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THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY

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archaeological engagements with the material world:

a celebration of the academic achievements of Professor Richard Bradley

edited by

Andrew Meirion Jones, Joshua Pollard, Michael J. Allen and Julie Gardiner

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CONTRIBUTORS

PROF. SUSAN ALCOCK
Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and
the Ancient World, Brown University, Box
1837/60 George St., Providence, RI 02912,
USA
Email: Susan_alcock@brown.edu

DR MIKE ALLEN
Allen Environmental Archaeology, Redroof,
Green Rd, Codford, Wiltshire, BA12 0NW
and
School of Applied Sciences, Bournemouth
University, Fern Barrow, Poole, BH12 5BB
Email: aea.escargots@gmail.com

DR LARA BACELAR ALVES
Centro de Estudos Arqueológicos das
Universidades de Coimbra e Porto (CEAUCP),
Polo da Universidade do Porto, Gabinete 107 –
Torre A, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade
do Porto, Via Panorâmica, s/n, 4150–564
Porto, Portugal
Email: larabacelar@sapo.pt

PROF. JOHN C. BARRETT
Dept. of Archaeology, University of Sheffield,
Northgate House, West Street, Sheffield, S1
4ET, UK
Email: J.Barrett@sheffield.ac.uk

DR STAN BECKENSALL
4, Leazes Crescent, Hexham, NE46 3JX

PROF. MARTIN BELL
Department of Archaeology, School of Human
and Environmental Sciences, University of
Reading, Whiteknights, PO Box 227, Reading
RG6 6AB
Email: m.g.bell@reading.ac.uk

PROF. BOB CHAPMAN
Department of Archaeology, School of Human
and Environmental Sciences, University of
Reading, Whiteknights, PO Box 227, Reading
RG6 6AB
Email: R.W.chapman@reading.ac.uk

DR ROS CLEAL
The National Trust, Alexander Keiller Museum,
High Street, Avebury, Wiltshire, SN8 1RF.
Email: Rosamund.Cleal@nationaltrust.org.uk

PROF. MARK EDMONDS
Department of Archaeology, University of
York, King's Manor, York, YO1 7EP
Email: mre500@york.ac.uk

CHRISTOPHER EVANS
Cambridge Archaeological Unit, Department
of Archaeology, University of Cambridge,
Downing Street, Cambridge, CB2 3DZ
Email: cje30@cam.ac.uk

PROF. RAMÓN FÁBREGAS VALCARCE
GEPN, Dpto. Historia I, Facultad de Xeografía
e Historia, USC, Praza da Universidade, 1.
15782, Santiago de Compostela, Spain
Email: ramon.fabregas@usc.es

EMERITUS PROF. ANDREW FLEMING
Stoneleigh, Clifford, Herefordshire HR3 5ER
Email: andrewfleming43@btinternet.com

DR JULIE GARDINER
% Allen Environmental Archaeology, Redroof,
Green Rd, Codford, Wiltshire, BA12 0NW
Email: jpg.escargots@googlemail.com

PROF. JOAKIM GOLDHAHN
Archaeology, School of Cultural Sciences,
Linnaeus University, 391 82 Kalmar, Sweden
Email: joakim.goldhahn@lnu.se

PROF. CHRIS GOSDEN
Institute of Archaeology, 36 Beaumont St,
Oxford, OX1 2PG
Email: chris.gosden@arch.ox.ac.uk

DR MARTIN GREEN
Down Farm, Sixpenny Handley, Salisbury,
Wiltshire, SP5 5RY
Email: mgreendownfarm@gmail.com

DR JAN HARDING
School of Historical Studies, Newcastle
University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU
Email: j.d.harding@ncl.ac.uk

PROF HEINRICH HÄRKE
Abt. für Archäologie des Mittelalters, Universität
Tübingen, Germany; Honorary Research
Fellow, University of Reading, Whiteknights,
PO Box 227, Reading RG6 6AB
Email: h.g.h.harke@reading.ac.uk

DR GILL HEY
Oxford Archaeology North, Mill 3, Moor Lane
Mills, Moor Lane, Lancaster, LA1 1GF
Email: gill.hey@oxfordarch.co.uk

PROF IAN HODDER
Stanford Archaeology Center, PO Box 20446,
Stanford University, Stanford CA 94309,
USA
Email: i.hodder@stanford.edu

DR ANDREW MEIRION JONES
Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities, University
of Southampton, Avenue Campus, Highfield,
Southampton, SO17 1BF
Email: amj@soton.ac.uk

DR FLEMMING KAUL
Nationalmuseet Denmark, Fredriksholms
Kanal 12, DK 1220, Copenhagen
Email: flemming.kaul@natmus.dk

EMERITUS PROF. DAVID LEWIS-WILLIAMS
Rock Art Research Institute, University of the
Witwatersrand, Private Bag X3, Johannesburg,
Wits, 2050, South Africa

DR STUART NEEDHAM
Langton Fold, North Lane, South Harting,
West Sussex, GU31 5NW
Email: sbowman1@waitrose.com

DR GORDON NOBLE
Department of Archaeology, University of
Aberdeen, St Mary's Building, Elphinstone
Road, Aberdeen, AB24 3UF
Email: g.noble@abdn.ac.uk

PROF. MIKE PARKER PEARSON
Dept. of Archaeology, University of Sheffield,
Northgate House, West Street, Sheffield, S1
4ET, UK
Email: M.Parker-Pearson@Sheffield.ac.uk

DR JOSHUA POLLARD
Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities, Uni-
versity of Southampton, Avenue Campus
Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BF
Email: C.J.Pollard@soton.ac.uk

PROF. COLIN RICHARDS
School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, The
University of Manchester, Manchester, M13
9PL
Email: colin.c.richards@manchester.ac.uk

DR CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ-RELLÁN
% GEPN, Dpto. Historia I, Facultade de
Xeografía e Historia, USC, Praza da Univer-
sidade, 1. 15782, Santiago de Compostela,
Spain
Email: carlos.rellan@usc.es

DR ALISON SHERIDAN
Archaeology Department, National Museums
Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1
1JF
Email: a.sheridan@nms.ac.uk

DR PETER SKOGLUND
Department of Historical Studies, University
of Gothenburg, Box 200SE-405 30, Göteborg,
Sweden
Email: peter.skoglund@gu.se

PROF. JULIAN THOMAS
School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, The
University of Manchester, Manchester, M13
9PL
Email: julian.thomas@manchester.ac.uk

DR AARON WATSON
Email: a.watson@monumental.uk.com

PROF ALASDAIR WHITTLE
Department of Archaeology and Conservation,
Cardiff University, Humanities Building,
Colum Drive, Cardiff, CF10 3EU
Email: whittle@cardiff.ac.uk

PROF HOWARD WILLIAMS
Dept. of History & Archaeology, University
of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester, CH1
4BJ
Email: howard.williams@chester.ac.uk

DR ANN WOODWARD
17 Great Western Road, Dorchester, Dorset,
DT1 1UF
Email: annwoodward0@btinternet.com

DR DAVID YATES
% Department of Archaeology, School of
Human and Environmental Science, University
of Reading, Whiteknights, PO Box 227,
Reading RG6 6AB
Email: dtyates@dtyates.freemove.co.uk

Ash and Antiquity: archaeology and cremation in contemporary Sweden

Howard Williams

Exploring the memorialisation of the dead in contemporary Sweden, this paper draws attention to the overt and implicit allusions to the prehistoric and historic past in the material culture and landscapes of memory and ash groves (minneslund and askgravlund). It is shown how memory groves create a sense of nostalgia and primordial antiquity through their geological, botanic and archaeological designs and their integration into pre-existing churchyards and cemeteries. Ashes are used to create different bonds between the living and the dead through their disposal and association with contrasting material cultures, monumentalities and landscapes. It is stressed that exploring the importance and potential of studying the material cultures and landscapes of the contemporary cremated dead may provide new insights and perspectives upon death in the human past.

Over the last half-century, landscape designs and material cultures have been deployed to recreate and re-enchant contemporary mortuary commemoration in Western secular societies. Until very recently, archaeologists have seemed largely oblivious to these rapid and varied changes in the commemorative material culture and landscapes of human ash within the societies in which they live and work. This is now quite surprising given the well-established tradition of archaeologists exploring the recent and contemporary past (Harrison & Schofield 2010) and the crucial in-roads mortuary archaeologists have made in studying 18th, 19th and early 20th century burials and memorials (eg, Mytum 2004; Welinder 1991). Yet most commentators have been content to

regard modern cremation as the antithesis of open-air cremation in the past, this author included (Williams 2004). In archaeological debates, contemporary cremation is seen as a list of austere clichés selected from sociological commentaries on the body and society in Western modernity, useful only as an interpretative and rhetorical straw-man for the activities of past people. This caricature of contemporary cremation in archaeological discourse is as problematic as regarding past cremation as exotic and esoteric alien deathways inexplicable to the Western mind without recourse to non-Western ethnographic and literary analogies. Some archaeologists might even be accused of wallowing in the otherness of past cremation with a frenzy that is

reminiscent of the romanticised and ultimately derogatory orientalism of Victorian colonial accounts of cremation in India, South-east Asia and Australia. Rather than removing modernity from the past, instead this only enforces the stereotyping of cremation in both past and present. To do this, modern cremation must be seen as industrial, secular and without meaning or ritualisation.

The first step to overcome this interpretative dilemma and bipolar perception of cremation is to recognise that, when studying cremation in the past and the present, both involve dealing with the otherness of using fire to transform the human cadaver. For the past, cremation was certainly a challenge to archaeological interpretation, a varied, complex, and multi-staged mortuary process often leaving scant material traces that was utilised in many different cultural contexts and involved incredibly different material cultures, architectures, and landscape contexts. Yet this also applies to Western modernity since here cremation is equally alien and difficult to comprehend for other reasons despite being widely-utilised in Western societies. This is because most people, including archaeologists, only encounter crematoria, cremation memorials, and the scattering of ashes on an intermittent basis and rarer still are we participants in public rituals involving cremation. When we are, the cremation event is itself behind closed doors and the ceremonies tend to be private and family-orientated rather than embedded in discursive and public ritual performances. This reflects modernity's widely-observed trend towards individual and personal mourning practices (eg, Hockey *et al.* 2007) as well as the secularisation of death. In other words, despite all the contrasts in technology and trace between ancient and modern cremation, neither are 'familiar' and each requires archaeological scrutiny.

The second step is for archaeologists to recognise that their vision of death in modern society as 'taboo', medicalised and screened from public experience is hopelessly out-of-date, stereotyped, and misleading. We need to re-evaluate this approach to take into account recent sociological and anthropological studies of death in Western late modernity. In particular, archaeologists need to perceive the various ways in which death is present and materialised in contemporary society in both

private and public contexts, and contexts that can be both private and public simultaneously (Sayer 2010; eg, Hockey *et al.* 2007). Furthermore, the study of cremation practices in both the past and present each requires the archaeological exploration of the material traces of people's actions and rituals that seek to transform and manage the corpse and negotiate the powerful affective and mnemonic agency of ash. Moreover, cremation past and present can be understood by considering the tensions and interactions between absence and presence, monumentality and ephemeral, spaces, place and landscape that make fiery funerals an effective and affective commemorative media (see Williams 2004; 2008).

Once these two points are borne in mind, it then becomes possible to engage archaeological perspectives and methods to cremation past and present. Two good examples that promote this approach are worthy of explicit citation. Ing-Marie Back Danielsson has recently explored cremation in contemporary Sweden, showing how its material culture finds parallels with the study of cremation in the more distant past but also how archaeological themes have inspired and pervaded Swedish commemorative culture over the *longue durée* (Back Danielsson 2009; 2011). More specifically still, Tim Flohr Sørensen (2009) has investigated the changing architectures, movements, and emotions associated with the rise of cremation and the adoption of lawn cemetery areas within rural Danish churchyards, providing both a contrast and parallel for the Swedish discussion presented here.

Inspired by this work to explore an archaeology of contemporary cremation, this short paper looks at cremation in one of the world's most affluent, liberal, secular, and cremating countries: Sweden. Death is organised differently in Sweden from the UK: the Church of Sweden controls and manages bodies and funerals, and in most cases oversees the disposal of ashes (Walter 2005). Hence, ashes are relatively rarely scattered in the Swedish landscape but often reside at crematoria, their grounds, or in traditional spaces of burial and commemoration. I contend that while modern cremation is only partially relevant and appropriate to provide analogies for studying past cremation practices (see Parker Pearson 1982; Back Danielsson 2009; see also Downes 1999), archaeologists can draw on approaches

to past cremation to study cremation today. In particular, mortuary archaeologists focusing on the material traces of death, disposal, and commemoration can investigate the mnemonic and affective agency of ashes, as well as the material cultures and landscapes associated with cremation and ash-disposal. This may allow us to perceive the materiality of modern cremation in sustaining emotive bonds with the deceased and stage their selective remembrance (see Sørensen 2009; Williams & Williams 2007; Williams 2004; 2008; 2011a, 2011b).

Sweden's memory and ash groves

Sweden's gardens of remembrance are exclusively used to receive human ashes (these are subsequently called 'memory groves', the direct translation of the Swedish *minneslund*). These are commemorative environments with textual anonymity; places where ashes are buried under a lawn without memorials. Ash groves (*askgravlund*) are more recent developments of memory groves; they are less textually-austere commemorative environments. While they share many similarities with memory groves, the burial locations of ashes can be marked by a stone and/or plaque bearing the name of the deceased and the dates of their birth and death.

I first encountered Swedish memory groves in cemeteries and churchyards during fieldwork in the late 1990s. Yet from 2005, during fieldwork at a Viking boat-grave cemetery in Sweden, I realised that a study of this form of commemoration was required for a number of reasons, namely because:

- Swedish colleagues could not point me to any archaeological discussions of this practice and therefore this appeared new territory for archaeological investigation.
- It seemed clear that I was witnessing a previously undocumented (by archaeologists) and ongoing commemorative tradition. This was certainly true of rural Sweden. For while urban cemeteries have had memory groves since the late 1950s, in rural churchyards I encountered memory and ash groves under construction and some with recent foundation dates inscribed upon them. Also, I encountered new groves where none had been on visits to the same churchyard a few years earlier.
- I felt that the contemporary data lent itself to similar approaches developed for the interpretation of early Anglo-Saxon cremation concerning the agency of ashes and the mnemonic roles of ephemeral practices, spolia and the historic landscape in commemorating the cremated dead (Williams 2004; 2008).
- My archaeological background and training helped me to recognise both overt and implicit allusions to the prehistoric and historic past in the material culture and landscapes of memory and ash groves. Some of these material references to the prehistoric and historic periods were evidently by design while others may simply be involuntarily. Either way, it appears that memory groves reveal a renaissance in nostalgia and invented traditions accompanying their establishment (see also Burström 1996; Holtorf 1996; 2005; Holtorf & Williams 2006), reflecting long-term interaction between mortuary practice and archaeology in recent Swedish culture (including landscape designers and popular culture), drawing on romantic conceptions of landscape and antiquity (see Back Danielsson 2009; Holtorf 2003).

It is the fourth and final point that is the focus of this chapter. Between 2005 and 2009, I visited around 158 Swedish churches and churchyards in the historic Swedish districts of Blekinge, Gotland, Öland, Östergötland, Scania, Småland, Södermanland, Uppland, and Västmanland. Each site is referred to in relation to its historic region, a system somewhat anachronistic but familiar to archaeologists and commensurate with emphasising the historical background to each site: Blekinge (Bl), Gotland (Go), Scania (Sk), Småland (Sm), Södermanland (Sö), Uppland (Up), Västmanland (Vs), Öland (Öl), and Östergötland (Ög). I recorded each grove with a digital camera, noting its design and deployment of prehistoric and antique designs and architectonic features, as well as their spatial association with pre-existing structures within the mortuary landscape. By any archaeological standards, I suggest that this is a viable sample from which to discern trends in the contemporary commemoration of Sweden's cremated dead, particularly in rural areas where most of my visits took place.

Each memory grove I visited was unique in its location and design, adapting to cemetery



Figure 20.1: Pseudo-runic inscription at the memory grove within the woodland section of Mjölby cemetery (Ög). Photograph: Howard Williams 2009



Figure 20.2: The boat-shaped ash grove at Motala cemetery (Ög), designed to evoke a form of monument associated with cremation in prehistory. Photograph: Howard Williams 2009

and churchyard space and employing variations on an evolving set of themes. While no two memory or ash groves are alike, they often comprise of paths leading to a collection of repeated material attributes. These include benches, lanterns for votive candles, and flower-holders for floral offerings. These features usually face memorial rocks framed by pairs of evergreen and deciduous trees and/or a monumental stone or wooden cross. Water features (fountains, pools, and streams) may also be present and there is usually an open lawn space where ashes are interred without a marker. All these features tend to be enclosed by trees and borders planted with flowers, heather, bracken, or shrubs. Some involve careful landscaping to afford a distinctive presence and a degree of seclusion from the adjacent burial plots, although frequently the edges of groves are permeable and ambiguous. Paths, often lit with lanterns, direct the visitor to the groves.

Replicating the past

The idea of the grove is essentially steeped in the romantic nationalist nostalgia that previously inspired the popular dissemination of ‘woodland cemeteries’ throughout 20th century cemeteries and churchyards in Sweden (for further discussion, see Williams 2011a). Specifically, the use of natural boulders, fountains, running water, and pools together with trees (both deciduous and evergreen), hedges, flower beds, and grass create ‘natural’ and primordial tombs situated within an idealised and nostalgic Nordic landscape. With facilities for lighting candles and placing flowers, this is created as a space designed for repeated visits to mourn the dead.

Geology is a cultural phenomenon and affords this sense of antiquity to memory groves. In memory groves, ‘ruined stones’ (Bradley 1998) provide a focus for mourning. For instance, at Västra Husby (Ög) and Tillinge (Up) the focal stones are moss-covered – evidently long exposed in the natural landscape. They bring the surrounding Swedish landscape into a recently-created monument and afford it with a ready-made geologic gravitas.

Other memory groves seem to recreate prehistoric monumental forms. For example, at Vikingstad (Ög), a large stone with *minneslund* inscribed upon it is set in bank of smaller stones giving the appearance of a dilapidated burial cairn. Similarly, at Östra Tollstad (Ög),

the memory grove focuses on a circular cairn topped by a glacial boulder. At Hagebyhöga (Ög), the memory grove has one stone with the word *minneslund* balanced on three others, giving the appearance of a miniature megalith. Elsewhere, memory groves incorporate tricorn stone-settings, mimicking a monument form of the Scandinavian Iron Age (Björkeberg church, Ög and Gardlösa, Öl). Meanwhile, boat-shaped arrangements are employed for flower-holders (Vreta Kloster, Ög and Hossmo, Sm), seating areas (Lagga, Up) and the memory grove itself (Gothem, Go), subtle allusions to the widespread occurrence of this monumental form in the Swedish Bronze and Iron Ages.

Viking rune-stones are also alluded to in some memory groves. The winding shape of the path of Resmo's (Öl) memory grove seems to reflect a common shape used in rune-stone text-bands. In Mjölby (Ög) cemetery, a stone placed in the 1970s as the focal point of the memory grove within a typical woodland cemetery landscape is inscribed with a pseudo-runic inscription (Fig. 20.1). It recounts lines from a popular Swedish hymn. Close by is a 'replica' historic bell-tower to give the woodland cemetery a further aura of antiquity.

Newly-created sculpted stones also provide the aura of history for memory groves. At Öja (Go), Runsten (Öl) and Algutrum (Öl), the focal stones of the memory groves are crosses reminiscent of historic gravestones. Obelisks (Hjortsberga, Bl), columns (Ängsö, Vs), miniature graveslabs (Overgrans, Up), and the many water-worn boulders discussed above also resonate with 19th century forms found elsewhere in historic churchyards and cemeteries. At Smedby (Öl), the memory grove is marked by a slab upon which a cross with a wreath is incised *minneslund* – a 19th century memorial depicted upon a 21st century memorial. Wooden crosses take on a similar role, particularly on Öland as at Köpingsvik, Gårby, and Föra. Meanwhile at Resmo (Öl) the focal cross is in iron with a central dove, seemingly mimicking an antique form of gravestone. Furthermore, modern 'medieval' spolia comprise architectural settings in memory groves at Martebo (Go) and Väskinde (Go).

In many memory groves, walls provide borders or features, explicitly imitating the historic dry-stone walls of churchyard and



Figure 20.3: Tingstad (Ög) memory grove is situated beside a rock outcrop on the eastern edge of the churchyard, the grove is bounded by the churchyard's drystone boundary-wall (east), a pair of evergreen trees and a natural rock outcrop to the left (north), a lantern, bench and flower-holder beside the path to the right (south) and modern grave-plots in the foreground (west). Photograph: Howard Williams 2009



Figure 20.4: Hulterstad (Öl) memory grove incorporating the 19th century gravestone of a local smith. Photograph: Howard Williams 2007



Figure 20.5: Memory grove at Glömminge (Öl) incorporating a 19th century iron cross memorial as a centre-piece behind a pond flanked by lanterns. Behind the hedge and two benches, further iron and stone 19th century grave-markers form a backdrop together with the churchyard's drystone wall boundary and the southern-end of a medieval farm building. Photograph: Howard Williams 2007

cemetery boundaries. Examples include Kalmar (Up), Tofta (Go), Sandby (Öl), and Uppsala Näs (Up). A further use of walls is at Låbro (Go), where the octagonal walls of the grove and the fountain within it replicate the form of the adjacent octagonal church tower.

Old iron is also employed to invoke the past. Old black-painted iron objects (or black plastic skeuomorphs of iron) constitute a regular component of memory groves. These include the lanterns for placing candles, flower-holders, fences, and street-lamps along pathways to the memory grove. Likewise, a large black iron chained fence defines the boundary of Haga's (Up) memory grove. Östra Husby's (Ög) memory grove is adjacent to the church and is purely contemporary in material terms. Yet the signs at the entrance are in large old Gothic lettering. Vases and flower holders also presence the antique, although little more than standard forms available in garden centres. Examples include the stone-coloured vases at Hagebyhöga (Ög) and Föra (Öl) and the black metal flower holders at Lundby (Sö) and Gistad (Ög).

These antique themes also pervade ash groves. For example, in Motala's suburban cemetery and crematorium (Ög), one ash grove resembles a prehistoric cemetery of circular mounds. Another is overtly archaeological in design inspiration: it is a boat-shaped stone setting (Fig. 20.2). Many of Motala's residents are being commemorated in true prehistoric fashion.

Reusing the past

Drawing on long-established traditions of the use of the ancient past in cemetery and memorial design (see Holtorf 1996), clearly Swedish landscape designers have had a field day in appropriating the prehistoric, medieval, and post-medieval for the commemoration of the contemporary cremated dead. Yet the past is also reused materially, and not just conceptually, to afford memory and ash groves with a sense of antiquity.

There are instances of Viking rune-stones and medieval grave-slabs incorporated into memory groves in rural contexts. These are rare since such ancient monuments are usually proudly and prominently displayed on the main approaches to the churchyard or close to the church. Yet at Tingstad (Ög), three rune-stones

are given a prominent position on a natural ridge at the south-eastern, 'private' end of the churchyard opposite the main entrance in the north-west corner. Here the memory grove has been designed around, and incorporating their situation, the rune-stones now occupying the space where ashes are interred (Fig. 20.3).

More commonly, 19th century stone and iron memorials are re-used as the foci of recent memory groves; the memorialised individuals receive a second-life in death as adopted ancestors for the modern cremated dead. For example, in the churchyard of Hulterstad church (Öl), the memory grove was constructed in 1997 and is situated within the western side of the northern churchyard boundary (Fig. 20.4). The limestone cross is the gravestone of village blacksmith, Lindström, who died in 1870. The stone has been reversed: the original inscription is now on the back of the stone and the word *minneslund* has been newly inscribed on the front (Jonsson 2006, 13). In other cases, the reused character of memorials is more explicit. On Öland, 19th century iron crosses provide foci for memory groves at Stenåsa and Ås. Also on Öland at Glömminge church, an iron cross is reused as the focus of the memory grove while iron and stone 19th century gravestones are displayed prominently behind the memory grove and in front of a medieval barn gable that comprises the churchyard boundary at this point (Fig. 20.5).

Memory groves re-use a wide range of other churchyard *spolia* that serve as collective mortuary monuments: iron anchors are adapted from their occasional use on traditional gravestones in maritime communities (eg, Skallvik, Ög and Sankta Anna, Ög). At Hjortsberga church (Bl), a stone drinking trough is re-used to contain flowers. Elsewhere, old iron water pumps serve new functions to dispense water into fountains (Gistad, Ög) and for mourners to water flowers (Räpplinge, Öl). At Gräsgård church (Öl), a monumental cross was originally placed to the west of the church in the 1960s. This was subsequently incorporated as the focus of the new memory grove in the 1990s (Johansson 2006). Other reused stone features include those at Styrstad (Ög) where two quernstones are reused as flower-holders and act as foci for the memory grove. In each case, their antiquity offers counterpoint to the stark modernity of these new commemorative spaces.

Re-using landscapes

Memory and ash groves augment and transform existing cemeteries and churchyards. As mentioned above, the groves are usually situated opposite the main entrances, facilitating private prayer and contemplation. This creates a repeated spatial choreography of engaging with past material culture for any visitor approaching the memory grove. Visitors must pass by recent grave-plots but also the historic church building itself with its associated displays of rune-stones, medieval and early modern gravestones. Far older monuments sometimes frame the approach to memory groves. For example, at Furingstad church (Ög) two rune-stones are displayed outside the main southern approach to the churchyard, while to the west of the churchyard boundary there are two more placed against a backdrop of a later prehistoric cemetery as well as sign-posted prehistoric rock-art. Once within the churchyard, the memory grove has been created on the 'private' northern side of the church, visible only once the building has been circumnavigated.

However, there are instances where grove design and location make explicit connections with the material pasts of the churchyard. Most commonly, the groves are situated adjacent (usually within, but sometimes without) the historic churchyard boundary. A further explicit association with ancient mortuary monuments can be seen at Skärkind (Ög): four historical iron memorial crosses have been displayed in the churchyard extension beside the path leading only to the memory grove. The attendant sign reads: 'The grave markers, which reflect a piece of Skärkind's history, were found in the attic of Skärkind church. Their original placement is not known' (Translation by Martin Rundkvist). The memory groves are thus enmeshed into a sense of experienced history, a revitalised topography of memory drawing off associations with both prehistoric monumental forms and the historic churchyard.

An intriguing instance of memory groves reusing a location of sacral significance occurs at Kila church (Sö). Here, it appears that the current church is modern, while the memory grove has been positioned over, and replicating, the footprint of the historic church (Fig. 20.6). This ground-plan is memorialised in a cross-shaped arrangement

of low hedges within which the memory grove has been created. The grove's focus populates the eastern arm, seemingly juxtaposed over where the church's high altar had been. Two graveslabs with iron corner-rings, typical of the late 17th and early 18th century, have been located to flank the memory grove's western approach. Once again, the modern cremated dead revitalise the churchyard's topography and draw on its ancient use as a site of worship and commemoration.

In further cases, memory groves 'reuse' abandoned or disused commemorative landscapes in town and country. Krokek church (Ög) is situated on the border between the historic provinces of Södermanland and Östergötland. The church was destroyed by fire in 1889 (Raä Krokek 28:1) and behind the churchyard is a 17th century border stone between the provinces (Raä Krokek 29:1) and an historic inn building (Raä Krokek 29:1). The churchyard contains the ruined walls of the church and many gravestones and iron crosses of 18th and 19th century date, re-erected and conserved as a site of historic interest for tourists. Yet the memory grove simultaneously revitalises the churchyard as a destination for local mourners (Fig. 20.7). For this abandoned church site, the grove is situated in a position never encountered for memory groves built at extant churchyards surrounding churches still in use: it is situated just inside the main (western) entrance and on the south side of the only path leading to the ruins.

A related situation to that of Krokek was encountered at Sankt Anna (Ög). The memory grove adapts the burial ground of an old medieval chapel (Fig. 20.8). Meanwhile the post-medieval church located 750 m to the south has none (Raä Sankt Anna 5:1). The grove's focus includes overt antique material culture including an iron anchor (mentioned above), reflecting the chapel's maritime proximity. Meanwhile a pair evergreens, usually framing a memorial stone in memory groves are here framing the chapel's southern door, incorporating the chapel into the grove's memorial design.

A further example of memory groves reusing abandoned mortuary locations can be seen at Rälla (Öl). Here, on a small hillock in a pine forest setting, a small, short-lived private family burial ground was constructed between 1932 and 1936 by Emil Persson (Figs 20.8a & b). From 1943, five family graves were interred



Figure 20.6: Kila church (Sö). The entrance to the memory grove flanked by two late 17th century grave-slabs. View from the south-west. Photograph: Howard Williams 2009



Figure 20.7: Krokek (Ög) old church, Raä Krokek 28:1 – the memory grove is situated on the path leading to the church ruin set amidst many historic gravestones. Photograph: Howard Williams 2009



Figure 20.8: Anchor as focal point of the memory grove on the south side of the chapel of St Anna (Ög), the memory grove also contains a bell tower and wooden cross. Photograph: Howard Williams 2009

within it, focusing on a large natural upright stone (Jonsson 2007, 8). This cemetery was itself in a deliberately antique style, seemingly inspired by the *en vogue* ideal of a woodland cemetery, the form and exclusive location symbolising the family's social status and aspirations (Jonsson 2007, 8, 12). The entrance to the burial ground mimics a 17th century lychgate, similar to those found at churches close by. Meanwhile, the dry-stone wall replicates those around Öland's historic churchyards. The antique memorial text above the entrance records its foundation in 1932. In the 1990s, the memory grove was constructed, populating the pine forest around the burial ground's southern side. The grove serves the parish of Högsrum and the parish church itself therefore has no memory grove (Ring 2006, 14). The edge of the grove merges with the forest, its boundary marked only by low wooden stakes. Its focus is a large, simple wooden cross. These examples show how historic cemeteries attract groves and afford them with the aura of timelessness and nostalgia that seems integral to their commemorative programme of memory groves

Conclusion

Developing from the 19th century reinvention of cremation, most European archaeologists now inhabit landscapes punctuated by crematoria and peppered with locales where human ashes are displayed, stored, interred, and scattered. Cremation today is well-established and highly sophisticated in both technological and commemorative terms. Crematoria and their grounds are efficient industrial installations for reducing cadavers to ash by burning and crushing, but they are also secular, multi-cultural landscapes of memory. Furthermore, cremation memorials adapt and revitalise existing and abandoned traditional commemorative and sacred spaces and ashes are increasingly dispersed in a wide range of other public and private locales (see for example, Williams 2011b). Our entire landscape from football grounds to archaeological sites, from rivers to mountain tops, are now places where ashes are dispersed and loved ones are mourned. The task of further work in the contemporary archaeology of cremation is now to explore the fine-grained variability in how ashes are used to create different bonds between the living and the dead through their disposal

and association with contrasting material cultures, monumentalities, and landscapes (see Williams 2011b).

Yet archaeologists have been slow to recognise the impact of the irregular personal engagement, but cultural ubiquity of cremation in Western popular culture and society. Less still have they explored the importance and potential of studying the material cultures and landscapes of the contemporary cremated dead. Doing so may provide new insights and perspectives upon death in the human past, but even if it does not, archaeology has considerable potential to shed novel perspectives on the material cultures and landscapes of cremation today and those planned and envisaged for the future. At the very least, modern cremation deserves more than its stereotype in archaeological writings.

The memory and ash groves of Sweden might superficially appear depersonalised modernist spaces where the dead are forgotten. Instead, I argue they are one instance where multiple temporalities continue to be powerful in contemporary Western late modern societies' commemorative practices. Memory groves create a sense of nostalgia and primordial antiquity through their geological, botanic, and archaeological designs and their integration into pre-existing churchyards and cemeteries. I explore the replication of the past in memory groves elsewhere (Williams 2011a), but here I have focused on the re-use and incorporation of past material culture as well as the locations of memory groves in ancient commemorative environments.

This case study sheds an alternative perspective on the use of the past in the present. Swedish memory groves cannot be regarded as the use and abuse of the past for political ideology, entertainment, branding goods, heritage, tourism, to wallow in nostalgia, or even construct specific social identities (eg, Holtorf 2005, 92–111), although elements of these are clearly at play. Instead, here the past is principally a powerful commemorative medium for mourning and personal remembrance. In this regard, I am reminded of Richard Bradley's 2002 discussion of the 18th century landscape of Stourhead. Despite the overt contrast between grandiose 18th century landscapes around British country homes and the miniature landscapes created in modern Swedish churchyards, they share in being



Figure 20.9: a) the family burial ground with an antiquated entrance set on a knoll within the memory grove, Rälla (Öl); b) the Rälla (Öl) pine forest memory grove established in the 1990s adjacent to the 1930s family burial ground. Photographs: Howard Williams 2007

'gardens of time' (Bradley 2002, 157). These are landscapes where the past is presented in order to transcend time, but also to sustain private and intimate emotional bonds between the living and the dead. The combination of ash and antiquity render memory groves places to imagine the dead in future destinations and root them in deep antiquity.

This paper has touched upon a number of themes that Richard Bradley has investigated through his long and illustrious archaeological career. I hope that in a very small way it serves to celebrate Richard's outstanding contribution to archaeology, but more specifically to thank him for his generous and steadfast support for my attempts to study the archaeology of death and memory since my time as a student at Reading to the present day. I would also like to acknowledge the enduring inspiration Richard has provided for me, not only through the quality and range of his numerous archaeological writings, insightful questions, constructive comments, lengthy anecdotes, and encouragement in the use of bad puns for paper titles (sadly resisted in this instance), but also by his exemplary example. Perhaps more than all of this, Richard has inspired me never to lose my archaeological nerve.

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