



# Developing Local Assessment Toolkits – a scoping study to look at developing a standard model for recording cemeteries and burial grounds

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A consultation exercise was conducted to scope the current state of digital data regarding cemeteries and burial grounds, and the requirements of a range of stakeholders in the use of digital data related to cemeteries and burial grounds. The study also assessed the volunteer interest in conducting digital recording of cemeteries and burial grounds, the ways in which this would feed into heritage management structures such as Historic Environment Records, and how the survey archives would be digitally curated and made freely accessible to the wide range of potential users.

Report completed February 2015

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### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Executive Summary**

Cemeteries and burial grounds are well known elements of the historic environment. They are of interest to a wide range of stakeholders, but have largely ‘fallen through the cracks’ given their unusual combination of issues linked to ownership (in both the legal and cultural sense), together with an anomalous legal position within secular and ecclesiastical law. These factors have meant that the unusual combination of below- and above-ground archaeology, the built environment, and culturally significant landscape is often poorly understood, with limited and often idiosyncratic statutory protection, and with a marginalised position in the planning system. This report summarises the results of wide consultation with many different interested parties, representing both professional and volunteer groups working within the heritage sector.

*This scoping study has concluded that:*

- Cemeteries and burial grounds carry high cultural, symbolic and emotional value, and have both historic and current uses in burial and commemoration, and that this is appreciated by local communities responding to the survey.
- The material remains in cemeteries and burial grounds are poorly recorded, yet they are important - highly contextualised - examples of popular material culture, particularly from the 17<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- There is a widespread interest in the evidence residing in cemeteries and burial grounds from professional heritage managers, cemetery and burial ground managers, and the public (ranging from Parochial Church Councils (PCCs), cemetery friends and local history groups to schools, family historians and ecologists).
- The current state of data access within EH systems is inconsistent and extremely patchy, largely because of the poor knowledge base, ad hoc process of monument listing, and past recording criteria in RCHME. Graveyard monuments are also split between many monument classes, e.g. in PastScape, hindering data retrieval.
- The current state of recording is extremely fragmented, inconsistent, and limited in scope beyond basic genealogical data. In most cases the material dimension is recorded only by a photograph. Fuller surveys (c.f. Mytum 2000), are rarely or partially undertaken. The materiality of memorials is appreciated but not well recorded or data easily recovered. There is no summarising of significance.
- Of the surveys that have been completed, few are publicly accessible, beyond basic genealogical data in many records offices. Many cemetery friends groups with more advanced surveys are reluctant to share their data as they see these as a financially valuable asset. Groups yet to begin are generally happy for more public access.
- Numerous web sites host genealogical data but most give no indication of data completeness, no site plans, and if there is a search facility it is limited to single person data; many charge for this service. Only some web sites provide monument images, and other landscape features are not recorded. These web sites are privately run and have no certainty of long-term viability.
- Digital recording of data from cemeteries and burial grounds is seen as highly desirable by community groups of all kinds, though not all wished to participate in a wider framework. There is no standardisation in digital structure, format or content, and archiving plans are either absent or short-term.

- Surveys reveal that neither county archives nor HERs are generally prepared to archive paper or digital resources, though the latter strongly desire summary reports.
- Further study is necessary to establish detailed protocols for the digital recording of data from cemeteries and burial grounds, and to design management structures for the volunteer groups and for the digital data they generate, and with archiving protocols for ADS deposition.

*The Consultation contacted a sample of:*

- HER officers through a short questionnaire, which has allowed assessment of the range of detail for cemeteries and burial grounds within existing HERs and also the current aspirations for level of detail in these systems.
- Those responsible for managing cemeteries and burial grounds to assess the ways in which digital records would assist in future management decisions.
- Archaeologists experienced in working with volunteer groups to understand the training and support frameworks necessary for successful project implementation.
- Volunteer groups, particularly cemetery friends and some parish workers, to assess both willingness to record data digitally, and to engage with a large scale project within agreed frameworks.
- Digital archive specialists, especially the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), to scope the deposition and curation issues associated with the digital databases and image data that would be compiled by volunteer groups.

## **Key Findings**

### *Current state of data on cemeteries and burial grounds*

There is a large amount of information that has already been collected, but this is extremely varied in its quality and its accessibility. There has been an emphasis on the genealogical information within inscriptions, and relatively little attention paid to the material character of memorials or the landscape of the burial ground, with its many cultural features (not only memorials) or of the ecology. Many ecological schemes have been concerned with encouraging diversity but rarely combine with the cultural heritage.

English Heritage data is variable in quantity and extent, and is extremely difficult to locate because of separation across many different keywords in databases such as Pastscape.

Genealogical data is held in many National and County archives facilities, but there is no standardisation in the data collected (some store only names, others full inscriptions, both with and without line breaks, but no indication of text size or lettering style). Some family history publications and web sites signpost archives and published lists, and hard copies of some graveyard genealogical data can be found in some County archives, but most of this data is not publicly available. It is seen as a private asset of the group, potentially a source of income with charges for searches; some cemetery friends groups resent any form of external involvement, seeing the site and the data as theirs, and not as part of a community resource.

Web-based data on cemeteries and burial grounds is extremely variable, from inscription listings to interactive sites where searches are possible, but there is an almost exclusive concentration on genealogical data. A small number of sites have interactive cemetery and burial ground maps, and an increasing number also have monument images. On the few web sites where this data can be interrogated this can only be done by the name of the

individual on the monument. There is also a lack of overall burial ground site descriptions on all of these web sites.

#### *Cemeteries and burial grounds in HERs*

A survey of HERs (18% response rate) reveals extremely varied levels of data regarding cemeteries and burial grounds. These vary from little more than probably incomplete listings of sites and their locations, through to detailed monument records for every memorial in a particular burial ground.

Although a few HERs were willing and able to house full burial ground archives, most wished to have a suitable summary and signposts to the location of the full survey data elsewhere. Many HER officers recognised that the entries in their systems were insufficient, both in terms of quality and detail of data, and in terms of uniformity of format. The enhancement of cemetery and burial ground entries was seen by most HER officers as highly desirable, though a few considered that given the limited number of perceived threats they were not a priority. The creation of more complete and informed HER entries using uniform terminology and criteria would be a significant improvement to HERs, and any initiative that leads to enhanced data is desirable. The Church Historic Environment Record (CHER) is being designed by the Church of England at present, and the HER entries will populate CHER which will also be able to link to detailed digital archives.

#### *Existing records in volunteer hands*

There is no structure or system for deposition in any format, paper or digital, so most remains in private or group ownership and is rarely known about outside the group. Many parishes do not have transcripts or copies, even if these have been made, and may not even know they exist or who has them. A central repository of archaeological records, e.g. ADS, with lists distributed via Diocesan DACs and local authority cemetery managers would provide an important framework for access.

#### *The recording toolkit – its potential content and structure*

The combination of reviewing current volunteer practice and the previous forms of recording (both paper and digital) allows a proposed structure of the recording toolkit to be outlined. This should then be further refined and trialled in a further stage of the study.

The recording toolkit should link monument and landscape data through a plan, on which all features are numbered; each site should have a unique site code as a prefix for all records.

Records (whether monuments of planting and landscape features) can be numbered on the plan, and can be in digital format as either entries in spreadsheets or as images. Use of the unique site code and plan number will make all data identifiable and locatable.

Simple monument data should be collected in simple coded form; a suggested list would include:

- Form (e.g. headstone, ledger, tomb, cross, kerb only, cremation plaque, other)
- Decoration, with potential for more than one field (e.g. mortality, cherubs, urns, flowers, cross, coat of arms, occupation symbols, Masonic symbols)
- Material (Sandstone, marble, granite, iron, ceramic)

Further optional data could be: state of preservation (simple scale of grading), measurements (height, width, thickness), presence of additional elements (e.g. kerbs, footstone, body stone, flower vase)

Non-monumental data is often also highly significant in terms of landscape and heritage significance, and also requires recording and would include:

- Planting recording, each bush or tree having a description (ideally to species). rough height
- Nature of paths
- Boundary features as seen internally and externally (e.g. walls, hedges)

- Any structures (e.g. stables, watch houses)
- Entry points (e.g. gate posts, lych gates, gates)

The recording toolkit should allow the data to be collected either digitally in the field or on paper, and later transferred to digital format.

The protocols must have at least one, preferably two (field check and digital archive stage), stages of data checking, as experience shows that most recorders make errors in transcribing, monument coding, and in data transfer.

The toolkit must have clear and simple protocols for data management; this is even more important with digital data which is much harder to manage than paper archives.

The format of proposed digital archives will require clear instructions on how to prepare the data, and the structure of the archive. This is essential if data is to be easily retrieved for heritage management purposes, or more than one site combined for analysis.

The final element of the protocol is the creation of a standard description of the burial ground as a high level summary to be deposited in the HER and the relevant owner / manager (e.g. DAC, local authority burial ground manager). If this summary is to include some qualitative assessment of significance, this is likely to require a small amount of expert consultant input as volunteer groups will not have the wider comparative and contextual knowledge to provide this.

#### *Volunteer interest in collaboration in digital recording of cemeteries and burial grounds*

The involvement of volunteers in the collection of data that is then digitally stored, and uploaded to the web was considered in the light of both ecological and heritage projects. Whilst both cultural and natural heritage, each have their own priorities and criteria, volunteers do not necessarily separate them when dealing with their local burial grounds, and an inclusive approach could allow wider participation.

The consultation with cemetery friends groups and with parish and diocesan representatives indicates that there is widespread interest in the opportunities of participating in a project involving digital recording of cemeteries and burial grounds. In addition, those professionals experienced in the management of volunteer archaeological projects indicated that graveyard and cemetery surveys would be both attractive and possible using the groups with which they are familiar.

The individual members of volunteer groups can vary in their levels of education, skills and confidence. In some cases the projects will gain from using existing expertise, but in many cases there will be a substantial skills-building element, involving training in a range of survey, decision-making, and IT skills which will be transferrable into employment, community engagement, and ability to access and use web-based resources.

Current social science research (Goraya et al 2012) indicates that understanding of, and access to, the digital world is limited amongst many underprivileged groups. A programme of digital cemetery and burial ground recording can be used as a vehicle to develop IT skills. Surveys have indicated that family and local history is a major incentive for the gaining of computer literacy skills amongst the older cohorts of the population; this project could enable many to gain or enhance their IT skills.

Assessment of volunteer and student recording projects already undertaken indicates that both paper and digital recording routes should be considered, the former could be converted to a digital format simply by scanning and saving as pdf records, possibly by those within groups willing and able to do so.

### *Management of volunteers in a national project*

The international literature on the management of volunteers on heritage projects indicates that this is effective provided that aims and objectives are clearly established, and that training and support is provided. Consultation with those experienced in volunteer management indicated that communication is extremely important, and that this is required at the initial stages, in dealing with queries as work proceeds, and in the final stages to ensure quality of the record and the digital archiving.

Volunteers will require a knowledge base about graveyards, their monuments and landscapes in order to appreciate and make informed decisions during any survey. They will also require training in the necessary skills to carry out the survey according to established protocols. Further training will be necessary to convert their records into a standardised digital archive suitable for deposition. The results from this survey reveal much lack of confidence, or independent, ad hoc, decision-making often leading to private collections of data not made available to anyone outside the group, and rarely archived. Much information can be provided on the national project web site, and short 'how to' videos can be prepared and available via YouTube.

Some form of training support will be highly desirable in order to maintain standards, possibly via local supporters, such as community archaeologists and Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) staff, who support groups 'on the ground'. Regional or diocesan training sessions involving national and local staff could ensure widespread institutional support, and will enable expertise to be 'rolled out' efficiently. Regional or diocesan events where groups can report back and share problems, solutions, and results can create a supportive environment and encourage project completion, and showcase early projects to encourage others to participate. It is also essential to provide training and support beyond the initial fieldwork, which is clearly the most attractive to volunteer groups, with the later data checking, ordering and archiving often not taking place.

### *Curation, access and use of cemetery and burial ground digital data*

The review of existing digital resources indicates that these are extremely uneven in quality and structure, and are often only accessible based on names of the deceased or monument by monument. Moreover, many web sites require payment for information. Where detailed archaeological surveys have been undertaken (e.g. using the CBA Handbook, Mytum 2000), there is no consistent location for deposition, and indeed many have not been placed in any public repository. Very few have been converted into digital forms. Some cemetery friends groups have digital burial data derived from burial registers, and some have large numbers of monument images. However, even in these cases accessibility is problematic and data management uncertain.

Consultation reveals that neither HERs nor County archives services are willing or able in many cases to accept and curate digital data from cemeteries and burial grounds, though they do welcome and require high level summary data of their contents. The same is the case for DACs. All would wish to have access to these resources, but many do not have the staff or expertise to curate digital archives. The executive summary could in part be provided by volunteer groups according to a set protocol, in which numbers of memorials, perhaps by set time periods, could be provided, together with basic summary (with some numerical data) of monument types (headstones, crosses, chest tombs etc), and so a descriptive summary of the burial ground landscape. However, groups would not be able to evaluate any relative significance of monuments or landscape because they would not have the necessary contextual information; this would have to be provided by someone with a wider comparative knowledge.

It is clear that any project requires a national repository which can be accessed by heritage professionals, burial ground managers, researchers, local communities and other interest groups including cemetery friends, schools, and family historians. The Archaeology Data

Service (ADS) is equipped to curate the diverse nature of digital data derived from recording projects at cemeteries and burial grounds, and it is essential that the necessary recording protocols are applied to the data and that budgets include the necessary level of support to cover the costs of long-term deposition.

### ***Recommendations in summary***

- Review of existing recording methods reveals limited interest in recording the material remains of burial grounds, beyond the use of digital photography. Only those utilising Mytum (2000) or simplified adaptations of this system record monument form, decoration, materials. It is clear from the adapted use of Mytum and limited take-up of even more complex recording systems in Scotland, that mass involvement should be based on a simple form, with additional advice if groups wish to go further. No popular recording methods as yet combine monument and landscape recording, beyond a plan, proposals should combine memorial and other data (e.g. plantings, other structures).
- Recording and digital archiving protocols require development through a pilot project before any national volunteer programme can be implemented. This covers a varied range of levels of data recording, and the flexibility to include ecological as well as cultural data. The pilot also requires the development of support materials for the necessary skills sets required by the volunteer groups (e.g. training videos for YouTube). The data structures for curation and the necessary protocols for these also need to be formulated, in conjunction with ADS.
- The volunteer recording should be designed to develop skill sets in the community through the digital recording project, ensuring wide public benefit beyond the recording itself.
- Volunteers require support by regional archaeologists experienced in community involvement if a national recording system is to be followed. These professionals should be trained and supported by experienced graveyard recorders, who can assess overall progress, provide training to the professionals, deal with queries on applying the protocols, and spot check the data to ensure some level of national consistency.
- A national centre or project consultant with wide-ranging expertise in graveyard recording and analysis would, via community archaeologists and DAC staff, be one way to support volunteer projects to enable the recording to take place. A hierarchical structure of data management is also required, with some level of data checking at the national level prior to deposition with ADS, as experience with existing archives reveals frequent inconsistencies. Recording opportunities can be publicised by local professionals, but will be best initiated by a bottom-up approach.
- A project to develop protocols and structures for effective recruitment, training and management should be developed, which will inform a Heritage Lottery Fund bid. This could be a Britain-wide bid, and the development of the protocols could also be in consultation with other interested parties in Scotland and Wales.
- A national project (across all of Britain or just England) to encourage and facilitate volunteer groups to digitally record cemeteries and burial grounds should be investigated further. Such an initiative will receive a positive response from heritage professionals involved with managing volunteer projects, numerous volunteer groups, and the various user groups including HERs, County archives services, researchers and many community groups as well as family historians.

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## **1 THE CONTEXT FOR THE PROJECT**

### **1.1 The report in relation to the project brief**

Cemeteries, churchyards, burial grounds, monuments, memorials and conservation are integral to English Heritage's work. This project conducted an initial scoping study of existing recording programmes, assessed their current status and operation, and has reviewed how to maximise the conservation benefit to be gained from existing records. This will inform English Heritage in its national decision-making.

The project report also provides advice and recommendations on developing a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) digital project bid to create a national toolkit and web-based database for volunteers. Their goal would be to objectively capture the current state of monuments and cemeteries (and include components such as cemetery gates and vegetation) at an appropriate and realistic level of detail, housed in a stable and accessible manner.

The project also sought to assess the state and location of existing cemetery and burial ground records, and the capacity for curation of digital archives in local government systems and in national repositories such as the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

### **1.2 Historiography and context of the project**

There has been a long tradition of recording historic monuments, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards – first looking at elite monuments for genealogy and heraldry, and then for wider family history uses (Mytum 2004). More recently the art historical dimension came to the fore, a by-product of which is that notable tombs and other burial ground structures have



been listed. Only in recent decades has a more archaeological approach been developed which considers a wider range of monuments and other features as worthy of record, management and potential preservation.

Much activity in the past has led to the creation of paper records that have been dispersed to a wide range of locations, many of which are not publicly accessible. It was beyond the remit of this project to locate such data sets, but it is clear that current activity is not creating material that is any more accessible or effectively curated. In addition, many on-line resources and web sites that accept text and image data have sprung up in recent years. These reveal the interest in both participating in collecting and in using this data, but these online sites face some of the same issues as paper archives in terms of free access and curation.

This consultation is designed to consider the current state of knowledge of cemeteries and historic burial grounds, the nature of the records, and the ways in which the digital revolutions have affected what has already been done, is being done, and could be done. This is in the context of the greater involvement of volunteers in collective action linked to the media, seen in everything from political lobbying to contributions to collective recording sites such as OPAL. A review of the most significant digital community initiatives linked to heritage and cognate areas including ecology were reviewed (see Annexe 1 for details).

One project involving individuals recording data was English Rock Art (ERA), which forms a useful first stage in exploring public involvement (Annexe 1.1.1), but the scale of new data entry and the lack of group involvement means that it is only partly relevant. Crowd sourcing data can be seen through the Edina App (Annexe 1.1.2) which can geo-reference images, and link to other data. The Lichen Society (Annexe 1.1.3) is an example of the nationally-supported crowd sourcing of data. The OPAL initiative (Annexe 1.1.4) also allows uploading of data, but the amount from a graveyard survey would overwhelm that system, and also be extremely time-consuming to format and submit. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that there may be ways to create a system for preparation of data (e.g. Excell spreadsheets, pdf record forms, digital images) and uploading in standard structures to allow assessment, checking and then passing to Ads for archiving, though all this would have to be costed in any HLF bid.

These projects show the obvious advantages with digital capture when it comes to volunteer groups. It is a way of quickly disseminating the skills to interested people through a variety of media, and then ensuring that the data they upload is consistent and useable with existing data. What needs to be developed is a way of managing the huge amounts of data that a stone by stone recording of a graveyard, its monuments and other (cultural and natural heritage) features while maintaining a similar digital ergonomic.

The danger of ad hoc uploading of data through crowdsourcing is that many graveyards will contain entries only recording the large, impressive, or unusual monuments, or those relating to particular ancestors of the recorders, as seen on some of the sites discussed in Annexe 1.2. Even if standard data fields were required, the checking process would be problematic. Some of the most valuable elements of the data set for future management – the general graveyard description and evaluation, and the graveyard plan which is necessary for informed ongoing management – is unlikely to be created through this format; some form of funding for consultancy or liaison with a national centre would allow rapid assessment and consistent summarising of each newly acquired dataset for deposition in the relevant HER and other databases.

The picture on the web is one of a patchy and largely ineffective resource, even for its primary purpose of genealogy. There are projects that record graveyards an archaeologically effective way, but these are often restricted to a few sites at most. These projects also tend to come from Scotland, where there is far more support for interested groups to perform a more archaeologically sound investigation, and even here problems of website maintenance become clear, in even the few years since the projects were running.

In England and elsewhere, the work that has been done is largely genealogical in nature, a mixture of projects done by passionate individuals, and those attempting to capitalise financially on the data desired by genealogists. The best of these sites promote a consistent form of recording, but this is rare, and marred by some of the criticisms levied above. There is a distinct lack of archaeologically satisfactory work being presented on-line within the graveyards field. Some of the projects above show that the public can be engaged in digital recording that allows for records that serve the purpose of both professional researchers and the public who are encouraged to contribute data. The challenge is to generate a robust system that takes the advantages from these various systems and applies and extends them to graveyard data, with the additional problems associated with the volume of data that will be created. It is likely that the simplest and most effective system will be to create files of images and spreadsheets, associated with pdf files, according to set protocols including naming formats. These can then be connected for a web-based use by ADS following a phase of checking prior to deposition. Some of the best summaries linked not to downloadable or searchable databases (rather than by name) are at [www.historicgraves.com](http://www.historicgraves.com), where professional archaeologists train and support volunteer groups through the whole process.

### **The status of graveyard and monument data in English Heritage systems**

Graveyard and monument data was searched in a number of on-line English heritage resources to reveal data quality and extent. This revealed extremely patchy data presence and often limited in extent. Thus, a search for chest tombs in Gloucestershire (well known for its elaborate tombs, a number of which are listed) revealed only four, with very brief descriptions. In NHLE, a similar search produced 1,164 entries. However, these are individual or small groups of monuments as selected for listing, and do not provide any understanding of the wider context (other, unlisted monuments, vegetation, paths etc.). Graveyards or churchyards are not present in systems as a category.

This criticism of the limitations of the present systems reflects the past criteria for heritage significance, and thus the data available in AMIE. The splitting of even those assets in the system under many headings (e.g. tombs, headstones, crosses, coffin stones, mausolea) allows for some selective searching but makes other forms of evaluation even more problematic. A site based search provides some data but not a clear framework. Thus, St Mary's Tetbury has 45 entries, most for single memorials but some for a group, but even then this does not provide an effective basis for management or analysis because of the partiality of the data and its lack of spatial and contextual information beyond the listed monuments. As burial grounds can contain numerous heritage elements such as protected trees (e.g. ancient yews), as well as having a landscape and collective cultural and heritage value, the present systems do not provide the necessary knowledge base for evaluation. The status of burial ground data within HERs is discussed in the following section.

## **2 THE ROLE OF CEMETERIES AND BURIAL GROUNDS IN HERs**

Prior to this scoping study there had been no recent assessment of the nature of HER data on cemeteries and burial grounds. Therefore, as part of the project a questionnaire was made available via the HER Forum. This makes the questionnaire available to c. 80 HERs, and from this a sample of 14 replies were received (c. 18% response). Some on-line HER resources were also accessed to review what was publicly available, but as this produced so little information this was not continued. The questionnaire responses covered urban county authorities, county councils and National Parks from a wide geographical area (Annexe 2). They would therefore seem to be representative of the state of the HER record as a whole. Although no statistical patterning can be derived from the data, there were widespread similarities in many aspects of the responses, even if expressed with diverse emphases. In addition, the York consultation meeting included one HER officer and a number of others experienced in HERs. This facilitated more detailed discussions which built on and

expanded the questionnaire data. The discussion below is therefore based on a range of sources; individuals and authorities have not been identified.

Although no statistical pattern of quality and quantity of data held in HERs can be offered, the range of data and attitudes to it were successfully captured by the survey. This reveals an extremely varied provision, and clearly some form of enhancement and creation of a baseline level of record is highly desirable. This was an opinion expressed frequently in the responses, though a few considered this to be a low priority. The evidence is summarised in relation to each of the questions.

## **2.1 Question 1. - What is the extent and detail for the following categories in your HER?**

*2.1.1 Church of England burial grounds* coverage was uneven and limited in detail. The average response indicated that whilst churches are included, especially if listed or with medieval origins, the entries often have little detail and there is even less description and assessment of the churchyards. Listed tombs are mentioned, as are archaeological interventions, but the level of detail is low and inconsistent. An individual burial ground record that could be separately plotted and have its own database entry was seen as desirable (but not yet achieved) in some cases. Some HERs have sections of the record that are of a higher quality, the enhancement being a by-product of initiatives such as town surveys. In very few HERs an historic interest has resulted more complex records being generated, with associated archives of monument surveys, images of monuments and burial ground plans. Given that such HER officers would have been more interested in the questionnaire, it is likely that these are a very small exception to the norm.

*2.1.2 Other denominational burial grounds* tend to have ad hoc records; many more of the burial grounds, now disused and potentially developed, do not even have known locations. There is a far more consistent approach to nonconformist chapels than to their burial grounds (which may be attached but are often physically separated). Even the most comprehensive HERs had extremely patchy coverage of these burial grounds.

*2.1.3 Cemeteries* are represented in the record, especially if they have listed structures or notable landscape qualities, but coverage is again inconsistent and usually brief, even in the most developed HERs. One HER officer is currently engaged in creating entries for cemeteries, which were previously absent, and some other HERs had no entries, except for listed structures.

## **2.2 Question 2. - What information would you like to have within the HER about these, and at what level of detail?**

It is generally agreed that the level of detail in the HERs is too sparse. This is widespread across the categories discussed above, but can be divided into two elements. The first is actually having entries for burial grounds as entities at all (some such as cemeteries are not uniformly present, in other cases very few churchyards are given entries distinct from their associated church). The second is that size, landscape character, use dates, and above and below ground archaeological potential is not recorded at all. The listed monuments have no context, and sometimes little detail.

HER officers typically desired basic records for all burial grounds, extant or not, including a summary of their history, outstanding architectural elements, date range of memorials, brief landscape assessment, condition survey and whether still in use. They wanted to be able to list archaeological interventions, and signpost to further resources.

A large minority of HERs desired much more detail on the range and condition of monuments and information on planting schemes. A smaller minority desired much less than this, wanting only a brief historical summary.

Only a few HERs wished to hold graveyard survey records, and most wished to be able to point to where they were housed elsewhere. The same applies to DACs who have to manage the planning process within the remit of ecclesiastical exemption.

### **2.3 Question 3. - In what ways do you think that local groups in your area would be interested in collecting relevant data?**

This response relies on the nature of the relationship between the HER officer and local groups (or knowledge of their colleagues' involvement) as well as the state of local heritage activity. It was generally a quite short statement. A major theme was that this was not part of their remit and they had little time for such activities, but many responses suggested that local groups could well be interested, and a significant minority of cases listed potential groups. In other cases it was suggested that the County Archaeologist or some other team member would better know the local context. Whilst some did not answer this, none were negative about the potential – only their resources to initiate and manage (which was not what was asked). Some responses were keen to make existing collected data, and new data, known to the HER and in some way added in summary form. Clearly communication is a major issue, and this is where regional community archaeological support would be essential to make the whole project effective.

### **2.4 Question 4. - What types of digital data could be collected, stored, retrieved and used in your HER?**

Most HERs provided only a short statement with regard to this question. The overwhelming majority did not wish for primary, detailed, burial ground survey data but wished for summaries and pointers to these sources. Digital resources in the form of pdf and Excell files were generally acceptable to those willing and able to take more data; a small number would take jpeg images. Most HERs suggested their County archives services as repositories, though it was notable how few had any formal contact or detailed knowledge of their functions, policies, or abilities to curate such data (see Annexe 4).

### **2.5 Burial ground and cemetery management and planning control beyond the planning system**

Whilst the heritage is managed at one level through development control, historic cemeteries and burial grounds have many threats that are not covered by this remit. Moreover, ownership and day-to-day-management is fragmented and dispersed across the sector, and is made more complex by responsibilities delegated through ecclesiastical exemption. With the Church of England, each diocese has a Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) which assesses applications for changes within the curtilage of consecrated ground, and these are at a much lower threshold and greater level of detail and scrutiny than in the secular systems. With other denominations, arrangements vary considerably.

No formal survey of DACs or Cemetery Managers has been carried out, but a number have been contacted and their roles were covered in the consultation meeting and other discussions. It is clear, however, that parishes have very varied levels of record, and many do not even have a graveyard plan. Where they do, this may focus on areas of current and recent burials. Nonconformist burial grounds often have even poorer records and management infrastructure. None have anything in digital form.

- DACs only have records linked to quinquennial inspections which give little attention to most graveyard features, and paperwork linked to faculty applications. Whilst at one level there is very fine-grained control and consideration at the planning level, there is no equivalent to HERs at a level to match the decision-making, which therefore relies on ad hoc personal knowledge. There is no digital archive or resource. Some DACs would welcome such information, and would use it in assessing applications for changes to graveyards. A Church Historic Environment Record (CHER) is under development by the Church of England which will address some of these issues. It will be linked to HERs and can be linked to any digital archives created through graveyard recording.
- Cemetery managers have very varied amounts of information, from full digital resources (though often only for modern burial areas) in a few cases, to only historic paper records in most authorities. Their main concerns, however, are with current burial and general maintenance.

Whatever the management structure, it is clear that the main threat to the heritage within burial grounds and cemeteries lies within routine grounds maintenance, especially mechanical grass cutting damaging stones, strimming, control of trees, ivy and other vegetation. The removal of monuments or lying them flush with the ground because of health and safety concerns is the other major threat. In some areas vandalism is a problem, but where community involvement has been encouraged, this threat has reduced.

There is a balance to be struck between natural and cultural conservation, and to date the ecological agenda has dominated conservation, to the point that many managers do not even consider cultural/historic conservation in burial grounds at all. Collaboration with English Nature and other ecological organisations will allow building from existing knowledge and interest. Consultation suggests that those active in churchyard ecology are open to incorporation of cultural heritage elements within their management plans. This integration will enable more informed consideration of grounds management and resolution of competing policies on a case by case basis.

### **Conclusions**

- Data within HERs is uneven for burial grounds, particularly nonconformist ones, and cemeteries of all types can be completely absent.
- Churchyards do not have separate entries from churches, which may only mention listed structures.
- A clear standardised structure for burial ground entries is widely desired.
- Only some HERs are able to hold digital archives for burial grounds; most require a pointer to where these are held elsewhere.
- Summaries of burial grounds are necessary starting points; these would be useful to HERs and DACs.
- There should be project web sites that summarise activity and results.
- Church authorities e.g. DACs do not have effective management data for churchyards but would use such a resource if available.
- ADS could provide a publicly accessible repository if the budget for each sub-project included these associated costs.

### 3 THE USE OF VOLUNTEERS IN PROJECTS

The project has considered two main issues concerning volunteers, the first regarding their effectiveness and management on survey projects, (especially with a digital component), and the second regarding volunteer group interest in burial ground recording, including current and past activity in this area. Evidence has come from various aspects of the scoping project, including cemetery friends responses, consultation meetings, project web pages, and the wider literature on volunteer involvement, particularly with heritage projects.

#### 3.1 Volunteers in projects

The consultation provided considerable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of volunteer recording projects. The publications and web sites created by such groups were also accessed to consider the levels and nature of their activity. In addition the survey of cemetery friends groups revealed useful information, and the consultation meetings and other interactions provided important insights into the role of volunteers.

##### *The existing records in volunteer hands*

Information from survey was only collected via the cemetery friends questionnaire, though interaction with many parishes through other means reveals limited amount of information, and that of extremely varied character, reliability and accessibility. It is mainly genealogical, and the main role is to answer genealogical queries and to manage current and future interments by knowing who is buried where, location of vacant plots etc.

Existing cemetery records are largely those produced by the cemetery as a working institution – plans and burial records; these may be held by the cemetery friends, private cemetery company, or local authority now managing the cemetery (See Annexe 3). Some have CDs of some data (including some transcribed areas and images of monuments) but rarely are resources on-line. The website for the Friends of Northwood cemetery contains a searchable database of name similar to online graveyard resources discussed in Annexe 1. The Burngreave Chapel and Cemetery in Sheffield has the strongest online presence of the groups surveyed, with both a detailed burial record online and a downloadable plan to the cemetery. This information is locally hosted, and indicates that at least some cemetery friends groups also consider the benefits of making their records freely available.

No cemetery friends groups that responded are recording the archaeological and material aspects beyond taking of digital photographs; there is therefore no searchable data, or any available for analysis or management purposes.

##### *Volunteers in wider heritage projects*

Participants in heritage projects are diverse and numerous, as revealed through web searches and consultation with volunteer groups and heritage professionals, particularly with those involved with public archaeology. There is a great demand for community engagement and activity, as evidenced by the long waiting list for Archaeology Scotland's Adopt-a-Monument scheme, and the take-up of HLF projects where community archaeologists are available in many regions.

Volunteers require training and support at all stages from planning a project through to its completion (Jameson & Baugher-Perlin 2007; Moshenska and Dhanjal 2012). Some HLF-funded projects have led to many diverse outcomes, including reports and records suitable for use by heritage professionals and incorporation within HER frameworks. In other cases this has not been the product, in some cases because of problems in implementation, but in most because this was not the primary aim. That a usable, widely accessible free archive is at least one of the outputs of the project needs to be made clear from the start. It is for this reason that some existing projects (notably those of some cemetery friends' groups) may not become

integrated, though as any system spreads and the wider publicity and access benefits become clear, they may well join.

A set of clear protocols and a programme of supportive training are essential for all volunteer recording activity, and the provision of face-to-face interaction with experienced community archaeologists or other already trained and experienced advisors is essential for project success across the maximum range of socio-economic groups. Some volunteers, including 'silver surfers', are now IT literate, but a large number (30-40%) are not or do not have camera phones, etc. Short training videos on line could really help many volunteers with access. This ensures not only a level of quality assurance but also encourages project completion. This is particularly important for those aspects of the project that are not team-based external activities in the field, such as data sorting, checking entering and preparation of the archive.

Volunteers are stimulated by events and varied forms of dissemination of their results, so these need to be incorporated into the projects so that the archives can be known locally, and also a wider range of skills can be developed by the participants. Many projects could have on-site venues (parish churches, cemetery chapels) or local public facilities (village halls, schools) for such events. Web-based project pages are also important vehicles for dissemination, skills development, encouragement for the team, and a vehicle for feedback.

Social science research has demonstrated that engagement with heritage – particularly local and family history – has been one of the main incentives for older individuals and groups to become computer-literate (Selwyn et al 2005). The development of a digital burial ground archive will allow the 'silver surfers' to enhance their knowledge, but will introduce basic skills to others. The integration of digital elements will also attract and motivate younger cohorts; many of these in disadvantaged communities have limited internet access and do not appreciate the potential of the web to beyond that of social networks.

The project can be seen as skills development and training, one user group in effect being those who do the recording – as they are learning]. There can be trickle down from local experts in a range of fields. With a hierarchical range of levels of data collection, self-selecting groups of volunteers can take different aspects of the recording and engage at whatever level they feel comfortable. Churchwarden training days can be a valuable and efficient way of reaching many communities in one go – 40 to 50 at a time- tapping into more networks. The use of on-line videos explaining particular recording and data downloading tasks can be inexpensive and highly effective at reaching distant or less institutionally recognised groups, and the outcome can be to the benefit of heritage management and social inclusion and upskilling of the population; these could be key features and outcomes of any HLF bid.

There is a wide range of experience in organising and running volunteer projects, including those with a digital component. There is also plentiful evidence of the social as well as heritage benefit that such projects, properly supported, can achieve.

### **3.2 State of volunteer activity in burial ground recording**

Some graveyards have been recorded by a range of local and family history groups or by friends of parishes and cemeteries. Many graveyards have had at least their older stones transcribed, and these may be housed in the local County records office. Perusal of many County archive catalogues will reveal lists of inscriptions, and some County Archaeological Societies (e.g. Yorkshire Archaeological Society) have sections of their membership who have transcribed graveyards as contributions to family history.

Large numbers of graveyards have transcribed inscriptions – largely on paper, and in many cases lodged in County archives services. Snell (2003) used 16,000 gravestone transcriptions from 86 burial grounds in the Midlands for his study of place in identity, and these are just a fraction of those available. These range in survey date from early 20<sup>th</sup>-century to very recent.

In some counties even older antiquarian transcriptions exist, but these are always extremely selective, with a bias towards impressive monuments. These various levels and dates of transcription often disagree on readings, and rarely are there photographs or discussions regarding differences between later transcriptions and earlier ones (which can be caused by levels of recorders' skill and dedication, lighting conditions during survey, state of vegetation growth, erosion over time, application of different methods e.g. rubbings, use of flour or foam to emphasise text; some of these can damage memorials),

Almost all groups contacted would not reveal in detail the nature of the records they produced, only their general content. This is part of the feeling of ownership, and the lack of personal, face-to-face contact necessary to develop mutual confidence in this survey. Most groups clearly had not had previous contact with academics or heritage professionals interested in their endeavours. Most of those who had not commenced recording welcomed any help, but those further advanced were wary of providing much detail, perhaps for fear of losing data or of criticism or interference in how the work might proceed. It also reveals the attitude that this data is private, a resource of the group, not of the wider community.

Some student and community recording projects have used simplified recording forms with only a few monument categories (headstone, ledger, cross etc.) and a limited number of other fields. Some groups create churchyard plans, either in sketch or measured form. Anglican parishes are meant to be producing burial plans for general management use, and these can therefore already exist for recorders to use, or be created jointly.

Cemetery groups have cemetery plans from which to work in terms of monument location (though these are not always as easy to use as might at first appear), but responses from cemetery groups were not specific on this matter. It is unclear to what extent the cemetery plot numbering system is incorporated into cemetery friends monument records. A full assessment based on the survey of friends groups is provided in Annexe 3.

Some groups have done recording using the forms supported by the CBA handbook (Mytum 2000), but often the forms are only partially filled in, and rarely is there a digital element. In Scotland, the detailed forms designed by the Carved Stones Advisor and Historic Scotland and supported through a three-year project, are still available on-line via Archaeology Scotland:

<http://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/our-projects/scottish-graveyards/resources>. However, in practice these forms again are often only partially filled in or groups design less formidable forms for recording for themselves. The deposition of graveyard recording archives, in paper or in digital form, is very rare. This may in part be because County archives services and HERs are unwilling to take them. In Scotland few have been deposited with Canmore, even though RCAHMS would be willing to take them. Some cemetery friends undertake recording, and this can include a digital element.

In general, beyond basic genealogical information in some cases, public archiving is absent. This is a combination of a sense of individual and group ownership of the data, lack of awareness of its wider significance and interest, no training as to what format an archive should take, and resistance from likely repositories to take such depositions. The numerous community projects already taken place in Ireland reveal a similar interest in the genealogical information and photographs, but little else. Only these elements are being incorporated into digital formats and made available on-line - see [www.historicgraves.com](http://www.historicgraves.com). However, this is a web site owned by a commercial heritage organisation, not a more permanent institution.

Local volunteers will have strong affiliations with their burial grounds, and they hold important social, cultural and in some cases personal memories and significances. There is already the latent or actual feeling of ownership, which can be applied to the creation of a record. Experience has shown that wherever such surveys take place, the wider local community is positive and enthusiastic, and the consultation process has demonstrated that those responsible for burial ground management are overwhelmingly positive in their attitudes to the creation of such records.



### *Summary of the strengths and weaknesses*

#### Strengths

- Transcriptions have been frequent
- Various models for recording have been proposed and offered (CBA, Historic Scotland)
- Some community groups have undertaken surveys using these models,. Albeit often limiting the amount of data they collect
- Many groups recognize the importance of the physical monuments, and may record this by photography
- There is a widespread recognition of the potential of digital recording and data storage
- Many groups welcome guidance and the open access format for data

#### Weaknesses

- Although existing models have had limited take-up in practice
- Recording of physical monuments is patchy and is rarely coded or recoverable beyond looking through images
- Digital databases beyond names and dates is extremely rare
- Ordering and cataloguing digital images so that they can be linked to other records, or searched or ordered, is rare
- There is limited understanding of the process of archiving paper or digital data
- There are no protocols and no processes for data deposition and archiving

#### **Conclusions**

- Many existing networks and structures can be used to publicise any digital recording system and protocols, e.g. Cemetery friends, DACs, CBA, Young Archaeologists Club, archaeology societies.
- Training for volunteers is required so that they understand the importance of monuments beyond their inscriptions.
- Support will be required for organising the digital data ready for deposition.
- Ways in which data could have community use need to be explored.
- 'Ownership' is important for volunteers, as they chose the level of recording. The ethos will be for sharing, so the deposition of accessible archives is essential.
- Future initiatives that develop skills and build communities through the collection and archiving of burial ground data may be rather more attractive to some funding bodies than ones which focus on data collection and archive creation.
- Clear protocols need to be designed and made available, and training offered to apply these; provision of on-line training videos would be a useful adjunct to manuals and face-to-face sessions.

#### **4 MANAGEMENT AND CURATION OF DIGITAL DATA**

The current state of management of digital burial ground and cemetery data was assessed through reviewing web-based resources, and through the various questionnaires and consultation meetings. No digital archives were directly consulted (apart from those on-line), as access was not offered (see comments above regarding sense of ownership), but in some cases an indication of their size and completeness was obtained in responses.

The amount and nature of digital data relating to cemeteries and burial grounds within HERs varied greatly, as did the capacity and willingness to store such data. It is generally clear that HERs are not the most effective locations for existing or future digital archives (see 2.4).

Whilst some County archives services are willing and able to house digital data in the form of pdf files, Excell spreadsheets and in some cases jpeg images, in most cases they are not (see Annexe 4). Although there was a poor response to the questionnaire regarding burial ground data in their care (especially given that supporting family history is one of their main activities), it would seem that the housing of the relevant paper or digital records would not be automatic, even if carried out within nationally set standards. It is therefore clear that no reliance should be placed on local provision for curation, even if in some cases copies could be so deposited.

Some cemeteries which are still in active use have commercial digital systems that manage burial data and can incorporate GIS mapping, databases, and images. These can incorporate historic data (such as 19<sup>th</sup>-century burial entries) in order to populate the databases, but they are designed for current management and are often on a leased arrangement with no long-term archival security for the data. Whilst excellent for their intended use, these would therefore not seem to be a model for any heritage-based solution.

Many web sites offer to house text and images of burial ground monuments, but there is no standardisation, no clear curation policies or procedures, and issues regarding ownership and access (see Annexe 1). These sites are largely privately run, with only a few special-interest sites (such as the Maritime Museum) being institutionally situated. There generally seems to be no quality control, and many burial ground entries are ad hoc and incomplete. In only a few community-based site-specific sites is there spatial information with maps. In all cases only name data can be searched, as family history is seen as the primary use for the sites, even if monument form and motifs may be indicated in general introductory text and with selected images. No sites are designed to function in any wider heritage management or research context. Experience from Scotland, over a number of years and with numerous community groups, indicates that the lack of a centralised set of protocols and support in the creation of digital archives leads to fragmented and inconsistent curation strategies, and most projects having no effective digital dimension at all.

Given the nature of the potential digital archive with its mix of spreadsheets, maps and photographs, the ADS was approached for advice. It is clear that, for the necessary standard fees linked to data complexity and file size, digital burial ground data can be curated by ADS, as this mix is what most archaeological project archives produce. The advantages of ADS curation would not only be professionally managed archives, but also free access, and the ease with which links to HERs, DAC and cemetery manager records, and local communities can be made. The data would also be available for research, and modelling and assessment in management terms, above the level of the local authority.

## **Conclusions**

- HERs would wish for clear standardised summaries for cemetery and burial ground sites, but this requires considerable enhancement.
- Only some HERs are able to hold digital archives for burial grounds, and most would wish to act as a pointer to these; there should be project web sites where there are community projects.
- The Church Historic Environment Record (CHER) will act as a Church of England equivalent of the HER, and will make similar uses of any archive as HERs.
- County archive services have uneven and often limited capacity to hold the relevant digital data.
- Existing commercial digital data management systems for cemeteries and the on-line repositories for monument data and images are inappropriate for wider heritage use, with issues regarding ownership, curation and limited interrogation capacities.
- ADS could provide a publicly accessible repository if the budget for each sub-project include associated costs.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 The establishment of a national recording system

#### 5.1 National recording system

The creation of a simple recording system that is both quick and easy to implement by volunteer groups can provide baseline data for heritage management and public engagement. This information should include spatial data (via a site map, even if not accurately to scale), monument, landscape feature and people databases (the last given the great interest in genealogy, and also because it provides dating and other contextual information for the other elements of the record). The recording system should be designed to allow for more detailed information to be collected on a hierarchical basis, linked to volunteer groups interests and skills, but not require high levels of knowledge or skills.

The recording system should generate digital data (either directly in the field or via paper records) that can be archived in a standard format which will allow for use by heritage professionals and many interested parties; this would include a summary statement of the data for HERs.

It would also be highly desirable to have some evaluation of the heritage and cultural significance of the burial ground as a whole and any notable elements within it, but this would require professional consultant input, as volunteer groups would not have this wider knowledge.

#### 5.2 National recording project

A national project to encourage and facilitate volunteer groups to digitally record cemeteries and burial grounds should be investigated further. Such an initiative will receive a positive response from heritage professionals involved with managing volunteer projects, numerous volunteer groups, and the various user groups including HERs, County archives services, researchers and many community groups as well as family historians.

National may mean England only, but positive reaction from those already involved in Scotland, and from a number of the Welsh archaeological trusts indicates that a pan-British project would receive widespread support.

A national project (however defined) can ensure data quality and compatibility and provide a structure for the spread of good practice, advice on unusual discoveries, access to consultancy regarding enhanced summary data, and ensure archiving is consistent and passed over to ADS is a suitable format; after an initial project launch phase when training will be at its maximum, it could be supported through elements of each community HLF bid including the checking, expert summarising (e.g. for HERs), and deposition with ADS.

### 5.2 Development of recording and archiving protocols

Recording and digital archiving protocols require development through a pilot project before any national volunteer programme can be implemented. This covers a varied range of levels of data recording, and the flexibility to include ecological as well as cultural data. The pilot also requires the development of support materials for the necessary skills sets required by the volunteer groups. Projects such as the Great Yarmouth Borough Council involving trainees from the long-term unemployed as well as the broad experience in England and Scotland needs to be brought together to identify best practice. The data structures for curation and the necessary protocols for these also need to be formulated, in conjunction with ADS. Basic guidance needs to be given e.g. on digital image size, Excel spreadsheet cell formats, use of upper and lower case on text entry.

Data to be collected should be all linked to the unique burial ground site code and feature numbers, and at a minimum include:

- Monuments: names and dates, simple coded data on form, decoration, material, presented in a spreadsheet, e.g. Excel
- Landscape features: paths, vegetation, boundaries, entrances, structures, presented as coded data or using thesaurus terms in a spreadsheet, e.g. Excel
- All numbered features should be located on a site map.
- All numbered features should be photographed, the digital images being named with site code and feature number

The archive should also include summary data including:

- Brief description of the burial ground landscape and its wider setting
- List of all feature types present and their numbers
- Date range of monuments and range of monument types

Hierarchical information could include more data on monument measurements, orientation, and state of preservation/legibility; higher level coding of monument form or decoration; more detailed geological identification; full inscription transcription; recording of lettering styles, forms of letter carving, use of paint/inlay; detailed planting species identification; ecological surveys. More advanced mapping could include accurately measured plans, available in CAD, and the most advanced could use GIS and link spatial, database and image data, though the expertise needed for this is at present beyond volunteer groups, and also presents archiving challenges. Digital data can be given Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) which are fixed identifiers, wherever the data gets moved, and this will assist in and reduce costs of data migration in the long-term.

### **5.3 Recording of burial grounds can be a vehicle for skills development**

Protocols for a national recording system should be easily accessible, and on-line resources could be made available to provide a baseline of training and support to carry out surveys. However, experienced public and community archaeologists indicate that volunteer groups often rely on personal contact and support to initiate conduct and complete recording projects.

However, through a national recording project that frameworks could be designed to develop skill sets in the community through digital recording, ensuring wide public benefit beyond the recording itself. There are many skills which would or could be taught or enhanced through such community projects. Feedback during the consultation reveals increasing confidence in the use of digital technology, but the need for specific training. The use of standard software but created as appropriate file types for data input and curation, is necessary to ensure standardisation and ease of use. Teamwork and technical skills can all form part of the training; participants can be encouraged to reflect on what skills they have learnt.

Skills development can be within the digital and IT elements, but also in teamwork, presentation, analysis, and development of skills in the actual recording process. The ways in which projects incorporate skills, and develop these through dissemination strategies beyond the deposition of a digital archive, could be locally selected to maximise impact and value to the participants and wider community. Examples of good practice can be collected nationally and presented on the main project web site.

### **5.4 A coherent training programme must be available for all groups**

The volunteers should be supported by regional archaeologists experienced in community involvement. These professionals should be trained and supported by a national centre with

experienced graveyard recorders, who can assess overall progress, provide training to the professionals, deal with queries on applying the protocols, and spot check the data to ensure some level of national consistency.

Experience not only on graveyard recording projects but many other types of community engagement with heritage has highlighted that types of training and support required for effective project completion. Existing HLF schemes have provided plenty of exemplars, and also a cohort of community archaeologists who could be easily trained in the appropriate protocols for recording and curation. Other groups such as those working on the natural heritage such as God's Acre also have extensive experience of working with and training volunteers groups in working within burial ground contexts.

#### **5. A project to develop protocols, training materials and archiving structures is necessary prior to an HLF application**

A project to develop protocols and structures for effective recruitment, training and management should be developed, which will inform a Heritage Lottery Fund bid. Experience in Scotland and elsewhere indicates that avoidance of the creation of ad hoc schemes is important, but the systems also need to allow for flexibility in levels of data capture, and allow incorporation of natural as well as cultural heritage data. This could be a Britain-wide bid.

The scoping study reveals demand both to conduct the surveys and to use their results. Although existing experience, e.g. through use of the CBA handbook in England and the various forms available in Scotland, is valuable, these do not provide immediately applicable protocols. Not only do past recording systems not integrate the digital element fully, they also do not offer a hierarchical recording structure which allows a spread from very simple to advanced levels of recording. Nor do the systems offer any option for integrating natural heritage information, or even pointing to its existence elsewhere. Now that the CBA have abandoned publication, and Mytum 2000 is out of print, it may be possible to negotiate a free version, suitably re-written for the new systems and current technological possibilities, without any problems of overlapping or conflicting interests between different national heritage bodies.

It would be therefore highly desirable that a project was developed that created the necessary protocols that ran from data collection in the field through to deposition in an archive, and also constructed a framework for training that included both the local community archaeologists and the volunteers themselves. It would be most effective if these included consideration of the Scottish and Welsh contexts. A pilot scheme would not only design but also test the effectiveness of the structures and protocols, which could then be adjusted in the light of experience. This would then provide a robust and credible framework for any further application for funding and for a full HLF bid, supported by tested system that can be shown to deliver the necessary heritage and social benefit results.

## **Annexe 1 Project context: Existing digital data related to cemetery and burial ground heritage**

A large number of web sites were consulted to assess the ways in which web-based media are used to collect and use volunteer-collected data. Some of these are not related to graveyards (Section 1.1) but indicate the potential uses of the web. Most attention, however, was paid to the current state of access to burial data not only in Britain but also from an international perspective.

### **1.1 Digital Recording and Public Involvement**

The following websites have similar characteristics: they specialise in digital data capture and public involvement. As current exemplars of the medium, they allow consideration of volunteer data capture and digital upload, and how that might inform a burial grounds project.

#### **1.1.1 English Rock Art (ERA): <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/era/>**

This project, promoting the awareness of and public involvement in the preservation and recording of the Rock Art that is scattered across parts of Northern England, utilises digital capture and volunteer involvement.

The Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Pilot Project (NADRAP), 2004 – 2008, sought to use over 100 local volunteers and train them in the necessary techniques of data capture. This created a database whilst capitalising on volunteer activity to create and foster public interest in the resource. A downloadable handbook allows amateur groups to submit material to project standards, and an app leads those that download it to view known sites by providing information via an interactive map.

The applications of this sort of model are obvious. Interested non professionals were trained in the use of complex survey techniques, with data then uploaded to a central database. The handbook also means that untrained individuals who think they may have new data to contribute are well guided, and their data would be compatible with the rest of the digital archive.

This model is only partially applicable to graveyards, as individuals recording occasional new discoveries of rock art does not equate with the scale and complexity of data that would be generated by even one group involved in a graveyard survey. However, the central website is an excellent example of a project site, and it encourages, educates and informs people that might be interested in contributing. These are all features that should be developed for a graveyard recording site.

#### **1.1.2 The Edina App 'Field Trip GB': (<http://fieldtripgb.blogs.edina.ac.uk/>)**

This is a mapping tool that allows researchers to combine the data that they collect with high quality maps. It is designed for smart phones, and is linked to a drop box. A researcher can use the tool on the Field Trip website to author their own data submission forms.

What is innovative here is the concept of crowd sourcing or, as the authors of the Field Trip GB app put it, 'informed crowd sourcing' where already trained individuals such as a university class go out as individuals and run the app to capture data before sending it through a drop box to the group leader who edits the material into a single document for submission: (<http://fieldtripgb.blogs.edina.ac.uk/2013/04/22/collecting-data-as-a-group-using-fieldtrip-gb/>).

This could be crafted to the purposes of a graveyards project, whereby a group leader trains members in the use of the app, and sends them to collect the data which is then combined with a mapping system, and collated through the leader. This introduces the opportunity to check data quality before then submitting it. Another key advantage is that with the mapping data comes a pre-built map of the graveyard, which if the GPS system was adept enough could be used to quickly map the recorded monuments into the plan as they go along. If

these systems could be adapted to the purposes of this project it would be possible to manage and check data effectively as it is being uploaded.

This model is not without its flaws, however. While the mapping data might be useful for attaching annotated images to large-scale well-mapped features of the landscape such as geological features, to accurately pinpoint monument locations within a graveyard necessitates too fine a level of resolution. It also requires several phones of varying makes, models, to have GPS technology within them that functions not only at a high resolution, but the same resolution. It also assumes access to smart phones, which given the inclusiveness of the project would be problematic.

#### 1.1.3 The British Lichen Society: (<http://www.thebls.org.uk/>)

The British Lichen Society is dedicated to the research and conservation of lichens. The website is full of information for those interested in lichens at all levels of expertise, and also provides information for those who wish to submit their own data for inclusion onto the British Lichen Society distribution maps (<http://www.thebls.org.uk/recording-mapping/bls-databases>). This requires more technical knowledge than the other websites considered here; there are links to the required programs but no guidance on how to use them. Nor is there detailed advice on how to conduct the survey. The data is available to use through the links on this page (<http://www.thebls.org.uk/recording-mapping/bls-databases>) essentially leading the enquirer to an interactive map that collates all of the data, which can be filtered to be useful to the needs of the individual. The ecological information is therefore potentially submitted by anyone, though with the caveat that a greater degree of technical expertise is expected. There seems to be limited checking procedures.

The basic model provides the interested (but informed) person with the tools to generate data and submit it. The British Lichen Society outline what materials and tools are required to do this work alone. The main problem is one of accessibility, with too much technical expertise presumed; the suites of programs are named and linked to but no further guidance is given on how to make these work.

#### 1.1.4 OPAL: <http://www.opalexplornature.org/aboutOPAL>

This HLF-funded project intends to bring scientific researchers, skilled amateurs, and the wider population together in the name of scientific and ecological research. It allows members anyone who has completed research for them to submit data via their website. It offers downloadable materials, helpful introductory videos, and project information, (<http://www.opalexplornature.org/takingpart>) and the ability to view and analyse the collated data (<http://www.opalexplornature.org/SoilSurveyResultsIndex>). This system allows the individual conducting the research the immediate satisfaction of seeing their contribution added to the pool of knowledge, as well as providing the opinions of professional researchers in the form of downloadable reports. Data is submitted via an online form (<http://www.opalexplornature.org/soil-survey>) and this particular project on earthworms allows for the attachment of a digital picture.

The strengths of this approach are many, with multiple surveys gathering data from researchers at varying levels of interest and technical skills. It provides those less equipped with the materials needed to carry out the work that they are interested in, it benefits the professional researcher by enforcing standardised data with the prescriptive submission forms, yet rewards those that submit as they see their data immediately put to use. As such it does its best to bring all levels of activity together, and at every stage the context and significance of the research is made explicit.

Certain technical considerations might make this model difficult to apply for a national graveyard recording survey, however. Presuming that the data was not app based (see problems discussed above), and paper forms had to be manually run through a system to be uploaded, even with a modest graveyard would be involve a huge time investment in data entry, and that requires its own management and motivation. Combine that with uploading



multiple high quality digital images, and some way of uploading a plan of the graveyard, and the system soon looks less applicable. However, the positive feedback elements would be useful to incorporate.

### 1.1.5 Conclusions

These projects show the obvious advantages with digital capture when it comes to volunteer groups. It is a way of quickly disseminating the skills to interested people through a variety of media, and then ensuring that the data they upload is consistent and useable with existing data. What needs to be developed is a way of managing the huge amounts of data that a stone by stone recording of a graveyard, its monuments and other (cultural and natural heritage) features while maintaining a similar digital ergonomic.

The danger of ad hoc uploading of data is that many graveyards will contain entries only recording the large, impressive, or unusual monuments, or those relating to particular ancestors of the recorders, as seen on some of the sites discussed later in this Annex. Even if standard data fields were required, the checking process would be problematic. Some of the most valuable elements of the data set for future management – the general graveyard description and evaluation, and the graveyard plan which is necessary for informed ongoing management – is unlikely to be created through this format.

## 1.2 Material Relating to Graveyards:

There is a reasonable volume of material already available online that pertains to graveyard data in the UK. Broadly, these can be summarised into two groups: smaller scale projects that capitalise on holistic recording and attempt to disseminate at least part of their research to the public, and larger scale websites that hoard genealogical data, sometimes searchable, which often run for profit. The former are considered as being closer to the aims of this project, and are dissected for areas where they can be improved. The latter are considered an archive in their own right, and their methods of data capture are examined.

### 1.2.1 Public Involvement

There is much to be lauded in the way that voluntary groups are enabled in Scotland, and there is much evidence for this online: <http://www.scottishgraveyards.org.uk/index.shtml>. This site freely provides information for those that might be interested in preserving their local graveyard. This ranges from downloads of documentation that needs to be considered when considering embarking on cemetery work, copies of the recording forms, and information and links to graveyard projects in the local community (<http://www.scottishgraveyards.org.uk/projects.shtml#scot> or <http://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/our-projects/scottish-graveyards/resources>).

The groups that are linked through the Scottish graveyards page host their own material, and other projects are actively encouraged to fill out a short form and be linked on the website; this is not now current and the Archaeology Scotland sites operates on a different basis. These projects visible on the web vary in scale; the Moray Burial Ground Recording Group (<http://www.mbrg.org.uk/index.shtml>) is attempting the full survey of all of the burial grounds in Moray, with detailed cemetery plans, digital photography, and full transcriptions. This can be compared with the smaller scale seen with the Parish of Traprain Graveyard Surveys Group, that produces small summaries of their projects such as this (<http://www.ejclark.force9.co.uk/survey/index.htm>) for Prestonwick church. Though there is sparse information on this site, they point the visitor to the complete archive of the 749 stones, housed with the RCAHMS. It is notable, however, how rarely this deposition has occurred (see Annex 5.2)

Between them, these websites offer many exemplars when considering a similar scheme for England. They provide a central source for the interested non professional to go, with all the information a group might need when considering doing this work. Links to similar projects to encourage newcomers to add to the already growing pool of work. However, the forms on

offer are very detailed and long, and given the levels of investment in Scotland over several years, it is clear that they deter many groups or lead to only selective recording inspired by the forms (see also Annex 5.2).

The opportunity for groups to place their own information on a proposed central website is excellent but it is not satisfactory to have the data only hosted by local projects that might not keep their sites running. This would avoid the fate projects like the Mearns Kirkyard Project ([www.mearnskirkyardproject.co.uk](http://www.mearnskirkyardproject.co.uk)) which, while offering a comprehensive map of the kirkyard which users can use to explore and find the data of the monuments, is not fully developed and functional, and is no longer being developed.

### 1.2.2 Access/Use

Many websites offer information that is designed to appeal to the genealogist. Often, but not always, some of the information is free, but other features of the website are locked behind a pay wall. The user then pays a subscription which allows them to access extra features. Even when not free, the archive can be extremely patchy.

One site ([www.gravestonephotos.com](http://www.gravestonephotos.com)) does not charge for its content, but only a limited amount of the data is available to the casual browser. This is a free service that offers high quality images of gravestones, indexed and sourced to a graveyard. Monuments are searched by name, though it is possible to browse through a list of graveyards and select a monument from there. The statistics that the website claims to have details of 703,000 individuals from over 333,000 graveyards. This indicates that many of the graveyards have very incomplete records; for example one municipal cemetery in Essex boasts only three monuments that have been photographed. The reason for this can be put down to the fact that volunteers submit data to the archive (<http://www.gravestonephotos.com/volunteers/become.php#photos>). There is clearly no overarching strategy for recording complete graveyards, and while the obvious desire to build a record is laudable, a clear program to record whole graveyards would create a more useful record.

Maritime Memorials (<http://memorials.rmg.co.uk/index-2.html>) is an example of an online archive with a desire to build a complete record. Though this website is designed as an archive purely of monuments to those that have died at sea, there is more of an effort to be complete. Users can freely search monuments on many criteria (<http://memorials.rmg.co.uk/BrowseMemorials.html>), and those interested in submitting a monument can be download information (<http://memorials.rmg.co.uk/SuggestMemorial.html>), though at the time of writing an online form is not available, and digital submission of photographs is currently disabled. Contextual historical information is placed alongside the inscription of the monument, as in this case where the unfortunate commemorated is the victim of cannibalism (<http://memorials.rmg.co.uk/Memoriald29f.html?Topic=3&MemorialID=M2793>).

This project provides important information, but there is still little in the way of spatial information, short of stating in which churchyard the monument can be found. Despite its ambitions, however, the site is also woefully incomplete and, given the complex inputting system, it is unlikely that those already creating graveyard digital data would wish to have to re-enter data again on this site.

There is a variety of sites with limitations, for example the Irish-based project [www.historicgraves.com](http://www.historicgraves.com) which hosts high quality images – where these have been taken – and allows for genealogical and site-based searching. However, the information is patchy and it is unclear whether all monuments in a graveyard have been recorded. Transcriptions are not always in the same format. This site has the benefit of giving all of its information free of charge, but the long-term viability of the site is uncertain as it is not institutionally backed. There is also no provision for intra-site spatial data.

### 1.2.3 Premium Content Sites

BillionGraves is an example of commercial web-based provision. It is a subscription service with some free access that attempts to add some mapping information, though this also has genealogy in mind. Its aim is to build up a massive database combining images of graves, transcriptions and a GPS position of each monument (<http://billiongraves.com/aboutus.php>) and, while it is American in origin, its desired scope is worldwide. Their goal is achieved by encouraging users to download an app, free of charge, and use a compatible smartphone to photograph, locate, and transcribe each monument. The app takes the user through the process of recording, and this effectively means that the data is universal and complete, at least to the degree that the website itself desires. The website earns its revenue through those accessing its archive, though there are free elements. Free content includes a minimal search engine, and the ability to see either transcriptions of the data, or a short summary of the grave or individual that the casual browser might be interested in tracking down (<http://billiongraves.com/pages/search/>). Paid services include search engines with a greater depth, high quality images of the graves, and being informed when data that you might be interested in is made available for your use (<http://blog.billiongraves.com/2012/03/billiongraves-plus/#plus>).

The site clearly intends to generate revenue from the more advanced searching options available to premium customers. Withholding more advanced ways of analysing the data from those that do not pay for the service is not in the spirit of a community project; even those uploading data do not have free access to their own material once added to the system. It might also be noted that uploading and recording monuments depends once again on access to relatively expensive technologies and a good internet connection, and there is no quality control.

### 1.2.4 Graveyard Management Suites

Online search of current graveyard recording projects also reveals programs that cemeteries themselves may use in their day to day management. These are commercial, and often very expensive, but some of their features may be of interest to this project and provide examples of what can be achieved.

Examples of commercial software are:

<http://www.peartechology.co.uk/content.php?cid=29>

<http://www.epitaph-solutions.com/features.htm>

<http://www.gowerconsultants.com/>

A cursory inspection of these programs reveal many elements that anyone building a record of a graveyard might desire. They often provide services that allow the effective cross referencing of records, maps, and photographs (<http://www.peartechology.co.uk/content.php?cid=29>). The ability to have the public search the records (<http://www.gowerconsultants.com/Products/CemsCrems/deceasedsearch.htm>) means that this suite has much of the functionality that a public graveyard project would require. However, these systems are not without their flaws when considering their application to the proposed project. The service is subscription-based, rather than program-based. These services are run at a cost, and the cost to the cemeteries can be quite considerable as well as ongoing (<http://www.peartechology.co.uk/prices.php>). To gain a comprehensive understanding of the program and its uses, and maintain the system, would simply be beyond the reach of many groups. Also Gower Consultants' considerable suite of programs (<http://www.gowerconsultants.com/Products/CemsCrems/index.htm>) to integrate photographic, tabulated and inscriptional data creates a more complicated system to operate. To be able to search the data a separate program is also required (<http://www.gowerconsultants.com/Products/CemsCrems/deceasedsearch.htm>), and while

this no doubt adds a valuable source of revenue for the businesses that created these programs, a more streamlined system would be more desirable.

These commercial projects demonstrate how the various types of graveyard data can be linked in digital systems, but similar structures using generalised software that is easily available and can be curated is the only practical solution.

### **Conclusions**

The picture on the web is one of a patchy and largely ineffective resource, even for its primary purpose of genealogy. There are projects that record graveyards an archaeologically effective way, but these are often restricted to a few sites at most. These projects also tend to come from Scotland, where there is far more support for interested groups to perform a more archaeologically sound investigation, and even here problems of website maintenance become clear, in even the few years since the projects were running. In England and elsewhere, the work that has been done is largely genealogical in nature, a mixture of projects done by passionate individuals, and those attempting to capitalise financially on the data desired by genealogists. The best of these sites promote a consistent form of recording, but this is rare, and mired by some of the criticisms levied above. There is a distinct lack of archaeologically satisfying work being presented on-line within the graveyards field. Some of the projects above show that the public can be engaged in digital recording that allows for records that serve the purpose of both professional researchers and the public who are encouraged to contribute data. The challenge is to generate a robust system that takes the advantages from these various systems and applies and extends them to graveyard data, with the additional problems associated with the volume of data that will be created. It is likely that the simplest and most effective system will be to create files of images and spreadsheets, associated with pdf files, according to set protocols including naming formats. These can then be connected for a web-based use by ADS following a phase of checking prior to deposition.

## Annexe 2 Questionnaire distributed via the HER Forum

### Questionnaire

#### **English Heritage NHPP 4D2 Cemeteries and Churchyards – Project 6358**

#### **Developing Local Assessment Toolkits – a scoping study to look at developing a standard model for recording cemeteries and burial grounds**

Harold Mytum, University of Liverpool [hmytum@liv.ac.uk](mailto:hmytum@liv.ac.uk)

We are conducting a survey for English Heritage to review the state of information within HERs on historic mortuary heritage, and on ways in which interested local groups could record data that could be of value to HERs. There are many forms of burial ground from the post-Reformation to the present within England, often with surprisingly little detailed documentation to assist with conservation and heritage management, and with varied ownership, management, and legal frameworks. Such sites, consisting of below- and above-ground archaeological elements and a significant landscape component, suffer from degradation through erosion, inappropriate management, vandalism, and in some cases redevelopment. In some urban areas current limitations of burial space threaten the archaeology of historic burial grounds through reburial. Many burial grounds are, however, often valued by the local community in terms of their role as repositories of the dead but also as heritage, open green spaces, and areas for wildlife conservation. To date, HERs have generally had limited engagement with this category of heritage asset, and this project wishes to explore ways in which this can be usefully ameliorated. We are therefore wishing to collect information from HERs as part of a consultation that will also include local groups and those responsible for managing burial grounds of various kinds. Please email responses to Harold Mytum.

#### **Questions**

What is the extent and detail for the following categories in your HER?

- Church of England churchyards and other burial grounds
- Other denominational burial grounds
- Cemeteries (local authority, trusts, private)

What information would you like to have within the HER about these, and at what level of detail e.g.

- Historical context
- Architectural elements
- Memorials
- Landscape and plantings

In what ways do you think that local groups in your area (e.g. parish congregations, local history groups, cemetery friends, archaeology societies) would be interested in collecting relevant data?

What types of digital data could be collected, stored, retrieved and used in your HER or other repositories, e.g. County Archives Services? Examples include digital photographs of memorials, buildings; Excel spread sheets of monument form and decoration data, inscriptions, burial data; pdf files of paper recording forms?

### **List of HER respondents**

- Central Bedfordshire
- Essex
- Gwynedd
- Hertfordshire
- Isle of Wight
- Lancashire
- Leicester City
- Shropshire
- Southampton City
- Peterborough City
- West Berkshire
- West Sussex
- Winchester City
- Warwickshire
- Yorkshire Dales

### **Annexe 3: Cemetery friends consultation**

Many cemetery friends groups exist across the country, largely in cities but also in some smaller towns. Many have web sites, though these are unevenly maintained and some had out of date contact details. An email survey was undertaken to ascertain the scale and the format of existing records, and what monument recording projects have been or are currently under way.

#### *3.1 Email consultation*

All names and addresses were taken from <http://www.cemeteryfriends.org.uk/>, the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF) website, and represented all groups within the coalition. The email addresses listed were often personal addresses of those running the groups or the designated contact. The initial survey asked some broad questions about the groups, and the level of detail of the responses was left at the discretion of the groups. Out of 68 groups with email addresses (others only had web pages with no contacts named) 16 full responses were received which, given that a number bounced straight back and others are probably rarely consulted, was a satisfactory response rate of 23%.

A table of the cemetery friends groups is separately appended. The key for the responses is:

Y – Answered positively to the question, indicating that they had or were working towards the records that we were interested in. That they were keen to take part in the project if it developed.

N – Answered negatively to the question in one or more respected: they did not have the record, or were not aware of it. They did not want to take part in any future project.

P – A partial answer: they may have made some progress in making a record but it is incomplete, and/or they have reservations and caveats regarding future involvement.

N/A – the response did not answer this question.

#### *3.2 Existing digital records*

All groups that responded were at least aware of records existing for their cemetery. Most cited hard copy plans, burial records and some transcribed monument records. In digital form, some have had CD's produced of this research, but a readily available online resource is rare. Most respondents that gave a location for these records placed them with their local council.

Some groups were already engaged in digital management; these were rare but indicate the potential in this regard. The website for the Friends of Northwood cemetery contains a searchable database of name similar to online graveyard resources discussed in Annexe 1. The Burngreave Chapel and Cemetery in Sheffield has the strongest online presence of the groups surveyed, with both a detailed burial record online and a downloadable plan to the cemetery. This information is locally hosted, and indicates that at least some cemetery friends groups also consider the benefits of making their records freely available. Some still active graveyards, such as Hyde Park (Doncaster) use the Gower Systems database to store information about the burials, highlighting the use of this program as an administrative tool in the management of a still used graveyard.

Twelve of the respondents (75%) have been recording the individual monuments at their graveyard, while three have only partially recorded the monuments in their care. Where the format of this recording is specified, they are inscriptions and digital photographs. Eleven respondents said that their records were in some way digitally available, but the details that were given varied considerably.

Twelve respondents (75%) indicated that other features of the graveyard, aside from the monuments were being recorded. Two groups, Woodbury Park and Lawnswood cite a

survey of the lichen in the graveyard, with the latter group making their results available online. Two more groups, Hyde Park, and Newark, admit that some features have been recorded – by means of digital photograph – but describe the process as ad hoc.

### 3.3 Attitudes to a larger project

Nine respondents (56%) would be interested in using such a scheme when developed and appealed for further information when it becomes available, whilst four (25%) were less positive, and attached to their replies certain conditions that would have to be met before they would find the scheme beneficial to them. Others did not answer or implied lack of interest.

This positive response rate suggests that, whilst some groups feel no need to be part of a larger project, many are interested and most of these were very interested. It is likely that those that have already invested heavily in recording monuments are least interested in using a different system. Here, further discussions may indicate effective ways by which these groups could be integrated within a national scheme. However, experience gained during other aspects of the consultation process suggest that ‘ownership’ of data is often a greater issue amongst cemetery friends than in most community heritage groups, and this might impede participation in a scheme that led to nationally-available free access to the data.

Table of Cemetery Friends responses

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Records</i>	<i>o/w Digital</i>	<i>Plans</i>	<i>Digital</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Digital</i>	<i>Monuments</i>	<i>o/w digital</i>	<i>Interested in Further Study</i>
Newark CC, via NCF	Y	Y	Y	N	P	N/A	P	N/A	Y
Tower Hamlets Cemetery	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	N/P
Mendip Hospital Cemetery	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Northwood Cemetery	Y	Y	Y	P	N	N/A	Y	N/A	P
Hyde Park	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Brandwood End	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Belgrave Cemetery Group	Y	N	Y	N	N	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Woodbury Park	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	P
Burngreave Chapel and Cemetery	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P
Hardwick Road	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
St Michael Stanwicks	Y	N	Y	N	Y		P	N	N/A
Lawnswood Cemetery	Y	P	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	P	Y	N/A
Histon Road	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lister Lane	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	p	Y
Glasgow Necropolis	Y	p	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Cathays	Y	N/A	Y	Y	N	N/A	N	N/A	Y

Y = Yes N = No P = Perhaps N/A = Not applicable / did not respond to this element



#### Annexe 4: Archives services consultation

A final element of the consultation was added as it became clear that knowledge of the location of even genealogical data collected from cemeteries and burial grounds was uncertain. Moreover, the extent with which County Archives services were willing or able to curate digital data was unclear. Given one of the major user communities of the digital data to be collected from surveys would be local and family historians, for whom the County Archives services were priority points of interaction, their ability or otherwise to house data was important. This was particularly important as the results of the HER questionnaire revealed that the detailed results of burial ground surveys would often not be housed within such systems.

The responses from the archives services showed a wide diversity of attitudes to graveyard data and abilities to store and manage digital data. A response rate cannot be given as contacting the relevant services was ad hoc, but the response rate was roughly similar to that for HERs. It should be noted that even the Yes responses often included caveats, and the value of records beyond transcriptions was often questioned. In most cases digital data was stored on CDs and plans for storing digital data on servers was only at a preliminary planning stage.

It would therefore seem that County archives services do not offer a consistent and archivally stable environment for the storage of digital graveyard data, even if a few such offices would be willing to hold copies.

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Accept Records</i>	<i>Digital Images</i>	<i>Format 1</i>	<i>Format 2</i>	<i>Curate and Maintain</i>	<i>National Scheme</i>
Denbighshire	Y	Y	ANY		Y	N/A
Derbyshire	N	Y	TIFF	JPEG	P	N/A
Herefordshire		P	Y		P	P
Lancashire	Y	Y	TIFF	JPEG	Y	P
Lichfield	P	Y	TIFF	JPEG	Y	P
Lincolnshire	Y	Y	TIFF	JPEG	N	Y
Northants	N	P			P	P
Somerset	N	Y	ANY		Y	P
Staffordshire	P	Y	TIFF	JPEG	Y	P
Stoke on Trent	P	Y	TIFF	JPEG	Y	P
Warrington	N	Y	TIFF	JPEG	P	Y

Y = Yes N = No P = Perhaps

## Annexe 5 Consultation meetings

### 5.1 York Consultation meeting 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

The report on the meeting summarises the main discussion points and conclusions reached.

#### 5.1.1 Attendees

James Cameron, Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool [JC]

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Sara Howard, Information Officer, Council for British Archaeology [SH]

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Linda Monckton, English Heritage [LM]

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Harold Mytum, Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool [HM]

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Mike Nevell, Head of Archaeology, Centre for Applied Archaeology, University of Salford [MN]

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Robert White, Senior Historic Environment Officer, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority [RW]

[robert.white@yorkshiredales.org.uk](mailto:robert.white@yorkshiredales.org.uk)

Phil Thomas, Secretary, York Diocesan Advisory Committee [PT]

[Phil.Thomas@yorkdiocese.org](mailto:Phil.Thomas@yorkdiocese.org)

Elvie Thompson, Head of Engagement, Council for British Archaeology [ET]

[elviethompson@archaeologyuk.org](mailto:elviethompson@archaeologyuk.org)

Many useful comments were made during discussion; these have been grouped under the headings, even if made at other points during the day as they are all inter-related and our discussions were fluid. Here some attempt is made to order the experiences and comments to provide structure and evidence for the concluding points. Initials are next to points, though sometimes others made the same point elsewhere – apologies for not acknowledging everyone – and HM not referenced at all.

### *5.1.2 Background to recording cemeteries and burial grounds, and the context for the project and consultation*

HM gave an illustrated presentation highlighting the ambitions and remit of the project, and the issues that seemed to the team to be most pertinent to address in the meeting. The potential of the historical burial ground resource was emphasised, together with some of the logistical and IT challenges in carrying out a project to create a digital resource with volunteers.

### *5.1.3 Existing volunteer activity, archives including digital, state of HER data on cemeteries and burial grounds; Desirable levels of detail, what should be accessible to whom, user needs – public, managers (cemeteries, DACs, parishes, HERs, EH), researchers.*

There are considerable amounts of existing activity and expertise already extant, though diverse, unconnected and not comparable. Rather than start from this point (much of which is in effect inaccessible as it is held by groups who will not have an interest in sharing, or may be incompatible for many other reasons) it is more useful to start from user needs, and in particular any core user needs [CH, GG].

Discussion led to a clear hierarchy of needs, from a general description (though what exactly should be in this was not covered in detail and requires some thought), to a locational element linked to graves with names/dates and other key heritage (and ecological) features, through to detailed image data of these and at the finest grain detail, other information as provided by the CBA graveyard recording system and particular ecological studies etc.

The locational data on cultural and ecological resources assists not only the occasional threat through 'development' but also more importantly overall, the informing of grounds maintenance regimes to ensure protection of sensitive resources [PT]. Often, locals do not realise what is valuable or distinctive in their burial grounds.

The data will be of value to local initiatives within education, local authorities, and tourism [RW, PT, ET]. But it will only be used if its value is explained for non-experts. Best practice, local traditions etc. can be highlighted, people are engaged and then wish to have memorials in these styles.

Aspects of anti-social behaviour from constructing shrines [PT] to sex, drinking and drugs in burial grounds [LM] affect other users. These activities affect managers and users generally, and the heritage/ecological resources can be under threat and also affect their appreciation by others. Recording in itself gives life back to a place and engages a whole range of people [PT]. Even if linked to places of worship, it is not religious and so can engage all of the community.

There was discussion of the conflicts and complementarity of cultural and ecological conservation [LM, PT, MN]. However, at the volunteers level the connectedness of things is exciting, not a problem. It is professional interests that divide. The place unites, whatever the type of data. How the data is then used may be professionally problematic, but at least then the competing demands are informed, rather than unknown or based on no data.

### *5.1.4 Encouraging, supporting, directing, and managing volunteers*

There was a wide range of volunteer management experience in the group.

One of the traditional interest groups, Family History Societies, are often only interested in the genealogical data and have often already collected it, and view this data as a financial asset [PT]. They may therefore not wish to lose control of this, or collect new data. The same may apply to some Cemetery Friends organisations, though already our consultation has indicated that others are keen to have guidance and could well be involved [JC].

Key issues were firstly education and motivation, then training and management, and finally assistance with archive deposition.

The wealth of information and areas of potential interest in burial ground data need to be made clear to groups (parishes, friends, local historians, youth groups). The materiality of the memorials – lettering, shapes, designs, local materials – are not obvious. This can also lead to a raised interest in maintaining these traditions as living skills [PT].

Data collection needs to be structured so that it is easy to collect and enter (if not entered in the field). The Brunskill vernacular architecture forms were excellent examples of old-style mass data collection and something similar could be easily produced for burial ground data collection [PT]. Volunteers like frameworks and protocols [MN].

The project can be seen as skills development and training [GG], one user group in effect being those who do the recording – as they are learning [LM]. There can be trickle down from local experts in a range of fields [MN]. With a hierarchical range of levels of data collection, self-selecting groups of volunteers can take different aspects of the recording and engage at whatever level they feel comfortable. The use of on-line videos explaining particular recording and data downloading tasks can be inexpensive and highly effective [MN].

Some volunteers, including ‘silver surfers’, are now IT literate, but a large number (30-40%) are not or do not have camera phones, etc. Short training videos on line could really help many volunteers. Whilst Apps sound attractive they do not work in areas with no signal if they need internet connection. Stand-alone apps, with subsequent data downloading, could be designed, however. There needs to be some level of paper recording, even if it is later converted to digital format within the project. Volunteers may well be prepared to enter paper records into digital formats [MN]; this can potentially widen the skill set of those able to participate, and provide activities over the winter e.g. evening meetings to enter data/name digital photos.

Interest can be measured and initiated through social networks, CBA members, projects such as Defence of Britain/Home Front, God’s Acre, Living Churchyards Group. Engaging bottom-up interest is the way to get burial grounds recorded [GG]. Churchwarden training days can be a valuable and efficient way of reaching many communities in one go – 40 to 50 at a time- tapping into more networks. All religions may chose to participate [LM] and in most cemeteries many are represented, even if managed by a local authority or the Church of England [PT].

#### *5.1.5 Digital data collection – what could or should be digital, formats. Experiences of collecting digital data, especially with volunteers. Managing digital data – storage, accessibility, curation.*

Experience of other projects (e.g. Victorian Schools in Norfolk [SH]) revealed problems when data collected was then transferred to digital systems in HERs and elsewhere. Not only did data on paper have to be entered but also restructured/selectively entered.

It was agreed that summary descriptions of the burial ground should be the starting point, linked to more detail when available. This would satisfy most HERs [SH, RW] and would be a good base line for DACs [PT] and other burial ground managers including for cemeteries and parishes. A structure of such data could already be generated from a range of sources, and then enhanced [CH]. These could be set up as project web pages, which can also publicise the volunteer groups and allow them to advertise their products e.g. pamphlets. The ADS ‘grey literature’ library allows units to show off their work; this would be similar. When it started it was pathetic but is now large enough to be a valuable resource – the same will be the case for this [CH].

That recording was taking place should be known by the HER [GG, RW]. This could be achieved through OASIS [CH].

A key word thesaurus needs to be developed, based on those that already exist. This can be hard for volunteers to apply, and requires training/support [CH]. The visual record (photos,

plan) is a key element, then others can check a lot of the data. The individual elements are easier for volunteers to grasp than the overview [GG].

There was discussion of accuracy and consistency of data – was embedded misleading data a problem [LM]? Many errors will be minor, and the main point is which users' needs are affected by what sort of error [MN]? It was generally agreed that researchers doing detailed analysis would have to check the data themselves, and that for most users the errors would be of minor significance. Key issues – such as very early stones caused by mis-typing should be highlighted as something to check in the protocols, and images often also confirm problems.

Whilst this project might be moving towards a national overview [GG], it is essentially ad hoc 'bottom up' locally driven. There is a challenge in working from fixed, defined projects (at whatever level) to then enhanced data added later and potentially by others – how should that be managed and controlled [CH, LM]?

Digital data can be given Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) which are fixed identifiers, wherever the data gets moved, and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) could be the repository. There needs to be a chain of responsibility from volunteer through validator and checker to ADS deposit [CH]. Guidance and training needs to underpin quality assurance [MN]. The number and quality of images is an issue that needs guidance and management [CH].

The data can then be drawn on by HERs, DACs, parishes, researchers of all kinds. However, the management of the data in the long term is the main issue. The challenge is sustainability with fixed length funding. In some areas e.g. Wales, the Royal Commission and/or National Library could be the central resource, and similarly in Scotland. How far the project goes beyond England will depend on a range of factors and was not further discussed, though it was agreed that collaboration in record design across all countries would be highly desirable.

It is vital that whatever is planned, data does not need re-working once submitted as there will not be resources for this [GG]. The development of protocols that are easy to understand and apply (and check) is an essential stage in the preparation for a bid. It is recommended that this consultation learn from ongoing and recently completed projects e.g. Northumbrian Rock Art, WWI project via CBA, WWI legacy project, Berlin wall, ways in which on-line forms are used.

#### *5.1.6 What is desirable and practical as a way forward?*

There was widespread agreement that there is great interest from a range of users, and that there are many potential participating volunteer groups. This has to be a locally-based activity even if there is county/diocesan level involvement. It may be managed at national level, which may also be the level for deposition.

Clear conclusions were:

#### Range of users

- HERs largely require summary and pointers to more detailed data
- Burial ground managers (cemeteries, parishes, DACs) can use data
- Local groups can use data for all forms of engagement and could have more informative guide books, tourism, education
- Can link with ecological interests

#### User needs:

- Burial ground description of main characteristics for HER, web sites
- Inscription format [text]
- Inscription content, esp. family history data [text]

- Memorial form [image(s)]
- Memorial features [images]
- Memorial location
- Plan with range of features – planting, structures, paths, monuments
- Link to ecology, burial registers and other documentation (even if paper)

Examples of aspects that could be expanded in the record:

- Coded monument data (e.g. CBA forms or simplified versions)
- Ecology data (many categories)
- Geological data

Volunteer training and management

- Many existing networks and structures can be used to publicise this initiative, e.g. Cemetery friends, DACs, CBA, YAC, county archaeological societies
- Training to understand importance beyond inscriptions
- Support for ordering digital data for deposition
- Ways in which data could have community use
- Ownership important for volunteers as they chose the level of recording, but also the ethos is for sharing, so uniformity in base record and deposition of accessible archives are essential
- The project can be seen as skills development/community-building through the collection and archiving of burial ground data rather than the other way round
- Clear protocols need to be designed and made available, and training offered to apply these; provision of on-line training videos would be a useful adjunct to manuals and face-to-face sessions

Digital data archiving

- Only some HERs able to hold digital archives for burial grounds, otherwise just a pointer to these
- Need for this project to research county archives services and ability to hold digital data
- Clear standardised structure necessary from the start
- Summaries of burial grounds are necessary starting points, and there should be project web sites
- ADS could provide a publicly accessible repository if the budget for each sub-project include associated costs
- Other digital archives linked to projects require review to learn lessons in training, implementation and curation

*5.1.7 Concluding remarks*

HM thanked everyone for attending and offering such useful comments based on the wide range of experience and viewpoints represented by those present. There was clear potential for the project, and some very valuable suggestions about how to learn from other projects and create a resource with long-term viability. Many of the points discussed during the meeting form key features of the final report, supported by the data collected in other elements of the consultation, which largely correlate with views and experiences at the meeting.

## **5.2 Edinburgh Consultation meeting 25<sup>th</sup> September 2013.**

A meeting was held in Edinburgh, courtesy of Historic Scotland, as far greater graveyard recording has been undertaken by community groups in Scotland than in England. Moreover, there have been past initiatives between Historic Scotland and the Council for Scottish Archaeology (CSA, now Archaeology Scotland) that specifically encouraged volunteer group activity in this field. The experience gained was therefore considered highly relevant in informing plans for future developments in the area.

The meeting was attended by John Raven and Stephen Gordon (Historic Scotland), Eila Macqueen (Director, Archaeology Scotland), Phil Richardson (Adopt-a-Monument Officer, Archaeology Scotland), John Borland, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), and Susan Buckham (independent historic burial ground consultant and previously carved stones officer for CSA).

The same agenda as for the York meeting was tabled, and valuable discussions took place. Eila Macqueen and Susan Buckham both provided details of historic and current projects that involve community group graveyard projects. John Raven now co-ordinates the National Committee for Carved Stones in Scotland, which includes gravestones within its remit, and Stephen Gordon has a long-standing professional interest in stone conservation, including its specific applicability to historic gravestones. John Borland outlined the Canmore database structure and how some of its limitations are being overcome. More graveyard data in the existing RCAHMS archives will become accessible on-line through current enhancement, and how new data would be welcome, particularly if it could be structured to allow easy addition to the system.

Many issues and conclusions were similar, but a few differences emerged:

- Archaeology Scotland's Adopt-a-monument scheme both reveals interest in graveyard recording and a framework for support. RCAHMS' five-year Scotland's Rural Past project, HLF-funded, also provides a template; an urban equivalent is under consideration by RHAHMS at present.
- CSA and Archaeology Scotland recording systems for graveyards presently available have been successful to varying degrees (many accessible via Archaeology Scotland's web pages), but they are also too complex for many groups, and simpler versions would be highly desirable.
- The RCAHMS is both willing and able to curate digital data from graveyard surveys without charge, and this commitment will continue after merger with Historic Scotland.
- Burial grounds are largely managed by local authorities which both simplifies ownership, access, and responsibility for conservation, but potentially distances communities from feeling that they have a role.

The conclusions drawn from the meeting were that Scotland's longer experience of volunteer groups both highlights the potential but also reveals the challenges in managing recording projects. The digital dimension has yet to be faced in any coherent way, and access to and sharing data has proven problematic in some cases. There was unanimous interest in the English Heritage project, and potential participation in a wider scheme. However, this would require flexibility to be appropriate within local/Scottish requirements and systems.

### 5.3 Thame God's Acre event 28<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

God's Acre, an organisation committed to conservation and management of graveyards, has been awarded HLF funding to conduct a number of day conferences with workshops to encourage volunteer groups to undertake graveyard management and to understand and enhance natural heritage and to maintain cultural heritage. The Beautiful Burial Ground Conference at Thame was a substantial event, with 79 registered, largely from the Oxford and St Alban's dioceses.

Harold Mytum took part in the event at Thame, Oxfordshire, and was able to informally discuss the project with members of the God's Acre team (Sue Cooper, Andrea Gilpin, Harriet Cart) and with Natalie Merry (Oxford DAC Secretary). In addition, c. 20 of the participants attended Harold Mytum's workshop on graveyard recording and conservation (there were 3 concurrent workshops, and it was widely agreed that many participants would have liked to attend other workshops that ran at the same time), and these indicated both the level of interest, knowledge and skills at the 'grass roots'. This workshop revealed the varied levels of engagement with digital recording technology amongst the attendees, but also a general acceptance of the desirability of having soft copy and wide access to data. The God's Acre and DAC members all agreed that a project that encouraged and guided volunteer recording would be both popular and effective, and that they would be happy to be involved. The God's Acre team started with an ecological focus, largely in the Shropshire area, but have widened their remit and also national coverage following the HLF grant. Organisations such as God's Acre would be effective conduits through which a national initiative could reach local groups. The HLF-funded regional events, of which Thame is one, may also provide one form of outreach to groups.

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