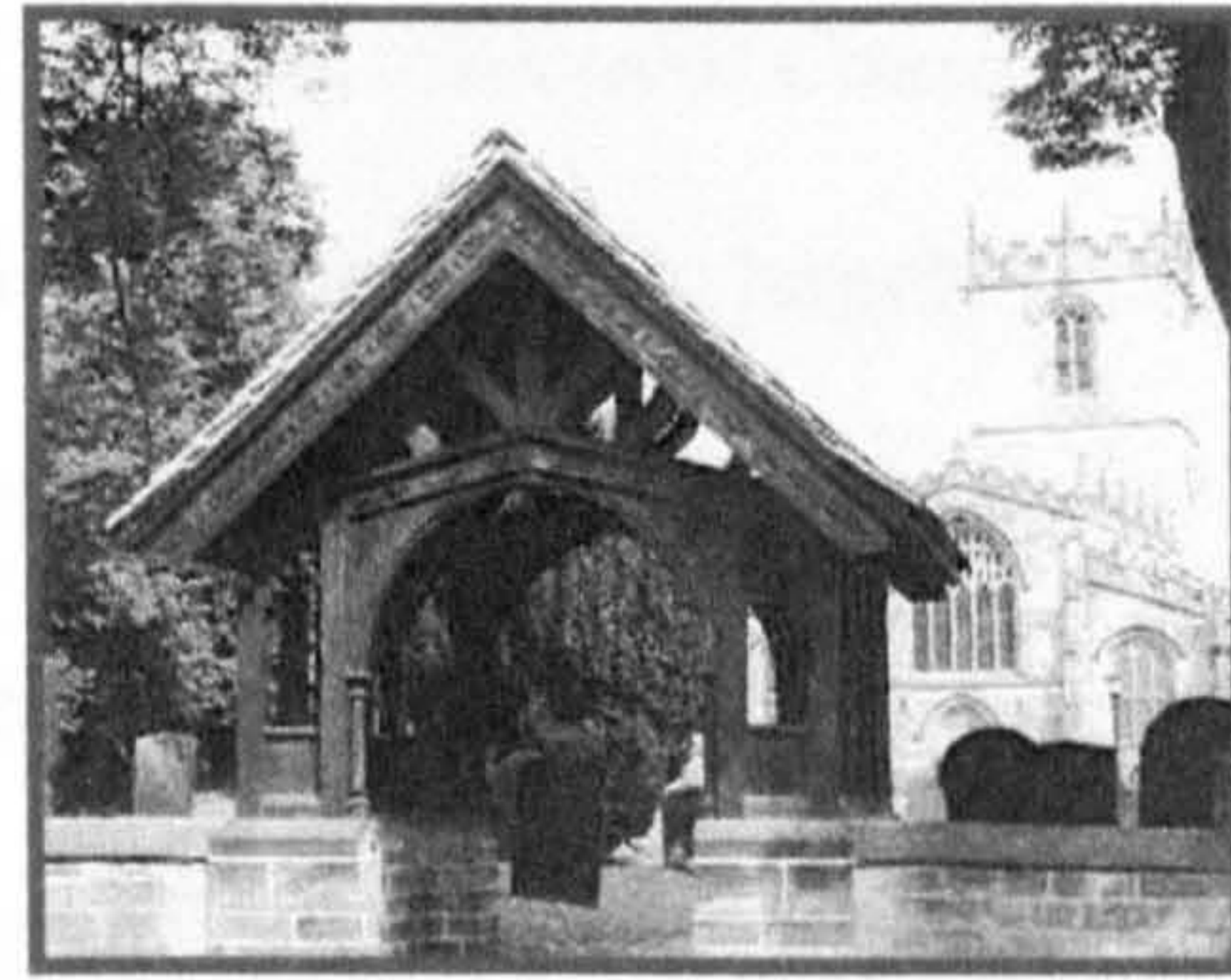
**‘ one of the most interesting documents in the Blaxhall parish chest is a Wool Book. .. In many parishes a new volume of the burial register was started in 1678. In this book the parson was constrained to make note of the burials and whether a certificate had been brought according to the law to show that it had been complied with. ... The Act remained in force for nearly thirty years; it was, however, not always obeyed as it is certain that there were many more deaths than there were entries in Wool Books. There were, however, fines if the Act was not complied with. A penalty of £5 was levied on the estate of the dead person if it became known that he was not buried in woollen. ... a year or so ago it was impossible to find a shepherd’s smock surviving in the parish ... most of the shepherds in this village were buried in their smocks. ... it was done secretly so that the parson might never get to know of it. [He] would object to what was very much like a pagan practice; or more likely, their secrecy was a survival of the attitude of former generations who knew they were breaking the law by burying the shepherd in his smock – a smock was made of drabbet (twilled linen) and they knew that it was the parson’s duty to see that the shroud was made of wool.’<sup>96</sup>**

On the subject of lychgates, The Churchyard Handbook states:

**‘Every churchyard should have a properly defined entrance, well-designed and welcoming: nineteenth-century architects were particularly successful at designing lychgates which complement the enclosing walls of the churchyard and the character of the church itself.’<sup>97</sup>**



**3.viii Lychgate:  
St. Mary's Parish  
Church,  
Ecclesfield, Sheffield**



Current Church of England advice on the management of churchyards is published in the form of *The Churchyard Handbook, advice on the history and significance of churchyards, their care, improvement and maintenance.*<sup>98</sup> This covers:

- churchyard history
- archaeological value
- monuments
- legal considerations
- redundancy of churchyards
- memorials and epitaphs
- disposal after cremation
- flora and fauna
- record keeping
- alterations and improvements
- suggested rules to govern memorials and maintenance
- care of the churchyard

On the re-use of old graves and legal aspects the Churchyards Handbook states:

‘... there is no right to burial in any particular part of the churchyard unless a space has been reserved by faculty or under the Consecration of Churchyards Acts 1867 and 1868...’

and on monuments:

‘Burial does not confer a right to erect a tombstone or other monument and, strictly speaking, the erection of one without a faculty is unlawful.’<sup>99</sup>

On faculties:

‘A faculty is a ‘power to act’; all works carried out in churches and churchyards must have the approval of the Diocesan Chancellor or the Archdeacon and they are subject to faculty permission being obtained. This includes works of repair, reordering, decoration, additions to the fabric or furnishings, or disposal of the same, works concerned with electrical installations or heating systems.’<sup>100</sup>



However, in the Churchyards Handbook Part III, entitled '*Practical Considerations*', there is a section concerning memorials: 'What is suitable depends largely on the context', where parishes are advised 'to set and maintain very firm regulations... Parishes should not hesitate to require high artistic standards'.<sup>101</sup> The photographs depict modern memorials labelled with admiring words such as: 'subtle; fine; focal work; witty; excellent; fitting and admirable'.

'The illustrations... endeavour to show the approach of a new generation of churchyard memorials, and make clear that there is no need to follow exclusively Georgian or classical models in order to produce something of distinction,'<sup>102</sup>

Whilst the designs are innovative, they show their age; the handbook was last revised and published in 1988: design appreciation has changed as with any fashion or style of art works.



### 3.ix Churchyard Rules

Sheffield's churchyard rules are explicit. Certain styles of memorials are not permitted in a Diocese of Sheffield churchyard. This example, photographed in Abbey Lane Cemetery, Sheffield, would not be permitted, without a faculty, in a Sheffield churchyard.

#### NOT PERMITTED

- white marble; heart shapes; porcelain portraits

### 3.ii Cemeteries

'The main object of a burial-ground is, the disposal of the remains of the dead in such a manner as that their decomposition, and return to the earth from which they sprung, shall not prove injurious to the living; either by affecting their health, or shocking their feelings, opinions or prejudices.'<sup>103</sup>

So wrote John Claudius Loudon in his article 'On the laying out, planting and managing of Cemeteries and on the improvement of churchyards', in 1843. However, the urban burial grounds that existed at the start of the nineteenth century reflected the current living conditions. Life in Britain's towns and cities then was unhealthy and unpleasant. Rotten refuse, shared privies, communal water taps, overcrowded courts



and bad sewage formed the environment of the labouring poor. Diseases such as cholera and typhoid gained ready access to an impoverished and susceptible population. Life expectancy was low and the death rate high.<sup>104</sup> Central churchyards, burial grounds and graveyards had long been full. It should be noted that the terms ‘burial ground’ and ‘graveyard’ are used to denote such parcels of burial land and are seen to be interchangeable. The ground levels rose as earth brought in from rural outskirts was piled over existing graves to make places for current burials. Bones were exposed and the charnel house was an outdoor experience. The 1826 cholera epidemic necessitated positive action. Many special cholera burial grounds were set up: a suitable depth of grave was needed to prevent the spread of the disease. This in turn gave impetus to the cemeteries movement. Joint stock companies funded many of the early cemeteries. Rugg’s unpublished thesis, ‘The Rise of Cemetery Companies in Britain, 1820-1852’, covers the histories of the Cemeteries Movement, early cemeteries and associated companies. It catalogues reasonings for the setting up of cemeteries:

- religious politics – ‘without distinction of sect’
- a city ethos – ‘a favourite resort of the living’
- sanitary reforms – ‘every necessary precaution as to public health’
- speculation – ‘necessarily mercenary’<sup>105</sup>

The new cemeteries would have unconsecrated grounds and so could offer the freedom of burial service that dissenters wanted:

‘The objection of some Nonconformist denominations – for example, Baptists, Quakers, and Unitarians – to the consecration of burial land meant that Dissenting congregations often used the space surrounding their chapels for burial, or bought small portions of land specifically for the purpose of interment.’<sup>106</sup>

and:

‘At the beginning of the nineteenth century the only way to dispose of the dead was by burial according to the rites of the Church of England. Everyone had the right to be buried in the churchyard of the parish in which they died, and the local incumbent had a responsibility to bury them, except when the dead person was unbaptised, excommunicate or had committed suicide. This may have been satisfactory at the



time of the Reformation when these provisions were laid down, but by the nineteenth century they were becoming out of date. Not only were parish churchyards often unable to accommodate the increasing number of dead bodies, but many nonconformists wished to bury their dead outside the Anglican Church.’<sup>107</sup>

The cemeteries were to replace the overcrowded and insanitary conditions prevailing in central town and city graveyards. The plans needed to attract capital; the emergent companies set out to offer an attractive, rural image, aesthetically satisfying, and offering vaults, catacombs and interment, with space for large imposing monuments.

Murry, in *This Garden of Death – the History of York Cemetery* puts the matter concisely:

‘The establishment of public cemeteries to make money out of death was a 19th century phenomenon.’<sup>108</sup>

The Victorian entrepreneurs found a window in the market. However, the establishment of the cemeteries did not halt burials in the old churchyards and burial grounds. Such was the problem that action was taken: the **Burial Act of 1852** and subsequent Burial Acts, finally rationalised by the **1972 Local Government Act**, granted the Secretary of State the right to prohibit burials in any churchyard or graveyard. Burial Boards were set up to lay out cemetery land and were funded from the Poor Rate. Between 1853 and 1890 the Burial Boards saw the founding of the majority of Britain’s cemeteries.<sup>109</sup> The private cemeteries continued to operate at a profit for many years, but eventually most companies went into liquidation.

Vandalism, neglect and destruction became the new order; however the old cemeteries became the subject of a new cemeteries movement, one of rescue and repair.

The Victorian cemeteries are now the subject of research and history; photography; tourism; education; conservation; nature walks; environmental campaigns; television and radio documentaries, and film. They are publicised and marketed, with sales of



books, postcards and greeting cards, leaflets and ephemera; have web-sites, with links to other cemeteries; preserved; repaired; the subject of campaigns and objections: a growth industry of the late twentieth century. They are often managed by volunteers or 'friends', and usually are charities. Bradford's impressive Undercliffe Cemetery Charity has the following objectives:

- To operate, maintain and promote Undercliffe Cemetery for the public benefit and to preserve it as a place of historic, architectural and ecological interest.
- To provide continued access to the Cemetery for educational use and as a valuable resource for the study of local history and social conditions in the nineteenth century.
- to restore and maintain monuments and tombs.
- To provide for the continued right to bury and protect the rights of grave owners<sup>110</sup>

Undercliffe is once more a functional cemetery, having been the subject of rescue campaigns since 1980.

The London cemeteries have received a large share of this attention, particularly the 'Magnificent Seven':<sup>111</sup>

- Kensal Green
- Norwood
- Highgate
- Nunhead
- Abney Park
- Brompton
- Tower Hamlets

Some of London's cemeteries became particularly well known because of the fame of the people buried there: Karl Marx and Highgate is a combination found in 'easy' quizzes.<sup>112</sup> London saw its first garden cemetery at Kensal Green: the establishment of the celebrated Père-Lachaise in Paris in 1804 and the Liverpool Necropolis in 1825 had set patterns of style and attraction. On Paris and its cemeteries Ariès writes:

'At the end of the 18th century a law was passed forbidding any burials inside churches or towns; cemeteries were established outside the gates of Paris. The monuments erected in them were of two sorts. On the one hand there were small ones



in memory of an individual or a couple and inspired by the forms of antiquity and traditional symbolism – the stele, the broken column, the sarcophagus, the pyramid. On the other hand there were larger ones, copies of gothic chapels, destined for use by a family.’<sup>113</sup>

The Victorian public cemeteries are familiar sights to all urban dwellers; the older ones may be disused and either preserved or in decay. The active local authority cemeteries are now most likely to be the grounds used when a burial is requested.

Private burial grounds have been mooted, as Saunders noted in 1992:

‘Plans are in hand for the region’s (Sheffield) first private cemetery. This is promoted as a ‘buy-before-you-die’ scheme for burial plots, and will occupy a former barley field outside the nearby town of Chesterfield. Plot prices are anticipated to range from £2500 to £10,000. The site covers 30 acres of farmland, and it is hoped it will appeal to the wealthy of South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire. The grounds will be landscaped with a wildlife lake haven, and grave memorials will be sold, imported from all over the world. .... It is unlikely that the scheme will succeed.’<sup>114</sup>

It has not.

A recent development in the style and operation of a burial ground is the setting up of public or private woodland burial grounds. The forerunner in offering woodland burials is Carlisle's cemetery, where Ken West, Bereavement Manager, established an area for woodland burial. The 1994 leaflet available from the cemetery states:

‘ ... the Woodland graves offer a natural form of burial, in which the accumulating graves will remain forever in the newly created oak forest. They will have important environmental benefits and in particular, will encourage and protect wildlife. ... This is the first true woodland cemetery in the world ..’<sup>115</sup>

### ***3x A woodland burial marker: Carlisle Cemetery***

These are unobtrusive and would soon be covered by undergrowth.





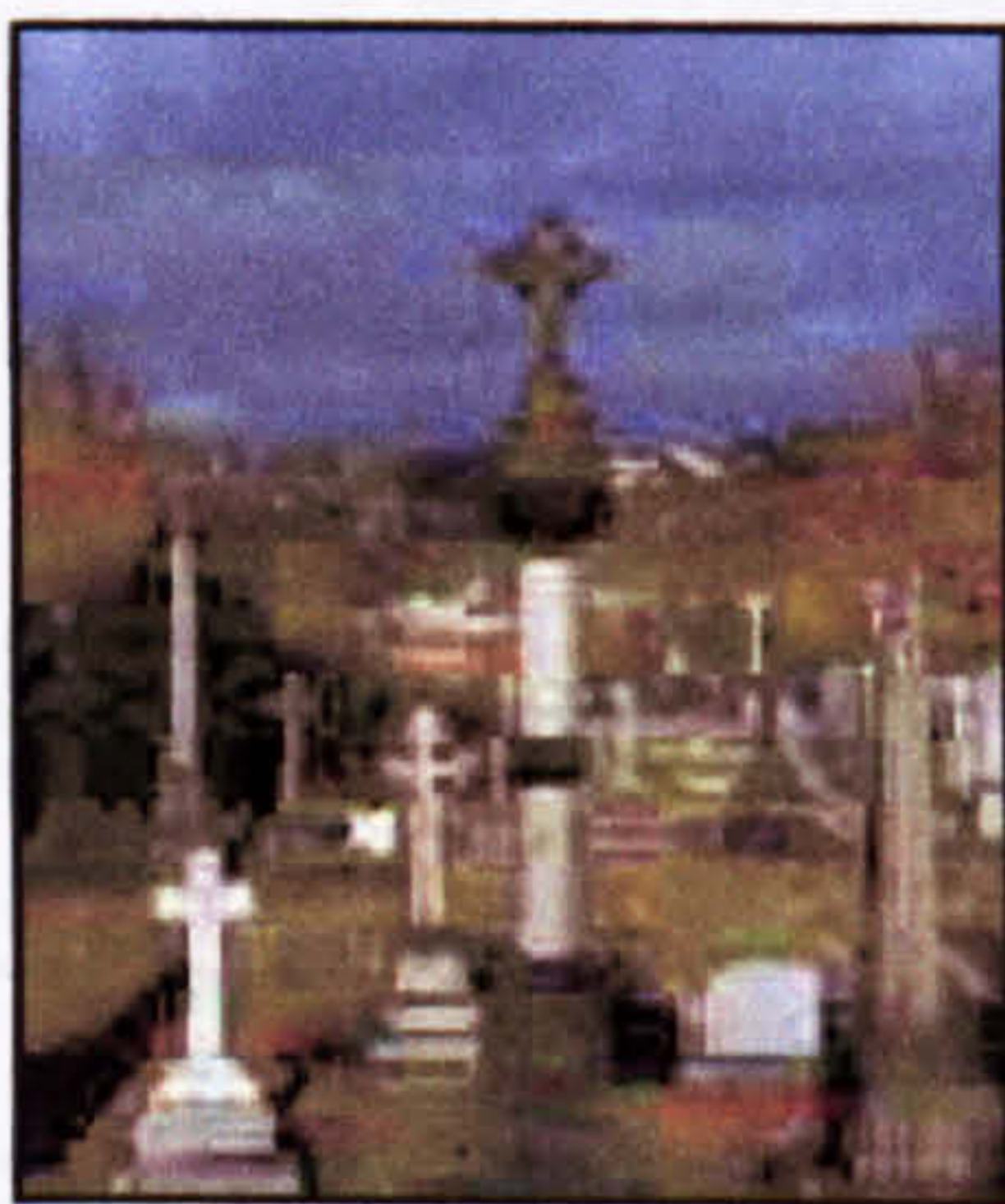
The burial services that Carlisle offers are ‘possibly the widest choice available at a single location in Britain’.<sup>116</sup> In addition to woodland burial they offer graves for cremated remains; graves for babies, stillbirths and foetus burial and a Catholic section. The current interest in ecology and the environment is now catered for in many local authority cemeteries, including Sheffield, where there is a newly established woodland burial area to the north of the city.

#### 4.i The Victorian Celebration

Of the Victorian funeral Curl wrote:

‘The grand cemeteries of the last century were show pieces at the time of their creation.’<sup>117</sup>

He found that ostentatious displays of grief were very much required by Victorian society, and the Gothic Revival of the time is evident in the styles of buildings and tombs. The grand monuments that remain are evidence of only one section of society at that time: the rich. The poor were interred in common graves, several corpses deep.



**3.xi Dominating monument to riches: Bradford**



**3. xii Funeral of the Duke of Newcastle, 1864**

Clergy, mutes and pall-bearers with mourning shoulder-scarves and weepers in their hats.

The trappings of an impressive funeral, with mutes, feathers, mourning shoulder-scarves and weepers were expensive. There were black-edged mourning cards and



black-edged stationery: indeed there still is.<sup>118</sup> Mourning dress was necessary and expensive: mourning jewellery required. As Saunders found:

‘No small aspect of potential was missed. there were mourning handkerchiefs and parasols and even mourning teapots.’<sup>119</sup>



The middle classes sought the best places for their graves: ones on the edge of the main avenues and preferably on corner sites where their family status would be recognised.

### ***3.xiii Impressive Victorian monuments in All Saints' Churchyard, Ecclesall, Sheffield***

The poor were keen to have what the rich had, just as they did over chantry masses and just as the middle classes had wanted the style and trappings of an heraldic funeral associated with the College of Arms. As the poor sought to follow the funerals of the rich and powerful, so the leaders in fashion quietly adopted a more restrained approach. Murray wrote :

‘In the last decade of the nineteenth century funerals are beginning to shed the trappings popularly associated with Victorian celebrations of death...black sashes, batons... abandoned by discriminating families in the 1890's. Mr Dickens ridiculed mutes out of existence.’<sup>120</sup>

### **4.ii Costume**

At the end of the twentieth century dressing for a funeral can still be a costly business. Convention still matters for most mourners, and convention nowadays means subdued and simple. It was not always so. Cunnington and Lucas document the history of costume and death customs in a comprehensive manner.<sup>121</sup> They note that black has been the colour of death for 600 years, although the poor could wear ‘drab’. Black must be dull and non-reflective. The belief that the wearing of black to a wedding was unlucky led to widows who were in mourning wearing red to a funeral.



Purple as a mourning colour was restricted to royalty. White had a history as a colour associated with death, particularly for virginal women and children. White trimmings are used when the customary garment is black, such as the cuffs on a Q.C.'s robes when the court is in mourning. Not to wear black could be ridiculed:

'But yer can't see people off when they die  
In brahn boots!'<sup>122</sup>

However, black was used in a distinctive way. Black vestments were worn by the clergy, mourning hoods very stylised. Mourning clothes were as subject to fashion changes as were all aspects of life. The spectacular funerals of the Victorian era only seem so when viewed from a distance. Mourning costume was essential for both rich and poor. The fashion for voluminous clothes meant that vast quantities of cloth were required. It is noted that the fortunes of the Courtaulds empire were founded on black crepe. Crepe is a silk fabric, processed to reduce silk's sheen. As an extra process, the threads are twisted so that a crinkle effect is obtained, further reducing the gloss. Mourning clothes, above anything else, had to be dull as well as black. Even staff were put into mourning during the 17th and 18th centuries, though the fabric used was serviceable and cheap. Such was the need and therefore demand for mourning apparel that there were mourning sections in stores.

### 3.xiv Mourning Warehouse

No matter what the distance,  
the fitting dressmaker came too.





Advertisements of the period provide good primary resources. The mourning clothes for widows have always had a special significance. Although widows in Victoria's time kept to the styles of fashion in cut, careful attention was paid to the material and its character. Mourning had a time scale: after a period half mourning could be worn. First, full mourning was for twelve months, then half mourning could eventually be adopted. This allowed greys, purples and violet. Even as recently as 1956 half mourning was noted; this was after a period of six months after bereavement. Grey had been worn for the previous three months.<sup>123</sup>

#### 4.iii Monuments and Grave Designs

The monuments and gravestones that furnish churchyard, burial ground and cemetery are reflections of a section of the population at that time. Britain's poor were fortunate to have a name and date on a common grave slab. Nevertheless, those monuments that remain offer a valuable record of a given section of society at any one time. Just as there are fashions in dress and food, so death attracts its own changes. Crichton records that the stele, an upright slab of stone, was first used by the Greeks in the sixth century BC.<sup>124</sup>

A cemetery may be stocked with similar gravestones, all from the same pattern book offered by the funeral furnishers. Of note, Ecclesfield churchyard has a section with some strikingly similar sandstone memorials: newly opened sections of local authority cemeteries also tend to look 'all the same.'

**3.xv Ecclesfield Church**  
Some similar memorials





### 3.xvi City Road Cemetery, Sheffield

Similar memorials



Just as the churchyards have their rules and advice, so do the cemetery managements.

Memorials must be of a certain size and conform to the custom of the site. There may

be only lawn graves on a site, with grassed over grave, or a traditional site may be an option where the maintenance of the plot is the responsibility of the grave owner.

However, there are likely to be fewer restrictions on wording, decoration, material and colour of lettering than one finds in churchyard requirements. It is even possible to buy memorials via the Internet.<sup>125</sup>

The art of death is recorded by monuments and ephemera. As Llewellyn says:

*'Commemorative art both describes the past life of the deceased and establishes the person's future reputation.'*<sup>126</sup>

Thomas Gray's *Elegy* was written during the period when the sculptors of monuments were true masters of their art.

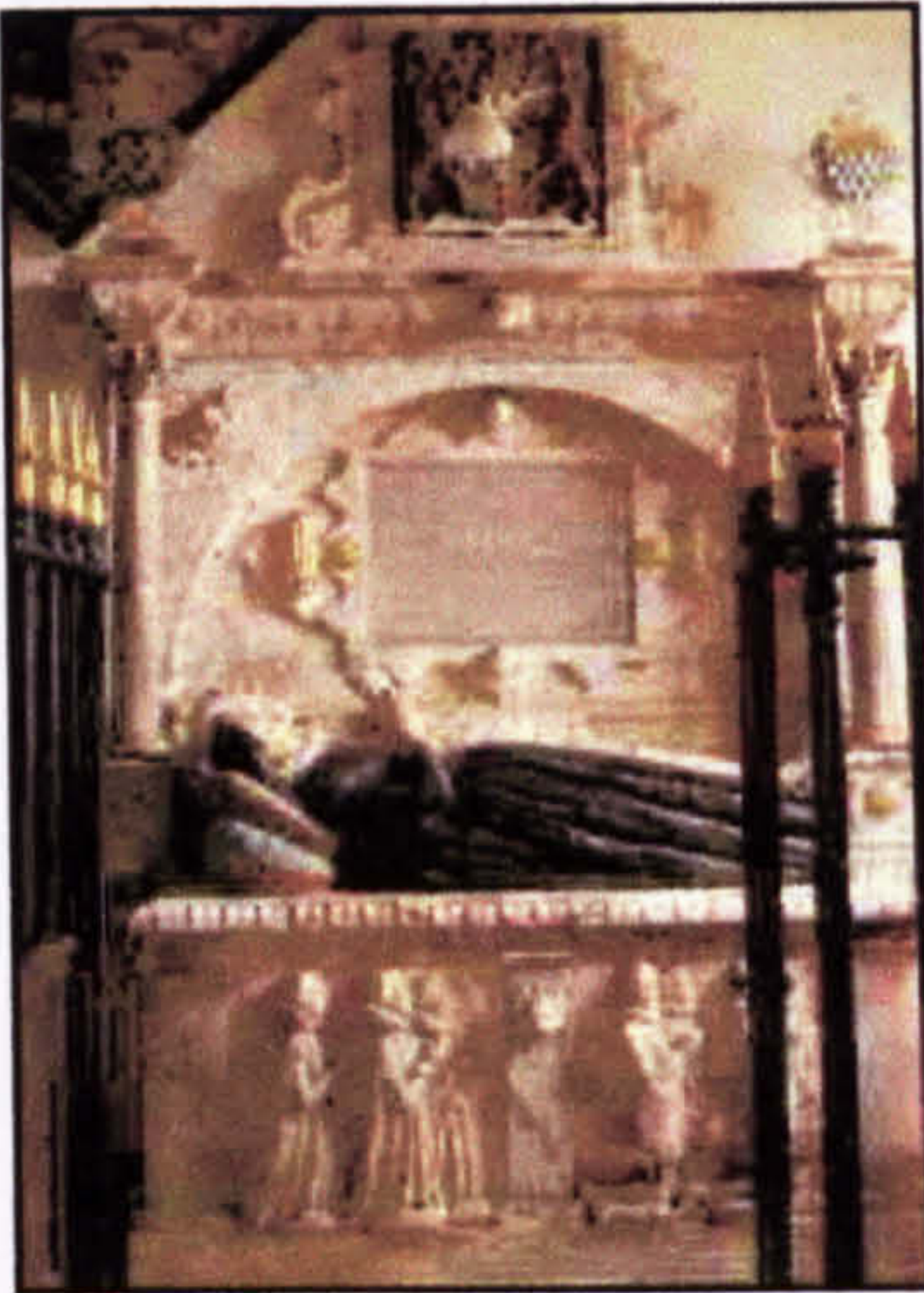
*'Can stored urn or animated bust  
back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?'*<sup>127</sup>

As Collinson notes:

*'... it was after the reformation that sculpted memorials began to increase in number and variety to represent every walk of life. With Renaissance exuberance or classical restraint they provide a running commentary on three hundred years of history from Elizabeth I to the reign of Victoria.'*<sup>128</sup>

Collinson's illustrated volume on monuments of the post-Renaissance includes an appendix documenting the styles and periods of the great monuments.





### *3.xvii Titchborne, Hampshire*

Seventeenth century monument in the Titchborne Aisle, the family chapel.

Church monuments have a long history; they may be found in any part of a church and may have been moved around or imported from another place. If there was a family chapel then one is likely to find appropriate monuments in that area. The styles of these monuments followed the styles of the time: the simple shallow coffin-shaped memorials of the twelfth century were placed over the intramural tomb of someone of note. Then developed the tomb-like structure with effigy and prominent carving, the master sculptors of the day demonstrating their art. Next was added the canopy; a product of the mid thirteenth century and beyond using Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular styles. Monuments grew larger in concept and construction culminating in the 'triumph of the Gothic Revival'<sup>129</sup> of the Victorian era. It is rare to find a late twentieth century monument in the past sense of that term; nowadays a memorial is more likely to be church furnishings and fittings or even vestments.<sup>130</sup> The dead have long created their own memorials with endowments or legacies. There are opportunities for memorials following cremation. A conventionally styled plot may be purchased: it is short, with low memorial stones. Brass kerbstones may be purchased to place around the edges of paths or near scattering grounds; a name may be placed in a Book of Remembrance at a church or crematorium. Different establishments



offer different styles of memorial. Columbaria are also used, as are walls of memorial plaques. Trees are often planted: their longevity, symbolism and beauty make them appealing subjects.

Brasses are found in many an old church. They are fine, engraved metal plates which used to be let into the surface of a tomb after intramural burial. They occupied no space and were available to all. If they are still let into the floor they are likely to be covered or roped off for protection. They depict the personage inhabiting the tomb, and are stylised; they show a figure wearing armour, vestments or conventional clothing. Dogs are added, as are shields and canopies. The appreciation of monumental brasses as a valuable legacy to the population in general, and an appreciated part of Britain's inheritance, is well understood. Brasses have become endangered so they are locked away, railed off or otherwise removed from touch, as the constant attentions of the rubbers was not so much rubbing them away as causing irreparable damage by defacement. In the past the brasses were lost by theft: stolen to be melted down. As Macklin found, 'Brasses were made of valuable metal, and were sometimes found useful in the casting of cannon.'<sup>131</sup> Macklin also states that brasses were sold off during the Gothic Revival and Restoration period of the nineteenth century when much that we would now appreciate was destroyed. He notes methods of brass rubbing and records how the British Museum arranged their collections. The preface to Macklin's book, written by Oman of the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1953, states that the rubbing of brasses has ceased to be a hobby. Brass rubbing is now a very common 'school trip' activity and tourists queue to 'have a go'; a pleasurable, easy, tactile activity on a wet day. That the brasses are reproductions seems of no consequence. Brass rubbing is now firmly part of the ritual of tourism.





### ***3.xviii Sheffield brass: Sheffield Cathedral***

This 1663 brass, set above the tomb of Martha, the sixth daughter of Stephen Bright, of Carbroke, Sheffield, was once the focus of much interest, and the attention of brass rubbers. It is now cordoned off to protect it for future generations.

The rituals associated with the Sheffield funeral may appear to be static, locked into place by memory and custom. Yet customs change, and new traditions can be established over a brief period of time, just as the use of plaques and pictures of the departed on grave markers in the burial grounds of this city has been firmly established within the last decade. For those necessarily involved, a funeral ritual in Sheffield is apparently static, and governed by custom, but it is a custom that is subject to change.



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## Chapter Four

### Religion and Burial Rites from Early Western to Contemporary

#### 1. Introduction

This study is primarily concerned with the religious elements in death rituals, past and present. Death invokes old beliefs and older rites: from the time of primitive man to the imminent second millennium a death in any tribe, group or society has both threatened the stability of that society and the mortality of individuals within that society who are touched by death. It could be considered that death has been seen as an inexplicable event and therefore rationalisation is necessary, and reasonings and rituals for it evolving and eventually being incorporated into the belief systems of any given group: *“this is what we believe therefore this is what we do”*. From the time of early man the corpse has received careful interment with attendant artefacts to enable it to function in its future life. Often the head was removed: consuming the brain passed on life and it had magical-religious qualities. James cites many burial practices from Palaeolithic and Neolithic excavations:<sup>1</sup>

- carefully prepared and protected grave
- provision of implements, food, ornaments, amulets
- burial in ritualistic position
- use of red ochre: life-giving agent
- head protected
- orientation of corpse
- shell necklaces
- flexed and tied bodies: to prevent the dead walking?

It is noteworthy that James stated, in 1958, in his investigation of myth and ritual in what he terms the ‘cradleland of the higher living monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity and Islam,’<sup>2</sup> from prehistoric times to the Bronze age:

‘Our modern habit is to look at religion from the side of beliefs rather than from that of rites largely because until recently almost the only forms of religion studied seriously in Christendom have been those of Christianity and Judaism where ritual has been regarded as important only in connexion with its interpretation. Even



amongst anthropologists the tendency has been for attention to be concentrated on belief as the ultimate source of ritual on the assumption that the latter is but the former put into practice, with the idea of the soul as the basic concept.’<sup>3</sup>

James continues by citing others who note that the old religions had no creed: they were institutions and practices. The practices were fixed, the meanings attached to the same rite given different explanations by different peoples at different times and in different places but all with common elements. Indeed, he states:

‘It is now widely recognised that the characteristic feature of religious thought is essentially mythological. In the higher religions it is true the cruder types of myth and ritual have been eliminated or transformed into symbolism, but the myth has never been wholly excluded or distinguished very clearly from symbol.’<sup>4</sup>

## **1.i. The Jewish way**

### **1.i.a Law and custom**

Jewish law has custom as its root: over time custom has been transmuted and accepted as law. The customs and laws of burial and mourning are quite specific. Indeed, whole works are published dedicated to death and mourning customs.<sup>5</sup> Lehrman refers to the Bible and the Talmud as ‘the two great monuments of the Jewish people.’<sup>6</sup> The Talmud is the literature that contains the Mishnah, the collection of laws known as the Tannaim which was compiled in 200 AD. Numerous laws, in the Talmud, and the Mishnah, concerning death, burial and mourning in Jewish beliefs and practices indicate that the burial of the dead is considered to be of great importance. Indeed, Rowell states:

‘The very existence of these regulations makes it clear that the burial of the dead was one of the important religious obligations of Judaism.’<sup>7</sup>



### 1.i.b Death and burial preparations

Patterns of Jewish burial customs have an exceptionally long history: customs concerning speedy burial and the washing of the corpse with its polluting attributes are well documented. Death management was, and is, provided by the Chevra Kadisha, the local burial society. The ritual laying out and washing of the body is performed in proscribed sequence. All aspects are governed by respect rather than by personal wishes. Thus the dying are watched over without being moved. The body is also watched at all times and is ritually washed and prepared for burial by the members of the Chevra Kadisha. Grave clothing is now specified: written evidence about the early Jewish way in death management and burials is scarce. However, there are strong suppositions that early Christian burials are based upon existing Jewish burial customs; the Synoptic Gospels point to Jesus being buried according to the Jewish custom. The body was wrapped in a linen cloth and spices prepared. The head cloth, the mitznephet, was used as well as other grave clothes, and a tomb used for interment.

### 1.i.c Burial

Rowell, writing of Christian practices inherited from Judaism, states, of Jewish burials:

‘The pattern of burial customs is basically dictated by the practical necessity of disposing of the dead man as reverently and as efficiently as possible. In hot climates, in which the body quickly begins to decay and becomes a danger to health, this means that burial must follow very soon after death.’<sup>8</sup>

However, Lamm, in his rabbinic ‘erudition’ *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*<sup>9</sup> states in his Introduction:

‘Repugnance to the mutilation of a body expresses a reverence for man, because he was created in God’s image. The ban on necromancy is founded on very precise



theological concepts of creature and Creator. Likewise, the commandment to bury the dead without delay draws a very fine, but clear, line between reverence for the dead and worship of the dead.’<sup>10</sup>

He continues later:

‘The Bible, in its mature wisdom, required burial to take place as soon as possible following death. It established this requirement by both a positive and a negative command. Positively, it stated, “Thou shalt surely bury him the same day.” Negatively, it warned, “His body shall not remain all night” (Deuteronomy 21:23). Jewish law, therefore, demands that we bury the deceased within 24 hours following death.’<sup>11</sup>

There is no mention of heat or pollution being the reason for quick burial. Indeed,

Lamm, of the American rabbinical school, writes only of the religious and psychological aspects, using four main points:

- respect for man, made in the image of God
- the soul has returned to God: the body must not be left to linger with the living
- Jewish tradition gives this honour of immediate burial to the dead
- psychological benefits for the family not to dwell too long in despair<sup>12</sup>

Lehrman, writing in England, notes a slightly different interpretation:

‘In early times, burials seem to have taken place on the day of death, but out of respect for the dead (lest the haste seem indecorous), and in order to enable relatives from afar to attend the funeral, it was decided to allow a day or two to elapse before the funeral took place.’<sup>13</sup>

The Central Council for Jewish Community Services supplies the following current information:

‘Judaism maps out a code of conduct for any eventuality and aspect of life, from birth to death, from washing in the morning to going to sleep at night. ... Burial should take place as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours of death.’<sup>14</sup>

Rabbi Felder writes, in the revised *Yesodi Semachos*, retitled *Mourning and Remembrance in Halachah and Jewish Tradition*:<sup>15</sup>

‘It is not permitted to delay the burial of a deceased ...’<sup>16</sup>

Again, Rabinowicz writes:

‘It is obligatory upon Jews to bury the dead as soon as possible, and early burial has always been the Jewish practice ... Early burial was not due entirely to the exigencies of the hot climate of the Holy Land, as it is sometimes said. Rather it was considered a humiliation to the dead to leave them unburied.’<sup>17</sup>



Rabinowicz also cites Deuteronomy 21:23 :

‘His body shall not remain all night upon the tree but thou shalt surely bury him the same day’,

and the appropriate portion of the Mishna Sanhedrin:

‘Whoever leaves his dead lie over night, transgresses both a positive command ... and a negative command.’

It must be noted that the King James authorised version of the Bible has, as

Deuteronomy 22: vv 22 , 23:

‘And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God:) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.’

From this it could be read that it is the *executed* body that defiles.

#### 1.i.d Mourning

Rowell refers to the ‘numerous regulations for burial and for mourning’: <sup>18</sup> they are comprehensive in its widest sense; laws and customs are precise and particular, with many dating from before Christ. He states:

‘The Talmudic tractate on mourning, ironically called *Semahoth*, ‘joys’, gives elaborate mourning rituals, some of which are thought to ... reflect the practice in Palestine in the first century CE.’<sup>19</sup>

Rowell catalogues some of these mourning customs, quoting the Talmud:

‘He is forbidden to do work, to bathe, or to anoint himself, to have intercourse, or don sandals; he is forbidden to read the Pentateuch, Prophets, or Hagiographa, or to recite the Mishnah, or Midrash and *halacoth*, or the Talmud or *aggadoth*. If, however, the public have need of him, he need not abstain.’<sup>20</sup>

Mourning patterns are prescribed: Lamm notes:

‘Judaism, with its long history of dealing with the soul of man, its intimate knowledge of man’s achievements and foibles, his grandeur and his weakness, has wisely devised graduated periods during which the mourner may express his grief, and release with calculated regularity the built-up tensions caused by bereavement. The Jewish religion provides a beautifully structured approach to mourning.’<sup>21</sup>



Mourning periods found in Ecclesiasticus are also noted by Rowell: the seven day mourning period noted as being frequently justified from the time of Joseph's mourning for Jacob, and the thirty day period for that allotted Moses.<sup>22</sup> Mourners sit *Shivah* (seven) for seven days and many common practices, such as bathing and shaving, are forbidden. Rabinowicz notes that 'the antiquity of Shivah is unquestioned'.<sup>23</sup> Lamm notes five stages of mourning:

1. between death and burial, *aninut*, despair when even major religious requirements are cancelled
2. the first three days following burial, days of weeping when visitors are discouraged
3. the seven days following burial, *shivah*, the mourner comes to accept the loss but remains in the house
4. the first 30 days, *sheloshim*, the mourner leaves the house and slowly rejoins society
5. the 12 months following bereavement, a time for mourning and saying *kaddish* three times a day

Customs during mourning include escorting the dead; the rending of garments; eating traditional foods: hard-boiled eggs and bread rolls; sitting on low stools, (the custom of overturning couches now obsolete); the turning of mirrors; not washing garments nor cutting one's hair and not occupying the customary seat in the Synagogue. The practice of wearing sackcloth and anointing oneself with ashes is an old tradition that is now obsolete, yet it is a term that lives on as an expression of penitence. The saying of *Kaddish* is of great importance for mourners.



### Mourner's Kaddish

Magnified and sanctified be His great name in the world which He hath created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom during your life and during your days, and during the life of all the house of Israel, even speedily and at a near time, and say ye, Amen.

*Let His great name be blessed for ever and to all eternity.*

Blessed, praised and glorified, exalted, extolled and honored, magnified and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He; though He be high above all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations, which are uttered in the world; and say ye, Amen.

*May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life for us and for all Israel; and say ye, Amen.*

He who maketh peace in his high places, may He make peace for us and for all Israel; and say ye, Amen

1.i.e Coffin and grave

It is now customary for the Jewish dead to be placed in a simple wooden rectangular casket. In early burials the body was wrapped in grave-clothes before being placed in a pit or tomb. As Lamm states,

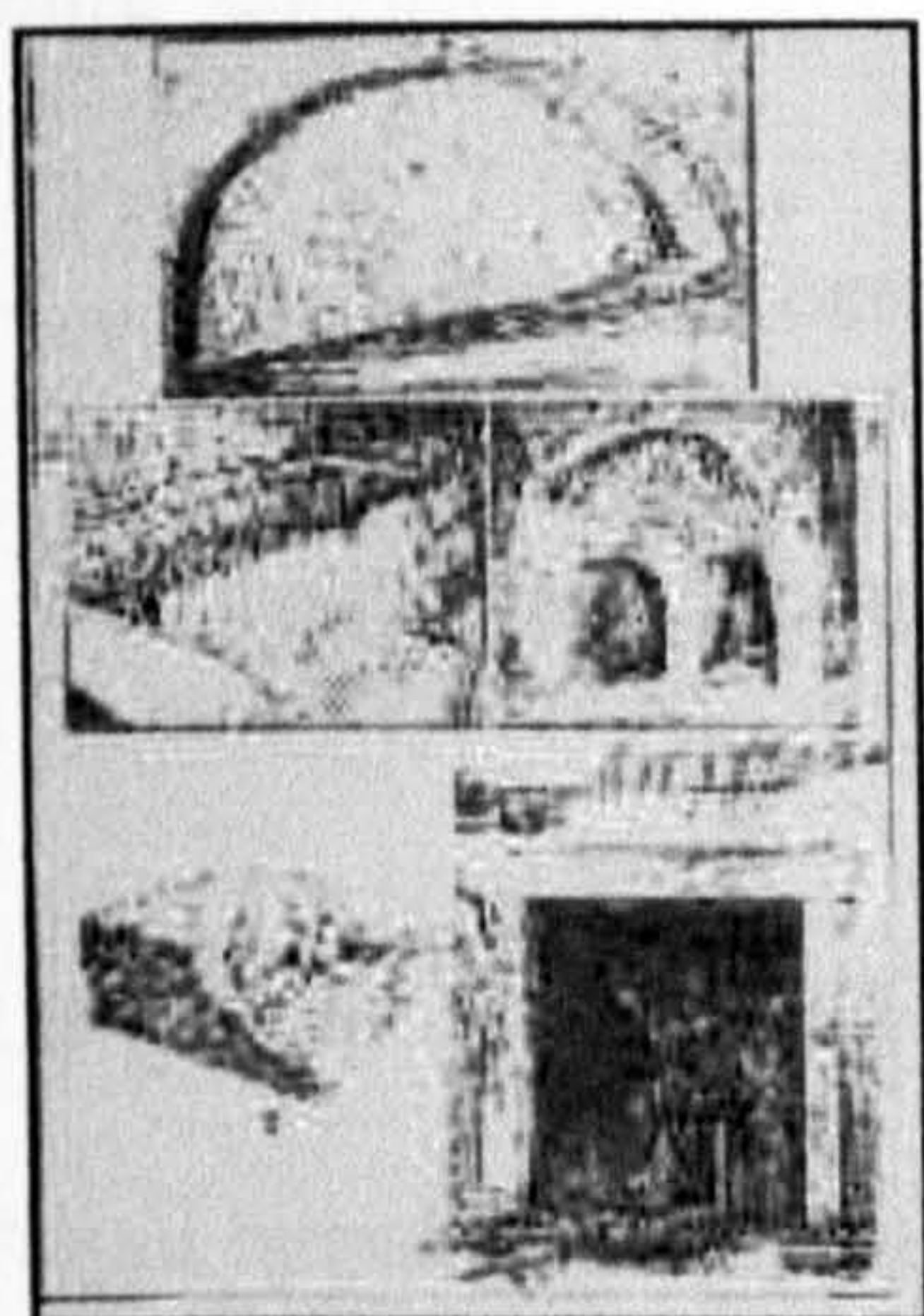
'Jewish law is unequivocal in establishing absolutely, and uncompromisingly, that the dead must be buried in the earth. Man's body returns to earth as it was. The soul rises to God, but the physical shelter, the chemical elements that clothed the soul, sink into the vast reservoir of nature. God's words to Adam are, "For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Later, the Bible crystallizes God's words into positive law, *ki kavor tikberenu*, "Thou shalt surely bury him" (Deuteronomy 21:23).'<sup>24</sup>

Van Deursen uses Biblical references in his descriptive annotation to the illustrations in his work on biblical customs, which includes a section on tombs. However, he deduces and presumes in arriving at his interpretations:

'A study of what the Gospels tell us about Jesus' grave yields the following information. The sepulchre was approached through the entrance hall (John 20:1, 3, 5, 6, 8). Presumably the tomb had an open entrance hall. Then those who came to the tomb had to stoop in order to look inside (Luke 24: 12,; John 20: 11), which confirms that the entrance was low. ... We can deduce that the arched recess and the arcosolium were the normal forms at that time in Jerusalem, and we can assume that the wealthy



Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27: 57), who was a counsellor (Mark 15: 43), had a grave made that was the best possible of his day...<sup>25</sup>



#### **4.i Tombs**

Accompanying illustrations to the section 'Tombs' in Van Deursen's *Illustrated Dictionary of Bible Manners and Customs*. These show possible Israelite family tombs.

Great efforts have been made to determine the exact site of Christ's tomb outside Jerusalem. In her Appendix Bloch-Smith writes of Christ's 'Garden Tomb' as identified by General Gordon in 1880's. She notes that Barkay<sup>26</sup> argues that the tomb is of Iron Age construction, and all grave objects attributed to the tomb date from the eighth to the seventh century BC.<sup>27</sup>

#### **2.i Early Christian rituals**

Little is known about the early Christian burials. Most 'information' is supposition, albeit of an educated manner and based on parallel evidence. Thus, as the very early Christians were Jewish, it is reasonable to suppose that the funeral rituals were based on the familiar. That the Christians cared for their dead was acknowledged by Julian the Apostate who gave that behaviour pattern as a reason for the conversion of the Roman Empire. Rowell has researched some of the accounts of funeral rituals of the era based on reports of the Acts of martyrs when the burial is incidental but still noted. Few reports of burials exists: burials were uncontroversial. Such records as exist point to the burial as being conducted with care. The first most striking characteristic noted is that of Christian singing at funerals. Rowell quotes a fourth century apocryphal account of the burial of John the Baptist's mother written by Garshuni where the souls



of Zacharias and Simeon sang over the body.<sup>28</sup> This reference is noted by Rowell as being 'characteristic of Christian funerals'. He continues:

'In Apostolic Constitutions vi. 30, after warnings about not following Jewish ideas about uncleanness resulting from touching a dead body, Christians are exhorted to read the scriptures and sing 'for the martyrs which are fallen asleep, and for all the saints from the beginning of the world, and for your brethren who are asleep in the Lord.'<sup>29</sup>

## 2.ii The Pagan inheritance

Pagan burial practices were influential in the development of Christian burial practice. In the early church Roman practices were influential, such as the kissing of the dying 'to catch the soul' and the coin placed in the mouth to pay the ferryman, Charon, whose role was to ferry the departed soul across the Styx: this a custom adopted from the Greeks. Some pagan customs were avoided by the early Christians, such as graveside funeral feasts: Jewish tradition demanded that funeral food be largely symbolic, simple in character and eaten in the home. Again, commemoration days were celebrated, on the third, seventh or ninth, and thirtieth or fortieth days following a death. These observances by the early Christians are seen by Rowell to have both pagan and Jewish origins, but 'were given an explanation in Christian terms', with local patterns of commemoration within the Eastern and Western churches. Again, Rowell quotes evidence of Christians wanting to be buried with the Eucharist in their mouths, in the same way that the pagans placed a coin.<sup>30</sup> He records that the church attempted to control the practice of funeral feasts with a substituted eucharist, with any feast having as its purpose the feeding of the poor. Bonner notes that there is archaeological evidence of pagan burial practices, both burial and cremation, with grave goods being present, the most famous of these being the Saxon ship at Sutton Hoo, where both pagan and Christian artefacts were buried.<sup>31</sup>



### 3.i Western medieval practices

The Western medieval Christian funeral with its preparation of the body, procession, service and second procession to the place for burial was influenced partly by the different monasteries under whose auspices a parish was held. Rowell's accounts of fragmentary evidence of religion and funeral rite from the earliest part of this period indicate several salient points. Reference is made to prayers; the giving of the Viaticum to the dying, and the washing of the body before clothing it in appropriate vesture. Funeral liturgies consist of prayers, antiphons and psalms, and the procession is preceded by cross and candles. Early rites showed an attempt to use liturgy during the necessary stages of a burial: procession; service; procession and committal.

### 4.ii *The Bedford Hours*

These date from about 1423: note the stages of death around the edges of the main illustration.



The office of the dead developed within the monasteries was in two basic parts, Vespers, and Matins and Lauds. Ceremonies and rituals were also formulated: Rowell refers to Durandus, 1230-1296, Bishop of Mende, who notes the dying man being placed on a bed of ashes, for the body is ashes and it will return to ashes, the grave



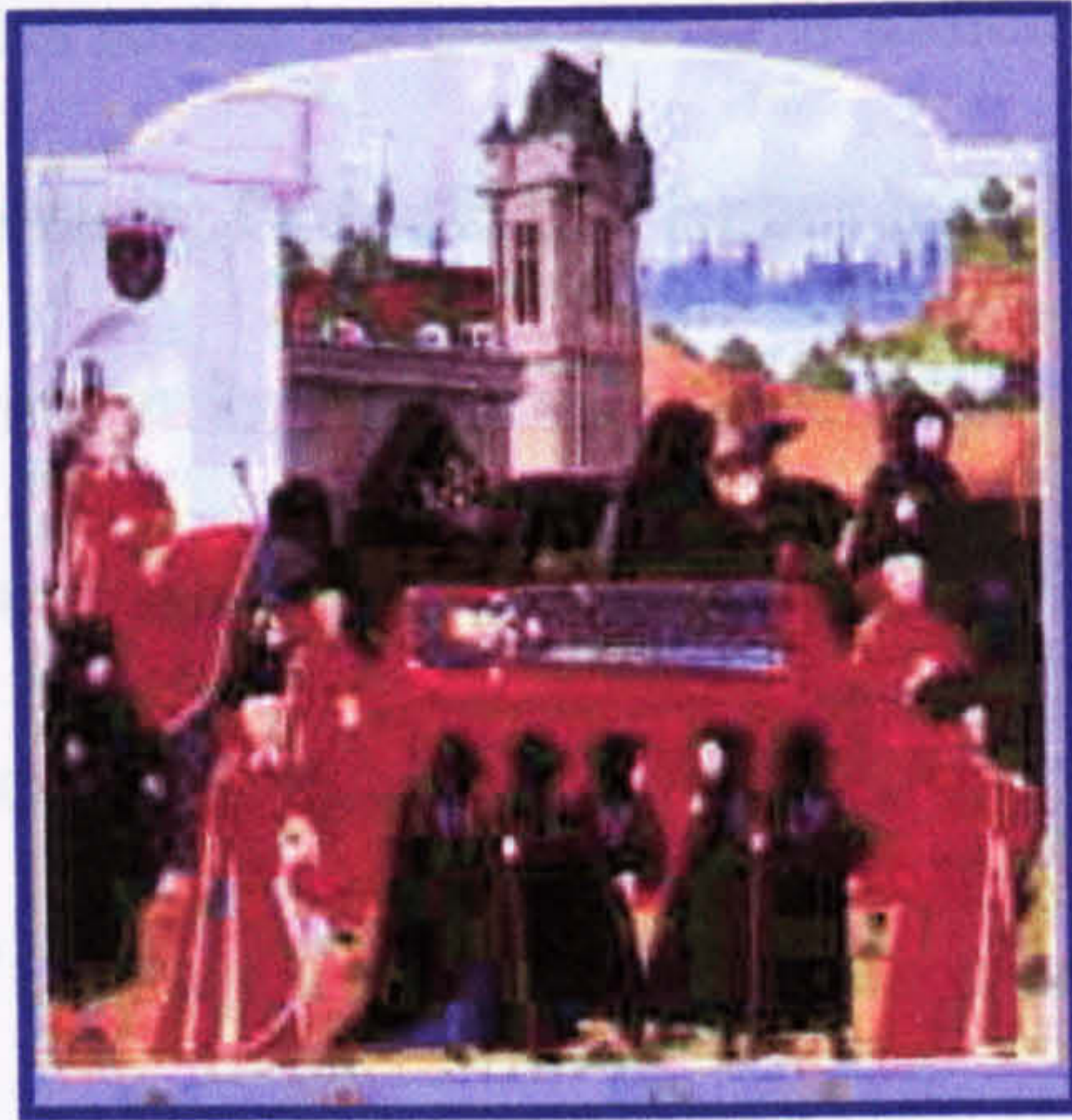
itself sprinkled with holy water and censed and laurel placed in the grave to signify continuing life in Christ. The corpse was laid with the feet to the east and the head to the west, in a prayerful posture. Durandus also notes that bodies should be clothed in clothes of the correct rank and with the feet shod in order that the resurrected bodies be prepared to meet their maker.<sup>32</sup> Bells were also rung when death occurred, this custom going back to the time of Bede in the seventh century when the death of Abbess Hilda was broadcast in this manner.

Barlow, in writing of the medieval English church in the eleventh century, states that:

‘Christianity is an historical religion wrapped in its own traditions ... especially did it remember its dead, because they were not dead but living.’<sup>33</sup>

Of the burial tithe, or soul-scot, Barlow notes that this was a custom sanctioned by royal laws, payable when a Christian was buried. Payment was to be made at the open grave: a nobleman’s tax was heavy and thus his burial ‘well worth having.’<sup>34</sup> Litten, in his work *The English Way of Death*, notes that the doctrine of the western church from the fifth to the sixteenth centuries was set by St Augustine of Hippo, who expounded the theory of purgatory, the purifying fire through which all must pass before receiving the crown of life.<sup>35</sup> The liturgy for death and burial was shaped upon the base of this doctrine of purgatory. In the *Sarum Manual*, dating from the fourteenth century, offices were said for the sick and dying which included the sprinkling of holy water and anointing with oil. The funeral procession to the church would have the corpse preceded by crucifer and acolytes, accompanied by the sound of ringing handbells and the carrying of tapers by mourners.





#### **4.iii Funeral : 1422**

The funeral of Charles VI of France

with the Duke of Bedford as chief mourner

In church the Office of the Dead was said, starting with Vespers in the evening. Then the body would rest overnight in church before Matins and Lauds, before the requiem mass. After this the shrouded body was processed to the grave, censed and sprinkled before interment. According to Litten, the first sprinkling of soil on the body was in the shape of a cross.<sup>36</sup> The committal was followed by penitential psalms in the church for the burial party; masses were to be said every day for a month, a period known as the Trental, with special emphasis on the third, seventh and thirtieth days: timings that were coincidental with Jewish periods of mourning, and probably a continuation of custom.

#### **3.ii Orthodox and Eastern rites**

The division of medieval Christians into separate Roman and Orthodox churches was the result of disputes that were centuries old. Within weeks of Christ's crucifixion church membership was numbered in the thousands. Church members were evangelists and travelled far to spread their news of a triune God, salvation and hope. Again, the church in Jerusalem was persecuted and church members scattered: 'they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles'.<sup>37</sup> Membership continued to grow and embraced those of different races. The Christian section of the Bible, the New Testament, chronicles some of these missions:



titles to the various sections indicate areas of evangelism. Thus one has epistles to the Romans; Corinthians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians and Thessalonians.

Persecution under the Roman Empire continued until the time of Constantine who decreed religious tolerance in 310 AD. During the centuries that followed the church became divided over matters of doctrine and power. In the west, following the division of the Roman Empire, the church in Rome took a central role, claiming first place: Rome was, after all, the centre of the Roman Empire. However, the Eastern churches were larger and older; dissension grew until eventually the churches divided in 1054 AD and so the situation remains to this day.

The Orthodox church is collegiate and allows worship in different languages, unlike the Roman church which used Latin for most of its history. The churches are Coptic; Greek; Byzantine; Armenian; Ethiopian; Syrian; Assyrian and Maronite. Within these churches there developed different burial rites but all are united in the length of the liturgy and its style. A ritual farewell in the form of a last kiss may be performed at different times: at the end of the service in the Greek order or at the graveside in the Syrian Order.<sup>38</sup> Orthodox churches tend to be ornamented with icons and the clergy's robes are decorated. Candles and incense are heavily featured in the services, as is singing, but this must be unaccompanied. Indeed, at a Greek Cypriot burial service at the Abbey Lane cemetery chapel in the middle of the 1990's, no precise instructions were relayed to the staff regarding music: church members had not thought to do so, for most Greek Cypriots in this country are repatriated for burial, and, whilst aware of the English custom of solemn music at a funeral, did not consider the possibility of it happening at their funeral. As the funeral party entered the chapel, staff went to play 'suitably solemn' recorded music from an area visible to the party. A cantor happened to notice and the action was aborted, much to his intense relief.<sup>39</sup>





#### ***4.iv Greek Orthodox: illustration to a 'Funeral Service for Lay People'***

Orthodox rites differ from those of western Christianity in some fundamental ways.

Firstly there are separate services for priests and for lay people, and secondly the services are lengthy, with many prayers and anthems. Rowell notes that:

*'Very often a simple, original pattern can be discerned beneath the elaboration of anthems and prayers, which often tend to draw together a multiplicity of biblical images, and to preface petitions for the departed or the mourners with a lengthy rehearsal of the saving acts of God.'*<sup>40</sup>

There are strong Jewish characteristics in the way that the rites draw heavily on the Old Testament wordings and saints. The rituals of washing, bodily preparation, and processions are lengthy: the extensive liturgies employed correspond to the length of the rituals. A shorter liturgy is to be sung for those who die at Holy Easter, and during the whole of the 'Bright Week'. The Greek priestly burial rites are significantly different from those of the laymen. When the body is prepared it is rubbed with oil by three priests and dressed in sacerdotal vestments. The face is covered with a veil normally used to cover the chalice, and a book of the Gospels is placed on the chest.

#### **4.i Reformation and change**

The Reformation of the European Christian churches encompassed Northern Scandinavia, Britain and Germany, involving Luther, Calvin and Wyclif amongst others. Reformation of burial liturgy had been ongoing for some time, as the length of time needed for required liturgy made it beyond the scope of all but the monasteries.



Gradually sections, such as that used during the washing of the body, were deleted, to be replaced in part by a greater emphasis on the mass. The revised Roman Ritual of 1614, in its efforts to set out a workable form of liturgy, was a part of the reformation of burial liturgy. In 1542 Henry VIII allowed a revised edition of the Sarum Breviary and the setting up of a commission for reform under Cranmer whose prayer book was eventually brought into force in 1549 under the sympathetic Edward VI, the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI being introduced in 1552. Much of the previous funeral liturgy had been removed. Litten notes that with Queen Mary's reign in 1553 some pre-reformation ritual returned,<sup>41</sup> yet the subsequent Elizabethan Office for the Burial of the Dead once more removed the requiem mass and lengthy rites. During the Commonwealth, Elizabeth's common prayer book was superseded by the *Directory of Public Worship*, which had the plain order:

'When any person departeth this life, let the dead body, upon the day of burial, be decently attended from the house to the place appointed for the public burial, and there be immediately interred, without any ceremony.'<sup>42</sup>

A revision of the Book of Common Prayer was authorised in 1662, under Charles II. This included an extended Order for the Burial of the Dead, with appropriate prayers and psalms, still preceded by The Order for the Visitation of the Sick and The Communion of the Sick. The Burial Order leads with the warning that the Office 'is not to be used for any that die unbaptised, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves.' It continues by offering alternative places for the service: church or graveyard. The service is short. No further changes in the English rite were made before the unauthorised 1928 Prayer Book. Rowell comments that the Reformation rites were 'all severe simplifications of the medieval pattern', with purgatory excised and prayers for the dead almost 'discarded'. He further notes that



the medieval multiplicity of antiphons and psalms were often replaced by a lengthy homily.<sup>43</sup>

#### **4.ii The Nonconformist issue**

Members of the Free Churches: Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian, were generally restricted to burial with the parish churchyard, there being no other burial ground.

This meant that the Anglican service was required to be used, a factor which contributed to dissent. This situation was not resolved until the passing of the Burial Act, 1880 which allowed Nonconformist services to be used in the parish churchyard, with the stipulation that they must be Christian. Rowell notes:

‘The Methodist practice of singing hymns at funerals was noted as a special characteristic.’<sup>44</sup>

Religious communities provided their own burial plots if at all possible, the issue of choice being of great importance. These were more likely to be set up in the cities and larger towns. Nonconformists in small areas of habitation had great difficulty in meeting their needs. For instance, Sheffield saw the establishment of Unitarian burial grounds, the earliest being outside the parish boundary. As noted in Chapter Three, 3.i, of this study, reforming Nonconformists were the instigators of the Cemeteries Movement: local authorities were empowered to establish cemeteries, funded from the Poor Rate, following the Burial Act of 1852.

#### **4.iii The Victorian influence**

The reputation of the Great Victorian Funeral, with black horses, weepers and plumes is carefully documented: artistic evidence in the form of sketch, painting and photograph are displayed as examples of the events that support the reputation.

However, given that there existed a funeral cult within a certain prominent and



influential stratum of the population, ever changing the style and manner of funeral furnishings, firstly demanding finer and more elaborate displays of wealth and pomp and then retreating to a stylish but discreet simplicity as the cult was adopted by those of lesser means, one seeks to question the apparent acceptance of that which could not be changed: the Anglican Order of Burial in the book of Common Prayer. The service is simple and apparently short, with no set space for homily, sermon or address and evidence of funeral sermons scanty. There was, however, considerable pressure for changes in the burial service. The *Unauthorised Book of Common Prayer Revised, 1873* and the *Protestant Prayer Book, 1894*, both contained simple changes in wording to accommodate changes in theological thought concerning the sinful world. Rowell notes that 'the Tractists and the Cambridge ecclesiologists led to demands for prayers for the dead and funeral eucharists.' He continues, noting that the ecclesiologists 'endeavoured to recover some of the traditional medieval appurtenances, which they believed to be part of true Christian funerals, and attacked what they described as 'mere undertakery' and 'sepulchral haberdashery'.' Burial Guilds were once again formed, not only to cover the cost of the funeral, with its Victorian trappings, but to urge for and to plan funerals which included the eucharist. Rowell also notes that funeral requiems became more widely established after the First World War.<sup>45</sup>

Contemporary accounts of the funeral service are scarce, as Jalland<sup>46</sup> points out:

'It is difficult to evaluate mourner's responses to funerals, and to assess their therapeutic value or spiritual significance, because family comments on funerals in letters and diaries were surprisingly few and brief, in sharp contrast to the lengthy accounts of dying and the deathbed. ... Press reports of funerals often provide more information than the letters and diaries of the families involved.'<sup>47</sup>

Jalland cites a *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* pamphlet of advice to mourners:



‘There is much of instruction as well as consolation in the office appointed by our Church for the Burial of the Dead; in which, as in all other parts of The Book of Common Prayer, it is edifying to observe how strict an agreement with Holy Scripture the church Services maintain. Of the whole Burial Service, three-fourths at least are the very words of Scripture itself. The selection has principally been made from those portions of it which relate to the Resurrection. And, it may be asked, what doctrine is so well calculated as to dry the mourner’s tears?’<sup>48</sup>

## 5. Revised rites

The first challenge to the established Prayer Book came in the form of the unauthorised 1928 version, known as the Deposited Book of 1928. In the service ‘The Burial of the Dead’ it adds new rubrics to the beginning, and offers the alternatives of church or graveside service. There is an increased number of opening sentences and a wide choice of psalms. The people are given the opportunity to respond in a traditional manner, after the psalms:

‘Rest eternal grant unto them, O lord: and let light perpetual shine upon them.’  
and the anthem:

‘O saviour of the world, who by thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us.  
Save us and help us, we humbly beseech thee, O Lord.’

Rowell states that ‘this book provides the Anglicans with ‘a richer burial rite than they had had since 1549.’<sup>49</sup> However, he criticises it for ‘not linking the rite with the Easter gospel and the Christian’s baptism into death and resurrection of Christ. This emphasis is only just beginning to be realised in Western Christianity as a result of the Liturgical Movement.’<sup>50</sup> Yet it is often the version referred to when a preference for ‘the old version’ is expressed, a version identified by the quotation of at least one of the opening sentences which are not present in the 1662 version:

‘Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.’

and

‘Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions.’<sup>51</sup>

The 1928 Book also includes an Order which may be used for the Burial of a Child.

The service is shorter than that for others and includes this opening sentence:



**‘He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.’**

**The current version of the Anglican prayer book, *The Alternative Service Book*, commonly referred to as ASB, is very inclusive in its funeral rite.<sup>52</sup> Space is reserved for there to be a sermon. The main service includes eight optional opening sentences, three of which have a resurrection theme; an opening prayer, again based on resurrection beliefs; a choice of four psalms printed, with the option of four more; three printed readings, with the option of ten others; a traditional or modern Lord’s prayer; space for extra prayers, indeed, a cornucopia of options, most of which are theologically appropriate but have the disadvantage of being unfamiliar even to those who use ASB weekly, but who fortunately do not attend funerals with such regularity. They have not inherited the legacy of repetition: even when the source indicates a familiar psalm or reading, the reality is that it is presented in a modern version, with updated words which are politically and ecclesiastically correct. The revised liturgy is resurrection-based, fulfilling basic criteria, yet the Anglican funeral service, with other liturgies, is again under review, as is shown in later chapters.**

**This overview of some of the factors contributing to the ritual / belief debate only serves to illustrate that the major Western religions have an ancient and common past, whatever the current, both major and minor, differences in belief and practice.**



## Notes

1. James, E. O., *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1958, pp.31-36
2. Ibid., p.13
3. Ibid., pp.293, 294
4. Ibid., p.13
5. Works cited in this study:
  - i. Felder
  - ii. Lamm
  - iii. Rabinowicz
6. Lehrman, p.16
7. Rowell, 1977, p.3
8. Ibid., pp.1, 2
9. Lamm, back cover:  
the back cover has a review of this work by Dr. Samuel Belkin, President, Yeshiva University: 'Your rabbinic *erudition* and your ability to present our traditional point of view in modern terminology will make THE JEWISH WAY ... a book that will be of great service to rabbis and laymen alike.'
10. Lamm, p.x
11. Ibid., p.19
12. Ibid., p.19
13. Lehrman, p.183
14. Sheffield City Council Social Services: handout at workshop , 'Major Incident Death in Different Cultures', 1999
15. Felder: *Halachah* refers to the body of laws according to the Torah: Rabbi Felder is based in Toronto; the work is formal, and is in English with a Hebrew translation
16. Ibid., p.36
17. Rabinowicz, pp.22, 23
18. Rowell, p.3
19. Ibid., p.4



20. Ibid., p.3
21. Lamm, p.77
22. Rowell, p.4
23. Rabinowicz, p.56
24. Lamm, pp.55, 56
25. Deursen, A. van, *Illustrated Dictionary of Bible Manners and Customs*, London, Oliphants, 1958, p.78
26. Bloch-Smith, p.234: the author refers to a conversation with G. Barkay, archaeologist, author of many works on the tombs of Jerusalem.
27. Ibid., p.234
28. Rowell, p.21
29. Ibid., p.22
30. Ibid., pp.13, 14
31. Bonner, in Gilley and Sheils, p.25
32. Durandus, G., *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, Book VII, in Rowell, pp.65, 66
33. Barlow, p.9
34. Ibid., p.162
35. Litten, p.147
36. Ibid., p.150
37. The Acts of the Apostles 8:1, King James Bible
38. Rowell, p.31
39. Interview, Nigel Gotteri, Orthodox, referring to his action
40. Rowell, p.74
41. Litten, p.156
42. Ibid., p.156



43. Rowell, p.74
44. Ibid., p.94
45. Ibid., pp.96, 97
46. Jalland
47. Ibid., p.217
48. Ibid., p.217
49. Rowell, p.98
50. Ibid., p.98
51. Personal experiences: discussions on funeral planning with mourners at St. John the Evangelist, Abbeydale, in the role of chorister: 1994 to the present
52. Alternative Service Book, 1980

### **Illustrations**

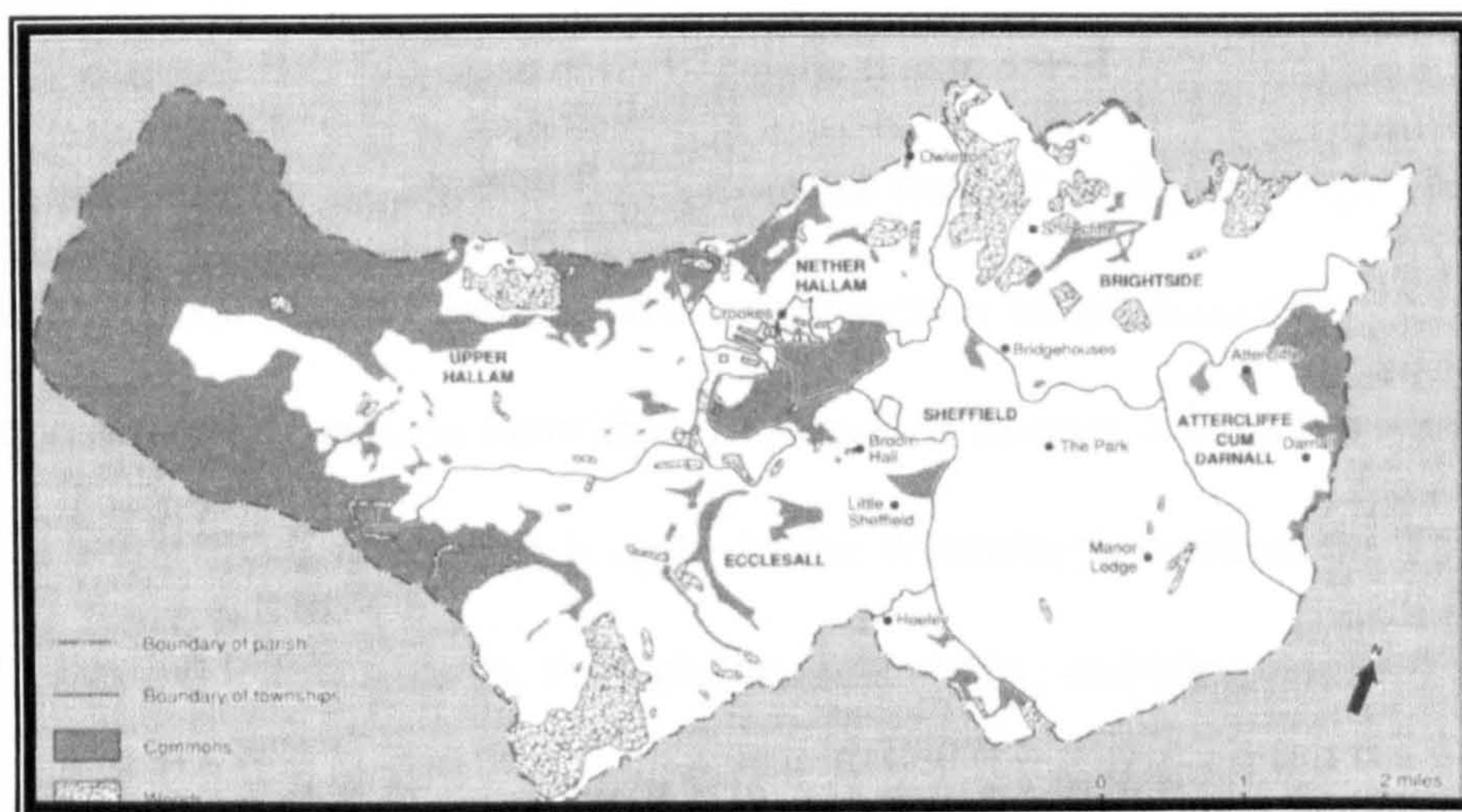
- 4.i **Tombs:** Van Deursen, A., *Illustrated Dictionary of Bible Manners and Customs*, London, Oliphants, 1958, p.79
- 4.ii **The Bedford Hours:** Litten, J., *The English Way of Death*, London, Robert Hale, 1991, Illustration 25
- 4.iii **Funeral: 1422:** Charles VI of France's funeral in 1422, Bridgeman Art Library, London
- 4.iv **Greek Orthodox :Illustration to a 'Funeral Service for Lay People':** *Funeral Service for Lay People*, trans. from the Greek original, Whitby, Assumption, 1993, p.7



## Chapter Five

### The Parish of Sheffield – 1843 to the present

#### 1. Introduction



#### *5.i The ancient Parish of Sheffield*

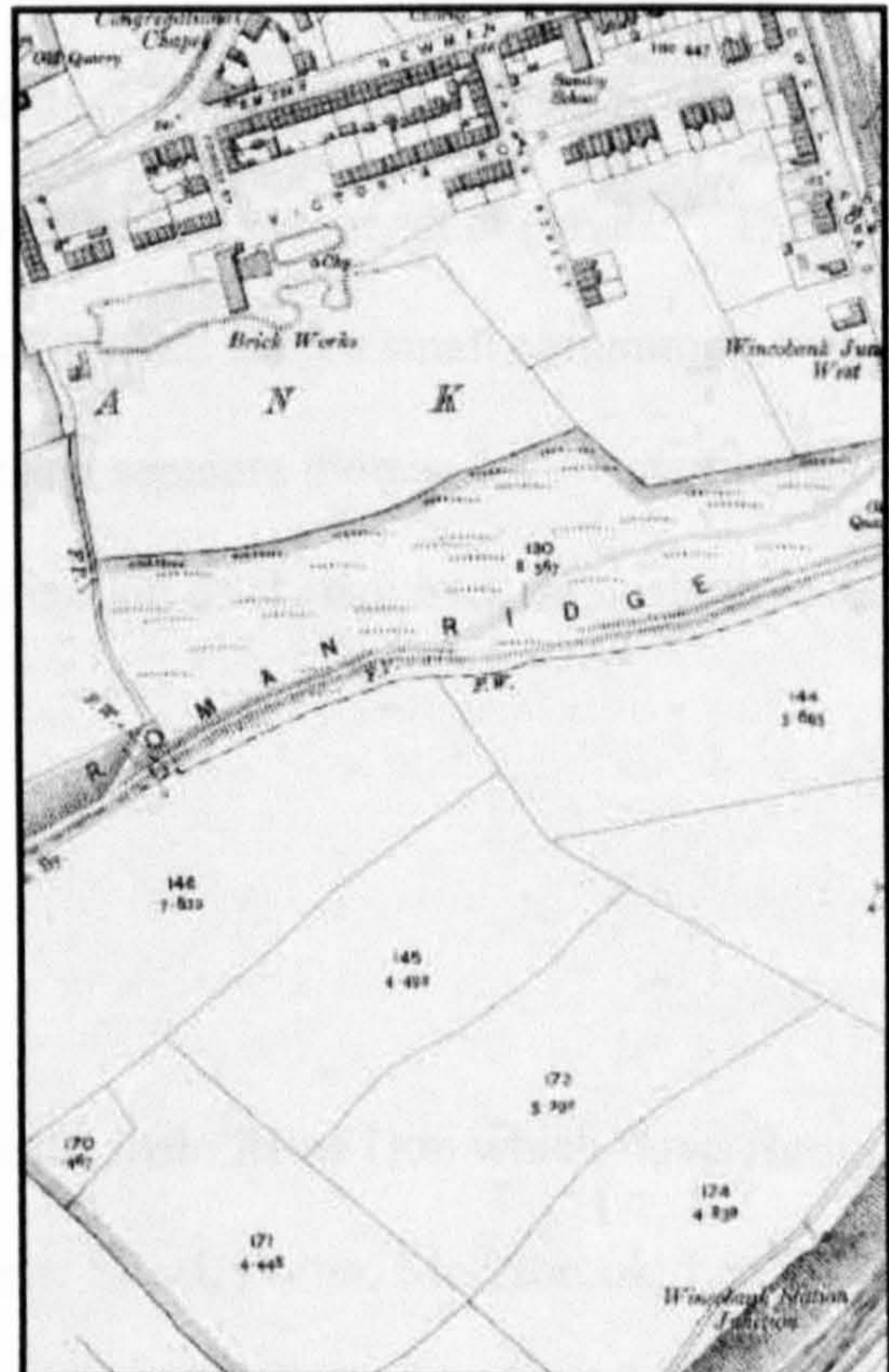
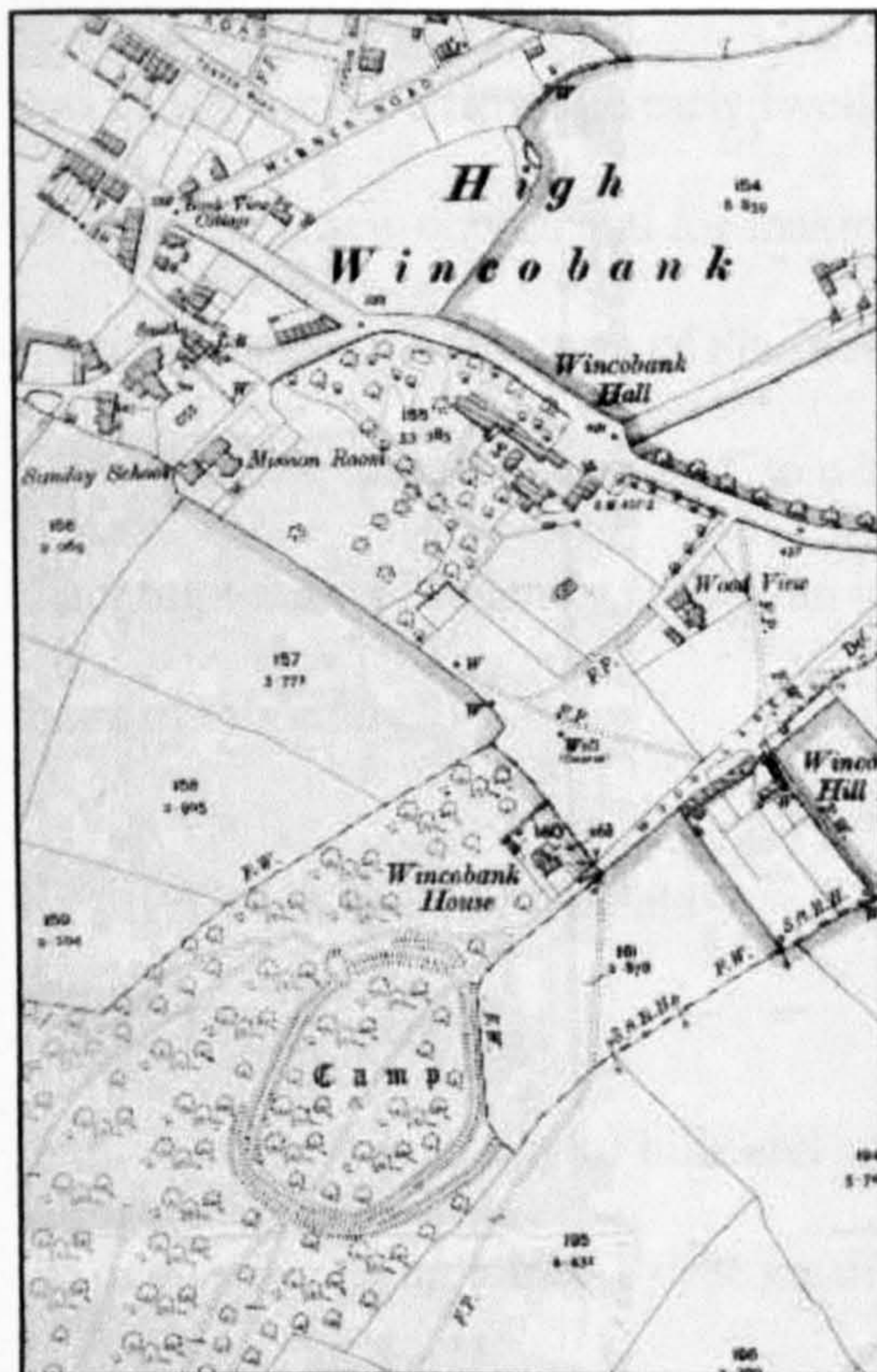
The parish is subdivided into six townships:  
the City of Sheffield follows the boundaries of the old parish.

The parish of Sheffield, now a ‘Parish Church Cathedral’<sup>1</sup> city, has a long and interesting history: its origins have been researched and documented by respected historians who offer a variety of approaches; works such as Hunter’s *Hallamshire* (Gatty edition);<sup>2</sup> Odom’s *Memorials of Sheffield*;<sup>3</sup> *The History of the City of Sheffield, 1843-1993*;<sup>4</sup> *A History of Sheffield*,<sup>5</sup> and *Sheffield, its Story and its Achievements*<sup>6</sup> serve as a combined and authoritative foundation for this study. This chapter introduces the Parish of Sheffield as an essential element in the study of the ritual and religion of the Sheffield funeral and, as noted in Chapter One of this study, *Introduction and Methodology*, the date of 1843 is pertinent as this was the date of the town’s incorporation as a municipal borough, whilst Sheffield is selected for research for a variety of interconnected reasons:



- previous relevant research experience in the city
- personal habitation for thirty years
- professional domain
- long-standing religious connections
- established professional reputation
- wide social network

The name ‘Sheffield’ refers to open country by the River Sheaf. Whilst there is evidence of habitation in the Sheffield area from the time of the Bronze Age, the Iron Age fort at Wincobank is the most noticeable evidence of early occupation: the site can still be visited, and ramparts identified. Evidence of Roman occupation was found at the fort at Templeborough, which is opposite the Wincobank fortification. From here a military road led westwards, through the present city, and out towards the Hope Valley.



**Ordnance Survey 1902 maps depicting the Brigantes hill fort at Wincobank, Sheffield**

**5.ii The Brigantes camp: Wincobank**  
The Iron Age fort is evidence of early occupation

**5.iii ‘The Roman Ridge’: Wincobank**  
The ridge is likely to be an Iron Age fortification



In the text accompanying the Ordnance Survey 1902 map of Wincobank, Lodge writes:

‘In terms of human settlement patterns, Wincobank was on the map, so to speak, centuries before the larger conurbation into which it was ultimately absorbed. There is evidence of a Mesolithic site hereabouts and in the Iron Age the Brigantes established a camp (hill fort) at Wincobank, of which traces survive. The “Roman Ridge” shown is something of a misnomer; if anything it predates the nearby Roman settlement at Templeborough, in all probability being a line of fortification also constructed by the Brigantes.’<sup>7</sup>

In the Anglo-Saxon period the area around Sheffield was known as Hallamshire, one of the Northumbrian ‘shires’ of Anglo-Saxon times whose ecclesiastical centre was the parish of Ecclesfield in the diocese of York: this ‘shire’ comprised the parish of Ecclesfield, the chapelry of Bradfield, and Sheffield, which operated as a chapel of Ecclesfield until gaining its independence. Hey, 1998, notes that William de Lovetot, lord of Hallamshire from the early twelfth century, ‘seems to have been responsible for building a new church and for making Sheffield an independent parish.’<sup>8</sup> The changing shape and structure of Sheffield as it moved from a small community within another parish, that of Ecclesfield, to a large and separate diocese is reflected in the changing nature of funerary rituals: an investigation of change over time which is the focus of this study.

## 1.i The Parish of Sheffield

### 1.i.a Topography

Sheffield is an inland city of hills and rivers, the main River Don which flows through the city centre being joined by the small rivers: Sheaf, Porter, Meersbrook, Loxley and Rivelin. The city is on the southern boundary of Yorkshire and is often termed a village, or a collection of villages. Binfield comments:

‘Sheffield is well known as a homespun city – the largest village in England – drawing on its hinterland to provide its population at times of growth.’<sup>9</sup>





#### *5.iv Sheffield from the southwest*

Sheffield lies in the valleys formed by its five rivers and seven hills

Harvey, in Walton, 1984, writes of a time 'when Sheffield was the biggest village in the country',<sup>10</sup> and Saunders comments that:

'It has the nickname "village" and residents are proud of the term. It includes an amalgam of small, separate communities which exhibit distinct differences.'<sup>11</sup>

The city was once part of the West Riding of Yorkshire: a new administrative County of South Yorkshire was formed in 1974 following the local Government Act of 1972, which comprised Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster. This caused some concern as the administrative centre was to be the smaller town of Barnsley; "Sheffield near Barnsley" was not a thought to be accepted lightly: a situation since rectified, much to the gratification of the population who enjoy being 'right'.<sup>12</sup> There was, however, little general concern over the change of address: as long as the term *Yorkshire* was included all was well, although there are those who would seek to live in an elementally fictitious 'South Riding'.<sup>13</sup> The identification with Yorkshire is recognised from the late eighteenth century onwards, as Hey, 1993, comments:

'Despite the city being tucked away in the southeast corner of the county and having taken in parts of ancient Derbyshire, Sheffielders think of themselves unreservedly as Yorkshire men and women ... the bonds were undoubtedly strengthened by the sporting traditions that were established in Victorian times. The Yorkshire County Cricket Club was, of course, founded in Sheffield.'<sup>14</sup>

Of early twentieth century Sheffield, Odom writes:

'Sheffield has been pictured as having two faces, as different as the masks of comedy and tragedy. "To the west it is all smiles as it climbs up the wooded heights of



Endcliffe and Ecclesall to open its lungs to the fine air of Derbyshire moors and dales. To the east it is all frowns and black looks as it sinks to the industrial netherworld of Attercliffe and Brightside." Encircled by lofty hills, and favoured by the glorious breezy Yorkshire moors and the wild, picturesque scenery of the Derbyshire Peakland, the town, notwithstanding the canopy of smoke which too often overshadows it, is second to none for beauty of situation.'<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, Hey, 1993, notes that:

'.. the density of the smoke was, in fact, the chief characteristic of Sheffield as far as nineteenth-century visitors were concerned. In 1843 the Revd J.C. Symons wrote that the new borough was 'one of the dirtiest and most smoky towns I ever saw.'<sup>16</sup>

Walton, writing in 1948, further notes that:

'The glory of Sheffield lies hidden under the famous smoke pall that hangs over the valley of the Don.'<sup>17</sup>



### 5.v 'Overview'

'An unusual rooftop view of Sheffield from Park Hill looking over the Midland Station towards the Town Hall.'

*from an original oil painting  
by Peter Owen-Jones*

That pall was largely swept away by the Clean Air Act of 1956 yet now the yellow sulphurous pollutions of Manchester and Rotherham now meet over the city and join with home-produced emissions to sit flatly and poisonously in the Lower Don valley.

Sheffield is accepted as a border city between north and south, east and west, a recognition that has its roots in the past when it was one of the small centres of habitation in Hallamshire. Hey, 1998, notes that in the Dark Ages:

'The Sheffield district was a border zone between northern and middle England, just as it had been in the pre-Roman period. ... The Limb Brook ... separated Mercia from Northumbria, and the border continued along the river Sheaf and the Meersbrook, both of whose names mean division or boundary. To the north of the Limb Brook the frontier was marked on the moors by Whirlow (whose name means 'boundary mound'), by what was described in 1574 as 'a great heape of stones called



Ringinglowe', and by that ancient marker, Stanage Pole. In later centuries these rivers, mounds and pole separated Yorkshire from Derbyshire and the Archbishopric of York from that of Canterbury. Sheffield's border position has been a constant theme in its long history.'<sup>18</sup>



#### ***5.vi Ringinglow: The Round House***

This octagonal Barber Fields tollhouse stands on the Sheffield turnpike at the 'great heape of stones called Ringinglowe' noted above.

Communications are affected by the topography of the area. Apart from two westward passes towards Greater Manchester which are notoriously affected by wintry weather or the mists which are commonly referred to as 'low flying cloud', Sheffield has the benefit of a nearby motorway, the M1, which is accessed from the city centre by a dual carriageway. The winter snow and ice can be tackled, but the motorway runs through the Lower Don Valley, a land subject to low-lying mist and fog for which there is no solution. The only rail line is subject to flooding at Sheffield's Midland Station: the Sheaf runs alongside the station and is not tamed. The little river is subject to England's version of a flash flood from any volume of rain in the moorland catchment area.

#### **1.i.b Demography**

The city has a current population of approximately 550,000 as against the 111,091 recorded in the 1841 census, and whilst the centre now has few residents following massive slum clearance, there are moves to attract a new and revitalised population: the 'Devonshire' district of the city-centre Anglo-Catholic parish of St. Matthew is



currently being developed and promoted. The parish has few church members who live within its present bounds, although it has recently been expanded to include the parish of St. Silas, where the church is closed. This parish had a resident congregation. Similarly, the Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals and Nonconformist chapels in the city centre attract their congregations from all around the city as well as from the daytime urban commuters and shoppers. There are large council housing estates both near the city centre, such as Wybourn and Manor, and further out, Shiregreen and Colley to the north and Woodhouse and Beighton to the east, which are typical Sheffield estates. High-rise flats mark the skyline at Norfolk Park, Skye Edge and Lowedges, whilst the infamous 'streets-in-the-sky' development of Park Hill has achieved a bewildering 'Listed Building' status.



### 5.vii *Park Hill flats*

The people of Sheffield were amazed to hear that these flats had achieved Listed Building status.

### 5.viii *Sheffield suburbia*

This pleasant Sheffield property, for sale in July 1999, is to the south west of the city and less than three miles from the centre.



**Sheffield**  
**o/a £279,500**



*Delightful landscaped gardens to rear*

- Superb four-bedroomed split-level bungalow
- Situated in much favoured district
- Luxury breakfasting kitchen
- Attractive en-suite bathroom
- Splendid lounge with double glazed bay window
- Excellent gardens to front and rear

As industry, smoke and grime claimed the town, the industrialists responsible moved their residences westwards, onto the wooded slopes looking down over the rest of the town. As soon as they could afford it, the upper middle classes followed, to be followed in their turn by those of more modest means. Now the largest properties are




properties are likely to be used commercially. Abbeydale Hall has recently been for sale, but it is expected to be converted into luxury flats or a commercial proposition.

## WHIRLOWBROOK HALL

*The most beautiful setting for social and corporate entertainment.*

Whirlowbrook Hall offers style and elegance in a beautiful, tranquil parkland setting, with a flexible range of comfortable reception rooms and fully equipped meeting rooms suitable for functions for up to 150 people.

The relaxed personal service and excellent food contribute to the unique atmosphere of this beautiful venue.



### **5.ix Commercial premises**

The large properties of Sheffield can often be saved by finding an alternative usage.

Whirlowbrook Hall's grounds are a public park. The public café in the Hall is very popular.

Sheffield is situated on the western flank of the southern Pennines known as the Dark Peak and is approximately equidistant from the Irish and North Seas. However, the upland area to the west forms a natural barrier which seems to deter casual traffic. Although the city has westerly direct road links with Greater Manchester via the two passes noted earlier: the winding and narrow *Snake* which runs due west, and the upland *Woodhead* which is accessed from the extreme north of the city, both are subject to sudden closure during winter blizzards. Even when the passes are open a winter transit is potentially hazardous, with fog and mist contributing to the accident rate. The citizens of Sheffield treat the east coast resorts as 'their' seaside: Skegness, Mablethorpe, Filey and Bridlington are popular destinations, particularly for caravan holidays, whilst the town of Scarborough is frequented by those who are prepared to travel just a little further.

The city has an interesting dialect and accents that are pertinent to particular areas.

The Hyde Park, Park Hill and Wybourn sound is more guttural than that of

Woodhouse, where vowels are narrower and the 'd' is frequently sounded as 't':

'bretcairk' for breadcake, and 'cort' for coat. Indeed, primary teachers new to the city



believe that the Teacher's Centre should offer an induction course in a language laboratory.<sup>19</sup>

Sheffielders display a village approach to foreigners, whether they be from Liverpool, London or Lahore. The city is self-contained and each community is rooted firmly in the past. Binfield comments that some Irish and Scots were attracted to Sheffield in the nineteenth century and 'its insularity was occasionally breached by migrants from further afield.'<sup>20</sup> In the 1970's, with the influx of relocated professionals serving the Midland Bank and the Manpower Services Commission, the city saw the growth of distinctive cosmopolitan areas where those left at home could hold comfortable coffee mornings for others in the same situation with whom they identified. Ethnic ghettos are self-established with the ease that is common in other cities

### 1.i.c Economy

Sheffield is not a wealthy city yet there is a commonly held belief that it has more Rolls Royces per square mile than anywhere else in the country. The city was the centre of the world's cutlery trade until comparatively recently, but with overseas industrialisation and cheap manufacture, Sheffield's share of the cutlery market has shrunk and is now largely that of high-quality luxury flatware and hollowware, albeit with more aggressive marketing than was necessary in 1843. Post-war Sheffield was the site of the vast majority of the cutlery firms in the country, however most of the firms were very small and both method and management were decidedly antiquated. The exceptions were firms such as Viners and Richardsons who expanded into cheap mass production and overseas factories. The rest fell by the wayside, even Viners, leaving the mass market to Richardsons, of 'Laser' knife reputation, and the luxury or designer end of the market such as Arthur Price, Osborne Silversmiths, Hiram Wild,



the Eggington Group and works from the designer David Mellor, whose artistry is acknowledged. The scissor market is still serviced from Sheffield, as is the specialist knife trade and tool trade. The industry employs about 3,000 workers.

### 5.x 'Laser Knives'

Richardsons are now justifiably famous for these knives, which bear that all-important mark: *Sheffield*.



Steel production overtook cutlery as the major source of wealth and employment during the nineteenth century and turned the east end of the town into the infamous roaring inferno that signified Sheffield to outsiders. The steel owners were large in ambition, reputation and gesture: for those with philanthropic leanings their names became attached to some of the most important buildings in the city: Mark Firth of Thomas Firth and Sons founded Firth College, later the University of Sheffield, and Thomas Jessop founded and paid for the Jessop Hospital for Women. Sheffield's steel firms were generally small, with a low output but which produced the valuable special steels and alloys that serviced the vastly larger steelworks of the east coast. The apparent decline in demand for Sheffield's production led to an east end of silent works and a high level of unemployment, yet the steelmaking plants on the outskirts of the city, at Stocksbridge, Rotherham and Shepcoat Lane, could produce far more steel than was produced in the middle of the twentieth century and with a much smaller workforce. The specialist firms still maintained a workforce, research and development continued, and so the aerospace and technical industries continue to be provided with Sheffield steel. The burgeoning steel industry had fuelled the growth of the city but its necessary change in operation to a modernised industry with a small



but specialised workforce saw the dereliction of a city that had kept its insularity intact.

It was time for Sheffield to look outward but it had several expensive, false starts. The World Student Games, which were eagerly sought, became a financial liability. That the citizens had never heard of them before the event and did not want to after it is now accepted and the Games acknowledged to be an unfortunate but very expensive detour on the road to returning prosperity. Supertram caused massive disruption to commerce and population alike: some people use it, most cannot or do not.



#### ***5.xi Supertram?***

The trams are now finished in their new Stagecoach livery. The original silver colour was thought to look like aluminium primer. The trams are cumbersome and slow. Those who live and work near their route say they get used to the noise of these 'silent' vehicles.

Sheffield is styled the 'National City of Sport' but outsiders are rarely aware of this, although events are held at Ponds Forge baths. The Don Valley Stadium no longer attracts events, and the ice-hockey played at Sheffield Arena is losing its fans: snooker at the Crucible theatre is more widely known. The latest initiative, the *National Centre for Popular Music* has not attracted the attendance originally forecast, and has suffered a lengthy period of closure.

#### ***5.xii The National Centre for Popular Music***



However, the service industries do provide most of the work in the city: shopping and education are popular and successful, and clubs thrive. Hey, 1998, notes that the Meadowhall shopping mall, with 7,000 workers, employs more people than any of the local steel companies. <sup>21</sup>



The economy of the city is affected by its communications. The wintry weather noted earlier has a detrimental affect on commuters who find that not even the 4X4 can move when the roads are gridlocked or there are drifts over the moors. Rail traffic is also subject to the weather conditions that prevail in the area: that the single line out of Sheffield is not electrified has been the subject of a constant campaign by rail users who demand improvement. Some say that it is quicker to travel to Doncaster for a high speed train than chug slowly southwards from Sheffield: the famed 'Master Cutler' is a heavily-booked once-a-day expensive option. <sup>22</sup>



**5.xiii KLM over Tinsley Cemetery**

Mourners at the quiet Tinsley cemetery can both watch and listen to the arrival of planes at the City Airport. Departures are noisier.

Sheffield City Airport has now opened at Tinsley, near the motorway junctions.

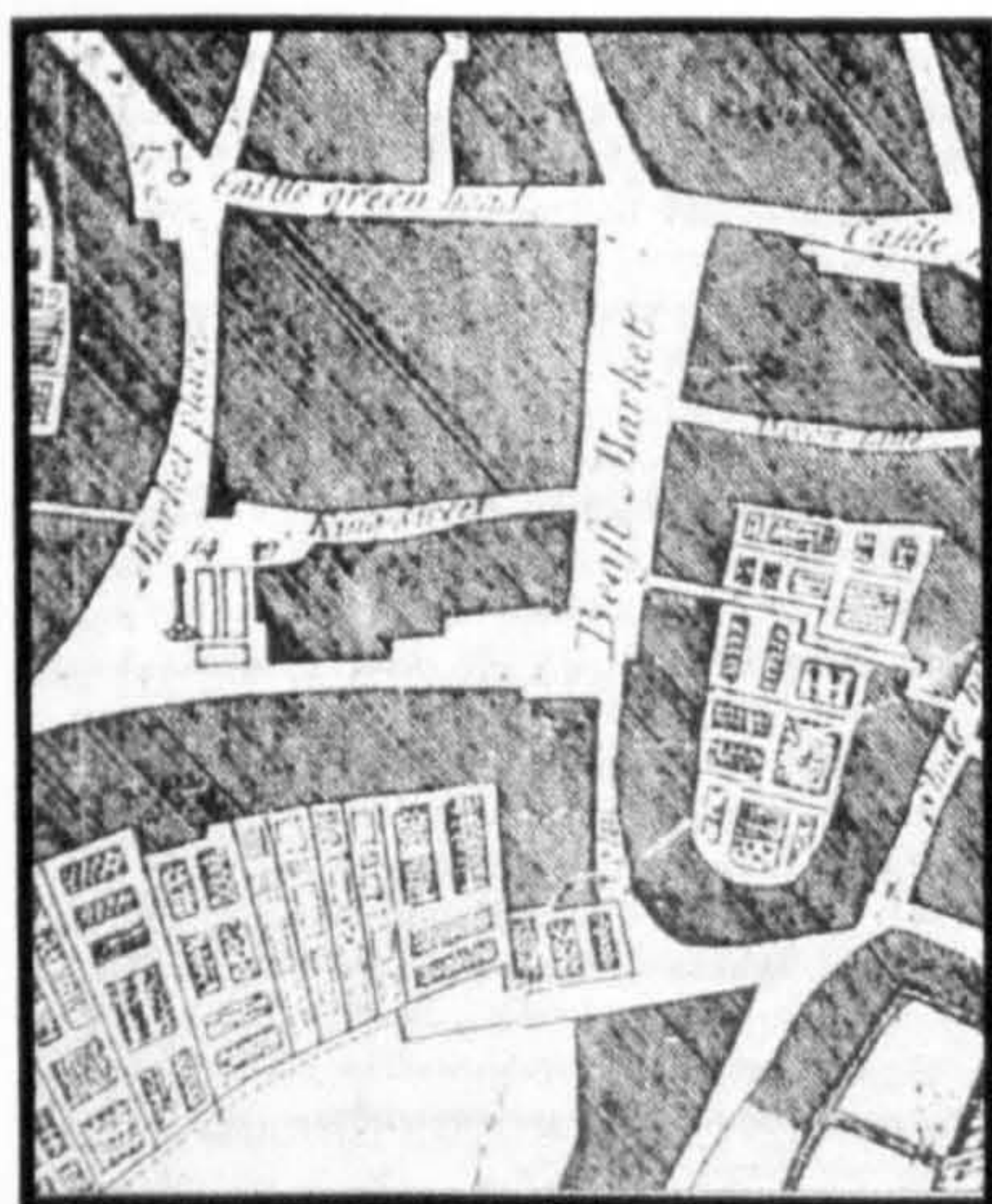
Flights are somewhat restricted, and the services offered have been subject to sudden permanent cancellation, making Manchester airport amore reliable alternative.

**1.ii Landownership and influences**

Modern Sheffield, with its improving transport systems, service industries, sport and music, is built on the sound foundation of its history. The medieval town can be recognised in the names and layouts of its streets, in its Master Cutler: man and train, and in the continuation of such bodies as the Church Burgesses. Hallamshire belonged to Earl Waltheof at the time of the Norman conquest. As a consequence of conspiracy and subsequent beheading, ownership passed into the hands of one Roger de Busliu, a Norman, then to a Roger de Lovetot. In the early twelfth century the lands passed into the possession of William de Lovetot, whose legacy was the creation of the parish of Sheffield. Boundaries were drawn around this parish, the



same boundaries that described Sheffield when it was made a city in 1893. William also founded Worksop Priory which was granted one third of the tithes of Sheffield, the priory providing Sheffield's vicar. The de Furnivals, through the female line, were the next inheritors of Hallamshire. One Thomas de Furnival was granted a charter to enable him to build a substantial castle, remains of which have been excavated. Under his lordship a market was established, and Sheffield remained a seignorial borough where the townsmen had some rights, granted in the Furnival Charter of 1297, but the lord retained most. The townsmen, or town burgery, inhabited narrow burgage plots, whilst the lords of the manor enjoyed hunting in their enclosed parks and in the woods of Hallamshire.



#### 5.xiv Burgage plots

The long, narrow gardens shown in the lower left of the map are those attached to the frontages in the market area. Space here and on the high street was valuable, just as it is today.

*Detail from Ralph Gosling's Map of Sheffield, 1736*

Hunting lodges were established and are remembered in place names today such as Lodge Moor and Manor Lodge school.

In medieval times Sheffield was divided into six townships: Sheffield town, Attercliffe-cum-Darnall, Brightside, Ecclesall, Nether Hallam and Upper Hallam, Ecclesall and Brightside being known as *bierlows*: the town charter was granted in 1297. The burgery was later divided into two: the Church Burgesses and the Town Burgery or Trust. The Town Trust was to administer funds from lands granted them by the Lord of the Manor: the bridge over the Don, Lady's Bridge, and the water



supply at Barkers Pool were to be maintained by the Trustees of the income. The principal trustee was the closest equivalent of a mayor for the people of Sheffield until the town became a borough in 1843.

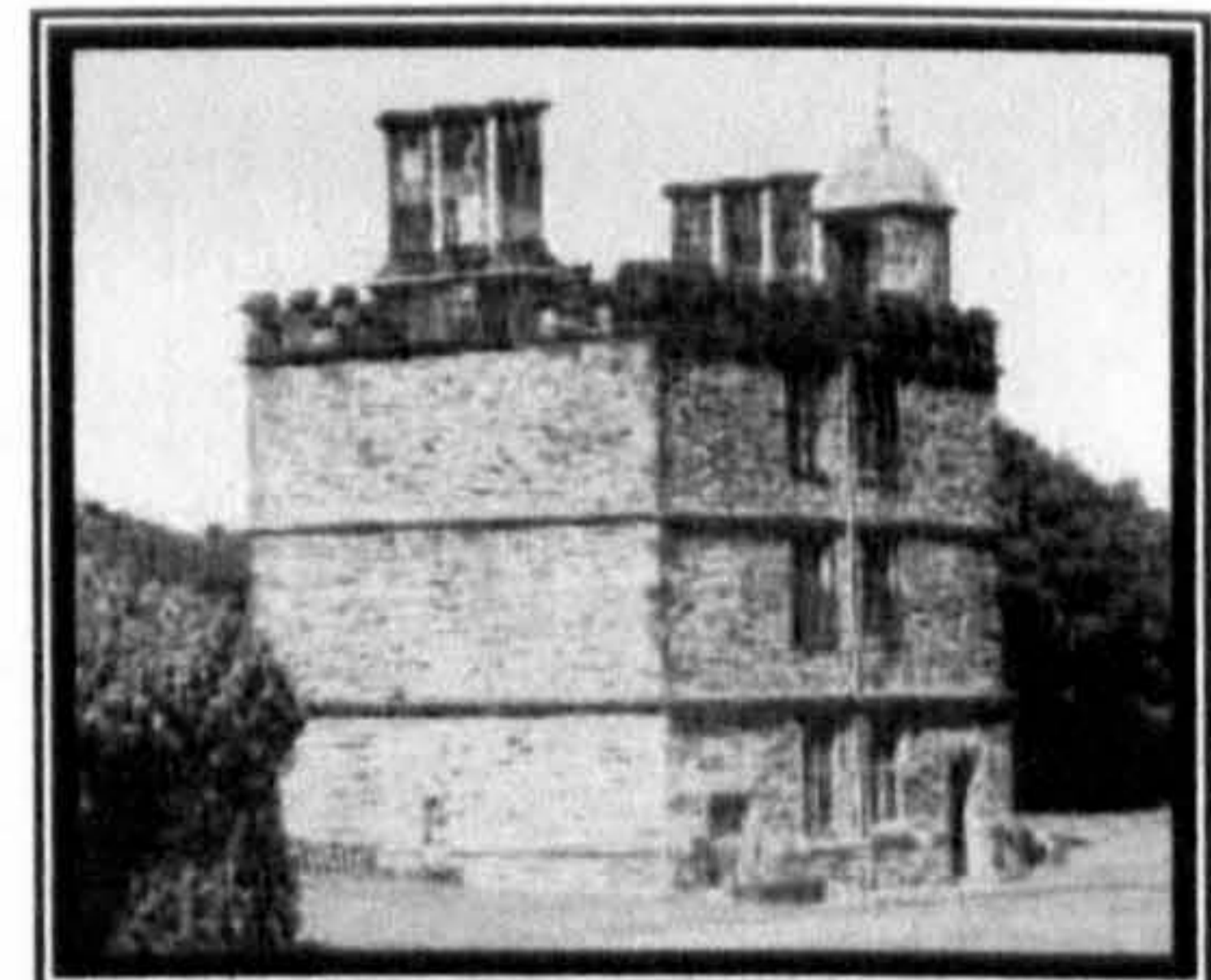
The Furnival line came to an end, and in 1410 the Talbot line, Earls of Shrewsbury, inherited Sheffield, a lordship that was to last for centuries. The Talbots took an improved Manor Lodge as their major residence, finding the condition of the old castle in the town unacceptable; the castle continued to be used for estate purposes, but not as the residence of the Talbots. They developed the Lodge until it had the style of a great country house. It was here that Mary, Queen of Scots, was held during much of her imprisonment. Sadly, little now remains of the Lodge; the Turret House is still intact and is referred to as 'Manor Castle, the prison of Mary, Queen of Scots' by some local children, possibly because of the turreted roof line.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the Turret House was erected at the entrance to the main house and served a variety of purposes including gatehouse and hunting lodge but never a prison and never a castle.

#### ***5.xv Turret House and Manor Lodge***

The sixteenth century Turret House was used as an entrance lodge, a hunting lodge and even for entertainment. It was *never* the prison of Mary, Queen of Scots.



The ruined Sheffield Manor, 1798







**5.xvi *The Shrewsbury Tomb: Countess and 'talbot'***



This alabaster tomb of George Talbot, fourth Earl of Shrewsbury is known to be one of the finest in the country. It is surmounted by an intricate arch and lies at the entrance to the Shrewsbury chapel, which he founded. Although the Earl's first wife is buried here, his second wife, who outlived him, is buried in Kent. The 'talbot', or heraldic dog, is around the effigies.

The tomb of the fourth Earl of Shrewsbury, George Talbot, is in the 'Shrewsbury' chapel, which he founded in Sheffield Cathedral. His effigy is accompanied by effigies of his two wives and of the heraldic dog or 'talbot' associated with the Earls of Shrewsbury. The chapel, officially known as the Lady Chapel, also contains the incredibly ornate tomb of George, the Sixth Earl of Shrewsbury, who was one of Bess of Hardwick's husbands, and the custodian of the imprisoned Mary. He died in 1590, and was the last of the great Hallamshire lords to take an interest in Sheffield.

Lordship passed on to the Howards, Dukes of Norfolk and Earls of Surrey, in the early seventeenth century.



**5.xvii *The tomb of the Sixth Earl of Shrewsbury***



The lords of the manor of Sheffield are commemorated in many ways, one of which is in public house names such as the Earl George, the Talbot Arms, the several Norfolk Arms, The Arundel and the Earl of Arundel and Surrey, whilst another is in the naming of many streets such as Surrey Street, Howard Street, Arundel Gate and Furnival Gate. However, given that the lords now had little interest in the functioning of the town, Sheffield was free to move out of constraint and follow the way of other towns to gain the status of borough. As Walton notes:

‘From now on the Free Tenants, the Church Burgesses, the parish officers and the community of cutlers found themselves both freer to follow their own inclinations and burdened with responsibility they could not pass to anyone else. A century after the Middle Ages ended in the more progressive parts of England, Sheffield had come of age.’<sup>24</sup>

### 1.iii Village to city

The Town Trust, noted earlier, was only one of several organisations ministering to Sheffield’s needs. It attempted to continue its responsibilities for the town until the nineteenth century when it became evident that the Trust was foundering. There was much to do within the growing town and insufficient funds to carry out necessary work. Town improvements led the Trust into debt, for it could not levy rates: the Church Burgesses, an offshoot of the medieval burgery and established in 1554, was another similar organisation. This again drew its funds from the investment in land and property in its charge and had the charge of maintaining the fabric of the church, paying for ministers and maintaining roads and paths in the vicinity of the church, as well as poor relief; the Burgesses were a closed community, replenishing any vacancies themselves. The Church Burgesses now operate an Educational Foundation: individual funding for girls from the Inner City church schools who have gained assisted places at a local public school is common.<sup>25</sup> In general, the Church

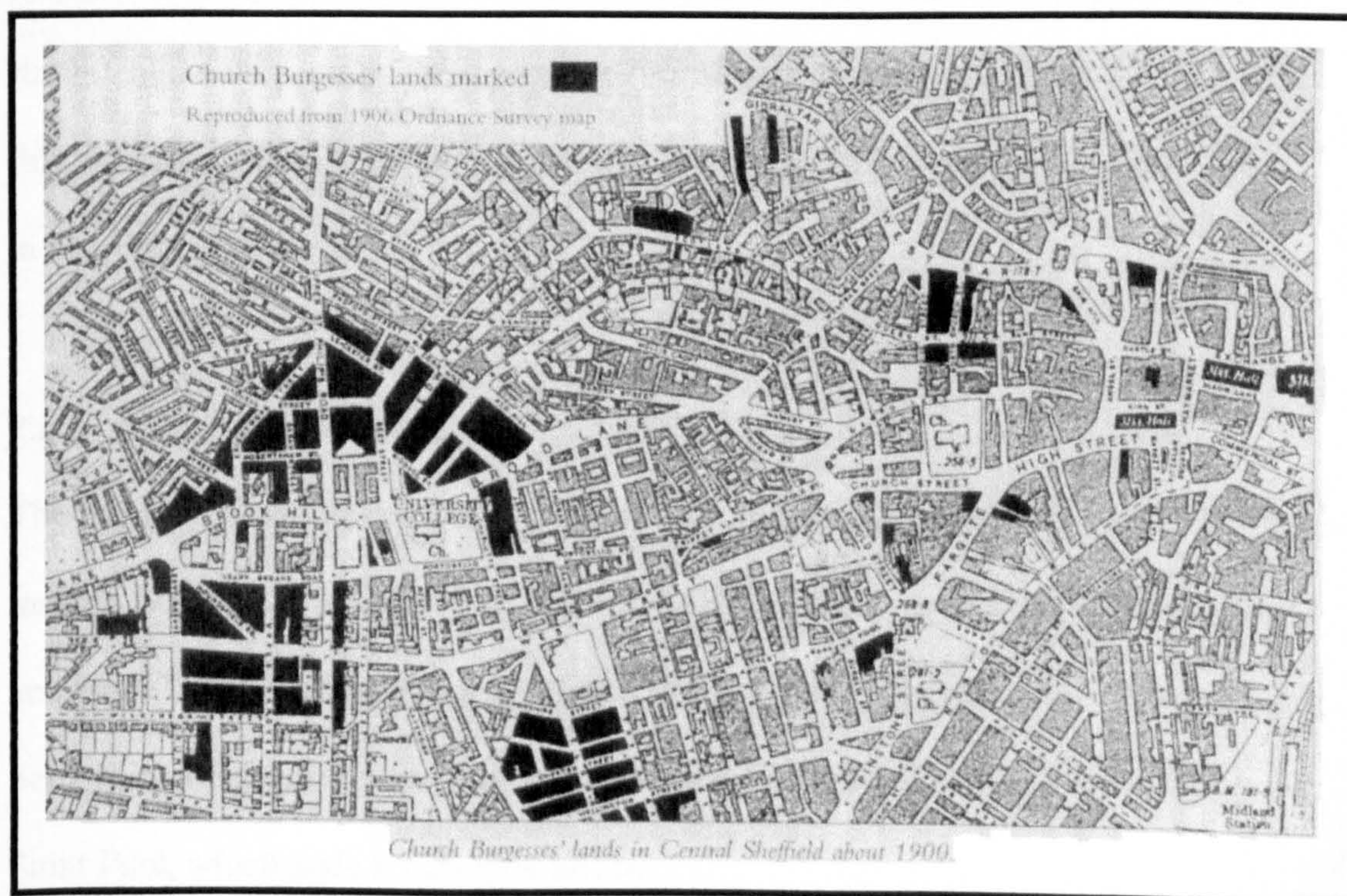


Burgesses do not talk about their personal membership: attitudes are discreet and somewhat private.<sup>26</sup> Of the Church Burgesses, The Rt. Revd John Gladwin, Bishop of Guildford, and Provost of Sheffield, 1988-1994, a respondent to this study states:

‘I could tell you about a whole range of funeral stories. Ask the clergy – they know. Church Burgesses? We work together, we always have done – but it’s a bit unusual – church and town working together. There is never any bother at all. Lincoln? Not here. It really is quite special. They want their own room. If we say we need the space - Oh!’

The Church Burgesses have a ‘new’ room, created from the space left vacant when the SPCK shop moved across the churchyard into ‘new’ premises. The old room was heavy, with a solid, dark oak table and seating. The ‘new’ Burgess room, whilst still smelling of carpet and wood, has a large window, and floor-to-ceiling cupboards in oak. It will mature. Use of this room as a changing facility for conductors of concerts is seen as a very special and discrete privilege, of the ‘don’t tell anyone’ type.

#### *5.xviii Church Burgesses’ lands: 1906*





A third ancient body administering to the needs of the old town was the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire which claimed administrative rights over the town's cutlery industry. Its function as regulator of the cutlery trade in Sheffield was first sanctioned by the Lords of the Manor of Sheffield and later by parliamentary act: this power was withdrawn by an act of 1814 which repealed the previous act of empowerment. The Cutlers company now existed in name only, yet it continued to command a presence in the town, and the Master Cutler is still acknowledged as the most senior citizen after the Lord Mayor.<sup>27</sup>

The country was in the grip of a dreadful recession during the 1840's, the time of the town's incorporation as a borough. Sheffielders had suffered poverty, disease and unemployment and its justice was meted out by 'outsiders' who did not live within the town. Sheffield needed to be self-regulating: there were continuous rumblings of discontent until a municipal borough was created in 1843. The town grew in size, facilities and export industry until eventually there was a short campaign for city status, following perhaps the example of Birmingham which had recently achieved this desirable status. Sheffield's wish was granted in 1893 whilst it was still a parish in the diocese of York.

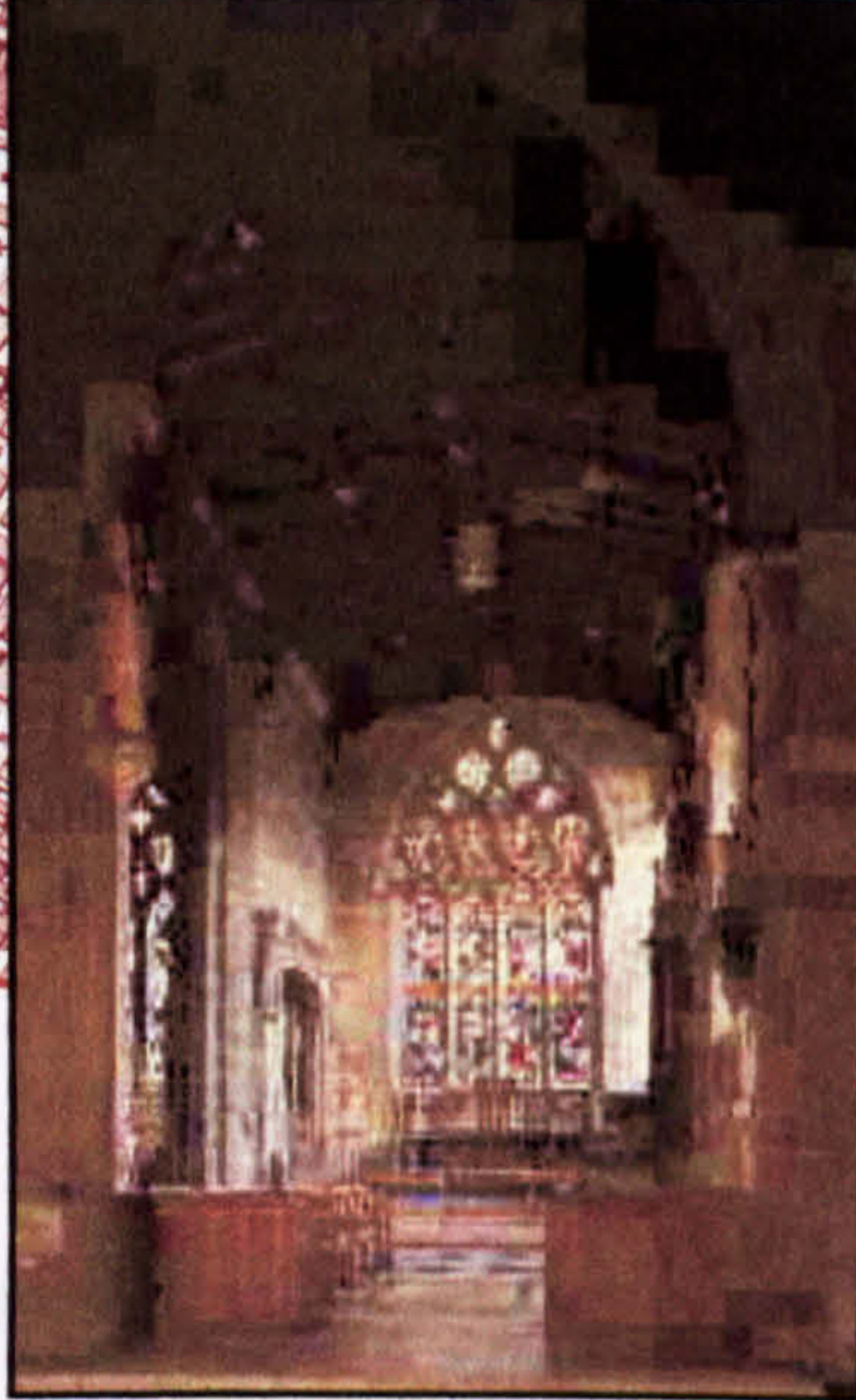
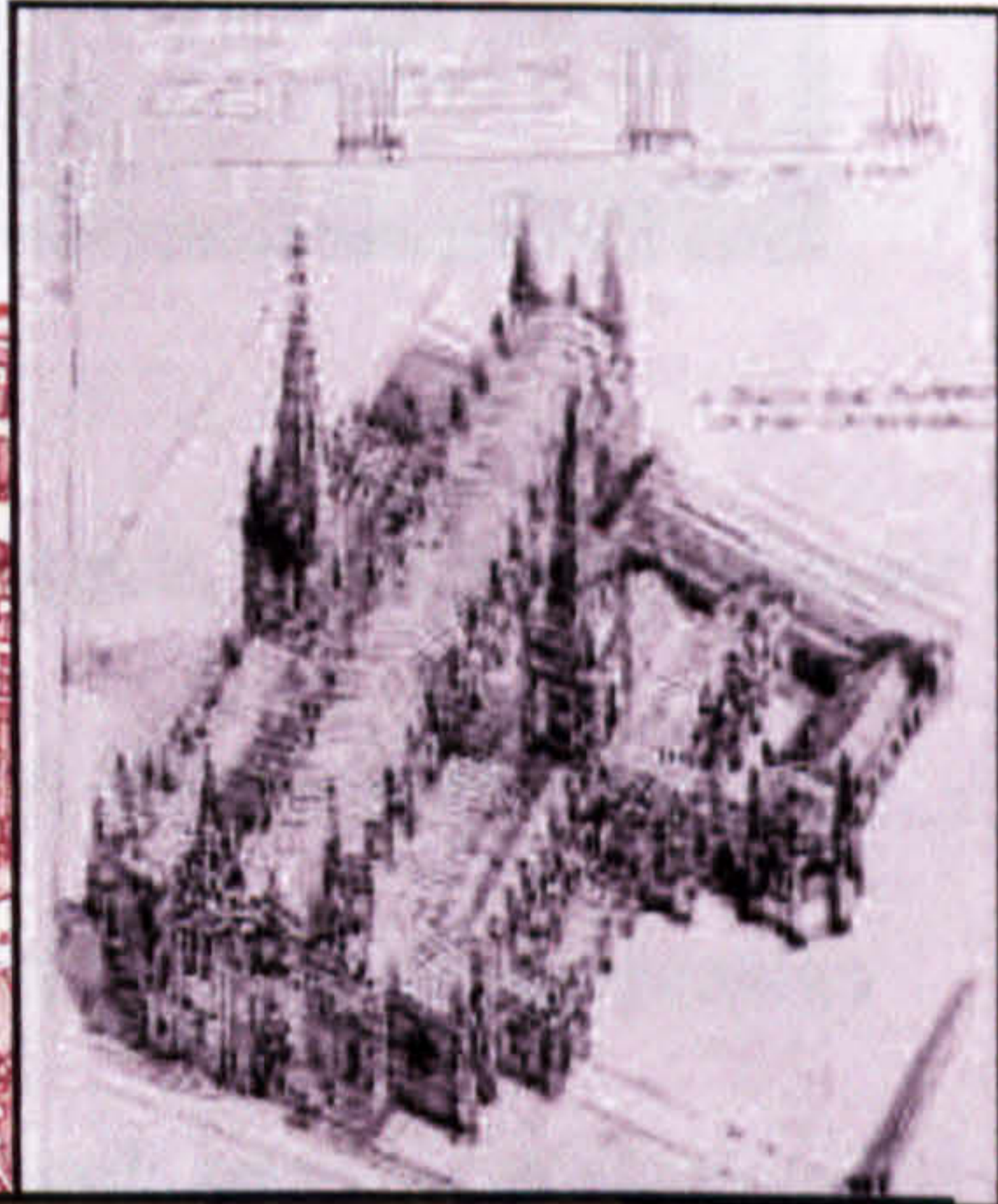
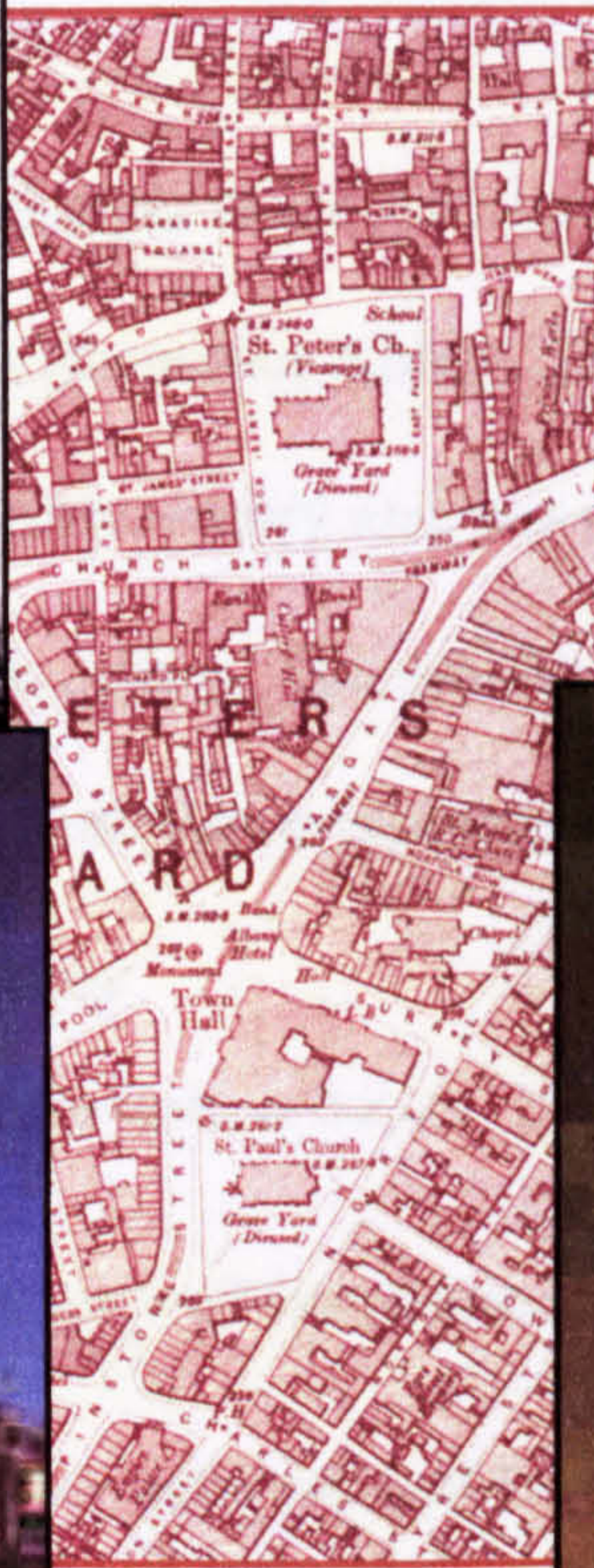
## **2.i Ecclesiastical growth**

The Parish church of Sheffield has had several names. At the time of Ralph Gosling's map of 1736 it was called Trinity Church or Holy Trinity, then changed to St. Peter and Holy Trinity before being simplified to Saint Peter's and later still, following the demolition of the lovely St. Paul's in 1937, the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, which style it currently holds.



**5.xix The Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul**

This chapel was demolished and replaced by a larger church in the eighteenth century.



While the abbey was dissolved in 1537, the church was left in ruins. The site was rebuilt or re-established by the eighteenth century. The

montage:

- top left** Cathedral about 1922
- centre** detail from O.S. map 1903
- top right** proposed extensions, 1921
- bottom right** Shrewsbury Chapel
- bottom left** Cathedral, 1995

St. Paul's Cathedral, London

The Church was the main building of the city of London. It was the largest church in the city and had a long history. It was built in the twelfth century and was the largest church in the city. It was the largest church in the city and had a long history. It was built in the twelfth century and was the largest church in the city.



### **5.xx Chapel of Ease, Ecclesall**

This chapel was demolished and replaced by a larger church in the eighteenth century.



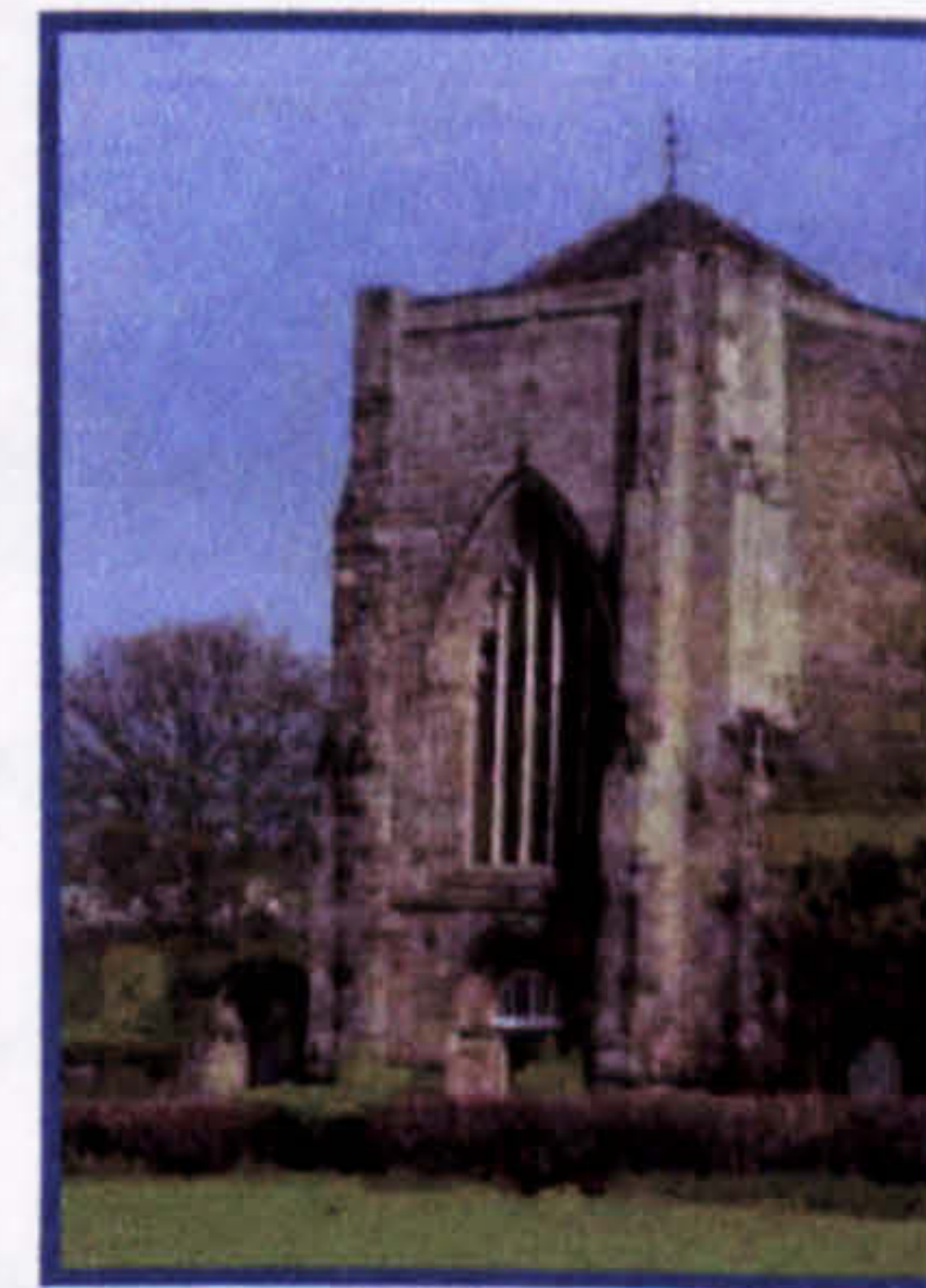
In medieval times there were, in addition to the parish church, two chapels of ease: Ecclesall and Attercliffe, as well as Beauchief Abbey. The abbey, which was in Derbyshire, dates from the late twelfth century and was of the Premonstratensian Order, which was based at Welbeck Abbey. The canons took services at Ecclesall chapel in exchange for gifts of land and water-powered industry.

### **5.xxi Beauchief Abbey**

The Abbey gives its name to the area of Abbeydale, in the old Abbey Dale of the River Sheaf.

The abbey dates from 1183. A truncated tower is all that remains after the abbey was forcibly abandoned in 1537.

A small church has been attached to the tower and is still used for occasional services.



Whilst the abbey was dissolved in 1537, leaving just attractive ruins, the two chapels of ease were rebuilt or re-established by Puritans in the seventeenth century. The Ecclesall chapel was completely rebuilt in 1789; indeed it has recently been subject to re-ordering involving closure for some months, but the Attercliffe Hilltop chapel remains, albeit reduced in size. To these ecclesiastical buildings were joined those of St. Paul's, started in 1720, and St. James', built at the very gates of the parish church, in 1786. Of St. Paul's, Odom writes:

'The Church, a massive building with exterior walls of large dressed blocks of stone, is in the Renaissance style of architecture, having a tower and bell turret at the west end 120 feet high.'<sup>28</sup>



This large building, capable of seating 1,400 souls, was demolished in 1937. It was not demolished to make way for Town Hall extensions, as is thought in Sheffield, but closure of the building was first proposed in a report in 1935, along with that of St. James, as they had served their purpose. Opposition to the closure of St. Paul's was supported by Bishop Burrows, but Provost Jarvis supported closure of this still popular church, so close to his Cathedral. The land was sold to the corporation for Town Hall extensions, but the second world war prevented the extensions being built and so its site became, officially, St. Paul's Gardens, later nicknamed the 'Peace Gardens' by the local papers after Chamberlain went to Munich on a peace mission.

*5.xxii St. Paul's Church, 1819*



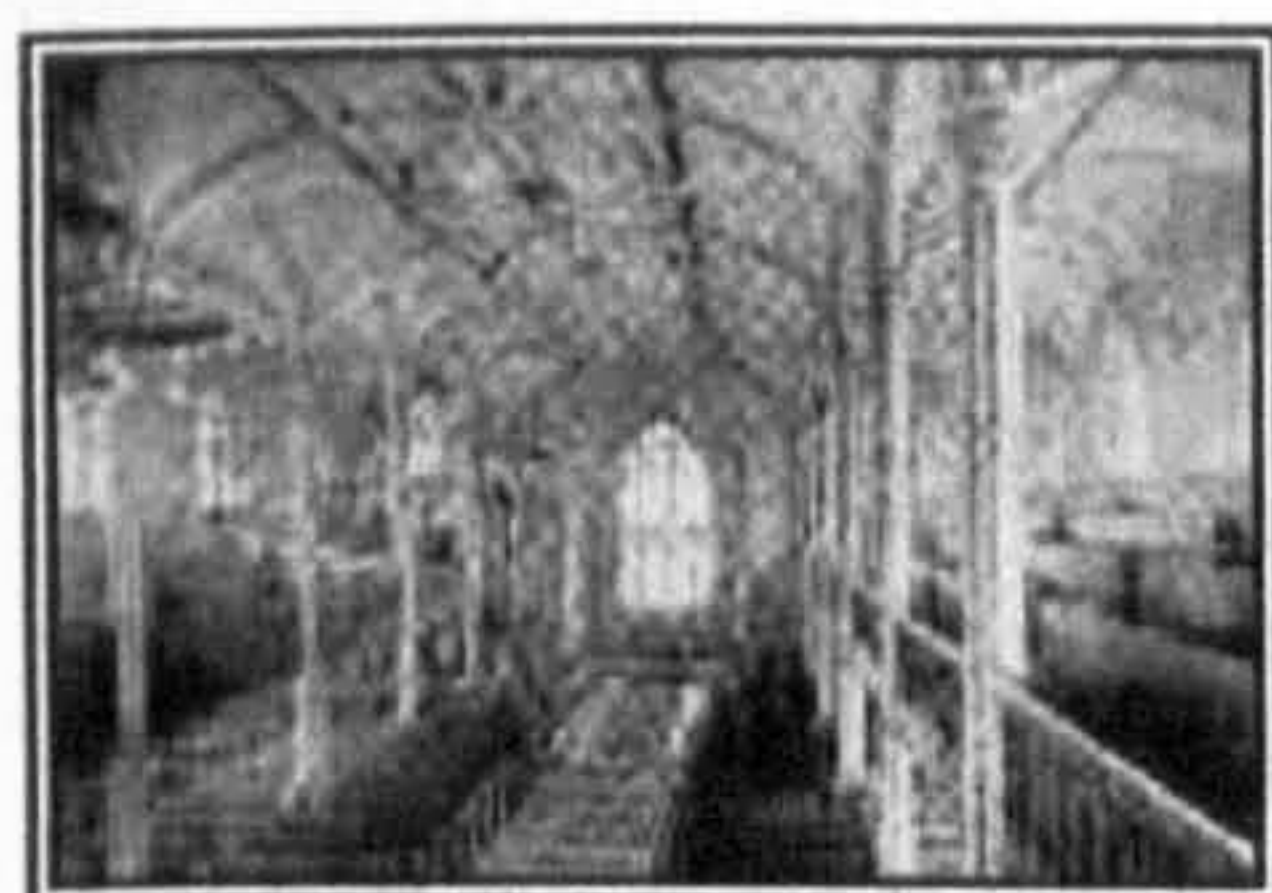
St. James' church was erected as a chapel of ease for the Parish Church on part of the extensive Vicarage Croft. There were sittings for 700, pews were rented, payable to the Vicar, and the crypts under the church contained vaults: the rights to burial in these vaults were attached to the pew rents. St. James became the fashionable church, even though it was so close to the parish church. It was demolished at the same time as St. Paul's, following the Saint Paul's and Saint James' Churches (Sheffield) Act, 1937, a rationalisation of the demographic situation: there was an obvious surplus of city centre churches following slum clearance and the move of the city-centre population outwards to the estates. However, at the start of the nineteenth century there were fewer than 4,000 sittings for Anglicans. The increasing number of nonconformist chapels was seen as a threat to the Anglican church: if there was a chapel in the locality it was there to be joined: if there was no church it could not



attract worshippers. It was time for an accelerated growth in Anglican church building.

## 2.ii 'Million Act' churches

Following the victory at Waterloo in 1815 when money was once again available, and given the lack of church accommodation throughout the country, pressure was placed on parliament for there to be action on church provision. Accordingly, in 1824, the sum of £1,000,000 was set aside for urban church building. This is commonly referred to as the 'Million Act' although the sum was later increased by 50%: this money was placed in the charge of the Church Commissioners. Four huge 'million' churches were built in Sheffield: St. George's, 1825; Christ Church, Attercliffe, 1826; St. Philip's, 1828 and St. Mary's, 1830. Of these, St. George's is disused as a place of worship but utilised by the University of Sheffield; St. Philip's is demolished, as is Attercliffe. which was demolished as unfit for repair, in 1950, and St. Mary's used for both worship and community activities.



### 5.xxiii St. Mary's 'million' Church

St. Mary's is the only 'million' church in Sheffield still used for worship.

## 2.iii Peel's Act - 1843

Following the building of the 'million' churches other chapels of ease were established in outlying districts at Park, Crookes, Darnall and Fulwood. At the same time as Sheffield's incorporation as a borough the Anglican church was itself subject to change and growth. Walton writes:

' In 1843, the Vicar of Sheffield was still in charge ... of the whole ancient parish. It was then heavily and unevenly populated'.<sup>29</sup>



There were, in addition to the parish church, eleven chapels of ease and the chapel of the Shrewsbury Hospital, built in 1660 as almshouses, and funded with Shrewsbury money. Under an Act initiated by Sir Robert Peel in 1843 parishes such as Sheffield were to be subdivided into separate districts according to the population and to each of which a curate was to be appointed, with churches erected as needed. Binfield<sup>30</sup> writes of 'the energy released by Peel's act of 1843, with the steady division of the parish into ecclesiastical districts, each to have its church and its resident parson, each to become a full parish.' The funding for such buildings was the cause of much controversy, particularly concerning the position of the Church Burgesses who, Walton notes, 'deemed themselves accountable to nobody.'<sup>31</sup> After some disagreement, noted in the following section, the Trust's income was reallocated and the Burgesses arranged to endow four of the new ecclesiastical districts. By 1870 all needs were seen to have been met and Sheffield had sixteen new churches. Many were funded privately: Sir John Brown, Henry Wilson and John Mappin were some of the Sheffield industrialists to endow the new churches.

#### **2.iv An evangelical 'fiefdom'**

The diocese of Sheffield has a reputation for evangelical action: other dioceses could be termed traditional or high. Thomas Sutton, the vicar of Sheffield from 1805 to 1851, was an evangelist and he is credited with planning the subdivision of his ancient parish to so continue the evangelical 'fiefdom' that he had created. However, at that time, the appointment of assistant ministers was in the hands of the Church Burgesses: two appointments in the middle of the century caused great disquiet, for neither of the appointees, Samuel Earnshaw and George Trevor, were evangelicals: the latter was not allowed into the pulpit at all, and the matter became of interest to local politicians. Eventually Trevor moved on, and after the issue went to Chancery, the Church



Burgesses were made to discontinue their former practice of appointing ministers. The town council effectively challenged the medieval rights of the Burgesses and gained a lasting supremacy, and the appointment of ministers was placed in the hands of the church.

**5.xxiv Brass on the tomb of Thomas Sutton,**  
evangelical Vicar of Sheffield,  
Sheffield Cathedral : St. Katharine's Chapel



The vicar following Sutton, Thomas Sale, set up a Church Extension Society which saw the building of seven churches and his enthusiasm was matched by the next incumbent, Rowley Hill, who planned to have another nine churches built, but was promoted before he could set his plans in motion.

## 2.v Incumbents and episcopates

The Sheffield Anglican church scene has been favoured with memorable clergy and incumbents, each of which has placed his own personality firmly within the framework of the city. Perhaps the best known is the Revd Alfred Gatty: the 'Gatty' in Hunter's *Hallamshire* (Gatty edition). Gatty was the vicar of Ecclesfield of whom Hey, 1968, writes:

'...he became a notable scholar in the fields of theology, history and art. He became a Doctor of Divinity and a Sub-Dean of York, published many lectures and sermons, and added greatly to our knowledge of local history ... He became a legend in his own lifetime.'<sup>32</sup>

The Revd William Odom was a prolific author who 'liked to see himself as Sheffield's representative parson'.<sup>33</sup> He was low church, and, as a young man before being ordained, attended a variety of places of worship, one of which was St. Matthew's in Calver Street in its early days before it became an Anglo-Catholic establishment under Fr Ommanney. Binfield<sup>34</sup> refers to Odom, in his early years in Sheffield, as an 'upwardly mobile Evangelical of the YMCA type'. In his first parish,



St. Simon's, he initiated societies and groups, giving the congregation something appropriately Protestant to do - actions he repeated at Heeley, where he spent most of his ministry. The influential vicar of St. Matthew, Calver Street, Father George Ommanney, was appointed to the position by the Crown, who appointed three such high churchmen to Sheffield livings in 1882. The evangelicals did not approve, yet, as

Binfield notes:

'He survived rows, riots, obdurate church wardens, Evangelical secessions, and thirty years of archiepiscopal discipline to turn St. Matthew's into 'one of the famous churches of the Catholic revival in England', with sung mass, confession, the reserved sacrament, and incense.'<sup>35</sup>

The church is still a centre for Anglo-Catholicism.

National church figures have influenced life in Sheffield as much as they would any similar industrial but secluded parish. Sheffield operated under the episcopate of the diocese of York: Archbishop Thompson (1863-1890) is understood to have paid considerable attention to the parish. Faced with the difficulty of ministering to the needs of his southernmost parish he is said to have suggested, in 1877, that there be formed a Diocese of Wakefield, of which Sheffield would be a part: Sheffield objected.<sup>36</sup> Binfield comments that Archbishop Thompson 'had a genuine rapport with Sheffield', adding that this was the reason why the Sheffield clergy did not want to leave York.<sup>37</sup> The Archbishop of York at the time of the formation of the see of Sheffield was Dr Cosmo Lang, and the particular influence of York over Sheffield had ended.

## 2.vi Diocese and deaneries

The transition from parish to diocese would appear to have been a smooth operation. Sheffield, having been in the Rural Deanery of Rotherham, had been created a separate deanery in 1855. Then, in 1884, Archbishop Thompson created an



Archdeaconry of Sheffield which was to include the deaneries of Sheffield, Wath, Rotherham and Ecclesfield. Even after the death of Thompson, in 1891, Sheffield was still reluctant to be independent. In 1901 Archbishop Maclagan appointed Canon Quirk to be suffragan bishop of Sheffield: he served at St. Mark's, Broomhill. Finally, in 1913, Sheffield was created a diocese under Archbishop Lang: it consisted of the Rural Deaneries of Sheffield, Doncaster, Ecclesfield and Rotherham with the patronage of any benefice in the diocese being transferred from York to Sheffield.

**5.xxv The first Bishop of Sheffield**  
Leonard Hedley Burrows D.D.



In 1914 Leonard Hedley Burrows was appointed the first Bishop of Sheffield. Doncaster now has its own Bishop within the Diocese of Sheffield, with both Sheffield and Doncaster having Archdeacons.

**Table 5.i**  
**Sheffield: Parish to See**

DATE	EVENT	PEOPLE
Late twelfth century	separate parish	William de Lovetot
<b>1843</b>	<b>Borough of Sheffield</b>	
1843	'Million' act	Sir Robert Peel Revd Thomas Sutton
1855	separate deanery	Archbishop Musgrave
1884	archdeaconry	Archbishop Thompson Archdeacon Blakeney
<b>1893</b>	<b>City of Sheffield</b>	
1901	suffragan bishopric	Canon Quirk
1913	creation of diocese	Archbishop Lang
1914	first bishop	Leonard Hedley Burrows



### 3.i Anglican Traditions

As noted earlier in the chapter, Sheffield has been evangelical from the time of Thomas Sutton in the first half of the nineteenth century. Evangelical Sheffield thrived on sermons to full congregations, with massive Sunday schools, Bible classes, home meetings, works missions and education. The formation of the Sheffield Church of England Educational Institute and the creation of the Young Churchmen's Protestant Association helped to ensure that, as Binfield states:

'Sheffield's Anglicanism was Protestant, unapologetic, strenuous and confidently unmodish.'<sup>38</sup>

Churches were predominantly preaching centres: churches which introduced ritual and ornament, such as St. George's, one of the 'Million' churches, could attract great disfavour. Even an action such as turning to the altar for the creed, which now seems perfectly conventional Anglican behaviour, was questioned and found unacceptable by some.<sup>39</sup>

The possible infiltration of high church practices was a matter of concern: Odom, 1917, records that the Misses Harrison, church benefactors of great note and obvious wealth, having built Fulwood, Wadsley, Crookes, Stannington and Holy Trinity churches, and 'who were deeply attached to Evangelical principles, were much concerned lest the Vicarage of Sheffield should be handed over to an un-Evangelical, perhaps a Tractarian, clergyman.'<sup>40</sup> Then came Fr Ommanney to St. Matthews.

Binfield comments:

'And ... to catholicize the chancel, Ommanney transformed his straight up-and-down essay in Victorian Gothic streetscape into a surprising cache for the Arts and Crafts: hammered copper representative of the Benedicite, iron screens copied from Pisa, Derbyshire stone and marble in place of linoleum. More than any other man Father Ommanney had brought Catholicism into Sheffield's Anglicanism and made it credible; but it was a credibility on Sheffield's terms. Sheffield's *parish* churches were increasingly in the suburbs. St. Matthew's was not a *parish* church.'<sup>41</sup>



The church specialised in mission rather than congregations and preaching: Sheffield rationalised the establishment as if it did not really count. Indeed, Bishop David Lunn wrote of Tractarianism and the Oxford movement not being experienced in Sheffield.<sup>42</sup> In St. Matthews the sacrament is still reserved, worshippers usually genuflect, use holy water, light candles, make the sign of the cross and are often observed to approach the altar on their knees before receiving the Holy Sacrament.

### **5.xxvi *Our Lady of Sheffield***

This statue of Mary, mother of Jesus, stands at the entrance of the Lady Chapel in St. Matthews, the focal point of that house of prayer.

Many communicants light a candle before the statue as they leave the chancel having received communion. At the end of Solemn Mass the clergy and choir process to face this statue to sing the Angelus.

.The statue dates from the early twentieth century and has survived theft and vandalism.



There is an element of Mariology in worship, and the Angelus is sung at noon after Solemn Mass. Bells are rung at appointed times during the service, incense is used and candles are carried. Mass is said every day and there are two priests who wear birettas for appropriate services; robes are not usually ornate but the priests' cottas are: their embellishment and variety are a source of enjoyable interest for ritualists. Fr Ommanney's memory is upheld: he is often referred to in sermons and notices. The restoration of fabric and fittings to their original Victorian splendour is being funded and work should soon commence. This work is to include adaptation of the vestry areas to further the Catholicism of the church.<sup>43</sup> The church is Anglican, but not on Sheffield's terms: it does not acknowledge women priests and is served by the Bishop of Beverley, their 'flying bishop'.



The Ecclesall parish church of All Saints serves as an excellent example of modern evangelical Protestant worship in Sheffield. It is suburban and full and has recently been reordered, with a gallery over the newly created entrance hall. There is a kitchen for refreshments and all seating is padded, all flooring carpeted. There are crèches, various Sunday Schools and youth groups; thriving House Groups worship together and there are ample opportunities for socialisation. Sermons are taped and the tape made available for subsequent borrowing. The ethos is one of evangelism. The services are modern but with a strong, albeit innovative and alternative, liturgical content. Music is usually mission-style: morning service has pre-service singing of choruses. There is plenty of noise and movement during services: hands and arms wave, children shout and some run about. A new electronic organ has been installed and any music from this is augmented by a massive volunteer band: members of the band are noted for their enthusiasm. Evening services include a monthly 'Youth Praise': attendance at this is a cheerful and popular social occasion. The church thrives. There are similar churches throughout Sheffield: Christ Church, Fulwood, is often referred to as a 'commuter' church because the large local congregation is enhanced by those who travel to experience its style of worship. This church has a well-subscribed student centre: as in Odom's day, education equals evangelism.

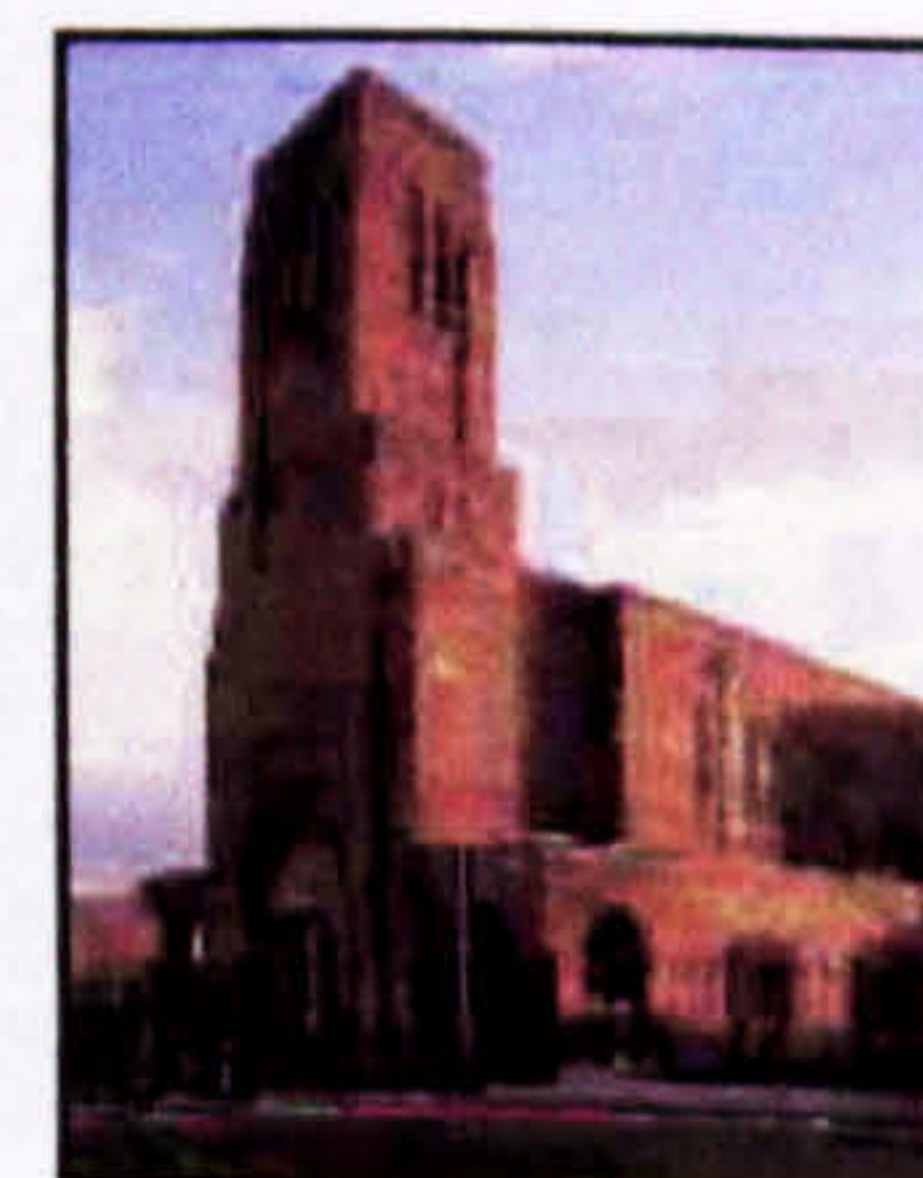
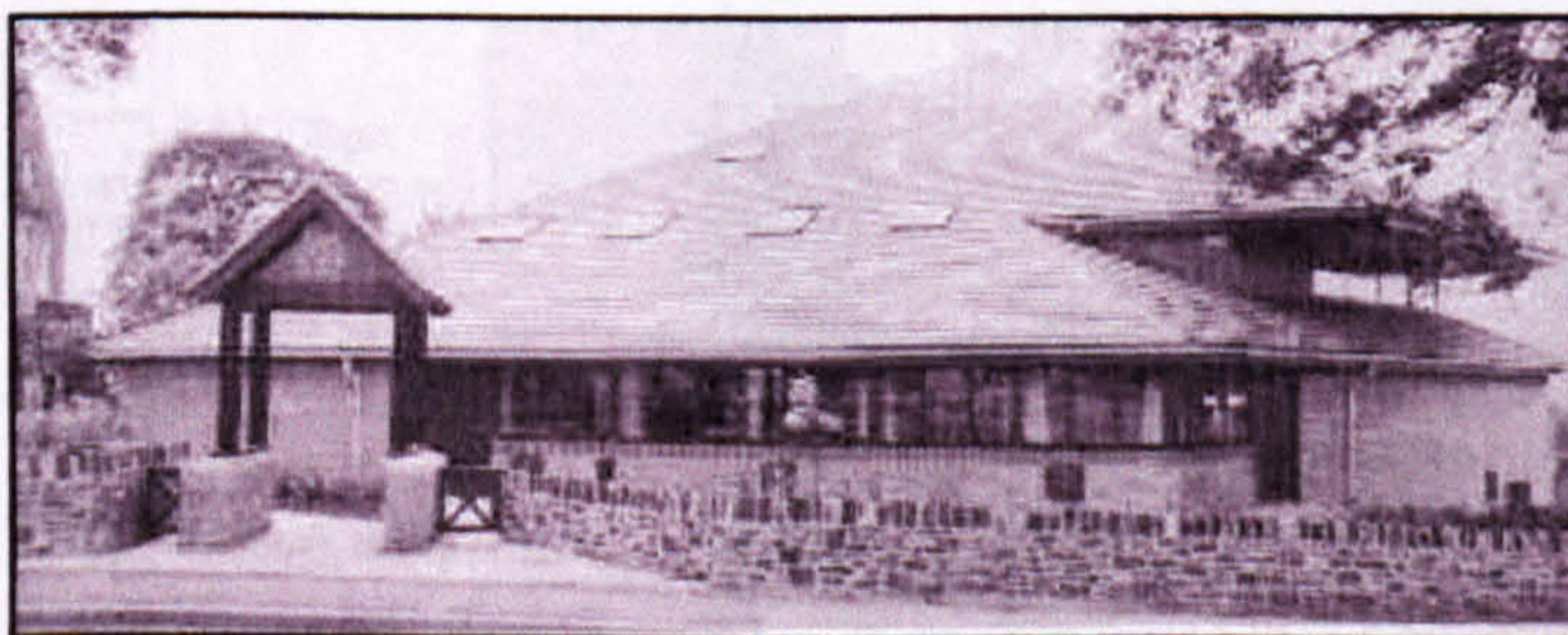
Again, Sheffield offers self-styled 'traditional' Anglican worship: St. John's, Ranmoor has a male-only choir with regular re-auditions, offers 1662 services from the Book of Common Prayer, and evensong with chants and settings. Several other churches retain some elements of the 1662 service, particularly the occasional evensong, although St. James, Norton, still with its boys and men choir, but with a token female alto, also offers the 1662 communion service. Other churches may only offer the old communion service at 8.00am, if at all. Matins is sung at St. Nicholas,



Bradfield, once the site of the medieval chapel of ease to Ecclesfield. A full choice of Anglican services is available in the Diocese of Sheffield, albeit perhaps not on one's doorstep.

### 3.ii Catholicism

The Cathedral Church of St. Marie on Norfolk Row is the centre for Catholic worship in the Diocese of Hallam, in which Sheffield is situated. Catholicism in Sheffield has been favoured by the coincidence of the Howard association following their inheritance of the Talbot estates. The Howards are Dukes of Norfolk, the leading Roman Catholic family in the land, and were represented in Sheffield by their agents. Catholic worship in the town was associated with these agents, also Catholic, who had their chapel in Norfolk Row, and Catholic worship has been centred there ever since. Catholic emancipation in 1829 led to expansion within the town, firstly focusing on those estates where the Irish Catholics lived, then spreading into suburbia. Most of these churches are noticeably European rather than English in form, perhaps with domes, such as the copper-clad dome of St. Theresa's, Manor, and that of Our Lady and St. Thomas, Woodseats, and the internal mosaics of Sacred Heart, Hillsborough and Woodseats. However, the modern St. Francis of Assisi, at Sandygate, is of similar form to any modern Christian church in England: angles, interesting brick and glass.



### 5.xxvii Roman Catholic architecture

St. Francis of Assisi, Sandygate  
A modern style but with traditional lychgate

Sacred Heart, Hillsborough:  
Romanesque style



Tridentine Mass is not celebrated in Sheffield. All services are similar, with wording that can still be followed from church to church, as in the manner of the old Latin Mass. However, each church expresses itself, particularly in the style of the mass and its music: there may be a Saturday or a Sunday evening Folk Mass, heavily attended by the young in spirit, such as that celebrated at Our Lady and St. Thomas, Woodseats.

### 3.iii Nonconformist aspects

The Nonconformist presence in Sheffield is strong, and has been since the first Dissenting movements of the seventeenth century. The earliest Dissenting chapel was erected near Sheffield, at Bullhouse, Millhouse Green, Penistone: it celebrated its third centenary in 1992, and still operates as an Independent Congregational Chapel. Binfield writes of Sheffield as a Methodist city<sup>44</sup> with a Methodist University, industry and commerce. Indeed the strength of the Dissenters in the Cemetery Movement accounted for the impetus that saw the founding of Sheffield's General Cemetery. Many of the names associated with Sheffield's wealth are also on a list of Dissenters: Firth, Cole, Bassett, Wilson, Ward and Osborn were powerful and influential industrialists. Their religious beliefs and practices were also influential.



### 5.xxviii *Abbeydale Primitive Methodist Church*

The church opened in 1891. It was sold in 1949 for use as a Christian Science church.



The Religious census of 1851 saw Anglican church attendance fall behind that of the combined Methodists and it could be seen that the drive for Anglican Church Extension was considered necessary to countermand the growing strength of the Dissenters. There have been many different approaches to Dissent, all with a different name: originally Sheffield had three distinct Dissenting communities: Presbyterian, Independent and Quaker.

**Table 5.ii  
Dissent in Sheffield**

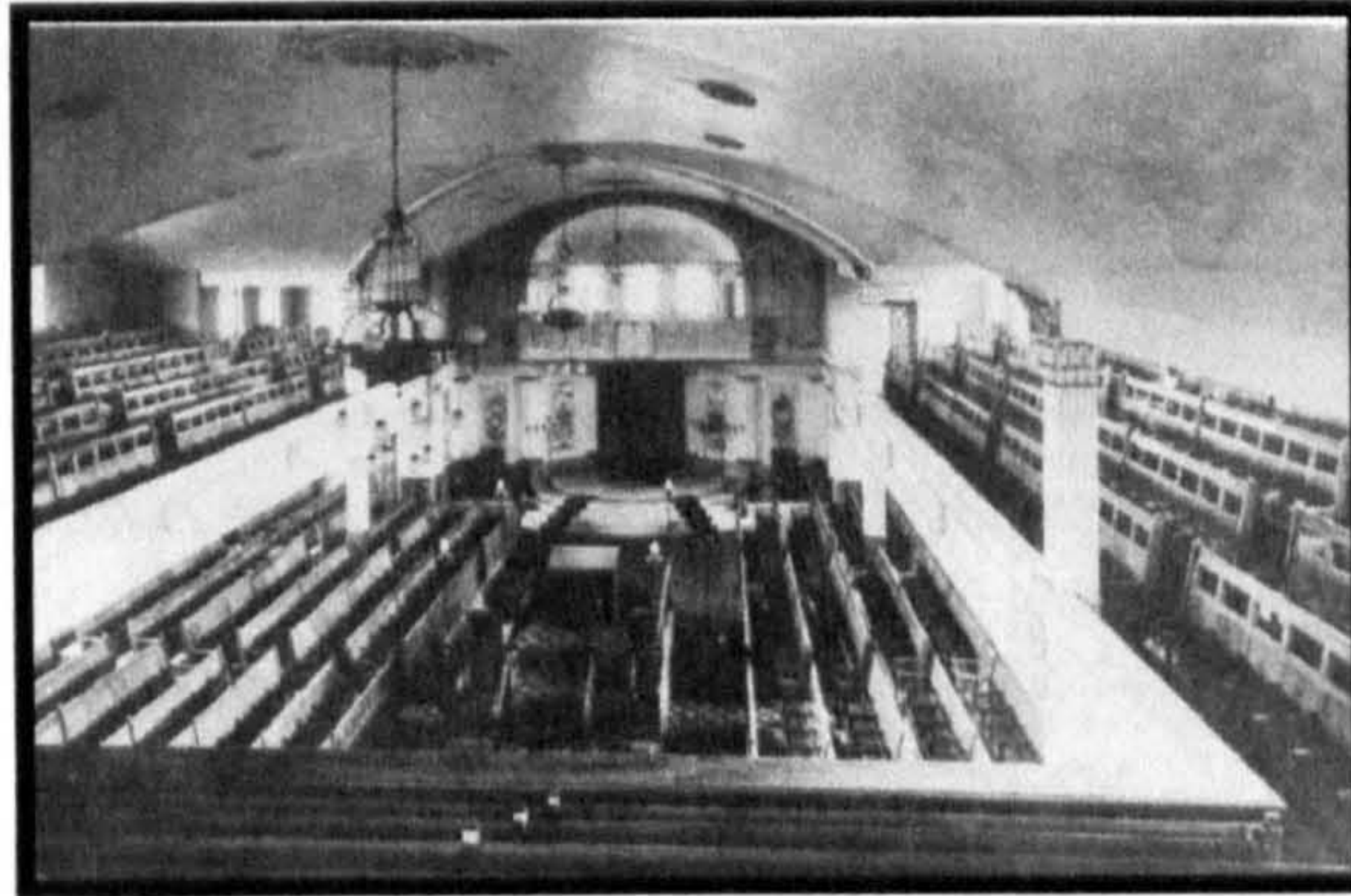
ORIGINAL STYLE	CURRENT STYLE	ASSOCIATED PLACE
Presbyterian: (Old Dissenters)	Unitarian	Upper Chapel Stannington: Underbank Fulwood Old Chapel
Independent: (Old Dissenters)	United Reformed or Congregational	Nether Chapel
Quaker (Old Dissenters)	Quaker: Society of Friends	Meetinghouse Lane
Particular Baptist (Old Dissenters)	Baptist	Cemetery Road
New Connexion General Baptists	Baptist	Cemetery Road
Wesleyan	Methodist	Victoria Hall Calver Street
Methodist New Connexion	Methodist	Scotland Street Broomhill
Primitive Methodist	Methodist	Bethel Chapel
Wesleyan Reform	Methodist	Queen Street
United Methodist	Methodist	Hanover Chapel
Presbyterian	United Reformed	Hanover Street

Sheffield's Dissenters are still subject to change and rationalisation: there are strong moves for unity between Methodist and Anglican. Given the history of Methodism in Sheffield and the current co-operation between the two styles of religion, such as St Andrews Psalter Lane, which houses both Anglican and Methodist following the closure of the structurally unsound Anglican building, and Emmanuel, Waterthorpe,



which again is united, and designed to be so, one can foresee that a future merge is possible and sensible.

### 3.iv Judaism



#### *5.xxix The Wilson Road Synagogue*

This has been sold to a Christian church.

All the Jewish signs and symbols have been removed.

The congregation of Jews has been a part of Sheffield life since 1774 when the Gofin family arrived in the town. Judaism in Sheffield never grew in the way that it did in other towns. The numbers in the congregations always remained small, but that did not stop there being separate congregations. Within this small community there can be recognised several well-known and local names: H.L. Brown (Braun) jeweller; the Brights, watchmakers, jewellers, goldsmiths and politicians; Isidore Lewis, mayor, and Irvine Patnick, politician. There were also tailors, outfitters and picture dealers. Most of the Jews in Sheffield are Ashkenazi: at the turn of the nineteenth century there were about 600 Jewish people in the town, divided into two congregations who worshipped at Fig Tree Lane and North Church Street. The latter moved to the Wilson Road synagogue in 1930, and was eventually joined by the other congregation. This large and beautiful building on Wilson Road has now been sold to a nonconformist



church and the Jewish congregation moved to a smaller synagogue on land already owned on Psalter Lane.

### **3.v Other religions and Christian denominations**

The Salvation Army is a long established feature of Sheffield life: their band is a welcome relief in the hectic schedule of Christmas, whilst their many charitable works are respected and admired. The Army has recently built new premises on Psalter Lane. The Afro-Caribbean community has introduced a vivid style of worship to evangelical Sheffield. The Elim Pentecostal, Baptist, and Seventh Day Adventists are some of the congregations which display the observable joy of a West Indian style of worship. The Assembly of God, Pentecostal churches have a thriving membership, which comes from the several different ethnic communities in the city. Many are Caucasian, with a rich mix of others who are often studying in the city. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, is well represented: householders receive visitations, and they have two new, large churches, at Grenoside and Norton. The Jehovah's Witnesses also have a noticeable presence in the city. Additionally, there are increasing numbers of faiths and styles of worship that are more common in other countries but are now practised in the Sheffield area: immigration has been the source of many of these. The representative for Hindus in the city stated that there are about 1,000 in the city, many of whom are 'Bengali'. They have settled within certain communities, particularly in the Attercliffe district, once well known for its steel works, and now subject to urban renewal, with the recent establishment of Meadowhall, the Arena, and the Don Valley Stadium. The Hindu temple is in this district. There are far fewer Sikhs in the city. One of the several helpful respondents to the study, of whom only two were finally selected, stated that there were just 30 Sikhs in Sheffield, although the only Gurdwara in the district, at Ellesmere, had about



‘100 families, from Chesterfield, Barnsley, and particularly Rotherham, there being a lot of Sikhs in Rotherham.’ It was established that the Sikh community was not significant in the city.

However, there are established Muslim communities which are concentrated in various communities. The areas of Darnall, Firth Park, Abbeydale, Tinsley and Attercliffe see the greatest number of Muslims, and the school populations reflect this. The Muslims in these communities are most likely to have relatives in Bangladesh or Pakistan, whilst Malaysian postgraduate students bring their families to live in Darnall or Netherthorpe for the duration of their studies, although recent political changes in Malaysia have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of mature postgraduates able to study in the city.

The majority of practising Buddhists in Sheffield, whether New Kadampa Tradition or Friends of the Western Buddhist, are converts. As Badham notes, in Gilley and Sheils, ‘Buddhism differs markedly from all other non-Christian religions in Britain in that its primary impact comes not through immigration but through western conversions’.<sup>45</sup> There are also small pockets of other less familiar religions, often attached to a University or student community: beliefs represented include Rastafarianism, Taoism and Confucianism, although it should be noted that the Pagan Society at the University of Sheffield ceased to function in 1999, because there were no members. Again, the general increase in religious pluralism found elsewhere in Britain has been noted in Sheffield, particularly New Religious Movements. Parsons notes that any particular New Religious Movement may have an ‘extremely small committed membership’ but the movements constitute an important element in post-



war Britain, not least because of a number of significant questions and issues which are raised by their existence.<sup>46</sup> Parsons further lists some of these Movements which can be readily identified, such as the Children of God, the Unification Church, the Divine Light Mission amongst others. He also questions whether such groups as the Jesus Army and the House Churches, both strongly present in Sheffield, can be readily classified as New Religious Movements.<sup>47</sup> Again, Sheffield has followers at the New Age and environmentalist end of the spectrum of New Religious Movements. Established premises selling crystals and publications concerned with the spiritual life and mysticisms are present in the academic areas and are viable. Background information concerning pagan and 'Green' funerals both in this country and in Australia and the United States has been gathered from voluntary contributors, but no evidence of such funerals was found in Sheffield, the area of the present research.

The city of Sheffield is a multi-ethnic community, with a high level of religious tolerance. It is as though all the citizens have incorporated the old, insular attitude to outsiders and not been sufficiently interested in others to take a great deal of notice. Its religious people and buildings reflect the history of worship within the community, slowly changing, adapting and accommodating to meet identified needs and situations.



## Notes

1. Binfield, in Binfield et al., Vol. II, p.377
2. Hunter, J., *Hallamshire*, (1819) Gatty edn., Sheffield, Pawson and Brailsford, 1869
3. Odom, W., *Memorials of Sheffield, Its Cathedral and Parish Churches*, Sheffield, 1922
4. Binfield, et al.
5. Hey, 1998
6. Walton, M., *Sheffield, its story and its achievements*, Otley, Amethyst Press, 1984
7. Lodge, T., text accompanying O.S. map, 1902, Yorkshire Sheet 289.13, Godfrey Edition, Alan Godfrey, Gateshead
8. Hey, 1998, p.11
9. Binfield, in Binfield, et al., Vol. II, p.5
10. Harvey, P., in Walton, p.273
11. Saunders, 1992, p.13
12. South Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council was created in 1974 and abolished in 1986
13. The meaning of 'riding' is a third: one cannot have four 'ridings'
14. Hey, D., in Binfield, et al., Vol. II, p11
15. Odom, 1992, p.1
16. Hey, 1993, p.12
17. Walton, p.253
18. Hey, 1998, p.6
19. A much discussed topic in the First School staff room of Woodhouse West First and Middle School amongst the nine probationary teachers, most of whom were new to the local accent and dialect, was the notion of language lessons: 1976. The concept of a language laboratory for 'foreign' teachers was mooted in Wybourn Primary School staffroom in 1998.
20. Binfield, in Binfield, et al., Vol. II, p.5



21. Hey, 1998, p.244
22. Trains from Sheffield are notoriously slow, although Midland Mainline is continually improving its timings. The notion of 'London via Doncaster' is mooted by academics in the Music Department at the University of Sheffield who travel regularly by train.
23. Noted presentations by the children of St. John, Park, following visits to Manor Lodge. They gained their 'knowledge' from staff.
24. Walton, p.64
25. Primary evidence: St. John, Park, Primary School to Sheffield High School, various, 1992-1997
26. Primary evidence: conversations with Headteacher, St John, Park Church of England Primary School, on the awards of individual and school educational grants 1992-1997
27. Primary evidence: procedure followed when holding the positions of Secretary and Patronage Secretary to Sheffield Oratorio Chorus
28. Odom, 1922, p.65
29. Walton, p.16
30. Binfield, in Binfield et al., Vol. II, p.368
31. Walton, p.217
32. Hey, 1968, p.124
33. Binfield, in Binfield et al., Vol. II, p.370
34. Op.cit.
35. Ibid. p.375
36. Odom, 1922, p.31
37. Binfield, in Binfield et al., Vol. II, pp. 371, 376
38. Ibid., p.372
39. Ibid., p.374
40. Odom, W., *Fifty Years of Church Life 1866 – 1916*, Sheffield, n.p., 1917, p.23
41. Binfield, in Binfield et al., Vol. II, p.375



42. Lunn, D. R., *Chapters towards a history of the Parish and Cathedral Church of St Peter and St Paul, Sheffield*, n.p., 1987, p.55
43. Primary evidence gained through regular worship at St. Matthew's
44. Binfield, in Binfield, et al., Vol. II, p.390; for a comprehensive history of the free churches of Sheffield see Binfield, in Binfield, et al., Vol. II, pp. 390-414
45. Badham, in Gilley and Sheils, p.495
46. Parsons, p.279
47. Ibid., p.290

### **Illustrations**

- 5.i **The ancient Parish of Sheffield:** Hey, D., *A History of Sheffield*, Lancaster, Carnegie, 1998, p.xvi
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## **Chapter Six**

### **The Laws of Burial and Cremation**

#### **Preface**

It should be noted that the exact wording of statutory provisions is set out in **bold type**.

The laws so stated are believed to be correct as at May 2001.

#### **1. Introduction**

The laws of England and Wales are quite liberal about the burial of a body; given that a medical practitioner has certified natural death, the body can be buried in any suitable plot of land. It is the suitability of such a plot that is the cause of controversy. The burial of a daughter in the back yard of a terraced house in Crookes, Sheffield, is likely to provoke a strong and negative response from neighbours and the local community. Yet the burial of a daughter in the family plot receives public approbation if the plot is within an estate of many acres. In the first instance laws are likely to be fabricated and then quoted to achieve the aim of a 'proper' burial in churchyard or cemetery; in the second, thousands of tourists plan excursions to visit the wooded island site of the grave. Conversely, the laws of cremation are quite strict; one certainly cannot burn a body on any plot, however large, notwithstanding any religious requirement for observed cremation. Thus, a study of the religious influences in funerary practices in Sheffield warrants a close examination of relevant law.

##### **1.i General requirements**

Every committal has to comply with current laws and regulations controlling the disposal of the dead. The principal areas of control are:



- Registration of death
- Authority for disposal
- Committal

As a Channel Four booklet on the subject states:

‘When someone dies and you find yourself responsible for making all the funeral arrangements you will find that a number of formalities have to be carried out and you have only a very short time in which to complete them.’<sup>1</sup>

This area of law is complex. There are a multitude of grey areas: beliefs are held as accuracies and erroneous advice issued to those who are in great need. Many of the difficulties encountered are due, in part, to the belief that a practice that was in place before “Dick the Third” - Richard III - did not need to be circumscribed by statute.<sup>2</sup>

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the funerary practices evident in England have had as their base a foregoing Judeo-Christian culture. Laws pertaining to burial were set down and operated by the Church:

‘In early Christian times the Church exercised control over all aspects of disposal and the established Church still retains, in theory at least, absolute control over all interments in its consecrated ground. Church officials were appointed to organize funerals.’<sup>3</sup>

and

‘The Christian Church took an interest in, and exercised increasing control over, the disposal of the dead. Today the Church has supreme control, in theory if not in practice, over all bodies buried in consecrated ground.’<sup>4</sup>

Ecclesiastical law sufficed and a persistent common belief in its powers will be demonstrated.

The first statute referred to in *Davies’ Law of Burial and Cremation*, 6th Edition, 1993, is one pertaining to the Church: **Church Building Acts 1818**, defining the ecclesiastical



districts wherein is set the power of acquiring and holding land for burial ground purposes set out in section 13(1) (c) and (e), New Parishes Measure 1943:

‘Defined [ecclesiastical districts] by s.29(1) of the New Parishes Measure, 1943, as including “any parish whether ancient or new, and any district formed under the Church Building Acts, 1818 to 1884.....’<sup>5</sup>

Although ‘*Davies*’ refers to the Anatomy Act of 1832 which made provision for the ‘use of bodies of deceased persons, and parts of such bodies for anatomical examination’ and functioned for over 150 years,<sup>6</sup> the earliest statutes applicable to burial are:

**Cemeteries Clauses Act 1847 and Public Health Act 1848.** As ‘*Davies*’ states:

‘For many centuries the burial of the dead was primarily a matter for the Church, but as many churchyard burial grounds eventually came to be used to capacity, special provision had to be made by Parliament for the purpose of providing additional facilities for the disposal of the dead. During the period between 1852 and 1906, no less than fifteen Burial Acts were passed but most of them are now repealed. In addition, there were, inter alia, the Cemeteries Clauses Act, 1847, the Public Health (Interments) Act, 1879, and the Cremation Act, 1902. The intricate network of these statutes with their many overlapping and amending provisions produced a complexity of burial laws.’<sup>7</sup>

A current ‘*Davies*’ is seen as a must for the cemetery and crematorium administrator and essential reading for those studying for examinations of the Institute Of Burial and Cremation Administration by its editor.<sup>8</sup> It is this known complexity that produces disparity of advice and a statement or advice given as fact that is untrue. The 1994 *Which Consumer Guide* states:

‘If you want to bury someone in your garden, you must apply for and obtain permission from your local planning authority, and the local environmental health department must be notified and given the opportunity to object to the proposal.’<sup>9</sup>

In this instance the DoE Press Office responded to a query thus:

‘I confirm for you...that planning permission is not required for the burial of one or two persons in ...back garden[s] ...12.5.94’<sup>10</sup>



Again: 'Burials must take place in approved cemeteries or churchyards' in Green and Green.<sup>11</sup>

and:

'Permission to bury on private land should be requested from the local department of Environmental Health. Permission is rarely given, even in rural areas, and is never given in built-up areas.'<sup>12</sup>

No consent is needed.<sup>13</sup> In referring to burials at sea, Green and Green state:

'A coffin ...may not be used.'<sup>14</sup>

MAFF officials have powers to decide on each case.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the 1993 Benefits

Agency D49 leaflet stated:

'...if the will directs that the body must not be cremated, this must be obeyed.'<sup>16</sup>

In this the DSS accepts that this was only true between 1930 and 1965 (SIs.1930/1016 & 1965/1146). It issued instructions to correct this point,<sup>17</sup> however, no errata slips were included in the D49 Leaflet then available, free of charge, at outlets which included funeral directors and the Medico-Legal Centre in Sheffield. The current, 1999, leaflet issues correct information.

Essentially, the general legal requirements are contained within documents issued or made available by various bodies such as *Which*; Benefits Agency; the media publications and *Help the Aged*, whose leaflets and booklets are accurate and helpful: each sets out the form and substance of such necessities in an individual but comprehensive manner.

## 1.ii Registration

Before any committal can proceed, a death must be registered. The time-base of five days for this can be extended to fourteen days if written notification of the death, together with



the written Notice of the signing of the Certificate of Cause of Death, is sent to the Registrar within the said five-day period. This is a requirement that has been in force since 1.7.1837 following the Registration Act 1836 which created the system which still operates nationally to register all births, deaths and marriages. This Act placed a requirement upon the appointed Registrars to register all such events, but did not place an equal onus on the population to actually register the events.<sup>18</sup> The requirement of registration of death before a committal could be authorised gave a greater incentive for deaths to be registered. Before the 1836 Act there was no certification of death and incomplete, often inaccurate recording of deaths. Burial records were inefficient and poor. Indeed, localised registration of death was introduced during the time of Henry VIII (1538) as another tax-gathering exercise. Green and Green cite three principal aims of the 1836 Births and Deaths Registration Act:

- to facilitate legal proof of death
- to prevent the concealment of crime
- to produce accurate mortality statistics<sup>19</sup>

Registers were in a prescribed format but provided little useful statistical information owing to the wide variety of terminology and quality of informant/information. The provision of the registration service was in the hands of the newly-created Boards of Guardians. The pay of registrars was poor and work haphazardly done: there were no penalties for lack of registration.

The Act of 1874, **Births and Deaths Registration**, brought into force many of the current regulations. Although a Green Paper exists: 1989, recommending twelve specific changes to registration regulations, the current law is that of **The Births and Deaths**



**Registration Act 1953, amended by The Registration of Births and Deaths Regulations 1987.**

The current (June 1994) regulations require that the free Cause of Death Certificate from the attending doctor is sent/taken to the Registrar of the registration sub-district in which the death took place or in which the body is found, unless the death has to be referred to a coroner. A Formal Notice stating that the Certificate has been signed is given to the 'qualified informant'. Where the deceased has not been attended by a doctor during his last illness or within fourteen days of death, or where death was sudden or accidental the death is reported by the Registrar to the Coroner. There is no statutory requirement for a doctor to report a doubtful death to a coroner. The qualified informant can be, by S16(2)

**Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953:**

- any relative of the deceased person present at the death or in attendance during his last illness;
- any other relative of the deceased residing or being in the sub-district where the death occurred;
- any person present at the death;
- the occupier of the house if he knew of the happening of the death;
- any inmate of the house who knew of the happening of the death;
- the person causing the disposal of the body.

Provision is made under section 17(2) of the Births And Deaths Registration Act 1953 for the following to give information to the Registrar if a body has been found and no information is available as to the place of death:-

- any relative of the deceased who has knowledge of any of the particulars required to be registered concerning the death;
- any person present at the death;
- any person finding or taking charge of the body;
- any person causing the disposal of the body.



Where a dead body is found and no information as to the place of death is available, the death is to be registered by the registrar of births and deaths for the sub-district in which the body is found. Deaths must be registered in the prescribed form and manner without any fee or reward (**Section 20, Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1953**). Since 1st October 1968 the special fee hitherto payable where registration of death was effected at a private house has been abolished. **Regulations 39, 40 and 42 of Part X of the Registration of Births and Deaths Regulations, 1987**, require particulars thus:

- Date and Place of Death
- Name and Surname of Deceased
- Sex
- Maiden Surname of Woman who has married
- Date and Place of Birth
- Occupation and Usual Address
- Name and Surname of Informant;
- Qualification
- Usual Address
- Cause of Death
- Certification and Signature of Informant
- Date of Registration
- Signature of Registrar

The registration of still-births constitutes a special case. By the **Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1953, s41**, amended by **Still-Birth (Definitions) Act 1992, S.1.1992 Ch29**,<sup>20</sup> 'still-born child' means a child which has issued forth from its mother after the twenty-fourth week of pregnancy and which did not at any time after being completely expelled from its mother breathe or show any other signs of life. **Regulations 31 to 34 of Part VIII of the 1987 Regulations** require the following details at registration which is a mixture of registration of Birth and Death:-



- Date and place of birth
- Cause of death and nature of evidence that the child was still-born
- Sex of child
- In respect of the Father:
  - ◊ Name and Surname
  - ◊ Place of birth
  - ◊ Occupation
- In respect of the Mother:
  - ◊ Name and Surname
  - ◊ Place of birth
  - ◊ Maiden surname
  - ◊ Surname at marriage if different from maiden name
  - ◊ Usual address (if different)
- In regard to informant:
  - ◊ Name and Surname (if not mother or father)
  - ◊ Qualification
  - ◊ Usual address (if different)
  - ◊ Signature of Informant
- Date of Registration
- Signature of Registrar

Special provision exists, under Regulations 35 to 37, to cover registration where a Registrar has reported an alleged still-birth to the Coroner under Regulation 33 on the ground that there is reason to believe that the child was born alive. **Regulation 72 in The Registration of Births and Deaths Regulations 1987** makes provisions for offences in the registration of deaths under or in breach of: the **1953 Registration Act**, the **Population (Statistics) Act 1938**, the **Perjury Act 1911** and the **Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981**. By section 35 of the **Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1953**, it is an offence punishable on summary conviction for any Registrar to refuse, or without reasonable cause to omit, to register any death or particulars concerning which information has been duly tendered to him.



**Under section 36 of the Forgery Act, 1861 it is a punishable offence for any person unlawfully to destroy, deface, injure or falsify any register of deaths or any part or certified copy thereof. Under section 6 of the Interpretation Act 1978 in any Act as to Gender and number:**

- words importing the masculine gender include the feminine
- words importing the feminine gender include the masculine
- words in the singular include the plural and words in the plural include the singular

**If Registration has not been effected within the required fourteen days the Registrar may issue written notice to any qualified informant to attend at his office. Failure to do so may attract legal proceedings. The Registrar can register a death up to twelve months after its occurrence or within twelve months of the date when the body was found: after this time only the Registrar General can authorise registration (Consolidated Regulations 1968, 56).**

**Any Registration is now likely to be computerised, will need to be checked by the informant and will need to be signed with the pen provided by the Registrar, using special inks. The usual signature is required. Any errors noted after signing will need the authority of the Registrar General before altering. Additional copies of the entry can be obtained should they be required.**

**If death occurred outside England and Wales yet burial or cremation is required in these countries, a Certificate of No Liability to Register will be issued by the Registrar of the sub-district in which the committal is desired. Documentary evidence will be required.**



There is no requirement to register the death when cremated remains are brought into these countries.

### 1.iii Coroners

‘The coroner is a doctor or lawyer responsible for investigating deaths...’<sup>21</sup>

The office of coroner is ancient: it originated as Keeper of the Royal Pleas: *Coronae Curia Regis*, and was instigated to provide a source of money for the royal purse, particularly during the Norman rule. The coroner investigated accidents such as shipwrecks to see if there might be any treasure-trove which could be added to royal funds. The function of investigation and recording of sudden deaths thus developed. His duties and powers were originally much wider than at present. Until recently he could commit a named person directly to the Crown Court on a charge of unlawful killing. In 1860 the first County Coroners Act made provision for the payment of a specific salary for the job and its status rose. The Coroners Act of 1887 extended his powers, giving him the right to investigate all sudden or unexplained deaths. The Coroners(Amendment) Act, 1926 altered the mandatory inquest in every referred case. The most recent legislation to affect coroners is the Coroners Act, 1988. The current holder of the office is either a doctor, a lawyer or both, and of more than five years professional standing. and operates independently from local and central government, responsible only to the Crown<sup>22</sup> but can be employed by a local authority. The Registrar has a statutory duty to report to the Coroner any suspicious death that may be unnatural or of uncertain cause. According to Green and Green, this practice is honoured ‘in the breach’.<sup>23</sup> In practice the Coroner is notified of such deaths by the attending doctor or the police. However, the Registrar may be able to identify the need



for a Coronial enquiry: the certifying doctor may not have been made aware of all relevant circumstances such as occupation of the deceased, factors which may come to light during registration.

In all the following examples the coroner assumes jurisdiction:

- the deceased was not attended by a doctor during the last illness
- the deceased had not been seen by a doctor for fourteen days prior to death
- the death was violent
- the death was unnatural or occurred under suspicious circumstances
- the cause of death is unknown or uncertain
- the death occurred during an operation or did not recover from an anaesthetic
- the death was caused by industrial disease
- the death may be subject to compensation
- the death may be the result of neglect
- the death occurred in prison or in custody

Referral of a death to the Coroner defers registration. Certain categories of people have statutory duties to report thus:

- The Registrar of Births and Deaths
- The Governor of a Prison
- Persons in charge of habitual drunkards (**Habitual Drunkards Act 1879 s27**  
**Inebriates Act 1898 s19**)
- Persons who intend to remove a body out of England or Wales for disposal elsewhere

There is no statutory duty for the attending medical practitioner to report a suspicious death to the Coroner directly: Polson states:

‘It has properly become a wide, if not general, practice for doctors promptly to inform the coroner of any death in circumstances where the cause is not known or the death appears to have been unnatural or due to violence, poisoning or neglect.’<sup>24</sup>

**The Coroners Act 1988** consolidates the Coroners Acts 1844 to 1980; by **S8 (1)** there is a duty to hold an inquest into such above mentioned suspicious deaths. This inquest may



be with or without a jury, depending upon subsection (3). A jury, summoned by the coroner by warrant, consists of not less than seven nor more than eleven persons. The coroner has four possible courses of action:

- He may advise the issue of an ordinary medical certificate of cause of death
- He may assume jurisdiction but decide that a post-mortem is unnecessary and issue a Pink Form A in lieu of a death certificate
- He may order an autopsy: if death is decided to be natural, a Pink Form B is issued in lieu of a death certificate
- He may open an inquest.

Green and Green<sup>25</sup> state that the purpose of an inquest is to answer four questions:

- who
- where
- when
- how

It is not called to establish liability for the death nor of civil liability. A jury must be empanelled where the death needs to be notified to a government department; the coroner may also empanel a jury in any case if he sees fit. The jury may be composed of 7 - 11 people who are chosen at random and may return a majority verdict if not more than two disagree. The jury returns the verdict: the coroner gives direction. The Coroner must have informed interested parties of the time and place of an inquest. These are seen to be:

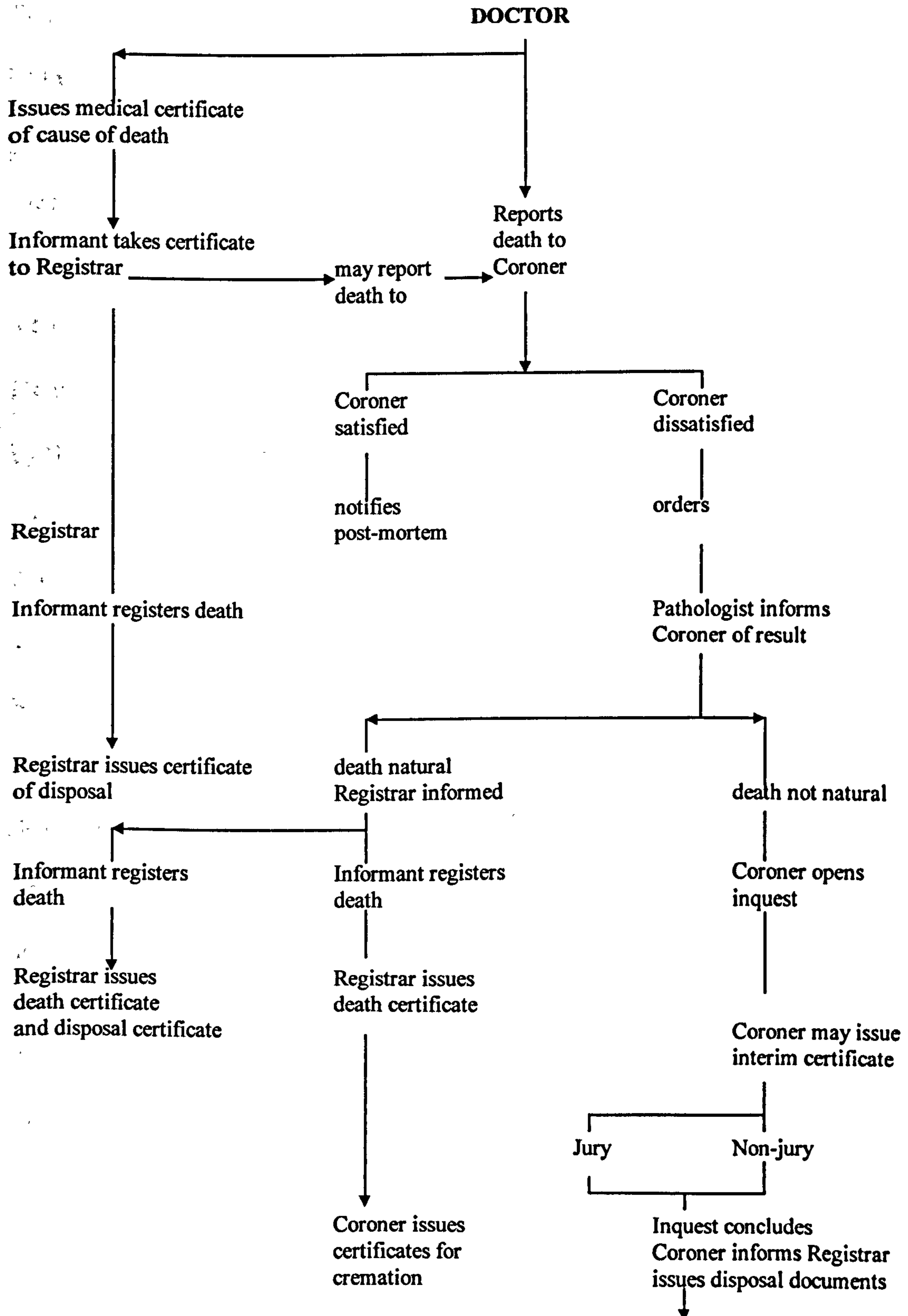
- The spouse
- The nearest relative
- The personal representative or executor(s)
- Any person who has asked to be notified of the inquest
- Any person with an interest in life assurance on the deceased
- Any pertinent trade union representative
- Any person who MAY have caused the death or contributed to it
- The Chief of Police or his representative
- Any other interested party at the call of the coroner



The inquest is likely to be public: it may only be held in camera where national security is threatened. The coroner may enlist the aid of the media to handle cases with sensitivity or again to highlight found dangers. The press can be present. There are reporting restrictions on minors but not in other general cases, excluding national security. There are no costs to the 'family' or estate resulting from an inquest. There is no provision for legal aid at an inquest.



**PLAN OF PROCEDURE WHEN DEATH IS REPORTED TO CORONER <sup>26</sup>**





#### **1.iv Authority for Disposal, Wills and Executors**

The authority of the Registrar who issues the death certificate is sufficient for a burial: he has no authority to permit cremation. After registration of death, the Registrar issues a green certificate, generally referred to as the disposal certificate. It is a punishable offence for anyone to dispose of a body without delivery of the Registrar's Certificate of Disposal unless, in the case of a burial, a written declaration in a prescribed form is given that such a Certificate has been issued as prescribed in the **Regulation of Births and Deaths Regulations 1987 (S.1. 1987 No. 2088) Regulation 49 (3)**. A still-born child is covered by the **Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1926**, as amended by **Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1953, s. 43 (1)** and **First Schedule, Paragraph B3**.

A coroner can issue an Order for Burial or a Certificate for Cremation. With the latter the two Medical Certificates (Forms B and C) are not required. The disposal certificate is issued by either the Registrar or the Coroner but not by both. The tear-off section of the disposal form is returned to the Registrar: if this is not done within 14 days, the local environmental services will be alerted. (S1.1987/2088A.51(2)) to ensure that there is no health hazard from retaining the body. This form has to be returned within 96 hours of disposal.

Wills are considered crucial in certain circumstances: they are a way of ensuring that the wishes of the deceased regarding disposal are known. Whoever is appointed in the will as executor decides whether or not to comply with these wishes. Further, the executor can disregard the preferences of relatives or friends. The executors have the legal responsibility for deciding what to do with the body but they must also have "a proper regard.... to the



comfort of others” (*Ambrose v Kerrison 1851 84RR778*). There is no property in a body: it cannot be owned or stolen but the executors have legal rights to possession and custody of the body pending disposal (*R. v Sharpe, 1875, Dears. and B. 160*). Wills cannot direct or instruct on what should happen to the body after death: only wishes can be stated. The information given in the Which Consumer Guide states that:

‘If the deceased left no specific instructions, the decision about burial or cremation is normally made by the next of kin, or the executor. Although it is usual to carry out the wishes previously expressed by the deceased, there is no legal obligation to do so.’<sup>27</sup>

This is correct information. It is therefore seen as prudent that named executors are chosen for their known due regard of the wishes of the person making such a will. The situations experienced by life-partners who are not relatives and who are excluded from funeral decisions and arrangements by next of kin serves to emphasise the advice issued by bodies such as the Natural Death Centre and the Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Project.<sup>28</sup> Gifts or inducements can legally be offered to executors to gain the compliance desired.<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that the right of possession and custody are expressly limited if the interests of public health are involved, by the provisions contained in ss. 43-45 and 47-48 of the **Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984**.

## **2.i Autopsy & Organ Donation**

An autopsy or post-mortem is ‘the examination of the organs and tissues after death’<sup>30</sup> it is a procedure with a long history and has attracted to it an equally long aversion. Many of the aversions are religious in origin: to interfere with the body was to deny the subject a true and complete bodily resurrection. Many religions and denominations forbid voluntary



autopsy: considerable care has to be taken when an autopsy is requested, for medical knowledge, from Orthodox Jews, Parsees, Muslims and others. However a Coroner's order must be obeyed by all. The aversion to autopsy is noted in all respondents whether affirming to a religion or not.

Autopsies are conducted on two levels: the Coroner's autopsy, in a hospital or public mortuary, and the academic, which takes place in the hospital. The academic autopsy may not be performed without the consent of the person 'lawfully in possession of his body after his death' nor may any organs or tissues be taken without consent (**Human Tissue Act, 1961, 9 & 10 Eliz. 2 c 54**). Note: Sub-s (1): In *Williams v Williams (1882) 20 Ch D 659, [1881-5] All ER Rep 840*, it was held that the executors have a right to the possession of a corpse. This consent to donation or post-mortem must respect known wishes and objections of the deceased and of his surviving spouse or relative. Donations cannot be carried out if there is reason to believe that there is to be an inquest or legally-required post-mortem.

## 2.ii Funeral Arrangements

The primary responsibility for the disposal of the body rests with the executors. The position under the **Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984** is that there are appropriate powers for the burial or cremation by public authorities of bodies in the interests of public health, especially where a person has died while suffering from a notifiable disease.



The appropriate local authority is also obliged to arrange the funeral of a person who was, at the time of his death, being provided with accommodation under Part III of the **National Assistance Act 1948** or living in a council hostel under that Act. It should be noted that, under s46 (3) of that Act, such an authority shall not cause a body to be cremated.... where they have reason to believe that cremation would be contrary to the wishes of the deceased. Similarly, any child who is being looked after by a local authority is covered by the **Children Act 1989** and funeral arrangements can therefore be made.

### 2.iii Financial responsibilities

The person who orders a funeral through a funeral director is contractually liable to that funeral director. When a person dies 'possessed of property', funeral expenses come out of the estate. (*Rees v Hughes, 1946 1 K.B. 517*) Where the estate of a deceased person is solvent, S 34 (3) of the **Administration of Estates Act, 1925** now provides that it shall, *inter alia*, be applicable towards the discharge of the funeral, testamentary and administration expenses. Funerals arranged under the **Public Health (Control of Disease) Act** are covered by section 46 (5) of that Act in that the arranging authority can recover expenses from the deceased's estate.

### 3.i Burial

It is a general rule that anyone dying in this country is entitled to a Christian burial with the full Church of England burial service unless he be excluded by Ecclesiastical Law from such a right (*R. v Stewart, 1840, 12Ad. and El. 773*). Under Ecclesiastical law, people are



excluded if they die unbaptised or are excommunicated. However, baptism according to any Christian denomination suffices. Following the **Burial Laws Amendment Act 1880** Church of England ministers are permitted to perform burial services in unconsecrated ground. A convenient time of warning must be given to a minister, as held in *Titchmarsh v Chapman, 1844*; one cannot bring a corpse to a burial ground and demand the immediate services of the minister, as due notice must be given.

Burial and cemetery authorities have their own Rules and Regulations. They are likely to contain provision for the following matters:-

- Time and place for ordering interments
- Time and place for payment of fees and charges
- Length of notice required
- Vaults or bricked grave provision(s)
- Payments in advance
- Particulars to be given
- Written requirements
- Production of Registrar's Certificate of Disposal
- Need for own arrangements of any service
- Hours of burials
- The burial of persons with infectious disease.
- Private (exclusive) grave provision
- Public grave provision
- Monument rules

It is prohibited to bury a child as if it had been still-born (**Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1874**). By virtue of the same act, the bodies of still-born children are still permitted to be buried in the coffin of another corpse, provided that this is stated in writing.

All burials in cemeteries are subject to registration, which may be computer-based (**Article 11 (2) (b), The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977; and (Amendment) Order**



**1986.** Offences against required registration are punishable. There is no law that prevents burial in private land, even a small town back garden. Care must be taken that the water supply is not polluted: practically the relevant water authorities pay scant regard to this; the moors which effectively supply Sheffield's water are scattered with the remains of dead sheep.

### **3.ii Graveyards**

In 1794 the common law right of all parishioners to burial in the parish churchyard or grounds without any leave from the incumbent was recognised in *Maidman v Malpas*. This right now applies to cremated remains by virtue of the **Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992**. A parishioner is one who resides within the parish or who is on the Electoral Roll. Unless a place for burial has been reserved by faculty the incumbent can decide where the burial is to be. Others may also be so buried upon the incumbent's permit. However, he may exercise a veto which cannot be overturned by Faculty. There may be customary right of burial which is worthy of consideration. If mandamus be granted against an incumbent's refusal of burial to a corpse with common law right of burial, burial in a certain place or family vault could still not take place without the incumbent's permission. There has been no common law right to burial within the church building itself. A faculty is required before such a burial, should it be allowed within that building, or the interment of cremated remains within the building. Burials may still be granted, by Faculty, within rural churches or where the church existed before 1848. St George's Chapel, Windsor, is still the place for the interment of members of the Royal Family. The right of burial only extends to a wooden coffin: an iron coffin is



not unlawful but it may attract a higher fee. It will not decompose and will therefore continue to occupy space. The exclusive right to burial within a particular part of the churchyard or in a family vault can be granted by a Faculty. It is worthy of note that permitted burials within Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral are of cremated remains only.

Memorials erected lawfully in a churchyard or church remain the property of those who caused them to be erected. Anyone who removes or defaces them is liable for an action of trespass. Alterations in their position may be authorised by a Faculty. Repairs to a monument do not need a Faculty. Memorials in the form of furniture or windows become the property of the church and as such are protected by the laws of property. Defective erection of a monument causes the concerned mason to be liable. The maintenance of the churchyard is the duty of the incumbent or owner, and is enforceable by indictment.

It is unlawful to cause malicious damage or destruction to any statue, memorial or monument to the dead erected in any church, chapel, meeting-house or any place of worship or in any burial ground or public garden: **Malicious Damage Act, 1861, s.39**, as amended by the **Criminal Justice Act, 1948, s.83 (3)** and **Schedule 10**.

**Under Part 1 of Schedule 2 to The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977:-**

- No burial shall take place, no human remains shall be scattered and no tombstone or other memorial shall be placed in a cemetery, and no additional inscription made without the permission of the appointed officer.
- No body shall be buried in a grave in such a manner that any part of the coffin is less than three feet below the level of adjoining ground, unless permission be given for it to be two feet below if the soil and other conditions permit.



- The coffin must be effectively separated from any other coffin in that grave by a layer of earth no less than six inches thick.
- No previous interment must be disturbed when using a grave for another burial.
- All walled graves and vaults must be of suitable materials.
- Where the burial authority permit uncoffined burials any reference to a coffin includes a reference to the wrappings of the body. *Shrouded corpses are now permitted in Sheffield's burial grounds.*

### 3.iii Disused burial grounds

A disused burial ground is defined by section 4 of the **Open Spaces Act, 1887**, as any burial ground which is no longer used for interments, whether or not such ground shall have been partially or wholly closed for burials under the provision of any statute or Order in Council. By section 20 of the same Act, a 'burial ground' includes any churchyard, cemetery, or other ground, whether consecrated or not, which has been at any time set apart for the purpose of interment. The formal closure of burial grounds for burial purposes is normally by Order in Council made upon the representation of the Secretary of State for the Environment: **Burial Act, 1853, s.1: Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 26 et al.**

Consecrated Church of England burial grounds are dealt with under the **Pastoral Measure 1983** which are then under much closer control than other grounds dealt with under the **Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment) Act 1981**. Before this latter came into force all such disused burial grounds were subject to the restrictions on building imposed by the **Disused Burial Grounds Act 1884**, unless a private Act of Parliament was passed. Such acts include that for Rochdale (1958), Manchester (1967) and Brighton (1975). The



Act of 1981, now cited with the 1884 Act, was raised to give churches and religious bodies statutory authority similar to that available to the Church of England to enable the erection of buildings on unconsecrated disused burial grounds. **The Open Spaces Act 1906** caters for the utilisation and maintenance of burial grounds under this Act which defines the powers and duties of Local Authorities operating under the terms of the Act.

#### **4.i Cremation**

The laws of cremation are extensive: the **Environmental Protection Act 1990** is the latest to qualify cremation. Compliance with this Act has resulted in great expense for those running crematoria. The primary aim of the Act is that prescribed processes must be authorised and this authorisation will oblige the operator of the process to prevent releases to the environment. Where prevention is impossible, releases must be minimised and rendered harmless. In this context 'harmless is defined as:

- affording no risk to health of living organisms
- that there be no interference with eco-systems
- that there be no damage to property i.e. black spots on washing
- affording no offence to man's senses

The lack of visible smoke now required is not thought to create a problem with religious groups such as Hindus, who have, in the past, required the sight of smoke. The requirements usually mean new cremators: if the cremator cannot operate without producing black smoke the process will have to cease operation. The Right Honourable The Earl Grey, at a Presidential address at the 1992 Cremation Society Conference said:

'A growing number of cremation authorities are now having to seriously consider the future of the service that they provide in the light of the cost implications of the EPA 1990.'<sup>31</sup>



**By section 4 of the Cremation Act, 1902, the powers of a burial authority to provide and maintain burial grounds or cemeteries, or anything essential, ancillary or incidental thereto, shall be deemed to extend to and include the provision of crematoria. Nothing in the Act shall authorise the burial authority to create or permit a nuisance. The Act includes coverage of restrictions of siting; the powers to accept gifts and fees. The burial of cremated remains within a church building requires a Faculty: the burial of cremated remains in a churchyard is now governed by Canon B38.**

#### **4.ii Crematoria Regulations**

**The Cremation Regulations, 1930 as amended by the Cremation Regulations 1952, 1965, 1979 and the Cremation (Amendment) Regulations 1985 cover the maintenance, closing and inspection of crematoria. There are restrictions upon cremation: there can be no cremation until the Home Secretary has been notified of the opening of a crematorium. Prior to the Cremation Regulations, 1965, it was not lawful to cremate unidentified remains nor the remains of any person who was known to have left a written direction to the contrary. There can be no cremation until the death has been properly registered or a Coroner's Certificate for Cremation been given. Form A covers the required application to cremate: it is normally signed by the executor or the nearest relative but it may be signed by a proper applicant with a satisfactory reason being given. The body of a still-born child can be cremated. The application requires information under ten headings, covering identification of applicant; information of relatives; date, time and place of death; how death occurred i.e. due to violence; the desirability of further examination; name of normal**



medical attendant and names of last attending practitioners. Two Medical Certificates are normally required.

After cremation the ashes left must be given into the charge of the person who applied for the cremation. If not, they are retained by the Cremation Authority for a 'reasonable time' before disposal by burial or scattering, following a fortnight's notice to the applicant.

Cremation must be registered according to the **Cremation Regulations, 1930** and the Registrar of Deaths notified within 96 hours of the cremation. Cremation Authorities are required to carefully preserve all documentation. All Regulations are under penalty.

### **5.i Exhumation**

This has recently been of great pertinence in the City of Sheffield. The building of the track-base for a modern tram system required the excavation of a deep layer of road surface around the Cathedral. This area encompasses the old parish church burial ground, long since disused. The remains of bodies were discovered at trial borings. A Home Office faculty was obtained for the exhumation of any affected bodies and their re-interment in another, open burial ground. This is an established practice: church authorities are long accustomed to such necessities. The Cathedral authorities agreed to such exhumations, under careful and appropriate supervision; they would gain by the re-ordering of the Cathedral forecourt and its landscaping. Indeed, it was believed that there were no remains under the road surface: that all remains had been previously exhumed and re-interred. The resultant publicity brought current thinking into sharp focus.



Headlines in local papers, such as **'Grisliest job which ran into trouble'**<sup>32</sup>; **'Staff shock at graveyard dig'**<sup>33</sup>; **'A grave mistake for city'**<sup>34</sup>; **'Heritage destroyed: Heartbreak as our graves carved up'**<sup>35</sup>; **'Tram dig a grave mistake'**<sup>36</sup> all give evidence of current views and opinions. Of prime pertinence here was the position of the Cathedral in citizens' thoughts. There had been no previous outcry at similar exhumations at other churchyards in the city, some of which were carried out in living memory.<sup>37</sup> Nor was there excessive public reaction to necessary exhumations later on further along the tram route at an old Methodist burial ground.<sup>38</sup> The cathedral was the old parish church: *'T'owd church'*<sup>39</sup> As such, any meddling was regarded as sacrilegious. The building and its burial ground were 'special' in the thoughts and minds of the populace. The exhumations prompted many *'Letters to the Editor'* and extensive photographic and televised media coverage as well as publicised general public concern. It must be noted that, whilst some coverage was prompted by the populace, much was media-instigated, with 'banner' headlines worthy of national tragedy.

There are various legal requirements when exhumation and re-interment of remains is considered desirable, for whatever reason. These include the **Town and Country Planning Act 1990 sections 238 – 240**: for land consisting of a burial ground which has been acquired by a minister, a local authority or appropriated by a local authority for planning purposes may be used in any manner...provided that the remains are dealt with in the prescribed manner. No ecclesiastical Faculty is required for removal and re-interment of remains; no Licence from the Home Secretary is necessary under **section 25 of the Burial Act 1857**, subject to the provisions of the **Town and Country Planning**



**(Churches, Places of Religious Worship and Burial Grounds) Regulations, 1950** by **section 240** of the 1990 Act. The above 1950 Regulations, Regulation 7, requires the person in whom the land is vested to give required notices before any removal and reinterment of remains; Regulation 8 deals with the Notice of Intention; Regulation 9 denotes the powers of personal representatives; Regulation 10 deals with where reinterment is to take place and Regulation 12 the required supervision by the local Environmental Health Officer. In Sheffield's case the local officer was John Batley<sup>40</sup> who gave considerable time and co-operation to this exhumation project. Regulation 12 requires that the ground must be screened from public view and a wooden shell provided where a coffin has perished. The wooden screens erected at the Cathedral site proved insufficient to conceal the operation from determined public view. Following massive local publicity, a tent-like shelter was further erected within the screens in an attempt to cover all workings. This erection hampered the work but helped the workmen who were distressed by the lack of understanding of their difficult and stressful job.<sup>41</sup>



**6.i Exhumations at  
Sheffield Cathedral**



The unauthorised disinterment of dead bodies is illegal at Common Law. In *R. v Lynn* it was held that the removal of a body from any burial ground without lawful authority was an indictable misdemeanour at common law, whatever the motive. Even when bodies are accidentally dug up there is likely to be a misdemeanour, it being held in *R. v Jacobsen* to be so. The accidental finding of remains in West Street in Sheffield in January, 1994,<sup>42</sup> was dealt with in a proper manner. The coroner may legally order the exhumation of a body, provided that there be sufficient and good reason, such as to hold a first or further inquest.

Under ecclesiastical law, a Faculty has been required before a body can be removed from consecrated ground. This might occur for family reasons: the family wishing to reinter at a more favourable place. Faculties may also be granted to establish identity; to obtain papers buried with the body; to remove in the interests of public health; to enable the widening of streets et al. Faculties are granted bearing in mind the general principle of undisturbance and that a churchyard be a place for peace and prayer.

A licence may be required from the Home Secretary in certain cases qualified under **section 25 of the Burial Act, 1857. The Protection of Military Remains Act 1986** covers the protection of remains in crashed or sunk military transportation. In some special circumstances both an ecclesiastical Faculty and a Licence from the Home Office may be required. Again, there are statutory exceptions where neither a Faculty nor a licence is required. Under **Article 11 of Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977** as amended by **The Local Authorities' Cemeteries (Amendment) Order 1986** disinterments must be registered.



## **5.ii Burial at Sea**

The current laws regarding burial at sea are set out under differing Acts and Regulations. The death must be registered as per usual. Two separate authorities or permissions are required before such a burial. Firstly, the Coroner must be informed that it is intended to take a body out of the country as prescribed in **Removal of Bodies Regulations 1954**, amended 1971. Then, the body cannot be removed out of England until after four clear days have elapsed. A licence is needed, under the **Food and Environment Protection Act 1985**, as amended by the **Environmental Protection Act 1990**, for the deposit of substances or articles within United Kingdom waters or United Kingdom controlled waters, either in the sea or under the seabed. This licence must be applied for to the local Fisheries Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Due regard is taken of the need to protect the marine environment. The Ministry understands the needs of those who have long had an involvement with the sea, but does not actively encourage sea burials. However, the Ministries' Sea Fisheries Inspectorate will indeed issue a licence which will give details of the deceased and the date and location of burial and other conditions. The body must be free of infection and fever. Embalmed bodies are not allowed burial at sea. There are few places around our coasts where sea burial is permitted: they must be away from fishing grounds and estuaries. They are likely to be outside the three-mile limit.<sup>43</sup> If cremated remains are to be buried a similar application must be made and guidance should be obtained. There is no regulation concerning dispersal of ashes at sea. A Register must be kept of all burials; offences carry penalties. New guidance is planned that will recommend that burial at sea should be in a coffin that conforms to certain specifications. The draft specification on Burials at Sea was the subject of a

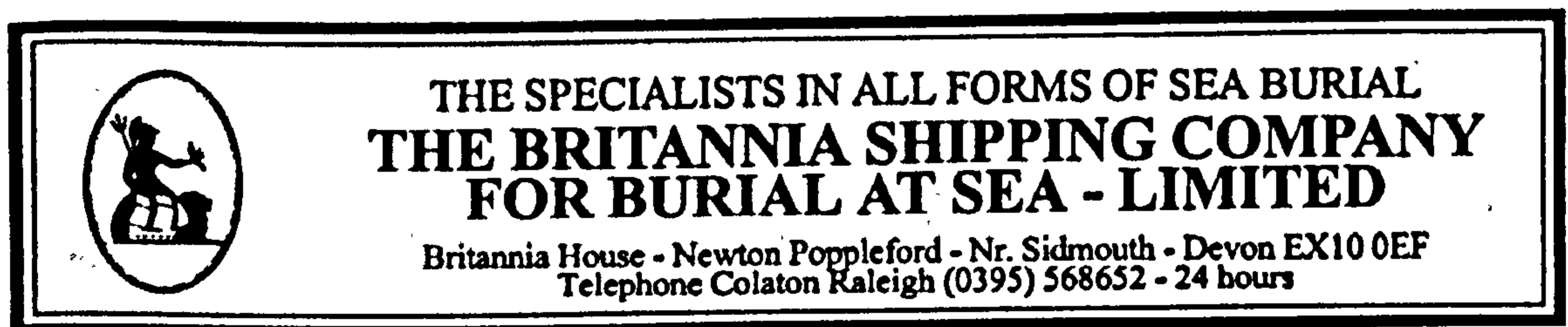


meeting between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and funeral service representatives on the 29 November 1993. MAFF records show that there were not more than 20 such burials in any one year. This was 'generally recognised' to be an unlikely number which pointed to the fact that there were many unlicensed burials.<sup>44</sup> The MAFF wished not to apply a detailed specification, rather to issue guidelines which would be applied at funeral directors' discretion. The traditional burial with a canvas/calico shroud and chain to hold down is considered insufficient. It would appear that bodies are being trawled to the surface. However, the *Which Guide*<sup>45</sup> states that the coffin must be solid wood well drilled with holes and containing many weights: it should be covered by a pall during any preceding church service: there is no current legislation to this effect. The concern expressed that corpses who died from AIDS related illnesses must be so buried that their malfunction does not re-enter the food chain via sea creatures ignores the fact that AIDS and its associated HIV positive indication is a human problem: hence the H in HIV.<sup>46</sup> The *Which Guide* further refers to burial at sea as being 'unusual, fairly complicated and expensive.'<sup>47</sup> It states in addition that all materials [not ashes] disposed of at sea require a licence under the **Dumping at Sea Act 1974**; this includes bodies, 'but in order to minimise distress to the bereaved .... a written notification that there is an intent to bury at sea may suffice in place of the issue of a licence.'<sup>48</sup> Any such application is stated to require the name and address of the applicant, the date and time period concerned and the information that a human body is to be disposed of at sea. The Fisheries Inspectorate is to be the addressee. Registration of death must be as normal, that is, within the Registration sub-district within which death occurred, and application must be made to the coroner for the removal of a body from England. on **Form 104**. A copy of the death



certificate will be required, and a declaration as to whether the death was a result of infectious illness.

There are particular firms which specialise in burial at sea such as the 'Britannia Shipping Company For Burial At Sea', who operate from Sidmouth, Devon; J Bevis, Southampton; and Davies' Funeral Services, Milford-on-Sea. It should be noted that burial at sea is far less complicated when arranged through the undertaker and carpenter, Alf Trenear, on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, where the regulations are less stringent and bodies are buried in canvas shrouds.



*6.ii Advertisement: 'Funeral Service Journal'*

**5.iii Repatriation**

It may be required that a body is removed for committal in another country than that in which the death occurred. This also applies to countries within the United Kingdom: a death in England or Wales needs documentation before committal in Scotland, Northern Ireland or the Channel Isles. Under section 4 of the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1926, The body of a deceased person shall not be removed out of England until the expiration of the prescribed period after notice of the removal has been given to the coroner within whose jurisdiction the body is lying or otherwise than in accordance with such procedure as may be prescribed. Permission must be obtained from the coroner of the local district in which the death occurred. This is done on Form 104 which



**notifies a coroner of the intention to remove such a body: Removal of Bodies**

**(Amendment) Regulations 1971.** If the Registrar or Coroner concerned has prior notice that such repatriation is to take place a certificate for disposal will not be issued. Any that may have been issued must be sent to the coroner together with the **Form 104**. He gives permission on **Form 103**. This is normally after four clear days. However, there is provision for immediate removal should this be deemed satisfactory.

No legal permission is required to take cremated remains out of the United Kingdom: the receiving country may have its own regulations. In Italy the same documentation is required as for a body. Greece will not allow importation of ashes until after one year after death: they are treated the same as an exhumed body. Consular regulations in the receiving country are liable to change and inquiries must be up-to-date and thorough.

Should the body need to be transported for burial in another district within England and Wales, registration must be effected in the registration district where the person died.

Firms and funeral directors cater for such requirements: they may have their own *rules* which are not however, subject to legislation.

Should the body be imported from another country a certificate of no liability to register is issued by the Registrar of Births and Deaths of the registration sub-district within which it is intended to bury or cremate the said body. In the case of cremation additional documentation is required. By **Regulation 12 A (1) of the Cremation Regulations 1930** the Medical Referee may accept Certificates given in accordance with Regulations under the **Cremation Acts 1902 and 1952** which have effect in Scotland; Northern Ireland, the



**Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.** From other countries similar documentation by qualified practitioners is required that would equate to the same level of enquiry current in England or Wales.

**If a body is to be imported from Scotland** the death must have been registered there and a copy of a certified extract from the entry in the Scottish death register produced. From the Isle of Man a form of acknowledgement must be given by a coroner that it is intended to remove a body from the island. From other countries an appropriate death certificate must be produced as issued by the civil registrar concerned or some official authorisation.

Should the death have taken place at sea, evidence from the master of the vessel or other responsible person is required to show that the death took place at sea. The procedure when death occurs in a vessel registered in the United Kingdom is that laid down in the **Merchant Shipping Acts, 1894 and 1970.** Registration is to the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen who transmits appropriate information to the Registrar general for the particular country within the United Kingdom. The death is entered in the Marine Register. The **Civil Aviation Act, 1949, s.55,** as amended by the **Civil Aviation Act, 1971, Schedule 10 (2),** covers for a return of deaths anywhere in the world which occurred in aircraft registered in Great Britain or Northern Ireland. It also covers deaths of all travellers, including crew which occurred on a journey as a consequence of an accident. Records are kept in the Air Register Books of Deaths; a copy is sent to the Registrar General. All deaths as the result of an accident in the United Kingdom are registered by the registrar of the sub-district in which the death occurred.



**The complexities of the laws of burial and cremation demand that any advice offered by organisations and charities, whose stated aim is to assist others, must be checked and agreed by those qualified and experienced in these aspects of law. Beliefs that are commonly held are not, of themselves, accurate. Beliefs that are held as legal because that is the subconscious desire of the holder must be subject to closer scrutiny. Legal requirements cannot be invented and stated as true by those who seek to inform.**



## Notes

1. Aleksander, T., p.16
2. Primary evidence: statement made at a conference by the Right Reverend Dr. Geoffrey Rowell, Bishop of Basingstoke, June 11, 1994
3. Green and Green, p.1
4. Polson and Marshall, p.47
5. Smale, p.83
6. Ibid., p.50
7. Ibid., p.86
8. Ibid., p.xvii
9. Harris, p.65
10. Bradfield, p.4
11. Green and Green, p.68
12. Ibid., p.9
13. Bradfield, p.93
14. Green and Green, p.11
15. Bradfield, p.93
16. *What to do after a death, D49, 1993, p.19*
17. Bradfield, p.15
18. Smale, p.12
19. Green and Green, p.13
20. Bradfield, p.10
21. *What to do after a death in England and Wales, D49, 1999, p.10*



22. Harris, p.35
23. Green and Green, p.27
24. Polson and Marshall, p.145
25. Green and Green, p.39
26. Harris, p.44
27. Ibid., p.51
28.
  - i. Natural Death Centre, 20 Heber Road, London, NW2 6AA
  - ii. Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Project, Vaughan M. Williams Centre, Colindale Hospital, London, NW9 5HG
29. Bradfield, p.14
30. Green and Green, p.54
31. 'Pharos International', Autumn 1992, pp.98-101
32. 'Star', October 15, 1993, p.4
33. Ibid., p.1
34. 'Gazette', August 5, 1993, p.2
35. 'Star', October 22, 1993, p.10
36. 'Star', July 22, 1993, p.12
37. St Philip's and St George's churches, Sheffield, exhumations
38. Calver Street Methodist Chapel, Sheffield, probable source of human remains, found January 27, 1994
39. Primary evidence, October 1994: conversation, Rt. Revd John Gladwin, one-time Provost of Sheffield, now Bishop of Guildford
40. John Batley, MIEH, MIOSH, General Manager, Sheffield Bereavement Services
41. Primary evidence: conversation, Paul Needes, PHK Operations Manager
42. West Street, Sheffield: route of Supertram, 'Star', January 25, 1994, p.16



43. Harris, p.116
44. 'Funeral Director', February 1994, p.17
45. Harris, p.116
46. Primary evidence, interview, Michael Green, Professor of Forensic Pathology, University of Sheffield, and Consultant Pathologist to the Home Office, June 1994
47. Harris, p.116
48. Op. cit.

### **Illustrations**

- 6.i Exhumations at Sheffield Cathedral: 'Star', October 15, 1993, p.1
- 6.ii Advertisement: 'Funeral Service Journal': 'Funeral Service Journal', May 1994, p.84



## **Chapter Seven**

### **The Sheffield Funeral Trade**

#### **1. Introduction**

At the end of the twentieth century most British mourners, faced with the prospect of a funeral, still decide to use the services of an undertaker: someone who undertakes to furnish a funeral. Although the term ‘funeral director’ is now used within the trade, and by most clients, there are those who still refer to ‘the undertaker’, either as a wry comment, acknowledging perhaps that the name ‘funeral director’ equates, in their minds, with that of the style of address used for ‘refuse disposal operatives’, or because that is how he is known locally. Woodhouse villagers use the term ‘undertaker’ for their local, long established firm, H. Keeton, because that is how Ray Keeton, is known in the Sheffield area.<sup>1</sup> Female funeral directors, of which there are increasing numbers, are similarly styled.

A particular funeral director is likely to be known within any locality or within any family: such knowledge is passed on by experience. Thus, long-established families in Sheffield will know of a funeral director who offers the style of service that is familiar, or, attendance at a funeral may well have provided incidental but useful information about which firm to, or not to, engage. The citizens of Sheffield have access to what must be considered the full range of trading options available in any other city; practices vary widely and the scope is comprehensive, given present day requirements. The Sheffield funeral directors are able to “provide what is customary”,<sup>2</sup> a phrase that is as applicable for the third millennium as it was when it was first used in the middle of the nineteenth century. Given that all customs change over time, it will be noted during this study that the tempo of change in the Sheffield funeral could be termed ‘adagio’: slow. The long-term nature of this study: 1970 to



1999, with informal research beginning in 1960, has provided the opportunity for in-depth primary research into such changes to be carried out over a significant period of time. Study of the 'trade' is an essential element of this research, for it is the trade that avails mourners of choices. Innovations and fashions in funerals are initiated in the same way as they are in other areas of lifestyle; there are rarely totally 'new' ideas: most are old practices and old fashions reworked, yet incorporating the influences of the present which mark a practice as 'of its age'.

### **1.i Funeral furnishers**

Saunders, 1992, in her overview of the history of funeral furnishing, states:

' .. historically it has always been the funeral furnishers who decided on the types and quality of the fittings and trappings used. The actual furnishings of funerals have a 500 year history.'<sup>3</sup>

Chapter Three of this present study notes the establishment of masses for the soul with their associated chantry priests and funeral guilds, and includes some of the history of the funeral trade following the collapse of the burial clubs: the functional inheritors of the guilds. The seventeenth century demand for an increasingly elaborate funeral, in the manner of those organised by the College of Arms for the nobility, is seen as the prime motivator for the emergence of the funeral trade. If clients had to pay extra to the club for required furnishings the logic was that they might as well go straight to the trade themselves. Again, just as the College of Arms had a strict scale of funeral etiquette: the baron being allotted a far simpler funeral than an earl, so the emerging trade operated their own scale of offerings. The need to emulate those that were thought of as one's betters, in this case the landed gentry believing they had as much right to the same style of funeral as, say, a knight, has a



long history. In the early history of the trade one could not purchase a funeral 'above one's station'. All that was to change.

This study of religion and rite continues the research previously carried out, firstly, in 1975, and secondly, in 1992, and presented as unpublished dissertations.<sup>4</sup> For the 1992 research, Sheffield funeral directors were selected for reasons of size of the firm or relevance to the particular geographical areas of study; those selected included the two firms which had been helpful in the first study. In this present study, which builds on previous work, the same firms were approached for repeat interviews. One firm, Heward's, had closed; the others were very co-operative, indeed some of the same personnel were still employed, which contributed to the scope and ease of any interview.

**Table 7.i**  
**Attributes of funeral directors in study**

	Pritchard	Heath	B&C	John Fairest	Lunt	Keeton	S&E (Yorkshire)
Significant Religious preference	Jewish		Muslim		Catholic		
Service Chapel		*	*	*			*
Chapel used			*	*			*
Crematorium			*				
Chapels of Rest	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Coffins made		*		*			
Palls	(*)	*		(*)	*		(*)
Flowers	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Food on premises			*	*			*
Food organised	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Memorials	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Trade Association	FSC	NAFD	NAFD	FSC	NAFD SAIF	NAFD	FSC
Ownership/links	SCI	Ind.		Yorkshire	Ind.	Ind.	Yorkshire

**Key:**

- B&C ..... the trading name of B&C Funeral Services: B&C stands for Brightside and Carbrook
- S&E ..... the trading name of Sheffield and Ecclesall Funeral Services
- \* ..... attribute present
- (\*) ..... attribute used if requested
- Yorkshire ..... Yorkshire Co-operatives Ltd.
- FSC ..... Funeral Standards Council
- NAFD ..... National Association of Funeral Directors
- SAIF ..... The Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors
- SCI ..... Services Corporation International



Additionally, other firms were researched by telephone, visit and observation, in particular:

- 'Peace Funerals' : helpful, but not willing to be interviewed
- 'Wood Funeral Services:' run by John Heath; uses all Heath's facilities
- 'Tomlinson and Windley Funeral Service': SCI; furnishes the Jewish funerals that are booked through Pritchards, SCI

All the firms specifically covered in the study belong to a trade association, some to two. Independent firms are members of NAFD of which John Heath and Sons was a founder member. Their trade journal is the 'Funeral Director Monthly'. It is a slim, glossy A4 volume, and largely in black and white. It carries few advertisements: 13 pages of the 40 produced for May 1999 consisted of the reproduction of speeches. The trade association, FSC, the Funeral Standards Council, attracts members of the larger groups. The 'Funeral Service Journal' has been published since 1886 and sits firmly in the centre of the trade. It is A5 in size, thick and colourful. The Home Page of its website, [www.fsj.co.uk](http://www.fsj.co.uk) reads:

### **Welcome to the *Funeral Service Journal* Website Essential Reading for the Funeral Industry**

**First published in 1886, the FSJ has become the leading journal in British funeral directing. Independent funeral directors, co-operative societies and SCI branches are all subscribers and there is also a substantial readership in Ireland. The FSJ can even be found in offices in Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, USA and mainland Europe.**

**The FSJ is a lively, colourful, monthly magazine featuring news items, mortality figures for the UK and Ireland, regular features, and the most comprehensive classified advertising section in British funeral directing. For advertisers, the magazine is the best way to reach funeral directors, and for funeral directors it is the best chance of keeping up to date with events in the industry.**

Research of the city's funeral trade pointed to a business in transition; funeral directing in Sheffield had undergone some interesting changes since 1992. Some of the firms had merged, others had been bought out, but it was in the provision of services that change was likely to affect the consumer. The most obvious of these was



the establishment of a private crematorium at Grenoside, north Sheffield. This is owned and operated by B&C, and opened its doors in the summer of 1998, attracting considerable attention in the industry. It is of an architectural style synonymous with many commercial buildings of the 1990's: brick built, angular, here with a predominance of pentagons, completed by a low pitched roof finished in green, and fashionable exterior cast iron furniture. A small fountain trickles by the main chapel door. It is reminiscent of the shopping mall, 'Meadowhall', to the east of the city.



### **7.i Grenoside Crematorium**

An external view of the new private crematorium in northern Sheffield.

Columbarium for ashes in urns: niche positions are chosen for a particular view.

The crematorium has two chapels of differing sizes. The shape of these is again based on the pentagon: they are spacious with lofty ceilings. Pseudo-balcony features are decorated with massed artificial plants, woodwork is blond and the building is fully carpeted in shades of blue and purple. During a visit, a technician expressed concern about the pentagonal features, believing this shape to 'be the Devil's shape'.<sup>5</sup>

### **7.ii Grenoside Crematorium: chapel**

The building has the pentagon as its theme. The balcony position is marked by artificial plants.



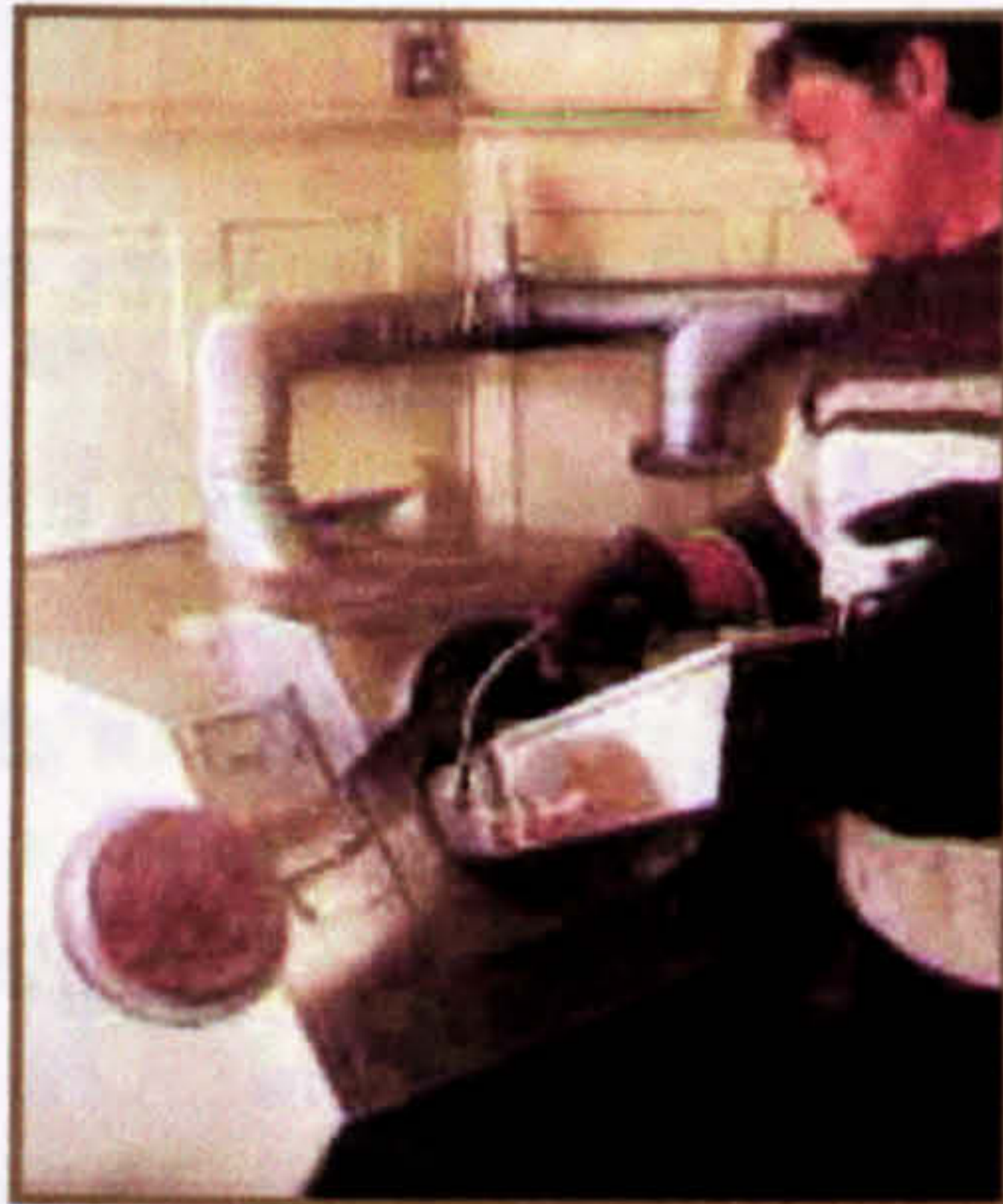
### **7.iii**

#### ***A modern bank of cremators***

Grenoside cremators are similar: they are operated from a protected control panel.



The cremators<sup>6</sup> are modern and there is powered charging, a safer method for the technicians; a 'Dustraction' system is in use, involving extraction hood and ducting fitted to the cremulator.<sup>7</sup>



Ashes being poured into the cremulator.



Sealing the casket: an air curtain protects the technician.

#### 7.iv A 'Dustraction' system

The grounds are landscaped, with pond, rose beds and shrubs and there is a 'Peter Pan' garden for children's ashes. Columbaria<sup>8</sup> are in brick, and there are strategically placed seats for visitors to enjoy the view across the city. Indeed, positions for cremated remains within the various columbaria are chosen for the view.

Another significant change is in the provision of woodland burial grounds noted in Chapter Three of this study, which referred to a farmer's profit-making scheme for a private, conventional, burial ground near Chesterfield, that did not come to fruition. However, a private woodland burial ground is now open at the village of Ulley, near Rotherham. This is owned and marketed by an established firm, Peace Funerals, who specialise in alternative funerals. The Sheffield branch is at Gleadless, with the parent organisation at Ormskirk, Lancashire. This firm offers:

- 'a different approach'
- 'Green Burials': woodland burials at Ulley, South Yorkshire and Golden Valley, Ripley, Derbyshire, with access to others
- horse and dray

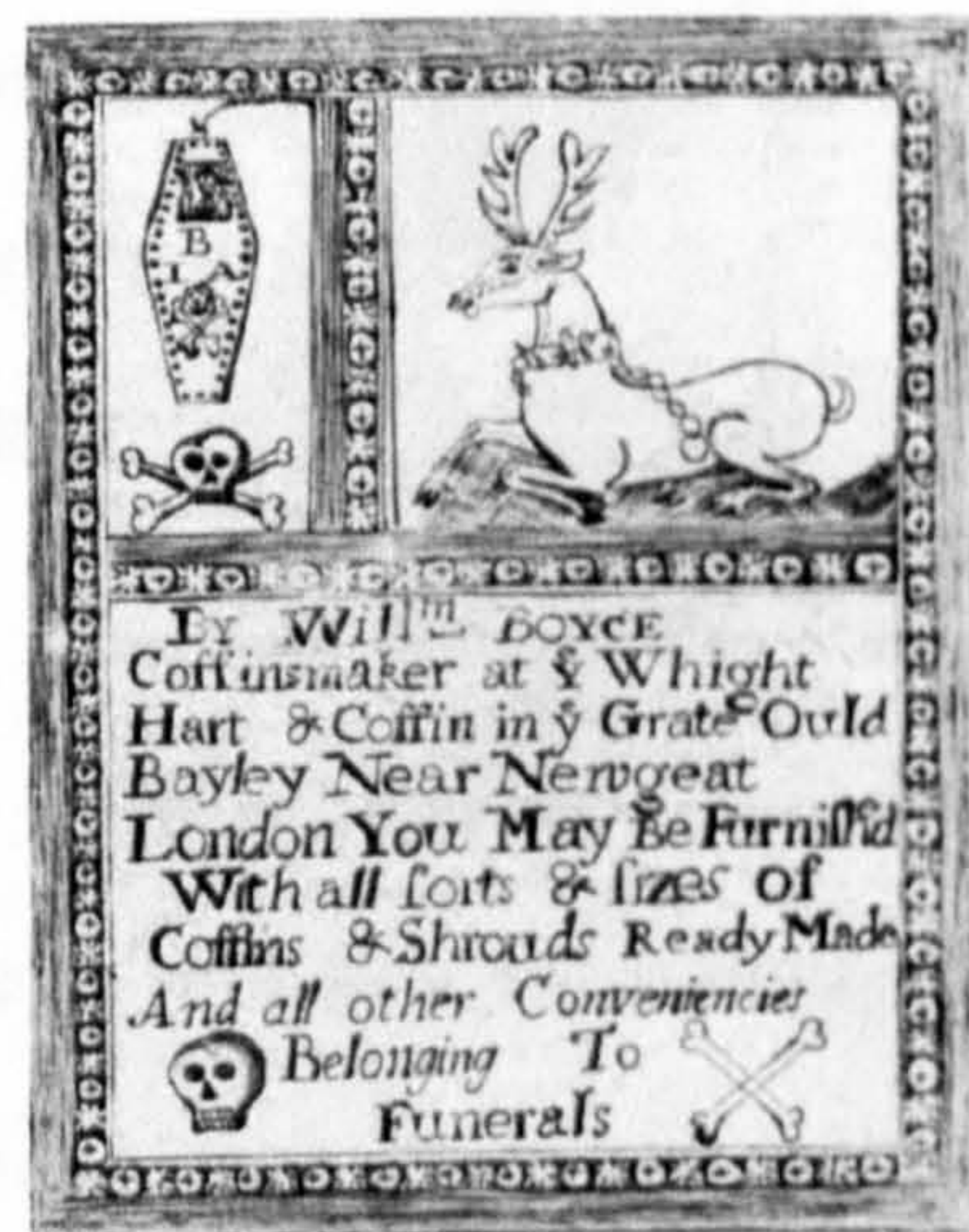


- painted coffins
- cardboard coffins
- ‘family involvement in washing and dressing’
- railway funerals: steam train to burial ground
- ‘funerals at sea: a memorial ceremony on the only surviving ocean-going paddle steamer’<sup>9</sup>

Whilst some of these features are available through other Sheffield sources, the firm seeks to offer an alternative style of service, whereas other firms add the alternative aspects to their existing, more traditional goods. This trade is a competitive business. To develop existing services and fund new, potentially profitable projects require adequate funding. Firms are continually seeking ways to increase profits whilst remaining within the bounds of acceptable taste.

#### **7.v Trade card: c.1680**

‘By Willm. Boyce  
Coffinsmaker at ye Whight  
Hart & Coffin in ye Grate Ould  
Bayley Near Newgeat  
London You may Be Furnished  
With all sorts & sizes of  
Coffins & Shrouds ready Made  
And all other Conveniencies  
Belonging To  
Funerals’



In the seventeenth century, the services of the emerging trade needed advertising but there were few acceptable methods. Trade cards were favoured as being discreet, and examples still exist. The modern funeral director advertises his trade in several ways; the window of a premises can display a permanent flower arrangement, an urn, a memorial, perhaps a book of remembrance or any combination of these, but never too much, and always in subdued tones. Wood Funeral Services, Ecclesall, a subsidiary of John Heath, has a modernised frontage, with rustic brick and smoked plate glass. The reception area is open to view, and set back from the street by a glazed porch. The



office and interview areas are screened by vertical blinds and there is an artistic shrub dominating the entrance / reception area. The frontage bears very large name and trade signs, as does that of its parent firm, John Heath. The position of any funeral director's premises is, of course, the salient factor here: if they are on the street where there are passers by, then windows might need to be dressed and displays that are considered appropriate used. Those that are not appropriate can attract criticism, such as that noted in a 'Funeral Service Journal':

'Mothers have voiced their concerns over a child-sized coffin which appears in the window of a new DIY funeral business ...'<sup>10</sup>

However, the main premises of John Heath and Sons, established in the city in 1880, has a lengthy street frontage facing the main route to the Northern General Hospital, yet the windows are set high, with small opaque panes. The only external advertising is large: the name of the firm and the words 'FUNERAL DIRECTORS'.



#### *7.vi John Heath: entrance*

Other funeral directors also have premises that are set back from the roadway: John Fairest, Pritchard's and B&C; Lunt's is on a side road in a southern suburb and Keeton's on an industrial estate, whilst S&E is on a main dual carriageway adjacent to the town centre, with no passing trade. These are all identified by prominent signs that merely state the name of the firm and the wording: 'Funeral Directors'. A logo might be included if appropriate. Again, advertising space is taken in telephone directories. Here, the same style of advertisement is used as is found in most other categories in such a directory. In Sheffield's 'Yellow Pages', the advertisements include firms' logos and even one photograph: this is of a female displaying an obviously caring,



gentle smile. Firms also display logos of associations and names of any associated pre-need scheme. John Heath's display advertisement is not only the largest advertisement but it incorporates more logos than any of the others. Other firms display the briefest of material: these are usually firms from outside the immediate area but who wish to be included in the city's directory. Thus one finds, for example, two-line entries for Doncaster, Barnsley or Worksop. The 1999 Sheffield edition of 'Yellow Pages' contains few such limited entries for local firms.

Again, the funeral trade differs in its choice of advertising publication. South and West Sheffield are serviced by glossy free advertising magazines: 'Westside - The Quality AB Magazine', 'Grapevine - Property and Business', and 'Profile - The Quality Lifestyle Magazine', all of which consist of advertising features, plus a little editorial matter. 'Grapevine' is noted for its funerary advertising features:

funeral firms using this method include:

- a. John Heath and Sons: 'Immortal Words' featuring Jason Heath <sup>11</sup>
- b. John Fairest Funeral Home: 'Funerals' featuring Martyn Askew <sup>12</sup>
- c. Hopkinson Memorials: 'Headstones' featuring Les Hopkinson <sup>13</sup>
- d. Wood Funeral Service: featuring Jenny Brennand <sup>14</sup>

These features have prominent subtitles:

- 'A Village Vanished' <sup>15</sup>
- 'Our Airship Disaster' <sup>16</sup>
- 'Coffin Craft' <sup>17</sup>
- 'Grave Concerns' <sup>18</sup>
- 'Burials Naturally' <sup>19</sup>
- 'In Loving Memory' <sup>20</sup>
- 'Grave Rules to Obey' <sup>21</sup>
- 'Faces to Remember' <sup>22</sup>
- 'The Last Goodbye' <sup>23</sup>

Additionally, the feature 'Death Matters', a humorous interview of someone local, is often used for advertising.



Questions asked include:

- a. *What do you think you'll die of?*
- b. *How will you spend your last day?*
- c. *What will be your last words?*
- d. *Do you want to be buried or cremated?*
- e. *Which music would you like played?*
- f. *What will be your epitaph?*

People interviewed have included the chairman of the Sheffield Bench of Magistrates and the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire.<sup>24</sup>

Most funeral directors restrict their regular advertising to the local evening paper, the 'Star'. These advertisements vary in size and approach: one column, two inch displays to quarter pages in full colour, with photographs. There are few advertisements in the summer months when trade is slow and these are usually small; Friday is a popular day for these advertisements, summer or winter. The manner of advertising is of concern to those in the trade, the issue being seen as one of taste. An article in the 'Funeral Service Journal', November 1998, reads:

'SAIF would like to bring to the attention of FSJ readers a development that some funeral directors may be familiar with and that is being approached by supermarkets to advertise their services in their stores throughout the country. Recently a SAIF member contacted SAIF's national office to say that they had been approached by a marketing organisation contracted by Sainsburys to sell advertising space in their stores. SAIF wrote to Sainsburys saying that they believed it was distasteful and requested that Sainsburys re-consider their actions. An extract from Sainsburys reply gives their response:

"I agree that advertising funeral directors in a supermarket is highly inappropriate..."

Funeral Directors may recall that a little while back all the major associations united in agreement to ban advertising in Registrar's offices. Let us not see this invasive advertising start again.'<sup>25</sup>

The 1999 'Yellow Pages' advertisement for Swift and Goodinson Ltd, owned by John Heath, bears the wording 'AT ENTRANCE TO REGISTRARS'.

All these Sheffield firms are subject to Trading Standards legislation. However, a Funeral Ombudsman Scheme has been set up and membership is optional. Founder



members of the scheme were the Funeral Standards Council and the Co-operative Societies, who were members of FSC, the Funeral Planning Council. Membership has increased since 1998, when members of SAIF joined. SCI was automatically made a member when it was admitted to membership of FSC. In all, approximately 70% of the United Kingdom funerals now fall within the scope of the FOS. A funeral director does not have to belong to any group or association, and can operate in complete independence.<sup>26</sup>

### **1.ii Multi-national conglomerates**

Research identified major changes in the structure and ownership of the funeral firms in Sheffield. Each firm visited volunteered information about other firms, and all information was offered in an open and helpful manner. There has been movement within the funeral business of the co-operative societies, trading associations long patronised in Sheffield. Yorkshire Co-operatives Ltd had been established by the time of the 1992 research, and already included Sheffield and Ecclesall Funeral Services. The firm was named 'Yorkshire' on merging, but reverted to its original 'Sheffield' name to keep custom. As Saunders, 1992 noted:

**'A second co-operative firm, Yorkshire Co-operative, formerly Sheffield & Ecclesall, is based in the heart of the city. They are a shrinking organisation, having changed names and venue they lost custom and allegiance: local people who would have used the firm for traditional reasons thought it had closed.'**<sup>27</sup>

John Fairest is now also part of Yorkshire Co-operatives but has retained its name, personnel, image and trade. This merger has enabled there to be a degree of rationalisation; S&E now keep a single hearse and one limousine at their small Eyre Street premises: their vehicle colour used to be silver, now it is dark grey which matches that of John Fairest.



However, these co-operative mergers do not equate to the enormous impact on the funeral trade, and its clients, by the operations of SCI: Services Corporation International UK, a firm which is registered in this country but has its financial base in the United States. This is a funeral industry grown massive, but SCI does not work like a 'Sainsbury', or a 'Tesco', which open cheap and well-stocked superstores that are understood to 'drive the small shopkeeper out of business'. The funeral trade is far too sensitive for that: when faced with the unfamiliarity of death, clients want a firm that carries a familiar name. The multi-national operating methods for attracting new firms to their group are simple: competition and persuasion. They buy a business on the open market, in any area, increase services and reduce prices, and thus contribute towards a pool of financially failing firms that simply cannot compete. Yet the business is still there, families want to use the same firms, names and people, so SCI need to keep these traditional attractions. An advertisement for businesses states this clearly:

'Running a family business can have its drawbacks as well as its advantages. It could be that your children have no desire to take the business over. Maybe you have no children. There's even a possibility you've inherited a business you have no wish to continue. Whatever the reasons, SCI understands them. You could say we're a family of family funeral businesses ourselves. So, when we become involved, we're keener than ever that our affiliates retain the identities that have been built up over generations. These are priceless assets that cannot easily be replaced; and we value them very highly. Whatever your reasons for talking to us, you'll find we have a refreshingly flexible way of doing business. No one values your family's business and reputation more than we do.'<sup>28</sup>

Saunders, 1992, documented some of the history of a large group, then called PHK

International, thus:

'The international firm, PHK International, now operate within the city. This started as a powerful national firm under the ownership of the publicity-conscious Howard Hodgson. His large firm was amalgamated with Kenyon Securities in 1989. Kenyon's were one of the earliest firms in the funeral furnishing trade. These (firms) account for the H and K. The P comes from further merging, this time with the enormous French firm, Pompes Funèbres Générales.'<sup>29</sup>



This firm eventually became the Midlands funeral business, Plantsbrook Group plc. Great Southern, the third largest funeral business in England, were taken over by SCI in 1994. SCI's bids for Great Southern were the subject of headline articles in the financial press of August, 1994.<sup>30</sup> Plantsbrook was incorporated into the new structure. Of note, Michael Kenyon, of PHK, is once again in the market for small firms: a half page advertisement in 'Funeral Director Monthly', May 1999, under the banner of 'Funeral Partners Limited', states:

'Funeral Partners Ltd has been created with substantial private capital and seeks associations with exceptional funeral concerns interested in future options but keen to preserve the best traditions of the British funeral profession whilst enabling some, or all, of their investments to be realised.'<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps the most pertinent word here is 'British'. Again, Glenhaven Funeral Service Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of CWS, advertise for investment opportunities thus:

'Your name stays above the door. You just have less to worry about.'

The trade journals contain interesting critical comments on the American group. Of SCI, 'Age Concern', and their linked pre-paid funeral plan, "Dignity", the 'Funeral Service Journal', March 1997, published the following comments:<sup>32</sup>

'SCI continues to hide behind the anonymity of the numerous names it owns ... Please, SCI, don't tarnish the whole profession with your relentless greed. ... just try to behave like honourable British gentlemen.'<sup>33</sup>

and, on media coverage, in the 'Funeral Service Journal', February 1998, an editorial states<sup>34</sup> :

'The year has started with SCI under the media microscope again.'

These comments include the following critical points made about SCI that were included in a Radio 4 programme: "Face the Facts", January 8, 1998.

- regular visits to branches by directors with 'sales targets' needing to be met
- staff questioned on not selling higher priced goods



This editorial also reports on an ITV 'World in Action' two-part series broadcast on 19th and 26th January, 1998, referring to:

'a hard hitting examination of SCI.'

The television reporting is stated to have highlighted the following practices:

- failure to give lowest estimates
- discouragement of the sale of cheaper coffins
- bribery of hospital staff

Another article in the same journal comments:

'... it does not leave a pleasant taste in the mouth of the traditional funeral director who is frightened of being tainted by association. ... Poor Michael Kenyon must be cringing at the way his once prestigious family name has been besmirched ... It is nothing less than tragic to see what was once a highly respected profession being constantly tarnished by the antics of one foreign company who will stop at nothing to achieve world domination within our industry.'<sup>35</sup>

Media coverage of the funeral industry is a recent development: funerals themselves have long had photographic and artistic coverage,<sup>36</sup> joined, most noticeably within the last twenty years, by news and features about memorials and unusual methods of disposal of ashes. However, media coverage of the funeral trade is relatively new.

SCI received further unfavourable broadcast attention following the Radio 4 programme and the 'World in Action' series. In May 1998 it was reported that investigations by the Office of Fair Trading of the funeral industry were to follow a television documentary, 'Last Rights', shown on May 12, 1998 on Channel 4, the investigations to include: claims of aggressive selling; links between funeral directors and crematoria; and the behaviour of undertakers in terms of their treatment of bodies.<sup>37</sup>

A positive comment on an SCI funeral attended by someone associated with the private trade, expressed in the 'letters' section of a journal, is noteworthy, and illustrates the impact SCI is having:

- 'the funeral was carried out in a very professional manner
- the coffin was of good quality, not foil
- a four-page price-list was issued to the family



- many of the private trade do not issue price-lists at all
- the private firm can learn a lot from SCI' <sup>38</sup>

In Sheffield, SCI firms always promote embalming during the preparation of the body: the charge for this is quoted in their price list. It is understood that the SCI firms are very persuasive in explaining why it is to be done, and include the health and safety of their staff in their reasonings for this invasive procedure. <sup>39</sup> Their SCI 'Client Charter' states:

'We will give you our best advice with respect to viewing and embalming of the deceased. We will always seek your permission before embalming. <sup>40</sup>

Yet other Sheffield firms, such as Lunt's, only embalm if the body is to be 'sent back to Ireland': Lunt's deal with the majority of the Catholic funerals in Sheffield. <sup>41</sup> This embalming policy was held by Lunt's in 1992, and it remains the same. Keeton's does not embalm: 'I've got a fridge.' <sup>42</sup> Again, the village firm of Noutch, of Bamford and Hathersage, Derbyshire, joiners and undertakers, does not embalm: 'With all the antibiotics in the meat that they eat round here the body'll last for eight days before it gets smelly.' <sup>43</sup>

## 2.i Religious preferences

The people of Sheffield are very traditional, as noted throughout this study, and never more so than in their choice of funeral director. Revd Frank Beattie, of Central United Reformed Church, originally from Belfast, commented recently that Sheffield people go to the undertakers that their family have always used, though he has noted a predominance of John Heath funerals within his congregation, although this is not based on any religious choice. Revd Chris Ellis, of Cemetery Road Baptist Church, finds his congregation, particularly those of Afro-Caribbean origin, like to use Heath's



or S&E, although B&C state they have a significant portion of that market. Several respondents point to Heath's for Methodist funerals, though here the major factor is one of family tradition. It is in the Roman Catholic and Jewish communities that a particular funeral director is selected, for they 'know how we do things'.<sup>44</sup> The Jewish congregation, through their Chevra Kadisha, always use Pritchards, who take the booking, but the funeral is actually furnished through Tomlinson and Windley, of Crookes. The Jewish funerals are arranged quickly, which procedure the large SCI firms can accommodate. Roman Catholics in the southern part of the city favour Lunt's: there the chapels of rest have a dark and sombre tone, with stained glass and religious elements: 'Lunt's do a lovely Catholic funeral'.<sup>45</sup> Lunt's also furnish most of the Polish Catholic funerals; again, it is trust that is the major factor. Heath's state that they undertake 30% of the Catholic funerals, and look after the convents, the remaining 70% of the trade being divided between Reeds, of Duke Street, for the centre and north, and the southern Lunt's: Reeds is SCI. The Orthodox community express no preference in the choice of funeral director, but find 'the one the Jews use (Tomlinson and Windley) know how to do things properly'.<sup>46</sup> S&E note the furnishing of Salvation Army funerals, where their chapel can be used as it is not affiliated to any religion.<sup>47</sup>

## **2.ii Coffin, casket and shroud**

From the vast choice of coffins available either in the British or world market, SCI firms are required, by the Funeral Ombudsman Scheme, to provide 'a showroom (or if not reasonably practicable, a brochure) showing at least four types of coffin at various prices, including a plain and inexpensive type.'<sup>48</sup> Coffins are available in a wide variety of materials: wood, metal, cardboard, chipboard, wicker and metal, and they can be zinc lined for shipment abroad. Coffins can be embellished with a religious



symbol such as a crucifix, a cross or an Om. The Jewish requirement is for the plainest wooden coffin, without linings.<sup>49</sup> Roman Catholics often choose a casket which is rectangular in shape and has a crucifix on the lid.<sup>50</sup>

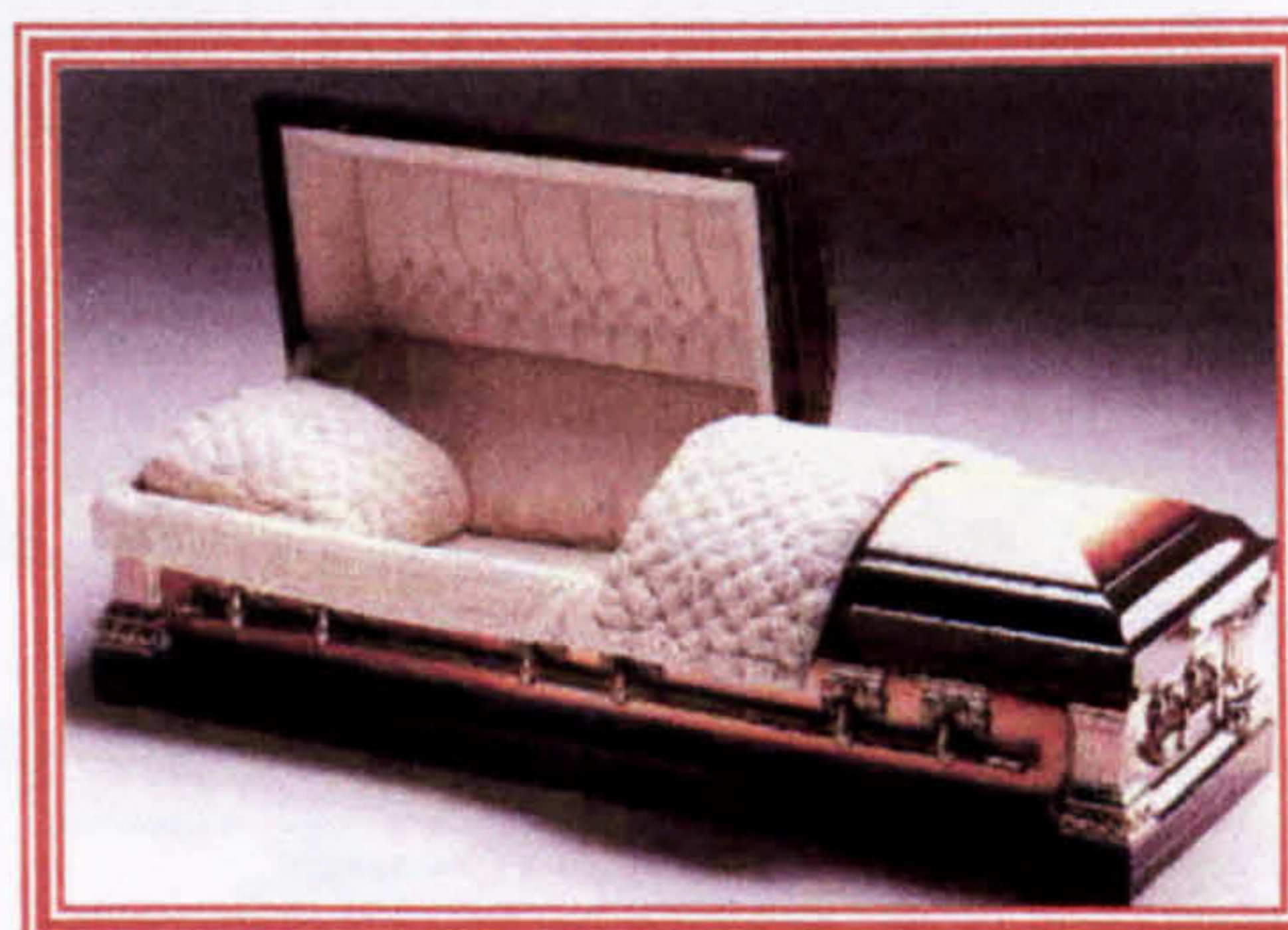
**7.vii A 'Last Supper' Coffin with crucifix**



A relief picture can be added, and a coffin can be painted or decorated; all sizes of bodies can be accommodated, from the largest imaginable to the tiniest casket for a baby or foetus. Afro-Caribbean mourners at Cemetery Road Baptist Church like an American casket with part-opening lid: very heavy and very expensive.<sup>51</sup>

**7. viii An American casket**

These are popular with the Afro-Caribbean community



In the Orthodox community the choice of coffin is likely to be ornate.<sup>52</sup> It is possible for other faiths to have specialised coffins. A Leeds funeral firm arranged for a Hindu family to have the Hindu symbol, the Om, on the lid and ends of the coffin: the family had noticed a Celtic cross on the lid of a display coffin and asked if their symbol could replace it. The firm now includes both Hindu and Sikh symbols in its range. No such provision was noted during any of the Sheffield research, although Hindus and Sikhs are part of the Sheffield community.<sup>53</sup> If a product does not exist there can be no demand.



John Heath still make coffins but also buy in the more elaborate caskets. Their particular speciality is the chipboard coffin covered in maroon fabric, held in place with plastic upholstery nails. This model is considered ideal for cremations and is stated to be a copy of a much earlier design.<sup>54</sup> Coffins for cremation have to meet certain standards for safe, speedy combustion, and to comply with environmental rulings. A potentially fascinating change in funeral practices identified in research was the use of 'foil' coffins.

### **7.ix Foil coffins**

A paper foil lamination carcass press line.



Fortunately, this product was not what it might have appeared, being made from paper foil lamination of chipboard substrate materials, with the potential of exotic woodgrain finishes produced on a carcass press line.<sup>55</sup>

A more disturbing innovation is that of re-usable coffins for cremation. The Cremation Society have long campaigned for public awareness of cremation facts, the most basic being that the whole coffin goes into the cremator. A re-usable outer shell with a cardboard liner that can go into the cremator is a disturbing concept, albeit as open to honesty and publicity as existing practices. Special cardboard products with sturdy bases had been developed and were ready for launch by 1998. These overcame the apparent problems experienced with existing thin-based cardboard coffins that made charging the cremator difficult, and also the problematical behaviour of cardboard at temperatures of 900° and over, when crumble and flash off occurs,<sup>56</sup>



leaving the body incompletely charged: an unimaginable notion. However, in 1998, the law on cremation required that all components of a coffin must be cremated: legislation needed clarifying before there could be any product launch.<sup>57</sup> A funeral director at John Fairest states that:

‘We have used cardboard coffins for cremation.’<sup>58</sup>

Bereavement Services, City Road Cemetery, Sheffield, inform their clients that:

‘A coffin **must** be used for a cremation service as it is essential to allow us to place the body in the cremator. The coffin must be suitable for cremation and must be made of wood, cardboard or chipboard. They cannot contain zinc, lead or steel.’<sup>59</sup>

### 7.x **Cardboard casket**

A casket suitable for home decoration.



Cardboard coffins are indeed available, and can even be purchased through Sheffield’s Bereavement Services, as well as from trade suppliers, by those arranging DIY funerals. The coffins vary in shape, some being caskets with lids, others modelled on the gable-lidded coffins of the late medieval period.<sup>60</sup> These coffins can be painted in any style, and painted coffins for woodland burials are promoted by the firm ‘Peace Funerals’.<sup>61</sup>



7.xii **7.xi Painted cardboard coffin**

Coffin painted by Sheffield artist  
Caroline Menis.



Another innovation, the wicker coffin, is a nostalgic return to Victorian styles. Peace Funerals offer to show clients how to decorate these for best effect. Unusual coffins can also be created. The 'Funeral Service Journal' carries advertisements for firms that will manufacture special coffins and caskets 'to your specification.'<sup>62</sup> In the March, 1997 journal, a news items read:

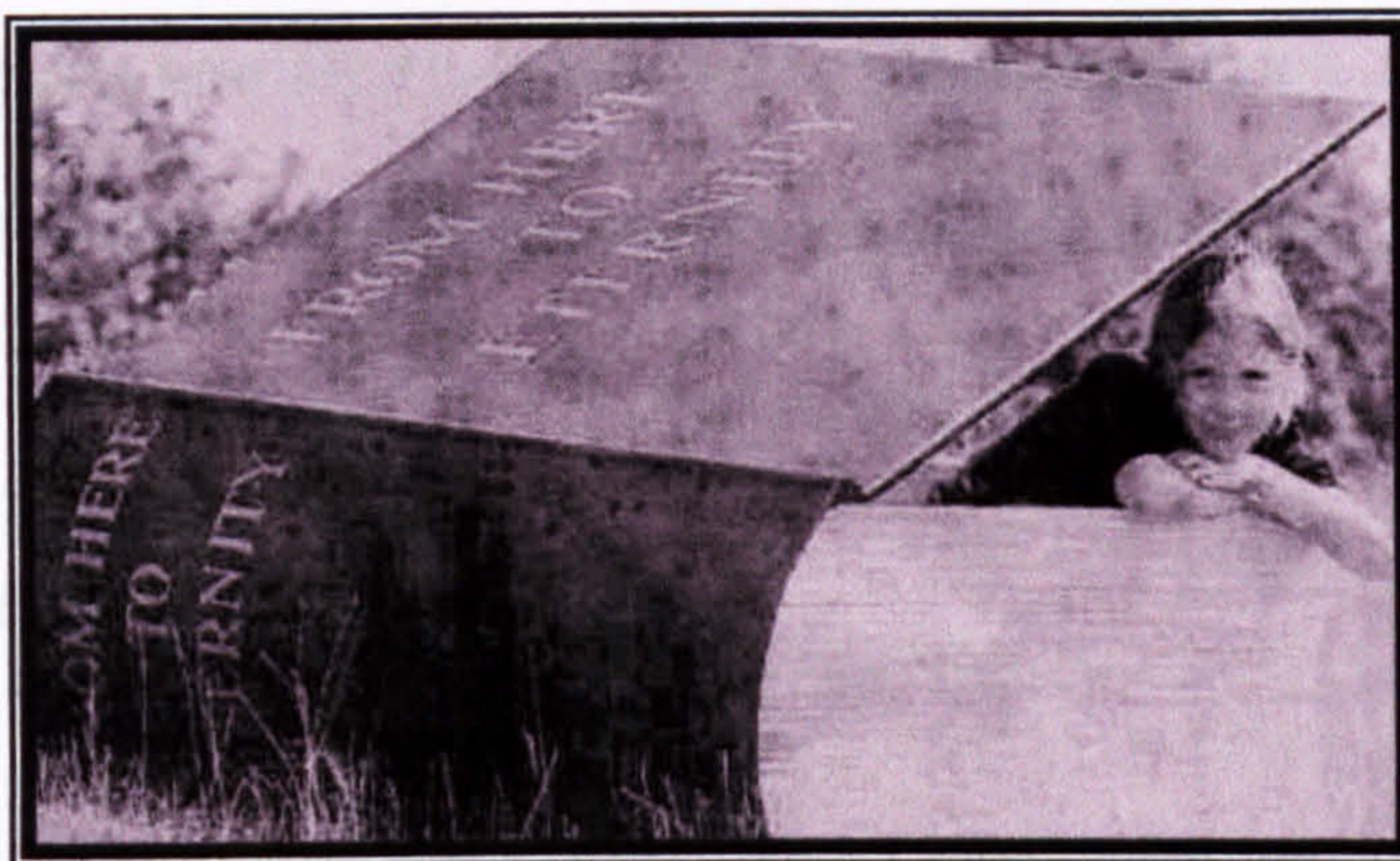
'A car crazy Chelsea fan from Salisbury has had an unusual and imaginative send off. Ken Edginton's final journey was in a blue coffin painted with pictures of his treasured Ford Capri. His family draped a Chelsea scarf and cap across the coffin. .... A Bristol firm has been asked to create and design two rather unusual coffins. 'Heaven on Earth' was asked to make a Red Arrows coffin following a television programme where their co-owner was seen with a coffin shaped like a Mercedes Benz. The other request was for a coffin with 'Smarties' as its theme, but Rowntrees had refused permission for this to go ahead.'<sup>63</sup>

A 'Daily Telegraph' Special Report: Funeral Planning, of 26th June 1997, gives details of made-to-order coffins by Sheffield stage designer Rodney Ford, which include a pig, a fish and a bus. The information is illustrated by an accompanying photograph of a coffin in the form of a book.<sup>64</sup>



### 7.xii 'From Here To Eternity'

Sheffield stage designer's made-to-order coffin: the child is not included.



Coffins are usually lined, though this is not a necessity: some do not want the conventional lining which can have a matching shroud. The term 'shroud' is used in a humorous, derogatory way to criticise modern clothes, yet its true meaning is associated with the deepest sadness. Shrouds, like coffins, have a very long history. Litten devotes a chapter to 'Winding-Sheets and Shrouds' in his comprehensive work on the English funeral.<sup>65</sup> The winding-sheet was a large piece of cloth gathered about the body: the material is likely to have been of cheap cloth bought in for the purpose, rather than waste good household linen. These shroud-cloths were tied in different ways but by the late eighteenth century they were replaced by shrouds that had the appearance of gowns.

### 7.xiii Rose lace-trimmed satin outfits

The coffin suite comes in pastel colours.



a. coffin suite



b. gown

Modern shrouds are generally part of a 'coffin suite', matching the linings of the coffin, and are backless for ease of dressing. Shrouds are kept by Sheffield's funeral directors: they are still used and are commonly requested for Roman Catholic funerals. They are of neutral or pastel colours and of a shiny, man-made fabric.



Dressing a body in everyday clothes is now seen to be the norm, unless there is a particular religious requirement: this aspect of religion and the Sheffield funeral is covered in Chapter Ten of this study.

### 2.iii Accessories and specialities

#### 2.iii.a. The pall

The customs of the eighteenth century funeral included those no longer practised today. One of these was pall-bearing, the pall being the cloth that covered the coffin.

At one time palls were short and heavily embroidered.

#### 7.xiv *The Dunstable Pall, 1516*

A pre-Reformation pall, short, and with heavy embroidery.



Then the style changed to that of the enveloping pall which was so long that it covered the coffin bearers. Pall-bearers carried the edges of the pall ceremoniously. The early trade laid down how many pall-bearers there were to be, usually six, and these had some association with the corpse: relatives, friends or one's peers. Again, the sex of the deceased might be reflected in who carried the pall, with a spinster's pall being carried by female friends. The task was to escort the coffin for the whole of the procession, unless the funeral was of one the nobility, when pall-bearing by one's peers was expected only on entry of the church. Palls are used today in some religions, and are customarily provided by some funeral directors. The colours also differ: white in the Roman church, for celebration, and purple at John Heath for respect; this firm has the old white palls stored 'upstairs' for when they are back in fashion.<sup>66</sup> The present incumbent of St. Matthew's has been in Sheffield for five



years, and on seeing the dark pall used by John Heath was 'appalled', having never seen anything like it. He had previously been attached to Worksop Priory. <sup>67</sup>



**7.xv Noble pall-bearers**

The funeral of Gladstone, 1898  
the Duke of Norfolk with the Earl Marshal's rod

**2.iii.b Coffin bearers**

The early trade's self-imposed regulations on matters such as the number of pall-bearers there were to be is still reflected in the manner of coffin bearing today. Firms tell clients their particular procedure: wheeled bier or shouldering; relatives shouldering or escorting the bier; or females doing either or neither. A Northern Irish funeral, in July 1999, of a young man murdered by the IRA 24 years before had the young man's female relatives shouldering the coffin. It is likely that the remains were light, but nevertheless, females shouldering is extremely unusual.

**7.xvi Belfast funeral**

The funeral of  
Eamon Molloy,  
July 22nd 1998,  
vanished 1975.



**2.iii.c Chapels**

All the funeral directors covered in this study had private chapels of rest which 'create an atmosphere of tranquillity and offer facilities where a deceased person can rest in dignified surroundings until the funeral.'<sup>68</sup> Some had service chapels: B&C, John



Fairest, S&E and John Heath. These are unpopular with the Anglican clergy, as

Saunders, 1992, found:

'Fairest's are stated to use their private chapel 'a lot', whilst B&C and Heath state that they do not, as the Bishop had said 'no' to the practice. As the Revd Pedr Beckley of St. Gabriel's said:

"... they are not authorised to have full services unless of course they want a pagan ... what they do, you see, is, they buck the system and have their tame clergy who pocket the money..."<sup>69</sup>

Jason Heath, of John Heath, states, of their service chapel, that :

' ... we only use it to display coffins for clients to see them in an appropriate setting. We know Fairest's use theirs: they shouldn't.'<sup>70</sup>

S&E have a dual-purpose area: the service chapel can be quickly changed into a Catering Lounge.

### **7.xvii 'Interdenominational Service Chapel and Catering Lounge'**

Sheffield & Ecclesall Funeral Services



### **2.iii.d Printing**

All the funeral directors studied considered printing to be part of their trade. Service orders could be provided and notices placed in chosen publications. However, John Heath also offered a range of funeral stationery, including black-edged notification cards reminiscent of past ages, although they have ceased to carry the range of black-edged notepaper and envelopes that were once their speciality. SCI offers a range of acknowledgement cards, and 'Books of Condolence', to record details of the funeral.

All firms will assist with any printing requirements.



### 2.iii.e Food

Again, food is usually considered an essential part of the Sheffield funeral. The phrase 'We buried 'im wi' ham' reflects the nature of the event. All funeral directors could arrange food; some, as recorded in Table 7.i, had facilities for refreshment at their premises. The S&E Service Chapel is converted, by means of a curtain, into a 'Catering Lounge' by moving furniture. Premises are often versatile: Keeton's turn their large entrance hall into an area for food, and John Fairest also use their reception area, though the large B&C premises has a dedicated refreshment area. John Heath find that their clients favour the Beauchief Hotel, AA\*\*\*, near Hutcliffe Wood crematorium, as 'food and funerals don't mix'.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.i Objects of Mourning

There are two main categories of objects available from funeral directors in Sheffield: flowers, or 'floral tributes', and memorials. Each firm offers clients a book of photographs of tributes from which to make a selection, although specialities and unusual designs can be provided. Funeral directors find that clients need everything to be made as simple as possible when trying to cope with the trauma of death: one-stop shopping for all one's needs is seen to help the bereaved. Keeton's offered a book of photographs of 'one's we've done', in 1992. The photographs are still offered, albeit updated, and are still a record of reality. Pritchards, SCI, offer a glossy A4 brochure, 'The Floral & Sympathy Collection', of the tributes that can be ordered. Wording includes:

'Choose the design you like, talk to us about colour harmonies and messages and leave the rest to us, confident that the flowers you have selected will reflect your feelings.'<sup>71</sup>

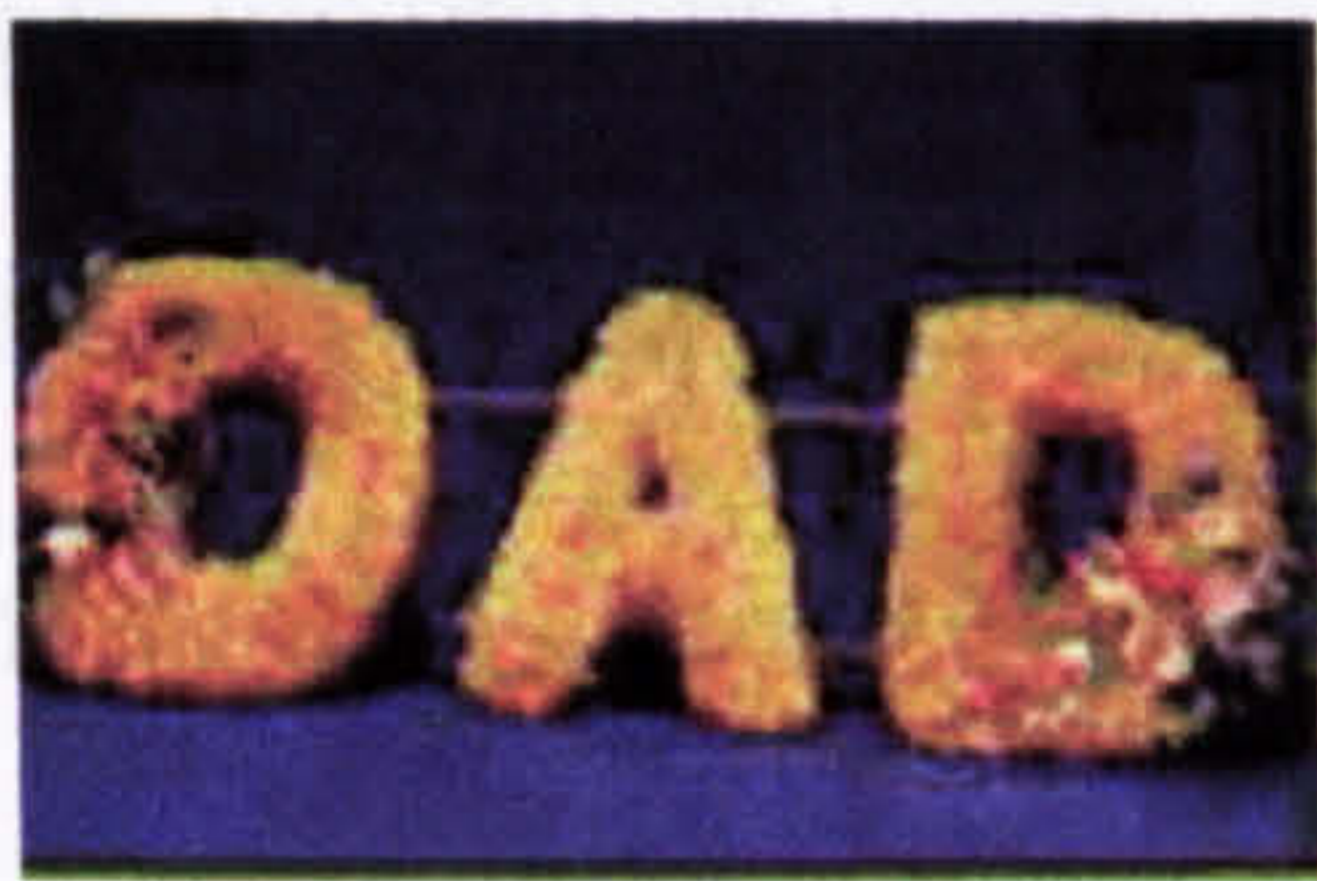


The brochure offers an apparently standardised SCI service, although other designs are stated to be available: tributes are made-up locally.



**7.xviii Three tributes from the Floral & Sympathy Collection**

***Pritchard and Son, SCI UK***



John Heath use 'Flora' of Ecclesall as their florist, and again a brochure of available tributes is offered. John Fairest offer clients several albums of formal arrangements and specialities that they have arranged. These include almost anything that can be made out of flowers, even a model of the local 'Nippy' bus that the deceased used to drive. B&C used to make up tributes on the premises,<sup>72</sup> but now find that it is easier and more economical to have them made up externally.

The choice of flower to use within the tribute is frequently subject to what is in any florist's pattern book and subject to seasonal variations, rather as the grave markers were and are chosen from a limited selection. Yet the choice of flowers, herbs and greenery in general, as seen by Drury, in *Folklore*, were an integral part of funeral rites in the past, with the choice of flora largely dependent upon regional traditions.

She lists several reasonings behind such Customs:



- rosemary; ivy; laurel: a symbol of the soul's immortality
- Madonna lily: represents the shriven soul and averts evil
- Red rose: the deceased's goodness
- white rose: a virgin
- nettles or thistles: someone unpopular
- rue, hyssop or wormwood: symbolic of repentance

In his 'Response to Drury', whilst Walter questions her evidence and sources of information, he notes that there is a lack of study in the use of flowers 'nowadays', investigating why certain flowers are chosen, suspecting that they are now seen as symbols of love, respect and remembrance. He accepts that the planting of a red rose, one of the options offered by most crematoria, is probably a symbol of 'the fragrance and pain of love', and asks when its use as a flower of remembrance first occurred. He confidently concludes that:

'Floral customs today result from the interaction of the commercial interests of florists, undertakers and cemetery managers with autonomous folk customs – though these may well be influenced by televised portrayals of funerals and disasters.'<sup>73</sup>

He adds that there is no such thing as a western or modern way of death; funeral customs vary considerably within Britain, and that what you do at a grave or for remembrance is up to the individual.

The second category of items offered by the firms is that of permanent memorials, selected from a pattern book, but these are not seen by clients as an immediate necessity: the city has firms of monumental masons which are known and well patronised. It is usual for several months to elapse before erecting a memorial at a grave, as the land needs to settle. Consequently, funeral directors can offer simple, temporary tributes so that the grave can be identified, such as those offered to the trade by the firm of 'Treasured Memorials'. Advertisements advise firms to:

'Mark a new grave straight away by ordering from our range of temporary materials'.



Styles offered include flat crosses or upright, conventional memorials.

### **7.xix Temporary memorials**

Mark a new grave straight away



Solid oak crosses are offered by a Monmouthshire firm:

‘Bereaved families find an unmarked grave upsetting. Help them, by supplying a temporary or permanent marker. Average size 4ft by 21 inches.’<sup>74</sup>

The most recent development, and one that was to be expected, is the provision of the

‘funeral video’ as reported in the ‘Funeral Service Journal’, February 1998. The

Journal comments:

‘We believe this service to be unique for funerals’.<sup>75</sup>

There is no knowledge of any Sheffield funeral being videoed; however, the service offered is very new.

### **3.ii Hearse and carriage**

The traditional Sheffield funeral utilises a hearse, the name now allotted to a vehicle with a long wheelbase and a rear opening onto a flat platform, and conventionally used to transport bodies in coffins. The hearse was once the term for the structure around the coffin in a church, but the construction and use of these had ceased by the end of the fifteenth century, although the term still refers to that which supports a coffin. Traditionally, people stopped whatever they were doing to watch the passage of the hearse: vehicles would give way, caps were raised, and ‘old soldiers’ have been known to salute.<sup>76</sup> In 1999 a funeral procession is broken up by traffic, with scant



regard for tradition and old-fashioned respect. Once, hearses moved very, very slowly. Now, the drivers are expected to move at a moderate speed and not hold up traffic; drivers receive humorous publicity when caught speeding. As 'The Star' reported:

'Two frantic undertakers tried to get to the church on time as they flew down the M1 at 100mph... with a coffin on board!'

and in the editorial on the matter:

'Some people rush through life, rarely taking a break, rarely having time to sit back and think. The case of the undertakers who raced along the motorway at 100mph meant that their deceased charge was in a hurry to the last ...' <sup>77</sup>

Old hearses take on new life, having a reputation of being carefully driven. On the 'Classic Hearse Register', which is a club for people who enjoy their vehicles, the 'Daily Telegraph' reported, in 1996:

'funeral vehicles are 'cars with character' and there's a club for enthusiasts who love them.' <sup>78</sup>

In the trade journals one vehicle supplier delights in the humour of his trade: <sup>79</sup>

#### **7.xx Grave humour**



The independent funeral firms in the city also delight in the sad saga of SCI Pritchards, who bought the standard SCI Volvo vehicles, which, whilst very good in a southern city winter, could not cope with Sheffield's snowy hills. The firm still keeps hoping for a change of fleet. <sup>80</sup> John Heath now use Mercedes vehicles in their traditional livery of black and green, and the Yorkshire Co-operatives now all use the same dark grey for their Mercedes vehicles. Lunt's, Keeton's and B&C use black vehicles.

#### **7.xxi The Victorian horse and hearse**





Interest in the transport at funerals is presently placed in horse drawn hearses and mourning coaches.<sup>81</sup> The trade journals contain many attractive advertisements for these turnouts, and there are advertising features on rebuilt Victorian models and also on the stables of Friesian horses: the 'Perfect Blacks', or Belgian Blacks of the Victorian era, that traditionally pull these vehicles.

### **7.xxii For the young**

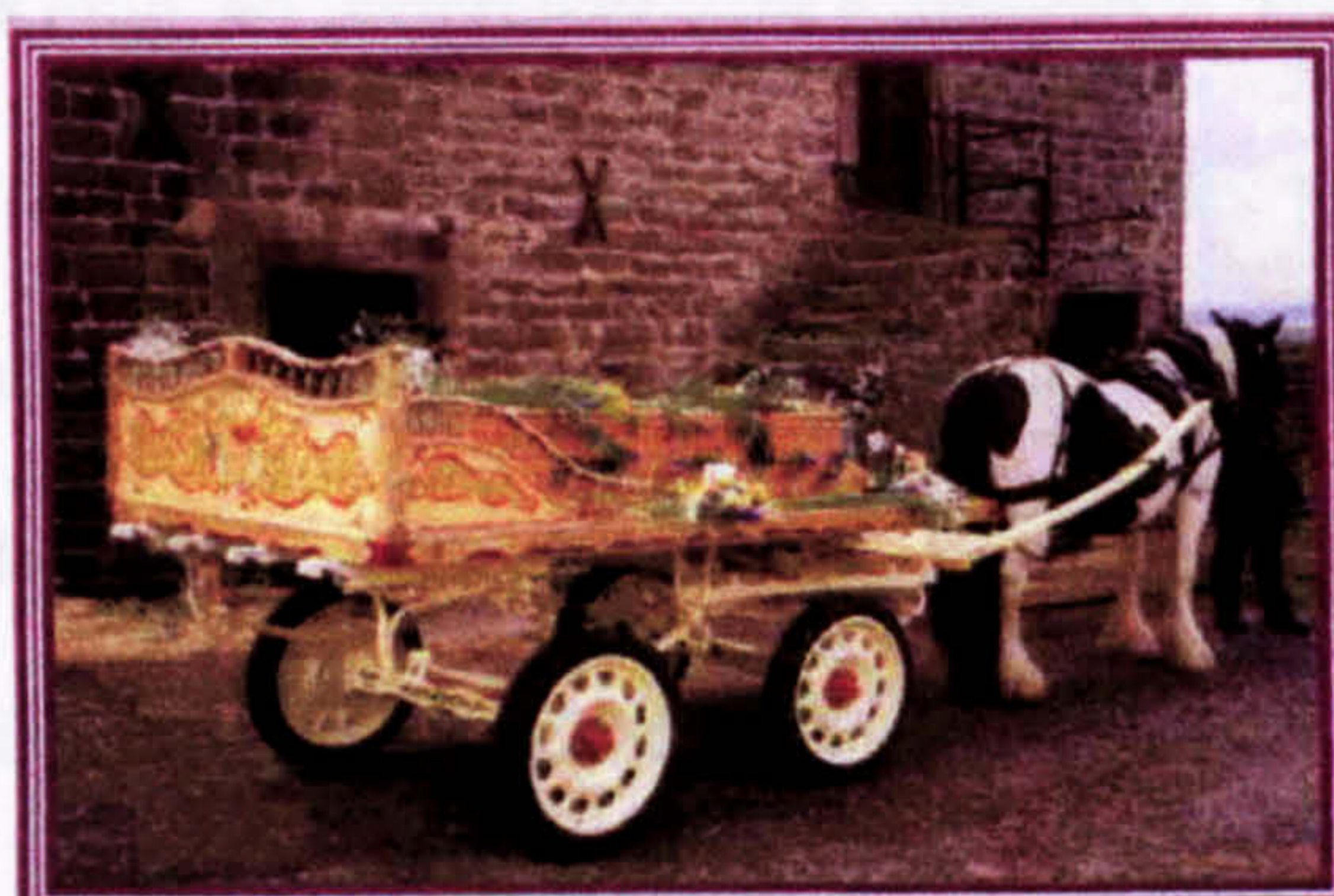
In the Victorian era white horses and hearses were used for young women and children.



Of note, Sheffield firms can arrange for such a turn-out, but the nearest supplier is in Rotherham: a riding stable at Bradfield is considering starting such a business. To cope with Sheffield's hills, the horses are taken by horse box to a place near the committal and the coffin transferred from a conventional hearse to the carriage.

### **7.xxiii Horse and dray with wicker coffin.**

The coffin can be decorated with flowers and foliage.



Peace Funerals offer an unusual selection of types of transport:

- conventional hearse
- estate car
- horse and dray
- steam or diesel trains
- Victorian horse-drawn carriage



#### **4.i The pre-paid funeral**

In 1992 planning one's own funeral was considered odd, yet now, such is the amount of advertising material distributed as junk mail, that most are aware of the business and pre-need planning is now more common: the literature of this pre-paid funeral industry is noted in Chapter 2.ii.a. Again, SCI is heavily involved both in the business and with 'Age Concern' who dropped their heavily-marketed association with 'Chosen Heritage' in February 1997, and put out their own "Age Concern Funeral Plan": in this scheme 'Age Concern' owns 25% of the business and SCI 75%.

Yorkshire Co-operatives offer their own 'Co-operative Funeral Pre-payment Bond'. John Heath offer 'Chosen Heritage', and SCI, the 'Dignity Personal Funeral Plan' while Lunt's offer the Golden Charter Pre-paid Funeral Plans: the business would appear to be a growth industry.

#### **4.ii Supermarkets**

The notion of a supermarket for all manner of funeral goods was the subject of a BBC2 programme, 'Modern Times', on 23 April 1997.<sup>82</sup> This documented the South London funeral supermarket of Stan Kemp, an undertaker with a difference. Here, clients can browse, discuss and eventually choose the arrangements that they want. It is not a DIY establishment, though they too exist. As noted earlier in this chapter, the Kenilworth DIY funeral business, called "From Life to Eternity", caused concern amongst local mothers about its window display of a small coffin. Again, a Preston store, "Treasured Memories", run by McKenna Funerals, has a range of garden furniture, headstones, coffins, caskets and special flower arrangements, as well as garden furniture that can be inscribed with a plaque. The store is said to be 'based on the American idea of Funeral Supermarkets ... one of the first in the country.'<sup>83</sup> The



funeral supermarkets planned in 1994 for London and Manchester, based on the French 'Roc'Leclerc' of Michel Leclerc, do not seem to have made an appearance.<sup>84</sup>



#### 7.xxiv 'Treasured Memories'

A funeral 'supermarket' based on those in America.

#### 4.iii A profitable undertaking

The research for this study identified the importance of adequate funding in the trade. Opportunities for an enhanced share of available business are being taken, such as the newly opened CWS Funeral Services website at [www.funerals.co-op.co.uk](http://www.funerals.co-op.co.uk). This website aims to provide a variety of services via the Internet, where visitors can:

- buy pre-arranged funerals
- buy grave tending services: even old graves, and with varying periods of service
- get advice when death occurs
- buy memorials
- investigate limousine hire

Several of the Sheffield firms of undertakers have information posted on the Web as part of their trade associations website: the SAIF site lists all their member firms in any area. Thus, of the firms in this study, Lunt's is the only one to post any information electronically.

Advertisements for investment opportunities identify worry, burdens, and release of investment as possible reasons for sale, a careful marketing strategy to promote initial interest from ailing firms. Successful firms look ahead and investigate the opposition.



Successful firms expand, buying into ailing businesses, and successful firms are prominent in any community. Whilst opponents of SCI would see the firm as interested only in profit, it must be noted that there are few businesses in any industry that are not keen to be profitable. Jason Heath, of John Heath, is keen to know how their firm differs from other major firms in the city: by such foresight might lie the future profitability of the firm. The smaller Sheffield businesses, such as Keeton's, are in the minority, yet, however small the trade may be, Keeton's continues to provide a service for the villagers who respect the Woodhouse name of Keeton. Keetons have owned the village's butchers, greengrocers, caterers and florists, and have been Post Office employees. B&C now operate in the central Market Street, but the village is a poor community, with boarded-up shops and run down areas. There is scarcely room for two profitable undertakings.

The essential nature of the Sheffield funeral trade is seen as continuing for the foreseeable future. The general population need the difficult aspects of life made as simple as is possible. The pre-need planning is marketed with that need in mind. The arrangements needing to be made following a sudden death are carried out more easily with the assistance of an undertaker. However, the ownership and financial structure of the trade is unstable, and the future city funeral is expected to be furnished by a branch of a large business.



## Notes

1. Woodhouse was one of the three principal areas of study in Saunders, 1992
2. Litten, p.30
3. Saunders, 1992, pp. 51, 52
4. Saunders, 1975, 1992
5. Comment expressed by Stephen Shepherd, cremation technician, June 1999
6. Cremators: the furnaces
7. Cremulator: the machine that pulverises ashes
8. Columbaria: walled niches for sepulchral urns
9. Peace Funerals, formerly Peace Burials, Gleadless, Sheffield, leaflets
10. 'Funeral Service Journal', March 1997, p.27
11. 'Grapevine', August 1999, p. 8; September 1999, p.14
12. 'Grapevine', April 1997, p. 51; November 1997, p.24; January 1999, p.10
13. 'Grapevine', July 1999, p.24; August 1999, p.28; September 1999, p.5
14. 'Grapevine', June 1999, p.14
15. 'Grapevine', August, 1999, p.8
16. 'Grapevine', September 1999, p.14
17. 'Grapevine', April 1997, p.51
18. 'Grapevine', November 1999, p.24
19. 'Grapevine', January 1999, p.10
20. 'Grapevine', July 1999, p.24
21. 'Grapevine', August 1999, p.28
22. 'Grapevine', September 1999, p.5
23. 'Grapevine', June 1999, p.14
24. 'Grapevine', October 1997, p.11; November 1997, p.23



25. 'Funeral Service Journal', November 1998, p.38
26. 'Funeral Service Journal', July 1999, p.51; advertisements point to a recruitment policy: 'Funeral Service Journal': "All independents need SAIF join today"
27. Saunders, 1992, p.81
28. 'Funeral Service Journal', November 1998, p.57
29. Saunders, 1992, p.141
30. 'Daily Telegraph': August 6, 1994, p.B3; August 8, 1994, p.21; August 9, 1994, p.22; August 10, 1994, p. 17, 'Sunday Telegraph', August 7, 1994, Business, p.1
31. 'Funeral Director Monthly', May 1999, p.23
32. 'Funeral Service Journal', March 1997, p.39
33. Ibid., 'F.D. Forthright is back in town!', an occasional article under F.D. Forthright, p.39
34. 'Funeral Service Journal', February 1998, p.7
35. 'Funeral Service Journal', p.51
36. Cunnington and Lucas, examples: Plate 52; used in Chapter Seven, and Plates 31-64
37. 'Daily Telegraph', May 16, 1998, p.9
38. 'Funeral Service Journal', July 1999, p.61
39. Primary evidence, Pritchard's, SCI UK, 1992; repeated June 1999
40. SCI Funerals Client Charter, leaflet
41. Primary evidence, 1992, checked August 1999
42. Primary evidence, 1992, checked June 1999, the fridge is an old refrigeration mortuary cabinet. Mr Keeton refers to this as his 'butcher's fridge'.
43. Respondent, Mrs Sally Fletcher, The Grouse Inn, Froggatt, February 1995
44. Respondents, Mrs Judy Ballin, Sheffield *Chevra Kadisha*, May 1999; Mrs Eileen Denial, St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Primary School, July 1992
45. Respondent, Mrs Sheelagh Green, Headteacher, St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Primary School, 1992



46. Respondent, Mrs Judy Ballin, June 1999
47. Respondent, Christopher Axe, Funeral Director, S&E Funeral Services, August 1999
48. Funeral Ombudsman Scheme Code of Practice, 3.1 Information and Choice
49. Respondent, Mrs Judy Ballin, July 1999
50. Respondent, Jason Heath, John Heath & Sons, Funeral Directors, June 1999
51. Respondent, Revd Chris Ellis, Cemetery Road Baptist Church, June 1998
52. Respondent, Nigel Gotteri, Greek Orthodox, February 1999
53. 'Funeral Service Journal', July 1999, p.15; Primary evidence: visits to Buddhist and Sikh Temples, 1998, 1999
54. Respondent, Jason Heath, June 1999
55. 'Pharos International', Autumn 1997, p.97
56. 'Funeral Service Journal', February 1998, p.35
57. Ibid., p.35
58. Respondent, Steven Willis, John Fairest, July 1999
59. Sheffield City Council Bereavement Services, Independent Funeral Arrangements, A4 sheets, current
60. Litten, p.92
61. Peace Funerals, Gleadless, Sheffield, leaflet
62. 'Funeral Service Journal', J. C. Atkinson & Son Ltd., October 1998, p.8
63. 'Funeral Service Journal', March 1997, p.28
64. 'Daily Telegraph', Special Report: Funeral Planning 2, June 26, 1997, p.41
65. Litten, pp.57-84
66. Respondent, Jason Heath, June 1999
67. Respondent, Revd Marcus Wakely SSC, Parish Priest, Parish of St. Matthew, Carver Street, Sheffield, August 1999
68. John Heath & Sons, brochure



69. Saunders, 1992, p.79
70. Respondent, Jason Heath, June 1999
71. Floral & Sympathy Collection, brochure, SCI UK, from C. Pritchard and Son, Swallownest
72. Respondent, Mr Robinson, manager, B&C, 1975: retired 1976, deceased 1998: researcher received a bouquet of flowers on her birthday after the 1975 visit.
73. Walter, T., "Funeral Flowers: A Response to Drury", *Folklore*, Vol. 107, 106-107
74. 'Funeral Director Monthly', advertisement, John Ball Carpentry & Joinery, Caldicott, Monmouthshire, May 1999, p.28
75. 'Funeral Service Journal', February 1998, p.21
76. Primary evidence: observation, Monty Skelton-Wallace, Sheffield, acquaintance, 1978
77. 'Star', January, 16, 1996, p.3; Star Opinion, p.6
78. 'Daily Telegraph', February 2, 1996, Weekend, p.14
79. 'Funeral Director Monthly', May 1999, p.40, Wilcox & Co. (Limousines), Chalfont St. Peter, Buckinghamshire
80. Respondent, Lynne Grieveson, C. Pritchard and Son, Swallownest, July 1999
81. Reported funerals: 'Daily Telegraph', November 19, 1993, Laura Davies, aged five:  
     ' ..her steel pink and grey coffin was carried through Eccles yesterday on a Victorian hearse, drawn by two shire horses.';  
     'Funeral Service Journal', October 1998, p.15, Mrs Elizabeth Murphy, associated with Paul O'Grady - Lily Savage: cortege comprised:
- Shillibeer hearse pulled by a pair of Belgian Blacks,
  - Mourning Coach pulled by four Belgian Blacks
  - Conductors in frock coat / morning suit, pall-bearers, coachmen and grooms in top hat and tails [Morning suit/dress = formal dress worn during the day, as opposed to evening dress ]
82. BBC 2, 'Modern Times', April 23, 1997, 9.00pm: video in SAFEC
83. 'Funeral Service Journal', November 1998, p.8
84. 'Daily Telegraph', January 1, 1994, p.3



## **Illustrations**

- 7.i Grenoside Crematorium: researcher's own photographs, July 1999**
- 7.ii Grenoside Crematorium: chapel: leaflet, Grenoside Crematorium, Sheffield, July 1999**
- 7.iii A modern bank of cremators: 'Pharos International', Winter 1997, p.17**
- 7.iv A 'Dustraction system: 'Funeral Service Journal', July 1999, p.52**
- 7.v Trade card: c.1680: Litten, J., *The English Way of Death*, London, Robert Hale, 1991, p.17**
- 7.vi John Heath: entrance: brochure, John Heath and Sons, Sheffield, July 1999**
- 7.vii A 'Last Supper' Coffin with crucifix: 'Funeral Service Journal', February 1998, p.41**
- 7.viii An American casket: 'Funeral Service Journal', November 1998, p.76**
- 7.ix Foil coffins: 'Pharos International', Autumn 1997, p.13**
- 7.x Cardboard casket: Carlisle Cemetery, researcher's own photograph, March 1994**
- 7.xi Painted cardboard coffin: 'The Page, The Arts Paper for the North', The Northern Echo / Northern Arts and Durham County Arts, March 1994, p.1**
- 7.xii 'From Here To Eternity': 'Daily Telegraph', Special Report: Funeral Planning 2, June 26, 1997, p.41**
- 7.xiii Rose lace-trimmed satin outfits: a. 'Funeral Service Journal', March 1997, p.2; b. 'Radio Times', 19-25 April, 1997, p.23**
- 7.xiv The Dunstable Pall, 1516: Litten, J., *The English Way of Death*, London, Robert Hale, 1991, Illustrations 1**
- 7.xv Noble pall-bearers: Cunnington, P., and Lucas, C., *Costume for Births, Marriages and Deaths*, London, A. and C. Black, 1972, Plate 52**
- 7.xvi Belfast funeral: 'Daily Telegraph', July 22, 1999, p.16**
- 7.xvii 'Interdenominational Service Chapel and Catering Lounge': leaflet, Sheffield and Ecclesall Co-operative Funeral and Monumental Services, Sheffield**
- 7.xviii Three tributes from the 'Floral & Sympathy Collection': brochure, SCI UK, from C. Pritchard and Son, Swallownest**



- 7.xix **Temporary memorials: advertisement, Treasured Memories Ltd., 'Funeral Service Journal', July 1999, p.78**
- 7.xx **Grave humour: advertisement, Wilcox & Co., (Limousines) Ltd., 'The Funeral Director Monthly', May 1999, p.40**
- 7.xxi **The Victorian horse and hearse: 'Pharos International', Winter 1997, p.43**
- 7.xxii **For the young: 'Funeral Service Journal', February 1998, p.72**
- 7.xxiii **Horse and dray with wicker coffin: leaflet, Peace Burials, Mawdesley, Nr Ormskirk, now also Peace Funerals, Gleadless, Sheffield**
- 7.xxiv **'Treasured memories': 'Funeral Service Journal', November 1998, p.8**