

To cite this output:

Rugg, JJ, Snell, K, (2012) Death and Community in Rural Settlements: Changing Burial Culture in Small Towns and Villages, c.1850-2007.

ESRC End of Award Report, RES-062-23-0929. Swindon: ESRC



ESRC End of Award Report

For awards ending on or after 1 November 2009

This End of Award Report should be completed and submitted using the **grant reference** as the email subject, to **reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk** on or before the due date.

The final instalment of the grant will not be paid until an End of Award Report is completed in full and accepted by ESRC.

Grant holders whose End of Award Report is overdue or incomplete will not be eligible for further ESRC funding until the Report is accepted. We reserve the right to recover a sum of the expenditure incurred on the grant if the End of Award Report is overdue. (Please see Section 5 of the ESRC Research Funding Guide for details.)

Please refer to the Guidance notes when completing this End of Award Report.

Grant Reference	RES-062-23-0929		
Grant Title	Death and community in rural settlements: changing burial culture in small towns and villages, c. 1850-2007		
Grant Start Date	21/04/2008	Total Amount	£317,393.72
Grant End Date	30/11/2011	Expended:	(100%) £253,915 (80%)
Grant holding Institution	University of York		
Grant Holder	Julie Rugg		
Grant Holder's Contact Details	Address	Email	
	Centre for Housing Policy	julie.rugg@york.ac.uk	
	University of York	Telephone	
	Heslington	01904 321480	
	York		
	YO10 5DD		
Co-Investigators (as per project application):		Institution	
Keith Snell		University of Leicester	

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1. Non-technical summary

Please provide below a project summary written in non-technical language. The summary may be used by us to publicise your work and should explain the aims and findings of the project. *[Max 250 words]*

The project considered the history of burial in rural and market-town areas after 1850. This study of cemeteries and churchyards used national and county archives to explore for the first time how local communities responded to churchyard closures and new cemetery creation. Hitherto, historians and sociologists have described a shift from the 'traditional' sacred churchyard to the municipal, secular and 'scientific' cemetery. This is a false dichotomy. New burial board cemeteries were managed largely by parish vestries and, until the Burial Act of 1900, consecrated cemetery land was in law regarded as an extension to parish burial space. In churchyards and cemeteries alike, the proliferation of complex monuments increased through the nineteenth century. Churchyard extensions created space for such expectations, particularly for families to be buried together and 'in perpetuity', undermining the tradition of churchyard re-use.

A new aesthetic is the most persuasive explanation for the changing landscape of twentieth-century churchyards and cemeteries, as 'cluttered' Victorian styles fell out of favour. Furthermore, maintenance was easier. The incidence of cremation increased substantially but has not necessarily undermined rural churchyard use: space for cremated remains has often been made available, for example in gardens of remembrance. For rural communities today, continued use of a churchyard remains a preference where possible. Patterns of churchyard closure differed between regions, being much more likely in the midlands, and less so than in North Yorkshire, where the majority of churchyards remain in use. However, in both locations, the need to secure more burial space remains problematic.

2. Project overview

a) Objectives

Please state the aims and objectives of your project as outlined in your proposal to the us. *[Max 200 words]*

Objectives [200 words]

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The research will explore changing burial culture in two regions (Yorkshire and Leicestershire-Rutland) and in doing so address the following three objectives:

To establish a robust chronology of changing burial provision (foundation of new cemeteries; extensions to existing sites; closure of churchyards and burial grounds; opening of crematoria), charting the shift in rural locations from the use of churchyard to cemetery and crematoria and characterising any difference between rural settlement types;

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To assess the relative strength of explanatory factors in changing burial provision, including demographic shifts; new legislation; relations between Church and Chapel; local political issues; and trends in funerary practice; and

To analyse the changing importance of burial provision to the senses of community and belonging in villages and small towns.

b) Project Changes

Please describe any changes made to the original aims and objectives, and confirm that these were agreed with us. Please also detail any changes to the grant holder's institutional affiliation, project staffing or funding. *[Max 200 words]*

In both projects, consideration was given to all burial sites – both urban and rural – the latter of course being by far the most numerous. Market-town environments were so inter-connected with rural parishes that this made sense, given close cultural interaction between the two, and the difficulty in some cases of large semi-industrial 'villages' or small towns of making any clear distinction.

c) Methodology

Please describe the methodology that you employed in the project. Please also note any ethical issues that arose during the course of the work, the effects of this and any action taken. *[Max 500 words]*

There were three principal stages to the research.

FIRST, an audit occurred of all burial locations in the case-study areas between 1850 and 2007. Difficulties in collating data restricted the Yorkshire areas to three local authorities: Ryedale, Hambleton and Harrogate, but encompassing in those areas all cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds. In total, the research covered 351 Yorkshire and all 556 Leicestershire and Rutland burial sites. Initially, it was decided to write to the parish clerks of every parish in the study to ask for information on local burial sites. However, it was found during the course of the archival research that this data was sometimes unreliable, and so was subsequently revised. In addition, enquiries were also sent to parish clerks, clergy, Nonconformist ministers, local history societies and other such parties with local knowledge. Site visits were undertaken and included the collection of photographic data. Much of the audit took place through detailed consultation of archival records. This audit resulted in the creation of two SPSS datasets, with a case for each site and a series of variables describing its characteristics. In Leicestershire and Rutland these data were combined with data from the 1851 Religious Census and allied sources. For all regions, information was included from a review of the *London Gazette*, which contains

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information on churchyard closures by Order in Council. Diocesan collections of Sentences of Consecration were also used to pinpoint the incidence of churchyard extension. One unanticipated advantage was the availability of on-line resources, such as Geograph and Google Earth, which allow 'virtual' visits to particular locations to scrutinise sites. There was a consequent reduction in first-stage fieldwork travel costs, and this facilitated exploration of national datasets in London.

SECOND, individual sites were explored in further detail. It was presumed at an early stage that there would be purposive selection, but the nature of documentation greatly influenced the choice of sites. It was not possible to anticipate which sites were rich in extant material and as a consequence, the research explored all parish-level documentation – for example, vestry minutes, archival material on the churchyard, and burial board minutes – relating to burial provision. For some sites no information was available.

THIRD, interviews took place with key stakeholders, including Anglican clergy, Nonconformist ministers, churchwardens, funeral directors, town and parish clerks and a cemetery friends group. In certain rural areas, issues of confidentiality sometimes raised issues about detailed reporting, for example local criticisms made by interviewees, which have been sensibly and adequately covered with tact or pseudonyms in publication. In North Yorkshire, three major 'outreach' events – attracting in excess of 100 attendees – gave opportunity for local communities to comment on findings.

A FOURTH and unanticipated research avenue comprised use of two major national archives, access to which was funded by savings in travel and subsistence. In TNA, study was made of files in HO45, which contain administrative records for the Burials Office. Ecclesiastical Commissioner records relating to churchyards were also reviewed at the Church of England Record Centre in Bermondsey.

d) Project Findings

Please summarise the findings of the project, referring where appropriate to outputs recorded on the ESRC website. Any future research plans should also be identified. *[Max 500 words]*

This project has substantially revised understandings of the management and use of different types of burial space over the last century and a half. Key findings include the following:

- Nineteenth-century churchyard closures by Order in Council tended to be negotiated rather than imposed, and sometimes offered conditions under which limited burial might continue.
- The second half of the nineteenth century demonstrated unease with burial practices that threatened disturbance of the dead, and this trend persisted through the twentieth century. However, directions accompanying the Burial Acts clearly expected that cemeteries would be re-used.
- The substantial number of new cemeteries in rural areas questions the overwhelming focus upon large city cemeteries in cemetery historiography.
- The Burial Acts allowed for the provision of cemeteries with both consecrated and

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unconsecrated portions. Denominational tension was evident in both regions on such issues as land apportionment and the building of chapels. Midlands cemeteries were more likely to contain two chapels.

- New church building and churchyard expansion continued to add to the stock of consecrated ground.
- Churchyard extension was not strongly linked to church rebuilding in either region. The incidence of extension in both places was particularly marked between 1875 and 1935.
- Burial boards were more prevalent in larger market towns, with greater numbers of ratepayers and higher demographic demand. The parish clergyman continued to preside at funerals in consecrated sections, as in the parish churchyard, while Nonconformist ministers played an increasing role in unconsecrated portions of new cemeteries.
- Denominational differences were marked between the two areas studied. Methodism was strong in both, but was much more likely to express itself through separate burial grounds in the midlands. Old dissenting denominations were especially strong in the midland counties, where Nonconformist burial grounds were more numerous.
- The establishment of rural district councils (RDCs), coupled with the Public Health (Amendment) Act (1879), offered the opportunity for new cemeteries to be established outside the framework of the Burial Acts. However, RDCs were generally unwilling to accept responsibility for providing burial space, which was undertaken largely by parish and parochial church councils.
- Cremation had limited impact in the Yorkshire rural areas, but has been very significant in the midlands. In many Yorkshire villages – more so than in the Midlands – the church remains a focal point for funerals. The majority of churchyards in both study areas accommodate cremated remains.
- Overall, churchyard closure was much more marked in the midland counties, affecting 53 per cent of Anglican churchyards. This difference is due to different demographics (larger and denser midland populations), midland nucleation raising space issues, rural industry, and historically greater Nonconformity. However, in both regions the rate of closure accelerated after 1970, and continues to be high.
- The appearance of both cemeteries and churchyards changed in the twentieth century, in the same way. Shifting aesthetics and a desire to improve standards of maintenance has driven policies to simplify the landscape.

e) Contributions to wider ESRC initiatives (eg Research Programmes or Networks)

If your project was part of a wider ESRC initiative, please describe your contributions to the initiative's objectives and activities and note any effect on your project resulting from participation. *[Max. 200 words]*

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3. Early and anticipated impacts

a) Summary of Impacts to date

Please summarise any impacts of the project to date, referring where appropriate to associated outputs recorded on the Research Outcomes System (ROS). This should include both scientific impacts (relevant to the academic community) and economic and societal impacts (relevant to broader society). The impact can be relevant to any organisation, community or individual. [Max. 400 words]

In terms of academic impact, this research contributes new agendas for death and church studies. The study of burial provision provides a clear chronology of 'countable' events which locates change in time and place. Findings from the research have already been presented at academic conferences in the midlands and internationally (Netherlands, Romania), and have provoked discussion on how to define 'modernity' in connection with mortality. The study has highlighted such factors as Anglican-Nonconformist tensions and parochial politics, and the wish for familial proximity in death, as principal factors changing burial culture in the nineteenth century. Earlier studies of cemeteries and churchyards have usually stressed aspects of material culture and status without considering emotional issues affecting burial choices. A text is close to completion, to be published by Manchester University Press in 2013. One major journal articles is in press for the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* and another is under review. A series of papers from the research have been presented at the University of York Cemeteries Colloquium, which is the leading academic forum for new cemetery work in the UK. Findings are already influencing a new generation of cemetery-related doctoral studies.

Locally, there has been considerable interest in the project. Presentations to a number of local history societies have been requested. Dissemination of findings through the Cemetery Research Group website increases access to studies from the research. A full report will be available on dedicated pages. Close working with the North Yorkshire Record Office has facilitated access to images which will be used in further dissemination. Data from the surveys are being sought by, and have been promised to, diocesan authorities.

Unlike many historical research projects, this study has substantial policy impact. Papers have been presented to the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Managers and published in their *Journal*. Local authorities have been particularly interested in the meaning and consequence of cemetery consecration, which has a direct bearing on current cemetery management. The project has already directly contributed to cemetery management planning by a major London borough and by Wiltshire and Leicestershire County Councils. The Church of England wishes to be apprised of findings that relate to churchyard management. English Heritage has shown interest in the findings as they relate to churchyard consecration. Policies concerning church and churchyard closures are being informed by the research, and findings have been presented to the Ministry of Justice Burial and Cemetery Advisory Group.

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b) Anticipated/Potential Future Impacts

Please outline any anticipated or potential impacts (scientific or economic and societal) that you believe your project might have in future. *[Max. 200 words]*

In academic terms, the study has created a template or framework for further local and regional studies of churchyards and cemeteries, in providing a much-needed chronology of change in legislation and regulation, and examples for comparison. The research also suggests a large number of research areas where further study would be of benefit, so creating a new agenda for cemetery and churchyard history.

The strong links between the research team and the cemetery management profession and policy-makers mean that continued use will be made of the data, and will feed into ongoing policy development. Current issues in cemetery management have already benefitted from early findings from the project, not least in understanding the relationship between Church and civic legislation on issues such as consecration.

English Heritage is giving consideration to recommendations on the preparation of more nuanced interpretative material for burial grounds, and this data will contribute to the creation of 'stories' which make historic burial space more meaningful and better integrated into elements of local history. The National Lottery Fund is also currently reviewing its funding arrangements to give more pointed encouragement to the submission of cemetery-related projects, and this study also encourages the development of local historical projects.

You will be asked to complete an ESRC Impact Report 12 months after the end date of your award. The Impact Report will ask for details of any impacts that have arisen since the completion of the End of Award Report.

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4. Declarations

Please ensure that sections A, B and C below are completed and signed by the appropriate individuals. The End of Award Report will not be accepted unless all sections are signed.

Please note hard copies are **not** required; electronic signatures are accepted and should be used.

A: To be completed by Grant Holder

Please read the following statements. Tick **one** statement under ii) and iii), then sign with an electronic signature at the end of the section (this should be an image of your actual signature).

i) The Project

This Report is an accurate overview of the project, its findings and impacts. All co-investigators named in the proposal to ESRC or appointed subsequently have seen and approved the Report.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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ii) Submissions to the Research Outcomes System (ROS)

Output and impact information has been submitted to the Research Outcomes System. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted as soon as they become available.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
or	
This grant has not yet produced any outputs or impacts. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted to the Research Outcomes System as soon as they become available.	<input type="checkbox"/>

iii) Submission of Datasets

Datasets arising from this grant have been offered for deposit with the Economic and Social Data Service.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
or	
Datasets that were anticipated in the grant proposal have not been produced and the Economic and Social Data Service has been notified.	<input type="checkbox"/>
or	
No datasets were proposed or produced from this grant.	<input type="checkbox"/>