Archaeology of the Dead

This is possibly my third version of this talk. The first, in 2019, was prompted by Catherine Wykes describing examples of Neolithic tombs in Ireland. The group had already looked at funeral practices, so I gave mine the title Archaeology of the Dead, to include more physical evidence. A shortened version was then made in 2023 to fill a gap. Hopefully not too many of the group today were present for that, but my apologies if you have heard it all before.

Traditionally the ways of disposing of the dead are burial, cremation, mummification, and excarnation. Today you find variations involving modern technology or motivated by current fashions. Some are ecologically motivated but others are simply weird or self- indulgent. I prefer to stick to more historical practices, and my previous talk covered the following.

Aspects covered

- Barrows/Tombs/Tumuli
- Catacombs (omitted)
- Pyramids
- Mausoleums, grand edifices, OTT spectacle
- Ship burials
- Vaults and crypts
- Ossuaries
- Coffins, sarcophagi, urns and jars
- Monuments
- Cemeteries

I am conscious that we have touched on several of these topics before, most recently Catacombs (which I won't talk about here). In recent years we have also done at least something on the Pyramids, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the tomb of Cyrus the Great, the Taj Mahal and the Mausoleum of Qi (the Terracotta Army).

Something on funerary practices

- Burial (interment, entombment) can be either above or below ground
- The purpose of burial is to remove a dead person from sight, but in a way which perpetuates the memory of that person
- The body that is buried might be either intact or just the skeleton
- Cremation is a very old practice in many parts of the world, and is the practice of choice in some cultures and increasing popular in ours
- Mummification and embalming are not the same thing, and both have been practised since ancient times
- Ship burial does not mean burial at sea

Although funerary practices are not what I want to focus on, I still need to describe them to some extent in order to understand the archaeology.

Burial, also known as entombment or interment or inhumation, can be either above ground or below ground. If below ground it may be either directly into the earth or protected in some way, but above ground invariably in a structure of some kind.

Apart from some remote cultures, and exceptions like venerated saints and leaders like Lenin and Kim Jon-Il who are embalmed and put on display, bodies are as a matter of routine removed from sight. This is for very good reasons, not only hygiene but also respect and to enable those left behind to move on. Marking a burial place with a headstone, inscription or living thing like a tree or rose bush achieves both of these objectives.

The dead may be buried as they died, or just their bones may be buried after the flesh has been removed, perhaps by means of a sky burial when the dead body is exposed for birds to strip clean. The motive for burying a body intact to decompose naturally might be to enable the deceased to travel into the spirit world, perhaps with personal belongings and treasured possessions. As we look at tombs it will be apparent that some are intended for one and some for the other.

Cremation solves the problem of decomposition and is the predominant practice in many cultures, including the Hindu and Japanese, and increasingly preferred in the West. In our part of the world, it is actually an ancient practice too and there is archaeological evidence such as receptacles for cremated remains and what may be found with them.

The difference between mummification and embalming is basically that embalming is treatment with substances that inhibit decomposition, but is only a half-way-house to mummification, which is intended to keep a body or the outside shell of the body in a permanent state of preservation. Since the object of both embalming and mummification is to pretend that the deceased is still with us, their bodies need somewhere to be put, which we can observe and marvel at.

Ship burial does not mean burial at sea, nor does it imply actually sailing a body out to sea in a ship, but rather the use of a ship or boat or something resembling one as a tomb on land. The romantic image of a burning ship sailing into the sunset with the corpse of a slain Viking chieftain is more likely fiction than fact, but if it happened there is nothing left to see.

Mesolithic burials (8000 to around 4000 BC)

Aveline's Hole Mother and child at

Vedbaek in Denmark

In Mesolithic times, from 8000 BCE to around 4000 BCE, the people were still nomadic hunter gatherers. This was the case in Europe at least. In the Middle East the timescale was rather different, but it was not in their nature to put up elaborate permanent structures until the first civilizations arrived. So, burials were in the ground, in cemeteries for small or larger groups, though they would use a cave if one was handy. Aveline's Hole in the Mendips was discovered in 1797 and found to contain several skeletons, together with stone artefacts and much older animal bones. There are no known examples of British Mesolithic cemeteries, but they have been found in a few European countries.

At Vedbaek in Denmark 17 graves have been excavated. Bodies were found on their backs facing the same way, with arms by their sides. This mother and child were found there. The small items clustered around the mother's head are snail shells thought to have fallen from a decorated robe placed under her head as a pillow.

Early Neolithic burial mounds (4000 to 3200 BC)

right Wayland's Smithy

below West Kennet Long Barrow

In the Neolithic we start to see burial mounds appearing all over Europe with chambers made of either stone or wood (possibly determined by available materials) in which bodies are laid and the whole covered over with a large amount of earth. These developed with regional variations into tumuli and barrows.

This is the time when people started to settle down as farmers, and the way they treated their dead is characterized by collective burial in large highly visible structures. In the transition period between hunter gathering and farming these monuments may have served to mark out territory, and represented a permanent link between the community, its land and its ancestral dead. Placed on high ground like at West Kennet in Wiltshire and Wayland's Smithy on The Ridgeway they are a statement of intent.

The terms barrow, tumulus and burial mound are almost interchangeable, though they tend to signify some variation on the theme. Tumuli are shown on OS maps and nearly always represent a small burial mound, very often in open country. The term barrow tends to be used for larger tumuli, and they are either long or round.

Regional variations in Neolithic tombs

- In South West England stone was more likely to be used for the chambers, due to the availability of local materials
- Cromlechs and dolmens dominated in Cornwall and Western Britain

  (right top Tregiffian, bottom Lanyon Quoit)
- In the lowlands and East of England wood was used for the chamber, leaving less obvious and resilient remains, as below in Norfolk

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As far as Ireland is concerned there are large numbers of Neolithic tombs and particular types such as wedge tombs. Catherine Wykes described these in detail these in one of her talks.

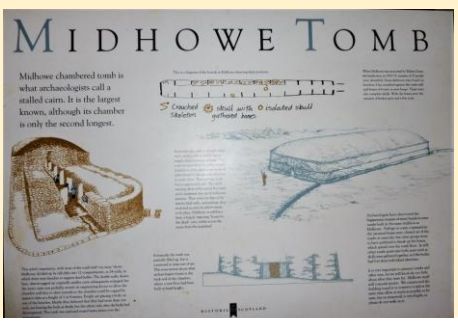
As a general point I should say that early Neolithic burials were often modified later on, so some might have features dating even from as late as the Bronze Age. Another general point to make is that regardless of shape and size, of date and regional variation, barrows and tumuli all originally comprised a chamber with an earth mound on top. But over time the earth has in many instances been eroded or taken away, so all we can now see is the remains of the chamber. They would also have commonly held grave goods, such things as pottery, beads, bone and flint tools, and arrowheads, but these too will have been lost when the chamber became exposed.

Late Neolithic (3500 to 2700 BC)

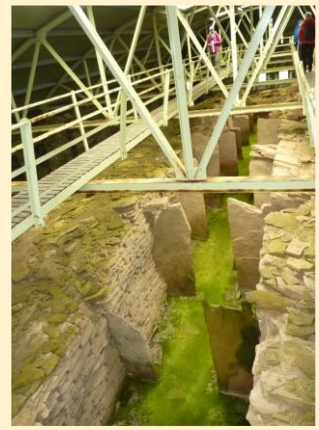
- Increased use of cremation
- Appearance of megalithic tombs, some astronomically aligned
- Important megalithic passage tombs found in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, such as Newgrange, Bryn Celli Ddu, Maeshowe and Mid Howe
- The interiors of these tombs have either compartments or stalls

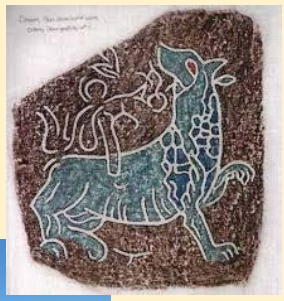
  Top – Newgrange (reconstructed)

  Bottom – Mid Howe in Orkney, with stalls



In the later Neolithic period communal burials continued, but with changes, like the increased use of cremation, and the appearance of megalithic tombs. Also, in some places megalithic tombs are associated with other stone monuments, and some have astronomical features. For example, the entrances to Newgrange and Maeshowe face the mid-winter sunrise and sunset respectively. The plan shown here of Mid Howe is a photo of one of the notice boards put up for visitors. I visited both Mid Howe and Maeshowe in Orkney several years ago and took some photos.

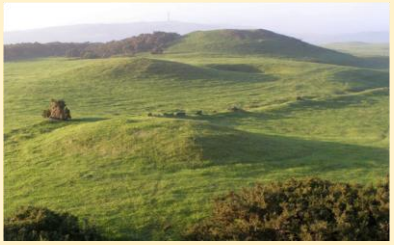




Above – interior of Maes Howe (not my photo)

Right – Bryn Celli Ddu passage tomb

- In the Bronze Age both burial and cremation took place
- Megalithic tombs gave way to smaller individual burials in flat cemeteries
- Burial mounds continued to be built
- Grave goods were mostly personal items and pottery (eg Beaker work)



Cremation became more prevalent among the Celtic people of Central Europe, and the Urnfield culture, from 1300 to 750 BCE, is an interesting phase when elaborate funerary urns were made to hold cremated ashes – see picture.

After the peak of stone burial chambers in the late Neolithic, burials in the Bronze Age were less spectacular and more individual. The Beaker people were generally buried in a curled-up position in flat graves with their pottery and ornaments.

The age of the Celts

- The nobility were buried with extravagant grave goods
- Warriors were often buried with their chariots or their weapons
- Roman occupation and culture brought more cremation, but Christianity reversed this trend
- Roman law prevented burials within settlements, so cemeteries were located on the roads leading out of towns and villages

The lower photo is taken from alongside the Great North Road in Hertfordshire, and shows 1st century tumuli containing Romano-British farming families.

Having mentioned the Roman rules on where to put dead bodies this may be the moment to look at tombs and monuments along the Appian Way in Rome itself.

Anglo-Saxon practices

After the Britons and Romans, in this country, we have the Saxons. Their burial practices were by no means stereotypical. Apparently, they practised both cremation and inhumation. They buried their dead both under mounds and in cemeteries, and the method does not appear to be determined by wealth or status. Also, there is the complication of Christianity. I know Christianity was around with the Romans, but the Saxons only adopted it in stages, with a rather blurred transition in the process.

The picture shows a recently discovered Anglo-Saxon burial chamber in Essex with the trappings of a pagan burial but with Christian touches. The chamber was made of timber and there was an earth mound over the top. Archaeological remains tend to show tombs as subterranean, but this doesn't necessarily mean they were built that way. They may well have been constructed at ground level, and then covered over by sediment over time.

Under my heading of 'mausoleums, grand edifices and OTT spectacle', there are several examples which in most cases we have looked at separately, so here are some brief reminders

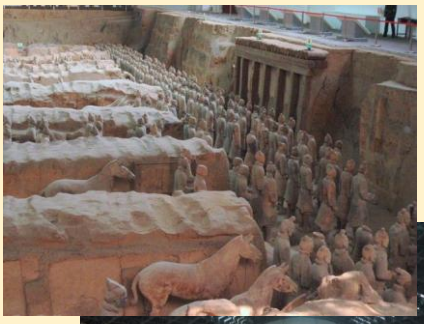
The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus

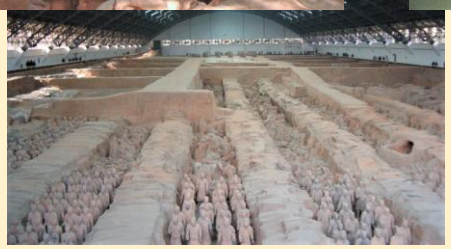
- Built as the burial place of King Mausolus by his sister-wife Artemisia c350 BC
- Designed by the most famous architects and sculptors of the day
- Made of white marble and combining Egyptian, Greek and Lycian styles
- 125 metres around and 45 metres high
- Destroyed by 1522 either by earthquakes or Crusaders, or both

Tomb of Cyrus the Great

- Cyrus the Great founded the Persian Empire in the 6th Century BC
- His tomb is at Pasargadae in Iran
- Claimed the right to a monument in recognition of his accomplishments
- Visited by Alexander and described at the time, but not destroyed
- Alexander also left alone the tomb of Xerxes at nearby Persepolis (below)

Mausoleum of Qin Shi Huang, Xian





The tomb of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China is associated with, but distinct from, what we call the Terracotta Army, and which is technically known as the Necropolis of Qin. The top picture here shows, from some distance away, the artificial hill under which the Emperor is believed to be buried. It is sealed and has almost certainly not been opened yet, partly out of concern for the preservation of the contents. A lot of the artefacts found nearby deteriorated rapidly on exposure, especially lacquer and paint.

Qin died in 210 BCE so his tomb dates from then, but he started building his mausoleum, including the Terracotta Army, as soon as he ascended the throne at the age of 13. A detailed account of the building of the whole complex says that the tomb itself contains ‘palaces, towers, officials, valuable artefacts and wondrous objects.’ Apparently 100 rivers were simulated using mercury, and above

them the ceiling was decorated with heavenly bodies. This is a rather fanciful account, and the palaces and towers may be models, and the 'officials' hopefully are effigies, not the officials themselves, but there is certainly a lot of mercury in the ground to validate the account of the rivers. The site of the tomb is quite large, about 100m by 75m.

The Chinese Government does not appear to be in any hurry to excavate the actual tomb. There are genuine concerns about whether current archaeological techniques are good enough to predict what might be in there and to prevent deterioration of so much material in one go.

We have done pyramids separately, too, but a brief reprise might be useful

Pyramids

- Pyramids in various forms are found in many parts of the ancient world
- In Mesopotamia we find ziggurats dating back to the 4th Millennium BC
- Egyptian pyramids, and those in neighbouring Nubia, came next
- A few pyramid shaped tombs are found in Greece for soldiers killed in battle
- Chinese emperors from the Qin and Han Dynasties were buried in flat topped pyramidal mounds
- Pyramids in Mexico and India are numerous and impressive, but they are not tombs

(top Egypt, middle Greece, bottom China)

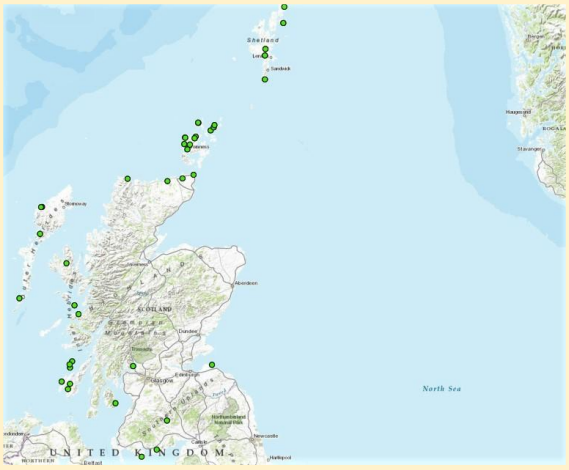
Viking ship burials

Oseberg ship being recovered Museum reconstruction

Ship burials were a tradition amongst Northern European peoples, in particular the Norse. These burials were on land and consisted either of a ship or boat, or the outline of a ship in stone, in which the body or bodies were placed. Earth was then piled over the ship in a mound.

One of the most impressive ones found was at Oseberg in Norway in 1903. This burial was for two clearly important women who lived in the 9th Century. Well at least one was important; the other may have been put there to accompany the older one, with or without her consent. Found with them in the burial were artefacts including clothing, ship's equipment, kitchen utensils, farm tools, three sleighs, a cart, five carved animal heads, five beds, two tents, fifteen horses, six dogs and two small cows.

Viking burials in Scotland



Sanday plaque

Obviously, a ship burial using an actual vessel was reserved for important or wealthy people, and the ordinary Viking was buried, mostly in straightforward graves but also in barrows with stones arranged in the shape of a ship. This map shows the location of such burial sites in Scotland from the second half of the 9th Century. An actual ship burial was discovered on the island of Sanday in the Orkneys in 1985 by a farmer. A number of bones were found on a sandy beach after a storm, together with some metal objects. The farmer thought he had found the old wreck of a fishing boat, but six years later the significance of the metal artefacts was realized and an operation to rescue whatever could be salvaged was undertaken before another storm washed it away. All the wood had rotted away, but archaeologists found a stone chamber constructed within what would have been a boat about 6.5m long. Three bodies were inside it, with some treasure and personal items. The plaque in the picture was one of these.

Since then, another ship burial has been discovered in Scotland on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, north of Mull. The body of a 10th Century Viking chieftain was found in 2011 in the remnants of a boat, with his shield and weapons and a collection of rivets.

Vaults and crypts

- They are essentially the same thing, and a departure from previous types of burial
- They started as structures under Christian churches
- Crypt building became popular in the 9th Century with the Franks
- Crypts become almost normal under later cathedrals, but not exclusively for burials
- Family vaults for the wealthy became fashionable in the 19th Century

Vaults and crypts are essentially the same thing. The Latin word *crypta* means vault, and itself comes from a Greek word meaning to conceal or hide. Burial vaults are not the same as burial mounds. Vaults are by definition underground. In many cultures, with the major exception of Egypt, they represent a new way of disposing of bodies, firstly because they are constructed underground, and secondly because what we think of as crypts are generally found under buildings not mounds.

The earliest crypts under Christian churches may have developed in two ways. They gave essential access to important tombs for the purpose of pilgrimage, such as St Peter's tomb under the old St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Secondly the art of building underground chambers was well developed by the time churches started to be built. Virtually every garrison town in the Roman Empire had a temple to Mithras, traditionally built underground, and for the purpose of carrying out rituals.

There are some examples of early crypts in Britain, and one of the best is the Saxon crypt in Repton, but this is believed to have been built as a baptistry rather than a burial vault.

It is quite impractical to excavate any significant structure underneath an existing church without it falling down. So, crypts had to be built as part of some new church building, and the period of large-scale church building in Charlemagne's time was when crypts became popular. Aarchen Cathedral does not seem to have one, but the Grossmünster in Zürich does.

Many Romanesque cathedrals in this country and throughout Europe were built with extensive crypts, but whether or not they were originally used for burials they are now more multi-purpose.

These might be on country estates, but also in churches. Morley Church (see picture) is a good example, with vaults for the Sitwell and Wilmot families, inside, as well as a Sacheverell-Bateman mausoleum in the churchyard.

Although it is not a very comfortable subject to talk about, ossuaries serve a very practical purpose. Bones turn up in all sorts of situation, whether it is battle, plague, or the digging up of a cemetery to make room for something else, and the idea of building a special place to house them has obvious merit. I find it distasteful to use human remains as a form of decoration, sometimes tens of thousands of them all set out for display, like you might see in the baroque setting of a church or chapel. This is the case in several places in Europe, but I won't show any pictures of these.

Custom-built ossuaries or charnel houses date back to the early Middle Ages, and became larger and more common in the 18th Century as a consequence of cemeteries becoming overcrowded and space in urban areas more limited.

The idea of storing bones actually goes back much further to Neolithic tombs, in cultures which practised sky burials. The dead would be exposed for nature to take its course, and the bones collected when they had been cleaned up. There is a tomb on South Ronaldsay in the Orkneys called the Tomb of the Eagles, pictured here. It contained 16,000 human bones when it was found, and several hundred of birds, predominantly sea eagles. This suggests the way in which the bones were de-fleshed, and respect for the creatures that did it.

Various cultures practise excarnation, often using platforms or ledges to expose the corpse. But archaeological evidence of this is obviously scarce.

France is particularly rich in monumental ossuaries. We have already seen the Catacombs of Paris. In Verdun there is an ossuary with the bones of 130,000 French and German soldiers who fell in the battle of that name.

Two ossuaries worth mentioning in England are St Bride's Crypt in London where the bones of thousands of plague victims were revealed by a WW2 bombing raid, and a crypt in Hythe with again thousands of bones, the result of church extensions into an older graveyard which was dug up.

Another event which caused a great amount of human remains to be dug up in England was the Dissolution. Many monasteries were quite old and their graveyards were full of monks who had died over hundreds of years. In country areas these graveyards may have remained untouched, and one was discovered not long ago at Fountains Abbey, but wherever monastic land was taken over and developed in some way the bodies were surely dug up, and the bones disposed of. In the circumstances it is unlikely that money would have been spent to rehouse them, but some may have ended up in an ossuary somewhere.

Funeral 'furniture'

- Coffins
- Caskets
- Sarcophagi
- Shrouds
- Urns
- Canopic jars

How a body in a grave or tomb might be contained and enclosed, if at all, depends on many things – the times, culture, status, location etc. If a really ancient burial was in a wooden coffin the likelihood is that the wood would have degraded and we wouldn't know, unless metal coffin fittings are found. A stone coffin, however, would survive. A shroud would not, unless it contained embroidered beads or other decoration that survived.

Cremated ashes can be disposed of in any way imaginable, but if kept this would normally be an urn or something similar. Canopic jars deserve a special mention since they were a distinctive feature of Egyptian burials.

Coffins and caskets

The only difference between a coffin and a casket is shape. Caskets are rectangular while coffins are shaped more or less to the outline of the human body. The earliest wooden coffins found so far are in China, dating back to 5000 BCE. As suggested earlier they are subject to deterioration except if kept in very dry conditions, like an Egyptian tomb. The picture on the left is a Middle Kingdom casket inscribed with texts from the Book of the Dead.

The grave pictured below that is a rare example of an Anglo-Saxon wooden coffin found in Norfolk. You might be able to make out the remnants of wood beneath the skeleton. It would have perished long ago if the waterlogged conditions and chemicals in the ground had not kept all the wood from rotting.

A lead lining to a coffin will extend the protection to the body inside but is expensive. A late Romano-British child's coffin was found in Leicester in 2013. Also in Leicester, of course, we have the tomb of Richard lll, who lies interred in an oak and yew wood coffin, lined with lead.

Sarcophaguses are strong coffins made usually of stone, but sometimes of lead. Let's face it, they are far more interesting than coffins, so I have put together a small selection. They were brought to a pinnacle of splendour by the Egyptians, though this slide shows a much simpler example, as well as the drama that come from finding and opening one.

The Ancient Greeks also made the sarcophagus a work of art, using marble as well as more ordinary stone materials. The one in the top left is Macedonian and found in Sidon, with scenes of Alexander's battles on it. A simpler sarcophagus is top right, with scenes of people going about their business. The theme of the one at bottom left is hunting, while the style at bottom right is 'Garland', a popular type of sarcophagus that was taken up and used by the Romans. This one is from the 2nd Century.

The Romans occasionally used lead sarcophaguses, as did the Jews around the same time. The Jews did not believe in cremation. Here we have a Roman lead sarcophagus and a Jewish stone one. The other two pictures show an early Christian sarcophagus, and a form of sarcophagean burial above ground, popular in the Unites States in the late 19th Century and still practised in the 1950s.

History of cremation urns

- The oldest pottery cremation urns found date from as early as 7000 BC in China, with later examples from 5000 – 3000 BC also in China
- The earliest found in Europe are pottery urns from Neolithic Russia
- Decorated pottery urns from the Bronze Age have been found in North America, the British Isles and Iberia, while cremation was spreading more widely around Europe
- A particular type of urn from the Celtic Urnfield culture of Central Europe was shown earlier
- In the Mycenaean Age (1000 – 800 BC) cremation became the accepted way to deal with dead bodies in Greece, mainly for health reasons with a high rate of mortality in battle
- The Romans may have picked up the habit from the Greeks, and often kept their urns collectively in niches called a columbarium
- The Saxons and other culture produced pottery urns before Christianity discouraged cremation; this was the case too in Pre-Columbian America

Left – Greek urn
Above – Roman Columbarium
Top right – Saxon
Bottom right – Pre-Columbian

Canopic jars

(middle) alabaster jar from 18th or 19th Dynasty

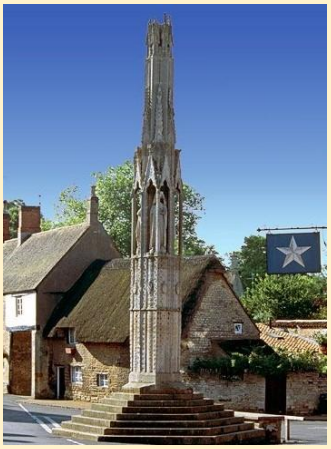
(top right) calcite and wood, found in Upper Egypt, from 21st Dynasty

(bottom right) alabaster from reign of Ramsesses II

Memorials to the Dead

I was in two minds about including Memorials in this talk, because they often seem to serve more than one purpose, not always to do with the death of the individual. Two of these memorials show what I mean. Nelson's Column, put up after his death at the Battle of Trafalgar, is as much to glorify Trafalgar as it is about him. The Arch of Titus in Rome was commissioned by his brother and successor to commemorate Titus's military accomplishments rather than mourn his loss. And the third picture illustrates a further trap; Trajan's Column was put up to commemorate Trajan, by Trajan himself while he was still very much alive.

Eleanor Crosses



When Eleanor of Castile died suddenly in 1290 in Nottinghamshire whilst on a journey, Edward I had the twelve so-called Eleanor Crosses erected in the places where the procession taking her body back to London stopped for the night. These three original crosses remain today at Geddington (middle), Waltham (left) and Hardingstone (right). Do these represent true memorials to an individual with no

ulterior purpose? With the exception of Lincoln, where there was a cross, they are not places where she was buried, since bits of her ended up in different places. But certainly, Edward was devoted to the woman who had given him something like 16 children, and I would give him the benefit of the doubt on the genuineness of his motives.

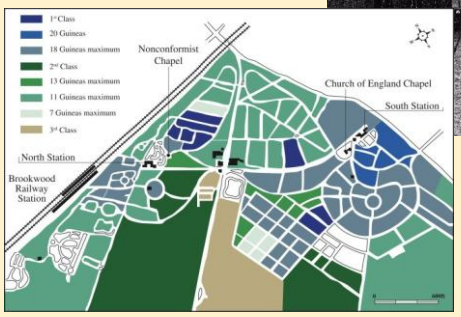
War memorials

War memorials are found in virtually every town and village, and they invariably list the names of those who died. But they also serve to commemorate the conflict itself and more often than not define the cause for which they gave their lives. The Cenotaph in London was erected to honour the dead of the Great War with a dedication to 'The Glorious Dead', understandably without any actual names inscribed on it. The Cenotaph was designed by Edwin Lutyens, who also designed the other memorial pictured here, a memorial near Derby railway station to those in the Midland Railway who died in the Great War, dated here as 1914 to 1919.

Cemeteries and graveyards

I'm sure we already know what cemeteries and graveyards are all about, whether they are small country graveyards like this one at Bradbourne, large urban cemeteries, or War Graves. Large cemeteries are a response to increases in population, which in this country meant the Industrial Revolution and the growth of previously insignificant towns. 19th Century cemeteries were created by municipalities and corporations rather than the Church, and the responsibilities of local councils were set out in Public Health legislation.

Brookwood
'Necropolis'



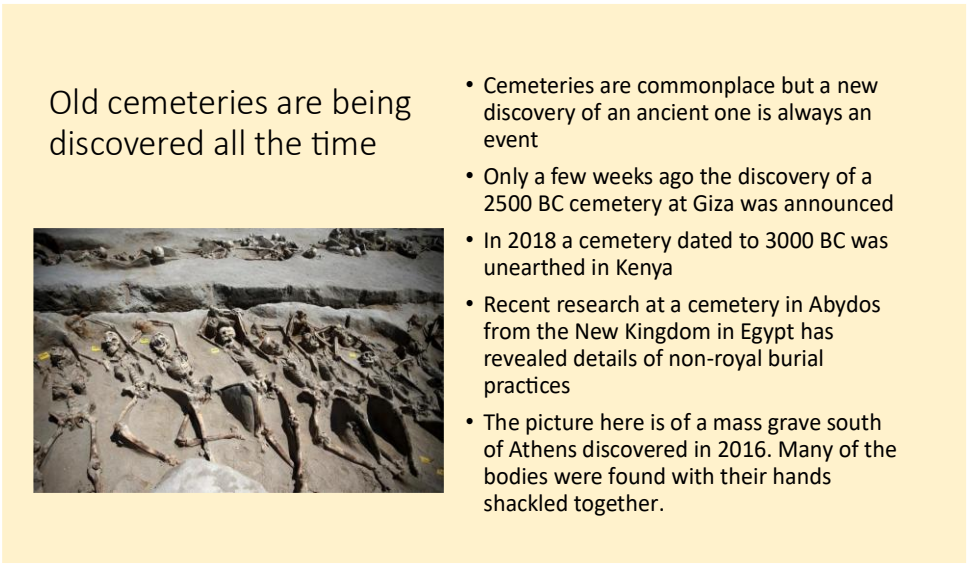
Developing cities have a problem with the disposal of their dead. We have seen what Paris did. In London by the middle of the 19th Century there was hardly a space left, and it was decided to take the deceased out of London altogether. In 1852 the London Necropolis Company bought 3.5 sq. miles of land near the village of Woking. It was poor land for agriculture, and a large circular cemetery was planned, centred on Brookwood, with its own railway station and special platforms at Waterloo in London for coffins and mourners. The London Necropolis Railway ran from 1854 right up to 1941. It had separate classes of carriage for mourners, and similarly for hearses, and at Brookwood one station platform was for Anglicans and another for all those 'disestablished'.

Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey is the largest in the UK and in its early days was the largest in the world. The plan pictured here shows the cemetery as it is today, with one segment of the circle presently utilized. And one of the reasons why the rest of the circle was not developed, and never will be, is because it was soon realized that more money could be made from building houses for the fast-growing area around Woking, where increasing numbers of people working in London were choosing to live. Most of the land originally intended for the necropolis was, shall we say, appropriated by local landowners and speculators.

The left-hand image is an early artist's impression of the proposed necropolis, and this Google Earth image shows some of the features today. It was originally intended to be a circle, but the present-day segment is a quarter of the whole. The disappeared parts became Woking town, which didn't exist at the time, and is not evident in the artist's impression. If without widespread corruption the project had proceeded as first intended, the cemetery would be at least four times as big as it is now.

Another significant English cemetery is in Highgate, North London. Actually, there are two cemeteries, East and West. Between them they hold the bodies of around 170,000 people, famous and not so famous, many in family vaults. Karl Marx is buried there, not far from several of my own family. There is one space left in our family plot, apparently, and I was offered it once, but declined. One reason I have chosen to show Highgate is because it has a gallery of catacombs – see picture.

These brick catacombs were part of original buildings in the cemetery when it was created in 1838-9. Inside, there is a brick-vaulted gallery more than 80 yards long, lit by small high round windows. It is lined with separate recesses, each large enough to take a single coffin end on, from floor to ceiling down both sides of the gallery, with 825 coffins in all. The catacombs were used as a permanent resting place or as a temporary one whilst a plot was chosen.



Wooden tombs painted in various colours and limestone statues of the occupants are amongst the treasures found. This discovery gave new insights into the lives of the herders who lived there at that time. There are about 600 graves, all of equal status and covering a period of hundreds of years. This demonstrates an egalitarian society, with a strong sense of community. The herders would have been scattered over a large area but brought to a communal burial place when they died.

The tombs of this New Kingdom Temple cemetery consist of modest, vaulted mud-brick substructures, with small pyramids once standing above them. These humble tombs once contained a staggering number of individuals. Burials include all ages, making this site one of potentially great importance to our understanding of non-royal life during the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Dynasties.

One of the things which makes archaeology so interesting is that there's always something going on, and that every year somewhere there are new and unexpected discoveries to be made.

We shouldn't talk about cemeteries without mentioning the 20th Century mass war graves which could be a subject in their own right. This one is at Pegasus Bridge in Normandy. Alongside some of the larger war cemeteries in Europe, in particular, there are impressive monuments.

Not far from Arromanches on the Normandy beaches, where remains of the Mulberry Harbour can still be seen, is the relatively recent British Normandy Memorial. This impressive memorial is enhanced, at the present time, by a display of silhouettes of soldiers standing all along the cliff top.

That's all, folks!