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# The Funeral as an Opportunity for Social Display, 1700 – 1820

With a specific focus on the West Country.

Daniel O'Brien

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for  
award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts

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## Abstract

The thesis examines eighteenth-century funerals as opportunities for social display. It analyses funerals in the region around the cities of Bath, Bristol and Salisbury, identified as the West Country. This is a prosperous and interesting region which has not been studied by existing literature on funerary consumption. The thesis demonstrates that funerals were intended to be respectable occasions, organised and performed by professionals and attended by the people with close social ties to the deceased. The funeral is presented as a display of status that used the goods and services of the developing undertaking trade. The importance of the funeral enabled the growth of the undertaking trade and conferred status to undertakers' businesses.

The thesis makes original contributions to several historiographical debates. It addresses the lack of discussion about funerary purchases in literature regarding polite consumption, by showing how funerary goods were used to demonstrate the personal status and character of the deceased person. The thesis challenges the lack of historiographical debate about the funeral as sociable by identifying how relationships were important to the organisation and performance of the funeral. By examining the roles and status of undertakers and clergy, it identifies how the funeral was professionalised. This professionalisation of death has been discussed in existing literature but the examples are limited to London and there is no attempt to acknowledge the role of clergy in professionalised death.

The thesis opens with an analysis of the professionals who organised and performed the funeral, the undertakers and clergy. The professionals' roles are outlined, and the perception of these roles is considered. Three different types of funeral are examined, showing how widely the funeral was used as an opportunity for social display. The intimate, 'private' funeral is presented as a celebration of personal achievement which was intended for the

friends and family of the deceased. The funerals of the elite are presented as ostentatious occasions in which the display was tailored to the different audiences that the funeral party encountered. The funerals of three nonconformist communities are shown to be less ostentatious occasions in which social ties and the personal qualities of the deceased were of paramount importance. Analysis of the nonconformist funerals shows the importance of justification for different goods and services used by mourners. In all three types of funeral, the thesis identifies the importance of funerary professionals and the funerary goods which they provided. The final chapter examines the act of general mourning for a deceased monarch during a period in which loyalist enthusiasm was high. The thesis shows that general mourning provided opportunities for both consumers and retailers to demonstrate their status and respectability in a specially contrived environment.

## Acknowledgements and Declaration:

I would like to sincerely thank my family for their persistent support and understanding during the production of the thesis. For well over a decade my family have had to live in the presence of book covers with skulls, skeletons, funerals, coffins, burial grounds and various depictions of death and maiden. This probably represents the greatest exposure members of the English public have had to the paraphernalia of death since the late seventeenth century.

I would also like to thank Richard Sheldon for his support and direction during the thesis. He has provided valuable advice and much encouragement over the last six years of my doctoral study.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Daniel O'Brien     DATE:19/09/2018

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## Introduction

This thesis argues that funerals were an opportunity for social display in the eighteenth-century West Country. The funerary developments of the period are interpreted as consequences of the development of a polite and commercial society, in which funerals provided an opportunity for consumers and practitioners; such retailers or religious officials, to demonstrate their status and taste.

The following points are advanced throughout this thesis' argument. Firstly, innovations in funerary display show a desire to make social statements through the use of items or practices that testified to a person's character and status. Secondly, the funeral was professionalised because it was necessary for a person to use the services of a businessman such as an undertaker or coffin maker to organise a respectable funeral. Thirdly, the meaning of funerals and funerary display was contested because different authorities, whether secular or religious, offered their own arguments about what constituted respectability.

## Historiography

### i. Historiography of Death in Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century is significant in the historiography of death as a period in which secular concerns influenced the ideas and practices with which English society responded to the phenomenon of death. This was not the end of the religious influence on death, but it represented the transition to a different environment in which death could be controlled by human agency. This change is understood to represent a transition from ideas and practices of medieval provenance to a 'modern way' of dying which became dominant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Historiography has identified change in the understanding of the phenomenon of death. It is conjectured that prior to the long-eighteenth century, death was accepted to be a spiritual concern, occasioned by divine will and acting as a transition to an afterlife. Such beliefs are fundamental elements of Tony Walter's 'traditional' type of death and the 'tame' death identified by Philippe Ariés.<sup>1</sup> In these models, both Walter and Ariés conclude that religion had endowed death with a sense of purpose and meaning which would fall out of favour due to increasing individualism. This argument is supported by evidence for the emerging importance of the individual before and after death in the decades preceding the period.<sup>2</sup> However, whilst individualism may have undermined the communal aspects of this 'traditional' way of dying, it cannot account for the apparently diminished state of spiritual thought. Acknowledging this dilemma, Roy Porter argues that scientific and medical thought, not addressed by Ariés, played a significant role in transforming the popular understanding of why and how death occurred.<sup>3</sup> For Porter, the proliferation of medical knowledge in the eighteenth century reshaped the popular understanding of the causes and meaning of death, much as it had influenced interpretations of illness and the body.<sup>4</sup> The consequence was an understanding of death as a temporal phenomenon, no longer a transition but an end and potentially, a failure. The negativity of such ideas is not ignored by existing literature which often contrasts this 'medicalised' death unfavourably with the forms of social organisation which preceded it.

Secular notions of death are observed to have caused change in the social structures which dealt with the dying and dead. Perceiving death to be a dysfunction of the body encouraged

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<sup>1</sup> T. Walter, *The Revival of Death* (London: Routledge, 1994). p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> C. Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> R. Porter, 'The Hour of Philippe Ariés' *Mortality* 4:1 (1999). p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> R. Porter, "Death and the Doctors," in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement* ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (London: Routledge, 1989). p. 88.

the belief that it was, as T.N. Madan describes, ‘amenable to human manipulation’.<sup>5</sup> The increasing presence of medical practitioners at the deathbed is offered as evidence of the contemporary belief that dying could potentially be assuaged by medicine.<sup>6</sup> Porter argues against this interpretation observing that the medical attempts at resuscitation or prevention of death were limited to the social elite and notably unsuccessful in reducing the incidence of non-virulent death.<sup>7</sup> Ivan Illich, whose conclusions were criticised by Porter, revises his original argument for eighteenth century medicine’s defiance of death, acknowledging that such behaviour did not emerge until the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Rather than preventing death, the medical care of the dying is argued to have focused on the management of the dying hours, contributing to the ‘peaceful death’ of the late-eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> This ideal of a resigned and quiet death is interpreted, whether positively or negatively, as a consequence of the medical intervention in the dying process.<sup>10</sup> However, it has been argued that peaceful dying did not represent an utter rejection of religious influence at death but rather a re-definition of the role of religion. Ann Digby argues that religious authorities were responsible for providing comfort and direction when medical intervention had ‘failed.’<sup>11</sup> In this interpretation religious beliefs are still relevant to deathbed activity but medicine is arguably the dominant influence because it determines and confirms the imminence of death. This is not to suggest however that the relationship between medicine and religion was one of

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<sup>5</sup> T.N. Madan, ‘Dying with Dignity’, *Social Science & Medicine* 35:4 (1992), p. 425.

<sup>6</sup> P.J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain, 1700-1850* (London: Routledge, 1995). p. 138.

<sup>7</sup> On the limited provision of medical support for the dying see, R. Porter and D. Porter, *In Sickness and in Health* (London: Fourth Estate, 1988). p. 248. For medicine’s failure to influence death rates, Porter, ‘Death and the Doctors’, pp. 78-79.

<sup>8</sup> I. Illich, ‘Death Undefeated: From Medicine to Medicalisation to Systematisation’, *British Medical Journal* 311:7021 (1995). p. 1653. This article addresses the conclusions of, I. Illich, *Medical Nemesis* (London: Calder and Bryers, 1975).

<sup>9</sup> Porter and Porter, *In Sickness and in Health*. p. 254.

<sup>10</sup> Negative appraisals of ‘peaceful dying’ such as Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain, 1700-1850*. p. 141, arguing that medicated dying patient lost control over their circumstances; E.H. Ackerknecht, ‘Death in the History of Medicine,’ *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 42:1 (Jan/Feb) (1968), p. 20, accuses the medical profession of brutality in their treatment of the dying.

<sup>11</sup> A. Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 84-85.

antagonism. Citing the directives of late-Georgian royal physician Sir Henry Hall, both Pat Jalland and Porter demonstrate that medical professionals of the early nineteenth century accepted the importance of religious beliefs to the dying individual.<sup>12</sup> It is furthermore observed that, contrary to Ariés' stance, the comforting notion of afterlife survived enlightened thinking but was transformed from a reward for temporal good deeds to a post-mortem reunion with deceased kin.<sup>13</sup> The perceived guarantee of a place in the afterlife permitted individuals to die free from the uncertainty and anxiety which had traditionally accompanied the final hours of life.

The immediate circumstances of the dying individual were concurrently transformed by the changing attitudes to death in long-eighteenth century England. In preceding centuries the deathbed had been a public space in which the final moments were the subject of spectatorship and evaluation.<sup>14</sup> Classified by Walter as the 'traditional' death, this was a communal occasion in which numerous members of the community were expected to participate.<sup>15</sup> Visitation of the dying was intended to be a didactic experience and positive appraisals of 'traditional' death assert that it de-mystified dying and encouraged preparedness for one's own death.<sup>16</sup> The persistence of these values is apparent in both Mack and Cecil's descriptions of dissenting deathbeds and this affirms Walter's assertion that different types of death co-exist within society particularly in marginal groups.<sup>17</sup> By stark contrast the ideal of

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<sup>12</sup> P. Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. and

<sup>13</sup> J. Rugg, "From Reason to Regulation, 1760-1850," in P. Jupp and C. Gittings (eds.) *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 213.

<sup>14</sup> R. Wunderli, and G. Broce, "The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20 (1989) p. 264, also observe that visitors played a significant role in aiding the dying individual to secure salvation.

<sup>15</sup> L. McCrae Beier, "The Good Death in Seventeenth Century England", in R. Houlbrooke (ed.) *Death, Ritual and Bereavement* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 55.

<sup>16</sup> McCrae Beier, "Good Death in Seventeenth Century England", p. 56.

<sup>17</sup> P. Mack, "Religious Dissenters in Enlightenment England", *History Workshop Journal*, 49 (2000) p. 4 and R. Cecil, "Holy Dying: Evangelical Attitudes to Death", *History Today*, 32 (1982), p. 30.

the peaceful death was defined by the tranquillity of the dying individual and most profoundly by the privacy of the deathbed, attended only by close relatives.

Much as secular ideas had influenced the experience of the dying individual so they transformed the ways in which society responded to death. Values such as privacy, concealment and intimacy became the defining features of a modern culture of death.

Existing literature has focused on two aspects of the social organisation of death, burial and funerals. The discussion of burial is more detailed, with contributions from archaeology and history, but the analysis of funerals is a developing field and also the main focus of this thesis.

This is observed in the emergence of mortuary practices which separated the living and dead in ways not common prior to the mid-seventeenth century. Changes in the location and manner of burials physically distanced the remains of the dead and sought to ensure the permanence of interment. Impermanence had defined burial in medieval and post-medieval England where disinterment was an inevitable consequence of burial conditions. Burial sites were predominantly urban spaces which were the subject of continued usage over many centuries due to their proximity to churches. Catholic teaching had invested the environs of the church with a spiritual significance which would persist in the popular consciousness well into the nineteenth century. This was not an egalitarian concept and the gradations of spiritually significant space reflected social divisions, but it was clear that burial without the churchyard was not an option for a decent, pious individual. Churchyards were therefore an inevitable destination for the majority of a community's dead and were accordingly burdened by the population growth which followed the seventeenth century. Overcrowding contributed to the striking accounts of disinterment in eighteenth and nineteenth century burial grounds because the dead were accidentally disinterred during the re-use of burial plots. Unlike the

medieval practice of mass burial and intentional exhumation, the accidental disinterment of the eighteenth-century dead was an unwanted problem which had to be managed by overworked parishes. In our region the problem of overcrowding was beginning to challenge urban communities but not to the extent that it had in London.

The influence of secular ideas on the funeral has been identified by studies of early undertaking trade. The historiography of the origins and development of the undertaking trade will be discussed in detail in chapter one, but it is important to address the key themes of this literature which influence this thesis. Primarily the common funeral of the long eighteenth century is presented as a highly commercialised occasion, with many different opportunities for display using purchased or hired goods. The undertaking trade are integral to these funerals; undertakers are identified by numerous studies as the only viable source for many of the innovative items and practices that became popular.<sup>18</sup> The primary purpose of the funeral was to create a personalised display that expressed the status of the dead person and satisfied expectations of respectability. These conclusions provide a good basis for the thesis but there are some shortcomings which must be addressed. The existing literature focuses predominantly on London, with a few studies considering the funeral from a national perspective. The regional focus chosen by this thesis is an original approach which is intended to examine the experience of retailers and consumers outside of the capital in greater detail. Secondly, the social purpose of the funeral has not been fully examined because many of the studies focus only on the undertakers and the capabilities of their businesses. The thesis will examine undertakers, but then attempt to understand how consumers used and

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<sup>18</sup> P.S. Fritz, 'The Undertaking Trade in England: Its Origins and Early Development, 1660-1830', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28 (1994), pp. 241-53; J. Litten, 'The Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England, 1714-1760', in *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, ed. by Peter Jupp and Clare Gittings (Basingstoke: MacMillan Publishing, 1997), pp. 48-62; R. Houlbrooke, 'The Age of Decency, 1660-1760', in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, P. Jupp and C. Gittings eds. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 174-201.

understood their products. This will also be an opportunity to consider the social purpose of the funerals which were being performed in the West Country. The final shortcoming concerns religion, which has been overlooked by existing literature on the funerals of the eighteenth century that focuses on the secular developments but does not consider the role of priests. The thesis examines the priest's role in the professionalised funeral and considers the priest as a 'deathworker,' an original interpretation.

## ii. Historiography of Politeness & Consumption

The thesis situates its analysis of funerary practices in a wider historiographical discussion regarding the development of a polite and commercial society in eighteenth century Britain. By examining the funeral as a social opportunity, the thesis expands on a significant body of literature about the development of a polite culture in eighteenth century.

In *A Polite and Commercial People*, Paul Langford described the circumstances of middling people from various backgrounds, who engaged in leisurely activities and sought to demonstrate their refinement and taste.<sup>19</sup> Langford notes that the pursuit of politeness united middling people from educated professionals to urban artisans. This challenged the earlier argument of E.P. Thompson who defined politeness as the culture of the gentry and aristocracy.<sup>20</sup> Langford interprets polite culture as open and flexible; qualities which appealed to the aspirations of the middling sort. Status, which had once been attributed to rank, could therefore be claimed by members of the middle class through personal behaviour and values. Sociability and refinement were important qualities that distinguished a member of polite society. Langford argues that there were many opportunities to demonstrate these qualities

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<sup>19</sup> P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 70-1.

<sup>20</sup> E.P. Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebian Culture', *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974), p. 397; E.P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?', *Social History*, 3 (1978), p. 157.



through interaction with one's peers and the possession of material goods which were perceived to be fashionable.<sup>21</sup>

Subsequent studies have identified the influence of politeness on various different aspects of middle class life. The development of polite manners has been observed by studies of male and female behaviour which discuss the importance attributed to personal interaction.<sup>22</sup> The influence of politeness on language has been similarly traced by studies of correspondence by Lawrence Klein and Susan Fitzmaurice.<sup>23</sup> The most significant body of literature focuses on the new forms of leisurely behaviour which were enjoyed by polite society such as the pleasure grounds, theatres and coffee houses.<sup>24</sup>

Peter Borsay examined the impact of eighteenth century polite culture on the built environment of provincial towns.<sup>25</sup> Borsay describes an 'urban renaissance' which was typified by the construction of new urban venues for polite activity such as club-houses, assemblies and civic buildings.<sup>26</sup> These spaces enabled middle class townspeople to participate in the leisurely activities that demonstrated their status as members of polite society. Subsequent studies have observed that urban space was transformed to facilitate the sociable encounters that were important to polite society.<sup>27</sup> The importance attributed to

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<sup>21</sup> Langford, *Polite and Commercial*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>22</sup> P. Carter, *Men and the emergence of polite society, Britain 1660-1800* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 56-62; M. Cohen, 'Manners' make the man: politeness, chivalry, and the construction of masculinity, 1750-1850,' *Journal of British Studies*, 44:2 (2005) pp. 313-14; 325.

<sup>23</sup> L. Klein, 'Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England', *The Historical Journal* 32:3 (1989), pp. 583-605; S.M. Fitzmaurice, 'The commerce of language in the pursuit of politeness in eighteenth-century England' *English Studies* 79:4 (1998), pp. 309-328. The importance of polite language has also been examined in: R.J. Watts, 'Language and politeness in eighteenth century Britain', *Pragmatics* 9:1 (1999), pp. 5-20.

<sup>24</sup> On polite gardens: T. Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: gardens and society in eighteenth-century England* (Stroud: A. Sutton, 1995); H Grieg, "'All Together and All Distinct": Public Sociability and Social Exclusivity in London's Pleasure Gardens, ca. 1740-1800' *Journal of British Studies* 1:51 (2012), pp. 50-75. Card playing: J.E. Mullin, "'We had Carding": hospitable card play and polite domestic sociability among the middling sort in eighteenth-century England' *Journal of Social History* 42:4 (2009), pp. 989-1008.

<sup>25</sup> P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>26</sup> Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 312-4.

<sup>27</sup> R. Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 355-74.

leisurely pursuits prompted Angus McInnes to argue that this was the development of 'leisure towns', rather than a widespread urban renaissance.<sup>28</sup> Borsay defended his theory against this criticism, noting that leisurely attractions were being developed in towns with diverse economic backgrounds, such as industrial centres, ports and county towns.<sup>29</sup>

Borsay's analysis of urban transformation is also criticised for the lack of detail afforded to shops and shopping spaces.<sup>30</sup> Subsequent studies have presented the redevelopment of shopping areas and the new design of shops as evidence for the argument that visits to shops were important to polite culture. Analysis by Stobart, Glennie and Walsh interprets the shop as venue for polite activity and illustrates how shops were places where fashions could be learned.<sup>31</sup> Helen Berry has added to this interpretation by arguing that the quality of a shopkeeper was testified by the design and organisation of their premises.<sup>32</sup>

Existing discussion has therefore focused on many different aspects of life that were influenced by politeness but has neglected to examine how death rites were influenced. This is surprising because all 'members' of polite society died or were bereaved, and it is logical to argue that the funerals would be influenced by the same values and behaviours that had instructed their lives. For this reason, the thesis will present the funeral as an opportunity for polite display, involving the purposeful use of services, material goods and professionals in order to secure the reputation of both the deceased and their surviving relatives.

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<sup>28</sup> A. McInnes, 'The Emergence of a Leisure Town: Shrewsbury, 1660-1760', *Past and Present*, 120 (1988), pp. 83-4.

<sup>29</sup> P. Borsay, 'The Emergence of a Leisure Town: Or an Urban Renaissance?', *Past and Present*, 126 (1990), pp. 189-96.

<sup>30</sup> J. Stobart, 'Shopping Streets as Social Space: Leisure, Consumerism and Improvement in an Eighteenth-Century County Town', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), p. 5; S. Pennell, 'Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), p. 556.

<sup>31</sup> J. Stobart and A. Hann, 'Sites of Consumption: The Display of Goods in Provincial Shops in Eighteenth-Century England', *Cultural and Social History*, 2 (2005), pp. 165-88; P. Glennie, 'Consumption, Consumerism and Urban Form: Historical Perspectives', *Urban Studies*, 35 (1998), 927-51; C. Walsh, 'Shop Design and the Display of Goods in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Design History*, 8 (1995), pp. 157-76.

<sup>32</sup> H. Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 383-4.

By examining the eighteenth-century funeral as an opportunity for social display, the thesis must consider the funeral as an example of polite expenditure. For this reason, the thesis responds to wider discussion on consumption in eighteenth century. Langford argued that polite culture was made possible by the increased wealth of the middle classes, raising their standard of living and improving their ability to be selective consumers.<sup>33</sup>

The rise in consumption was first examined in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth Century England* by Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John Plumb.<sup>34</sup> The three essays made a significant contribution by explaining consumption from the perspective of customers, rather than producers, and arguing that demand was a more effective means of explaining the increase in consumption than supply. This approach placed emphasis on the experience of consumers, by addressing the social consequence of consumption and contemporary attitudes to consumption. The essays exposed the rich variety of subjects consumed in the period, in addition to material goods, printed works, plays and architecture. Plumb's argument for the commercialisation of leisure was a continuation of his earlier work on the commercialisation of leisure in which he had analysed how horse racing, music became experiences for people to buy.<sup>35</sup> Brewer would later expand on the consumption of culture such as plays, music and literature.<sup>36</sup> There has been criticism of the conclusions in *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, two specific points of criticism are relevant to this analysis of funerary consumption: the importance attributed to emulation and the lack of detail discussion on shopping.

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<sup>33</sup> Langford, *Polite and Commercial*, pp. 68-9.

<sup>34</sup> N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth Century England* (London: Europa, 1982).

<sup>35</sup> J.H. Plumb, *The Commercialisation of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century England* (Reading: University of Reading, 1973), pp. 14-9.

<sup>36</sup> J. Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1997).

Specific criticism has been directed at McKendrick's argument that consumption was motivated by a desire to emulate the elite; a form of 'trickle down' economy as originally described by Georg Simmel and Torsten Veblen.<sup>37</sup> Lorna Wetherill questions the effectiveness of emulation as a comprehensive motivation for consumers' purchases, arguing that popular items were not always possessed by those of high status.<sup>38</sup> Glennie criticised historiographical arguments for emulation as a 'caricature' which simplified the relationships between different groups of consumers.<sup>39</sup> Neither disagree that emulation was a factor but they criticise the argument that it can be used to explain all expenditure. Emulation is a significant subject for this thesis because existing literature on funerary consumption has characterised the consumption of new funerary goods as a form of emulative activity. It will therefore be important to consider how debates about emulation in polite society can influence our understanding of funerary expenditure and the marketing of funerary goods.

Shopping is important to this thesis because it must consider the undertakers, shopkeepers, who were an important development in funerary organisation. *The Birth of Consumer Society* gave a limited discussion of the role of the shops and shopkeepers but placed greater emphasis on the possession of items rather than their acquisition. A more detailed analysis of shopping has been performed by subsequent studies of the operation and patronage of shops. Mui and Mui have identified the considerable status attributed to some shopkeepers, although their conclusions about the limited capacity of provincial shopkeepers are challenged by later research that identifies specialised and well-supplied retail in the provinces.<sup>40</sup> John Stobart and Andrew Hann argue that shopkeepers played a significant role in the informing their

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<sup>37</sup> N. McKendrick, 'The Commercialisation of Fashion' in *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (London: Europa, 1982), p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Routledge, 2003) pp. 195-6.

<sup>39</sup> Glennie, 'Consumption, Consumerism', p. 931.

<sup>40</sup> H-C. Mui and L. Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 234-5.

consumers of fashions and introducing new items.<sup>41</sup> Christina Fowler identifies the specialisation of retailing in businesses in provincial area from the middle of the eighteenth century, arguing that this was a period of viability for the retail of specific items.<sup>42</sup> Berry argues that specialisation in a particular trade conferred status to the provincial shopkeeper and their business.<sup>43</sup> Here there are useful parallels with the funeral trade, which comprised urban artisans and shopkeepers, from many different backgrounds, who specialised in funerary work. Through their actions, funerary organisation, which had been ‘amateur’ work became professionalised.

Existing literature indicates that it is valid to consider non-luxury purchases as indicators of social quality and status. Studies of politeness and consumption have predominantly focused on luxury items and non-essential goods. There are practical reasons for this, as Berry argues, the acquisition of luxury items produces greater expenditure and requires a personal interaction; therefore, an opportunity for polite interaction.<sup>44</sup> Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift note that consumption can involve an eclectic range of purchases and argue that all purchases are in some way indicative of a person’s identity.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Overton, Whittle, Dean and Hann note that any sort of consumption required a choice and was influenced by the values of the individual who made the choice.<sup>46</sup>

## Methodology

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<sup>41</sup> J. Stobart, and A. Hann, 'Sites of Consumption: The Display of Goods in Provincial Shops in Eighteenth-Century England', *Cultural and Social History*, 2 (2005), pp. 165-88.

<sup>42</sup> C. Fowler, 'Changes in Provincial Retail Practice During the Eighteenth Century, with Particular Reference to Central Southern England', *Business History*, 40 (1998), p. 46.

<sup>43</sup> Berry, 'Polite Consumption', p. 383.

<sup>44</sup> Berry, 'Polite Consumption' pp. 376-7.

<sup>45</sup> P. Glennie and N. Thrift, 'Consumers, Identities, and Consumption Spaces in Early-Modern England' *Environment and Planning A* 28 (1996), pp. 36-7.

<sup>46</sup> M. Overton, J. Whittle, D. Dean, and A. Hann, eds., *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750, Routledge Explorations in Economic History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 87.

This thesis is a thematic study of funerary culture which considers funerary professionals, types of funeral and the act of mourning. It is important to qualify that the thesis discusses protestant funerals, with an emphasis on the established church in addition to members of three nonconformist communities: Baptists, Society of Friends and Methodists. The funerals of men are most commonly analysed, with some female funerals involved. This is a consequence of the source materials identified rather than an argument that only male funerals were polite occasions. The periodisation, location and sources of the thesis will now be justified in greater detail.

### Periodisation

This thesis examines West Country funerary practices in the period 1700 to 1820. This period has been chosen because it is identified as a halcyon for funerary consumption and represents the century in which material displays of status were most popular.<sup>47</sup> The majority of the examples studied in the thesis are drawn from the second half of the eighteenth century and this is a consequence of the greater variety of source materials which existed from the 1760s onwards. The period closes in 1820 because this has traditionally been identified as a point of transition between a funerary culture that was focused on decency and a different culture that extolled sensibility or emotion.<sup>48</sup> Wider developments in 1820s, such as the introduction of cemeteries and concern about regulation represent a shift towards ‘Victorian’ death. In the second chapter several examples are drawn from the first half of the 1820s because the source materials were produced by clergymen who had been writing throughout the period.

### The West Country

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<sup>47</sup> Fritz, ‘Undertaking Trade in England’ pp. 241-53; Litten, ‘Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England,’ p. 20-1.

<sup>48</sup> Rugg, ‘From Reason to Regulation’, pp. 205-8.

This thesis adopts a regional focus which has been used by studies of polite culture in urban England. These studies examine evidence of politeness in the urban landscape and the behaviour of townspeople living in provincial England. The regional approach permits national generalisations about politeness to be challenged and provides an opportunity for local influences to be considered in detail. Hannah Barker used a regional focus on three Northern English cities to challenge national generalisations about the politeness and discuss local influences on polite behaviour.<sup>49</sup> Other studies have focused on specific aspects of polite culture in different regions such as Stobart's analysis of shopping space in North West England and Helen Berry's work on newspaper advertising in Newcastle.<sup>50</sup> This thesis will be an original contribution to this literature because an examination of polite culture through funerary customs has not been completed previously.

In this thesis, the term 'West Country' is used to refer to the three cities of Bath, Bristol and Salisbury and their neighbouring towns in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. This is a smaller area than is usually described as the 'West Country,' but it is intended to allow a detailed focus on the conditions in these three cities and the communities which were closely linked to them.<sup>51</sup> Historiography justifies the use of these cities as a focus for studying the influence of polite culture on funerary practices.

Bath has been presented as a nationally-significant location which grew considerably as demonstrated by a population increase from 2,000 to 30,000 inhabitants during the eighteenth century.<sup>52</sup> Studied as an influential spa town, Bath is presented as a town with a reputation for the quality and tastefulness. Borsay argued that Bath had a status comparable to London and

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<sup>49</sup> H. Barker, "'Smoke Cities': Northern Industrial Towns in Late Georgian England", *Urban History*, 31:2 (2004), pp. 188-9.

<sup>50</sup> J. Stobart, 'Shopping Streets as Social Space: Leisure, Consumerism and Improvement in an Eighteenth-Century County Town', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), pp. 3-21.

<sup>51</sup> The West Country may also include Devon, Cornwall and Dorset.

<sup>52</sup> P. Borsay, 'Bath: An Enlightenment City?' in P. Borsay, R-E. Mohrmann, G. Hirschfelder eds. *New Directions in Urban History* (London: Waxman, 2000), p. 3.

played a central role in the ‘making of Georgian England.’<sup>53</sup> Bath’s importance to the social routines of the elite has been acknowledged by several studies of the local and national elite, which demonstrate how widely the city was admired.<sup>54</sup> Ronald Neale has examined how the development of the spa was ensured by the cosmopolitan patrons who visited the city, central to his study is argument that Bath was a place to make displays of status.<sup>55</sup> Borsay argues that the success of Bath depended on its reputation as a place of culture and this was secured by the leisure spaces, shops or amenities.<sup>56</sup> Trevor Fawcett has examined these assets in his studies of leisure and commerce in Bath, illustrating the extent of Bath’s leisure and consumption infrastructure.<sup>57</sup> Fawcett argued that non-luxury shopkeepers in Bath were influenced by their affluent customers to stock more expensive produce and also, in some cases, to adopt more refined behaviour.<sup>58</sup> This is a particularly relevant conclusion because it indicates that non-luxury trades, which undertaking was an example of, could be influenced by the unique character of Bath.

By contrast, Bristol was a city with a national status as a centre of colonial trade and commerce, which Walter Minchinton classified as a ‘metropolis of the West.’<sup>59</sup> Minchinton argued that geography made the city an ideal port for trade in the English channel and also a nexus for regional trade in agricultural produce and raw materials for industry.<sup>60</sup> The success

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<sup>53</sup> P. Borsay, ‘New Approaches to Social History. Myth, Memory and Places: Monmouth and Bath, 1750-1900’, *Journal of Social History*, 39 (2006), p. 873.

<sup>54</sup> P. Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry 1640-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 245; L. Stone and J.C.F. Stone, *An Open Elite?: England 1540-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 326.

<sup>55</sup> R.S. Neale, ‘Bath: ideology and utopia 1700-1760’ in P. Borsay, *The Eighteenth-Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 223-59; R.S. Neale, *Bath 1680-1850* (London, 1981).

<sup>56</sup> P. Borsay, ‘Image and Counter-Image in Georgian Bath,’ *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies* 17:2 (1994), pp. 165-180; Borsay, ‘Bath: An Enlightenment City,’ pp. 4-9.

<sup>57</sup> T. Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd: Shops, Trade and Market at the 18th Century Spa* (Bath: Ruton, 2002); T. Fawcett, *Bath Entertain'd: Amusements, Recreations and Gambling at the 18th-Century Spa* (Bath: Ruton, 1998); T. Fawcett, ‘Eighteenth-Century Shops and the Luxury Trade’, *Bath History*, 3 (1989), 49-75.

<sup>58</sup> Fawcett. ‘Eighteenth Century Shops,’ p. 61.

<sup>59</sup> W. Minchinton, ‘Bristol: Metropolis of the West in the Eighteenth Century’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (1954), pp. 69-89.

<sup>60</sup> Minchinton, ‘Bristol: Metropolis,’ pp. 76-77.



of Bristolian trade supported an ebullient middle class within the city and created a local elite.<sup>61</sup> Kenneth Morgan introduces his study of West India merchants from Bristol, with a brief description of their memorials in the city cathedral. This gives an indication of the importance of burial practices to the self-made men of status in Bristol, although the description is limited and there is no reference to their funerals.<sup>62</sup>

The cathedral city of Salisbury differed from Bath and Bristol because it was not subject to a boom in a specific mode of activity. Salisbury has been classified as a ‘dominant regional market’ by Everitt, who argues that it was a focus for the commerce and culture of its surrounding region.<sup>63</sup> Other studies have noted the city’s dual significance as a regional centre for ecclesiastical life and a significant local marketplace.<sup>64</sup> The city was not untouched by the cultural developments of the eighteenth century and in several studies of the we can see evidence of acquisitive culture and leisurely activities of polite society. The printing industry in the city has been examined by studies that identify how newspapers were used to sell and promote new medicine, report and promote musical performances.<sup>65</sup> The development of Salisbury as a centre for music studied by Patrick Driscoll, presents a compelling example of how polite culture thrived in a city that was not a ‘leisure town.’<sup>66</sup> As

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<sup>61</sup> K. Morgan, ‘The Economic Development of Bristol, 1700-1850’ in M. Dresser and P. Ollerenshaw, *The Making of Modern Bristol* (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp. 58-59.

<sup>62</sup> K. Morgan, ‘Bristol West India Merchants in the Eighteenth Century’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3 (1993), pp. 185-208.

<sup>63</sup> A. Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (London: Hambledon Press, 1985), pp. 22-3.

<sup>64</sup> Salisbury was the centre of its own diocese: D.A. Spaeth, *The Church in an Age of Danger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 58. Salisbury’s significance as a market is mentioned in: D.K. Cameron, *The English Fair* (London: Sutton, 1998), pp.61-2;

<sup>65</sup> Benjamin Collins is the most notable figure in Salisbury’s printing industry: C.Y. Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the provincial newspaper trade in the eighteenth century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) Collins discusses Salisbury advertising in C.Y. Ferdinand ‘Selling it to the provinces: News and commerce round eighteenth-century Salisbury’ in *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1994) pp. 393-411; M.E. Knapp, ‘Reading The Salisbury Journal, 1736-99’ *The Yale University Library Gazette* 56:3/4 (1982), pp. 7-39.

<sup>66</sup> P. Driscoll, ‘The Salisbury Annual Musical Festival 1770–1800’, *Cultural and Social History*, 5:1 (2008), pp. 33-52. Also on music in Salisbury: P. Drummond, *The Provincial Music Festival in England, 1784–1914* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 19-20; C. Kent, ‘Music of Rural Byway and Rotten Borough: A study of musical life in mid-Wiltshire, c.1750-1830’ in R.Cowgill and P. Holman (eds) *Music in the British Provinces, 1690-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), pp. 163-5.

Langford argues, Salisbury was as culturally relevant as London to the people of its surrounding community.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to these three, core cities, the thesis will also use evidence from neighbouring towns in the surrounding counties of Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire. These communities were not isolated from developments within the cities and their inhabitants were active funerary consumers as the thesis will demonstrate.

### Sources

This thesis is a social history of funerary practices which applies approaches from studies of consumption and polite society to interpret the actions of consumers, retailers and practitioners. An eclectic range of primary source materials are used to compensate for the lack of a single, plentiful source for the study of funerals in the region. Existing studies of funerals have focused on evidence from legal and financial records such as probate documents, inventories and funeral bills. The thesis will combine evidence from these traditional sources with data from a wide variety of documents that recorded the occurrence of funerals: newspapers, visual ephemera, satirical literature and personal correspondence. It is expected that this original use of sources will improve our understanding of how funerary customs were perceived, explained and questioned.

Newspapers have not previously been used as a source for the study of the common funeral in eighteenth century England. It is arguable that this is a consequence of the sporadic nature of funerary evidence within newspapers. The use of newspapers as a source for the study of polite culture and consumerism has been demonstrated by studies which draw evidence from the reportage or advertising content. Editorial content has been analysed in Patrick Driscoll's

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<sup>67</sup> P. Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798: The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 47.

research into the commercialisation and professionalisation of music in Salisbury and Helen Berry's study of how cultural knowledge was communicated in the Newcastle press.<sup>68</sup> These examples demonstrate how newspaper accounts can inform a study of polite customs and provide evidence for analysis of change in customs. Advertisements were also an important part of early newspapers and have been used by studies of popular polite purchases such as literature, tea and recreational events. Barker identified and quantified businesswomen through their advertisements in local newspapers and analysed the language to determine the perceived qualities of these businesswomen.<sup>69</sup> The thesis will use advertisement evidence in a comparable manner; to determine the number of undertakers, their goods and the way in which they promoted themselves. This original approach will expand on existing literature that has only provided a very limited discussion of undertakers' self-promotion using trade cards which are primarily sourced from London at the close of the seventeenth century and opening decades of the eighteenth century. There were several established newspapers in the urban areas studied by thesis and they published accounts of funerals. These accounts are limited to noteworthy events but they provide useful detail of how socially-significant funerals were perceived by contemporaries.

Visual sources have been used as evidence within historiography of death but there has not been a detailed study of how funerals are depicted. Ephemera such as trade cards and funeral invitations are briefly discussed in the broad studies of funeral by Litten and Fritz; here they are used as evidence of undertakers' inventories, but the examples are limited to early undertakers from London.<sup>70</sup> This thesis will study regional ephemera, which has not been considered by historiography, employing the same methods that have been used in existing

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<sup>68</sup> Driscoll, 'Salisbury Annual Musical Festival', pp. 33-52.

<sup>69</sup> H. Berry, 'Promoting Taste in the Provincial Press: National and Local Culture in Eighteenth-Century Newcastle Upon Tyne', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 25 (2002), pp. 1-17.

<sup>70</sup> Fritz, 'Undertaking Trade in England', p 244 and p. 248; Litten, '*English Way of Death*,' pp. 20-1.

studies of undertakers' trade cards. The visual sources analysed by the thesis will also include caricature, which was a popular method of comment in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Existing studies of the funerary trade have made very limited use of caricature, this is arguably because their focus was directed to explaining how funerals were organised rather than how they were perceived. The viability of caricature is demonstrated by use of cartoons as evidence in the wider historiography of consumption. Caricature has been used by Caroline Walsh, in a study of the perceived relationship between retailers and customers.<sup>71</sup> Glennie and Thrift used satirical depictions of shops in their analysis of the appearance and design of shop interiors.<sup>72</sup> Caricature has also provided useful examples for studies of the behaviour and values of consumers.<sup>73</sup> In each of these examples caricature has been successfully used to examine the contemporary beliefs and perceptions that inspired the artwork.

Satirical works including plays, songs or prose are used in the thesis to expand our understanding of how funerary customs were perceived. This is an original use of source materials because fictional representations of funerary culture have been examined in very a limited number of cases, on R.A. Aubin's *Behind Steele's Satire of Undertakers* as an early and forgotten attempt to discuss fictional representations and the actual trade.<sup>74</sup>

Personal correspondence will be used, where available, to explain the motives and values of the customers. These materials are limited, due to the survivability of texts because not all

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<sup>71</sup> C. Walsh, 'Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making in Eighteenth-Century England' in eds. A. Vickery and J. Styles, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (Yale Center for British Art: New Haven, CT, 2006) pp. 152-62.

<sup>72</sup> P.D. Glennie and N.J. Thrift, 'Consumers, identities, and consumption spaces in early-modern England', *Planning and Environment A* 28 (1996) pp. 33-4.

<sup>73</sup> H. Grieg, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 31-3; D. Donald, *Followers of Fashion: graphic satires from the Georgian period* (National Touring Exhibitions, University of Michigan, 2002), pp. 9-13.

<sup>74</sup> R.A. Aubin, 'Behind Steele's Satire on Undertakers', *PMLA*, 64 (1949), pp. 1008-26. Aubin's analysis is not mentioned or expanded upon by any of the modern studies of the funeral trade.

instances of written communication were considered worthy of preservation. Examples of surviving correspondence will give information on directions for funerals, motives for invitation and give detail to the relationships which made a funeral possible. This is particularly beneficial for a study of the social importance of funerals because it provides clear evidence of customers' intentions.

## Chapter Structure

The first two chapters of the thesis examine the professionals who oversaw the organisation of the funeral: the undertakers and the clergy. The middle three chapters each focus on different types of funeral that occurred within the region: the private funeral, the elite funeral and the funerals of nonconformists. The final chapter is an analysis of how the practice of 'general mourning' for dead monarch was an opportunity for social display. Each chapter will now be outlined in greater detail.

The first chapter analyses the early undertaking trade in the West Country; identifying the origins of early tradesmen and the products which they sold. This approach responds to existing literature that identifies the trade as a significant funerary development in eighteenth century. The chapter argues that early undertaking was supplemental because retailers combined the provision of funerary goods with other trades. The early trade was very competitive with different retailers trying to present themselves as professionals who were most qualified and equipped with fashionable goods. Their comprehensive range of goods sold by undertakers complements existing literature about the funerary goods which were sold in London. By analysing the development of undertaking businesses, the chapter establishes the existence of a developed and well-equipped funeral trade in the West Country which would be essential for the execution of 'respectable funerals.'

The second chapter examines the role of the clergyman as a ‘deathworker,’ a professional who has a unique and important role in the response to death. This is an original approach which applies the sociological concept of ‘deathwork’ to historical evidence. As a consequence, the chapter responds to lack of historiographical discussion regarding the place of the clergy in the commercialised funeral of the eighteenth century. The chapter argues that the clergy had different roles in the eighteenth-century funeral which ensured that their services were essential for a respectable occasion. The popular representation of clergymen at funerals exposed anxieties about the authenticity of the clerical behaviour and the worth of their services. Clerical roles in the funeral reinforced their status as but also prompted questioning about the contest between professionalism and piety in established church. Questions about clerical motives and behaviour compliment contemporary concerns about and sham goods. In the popular imagination, clergymen were identified as members of a community of deathworkers who were presented as both a unified and quarrelling force, benefiting from death. The chapter extends the thesis’ investigation to an important but overlooked aspect of the respectable funeral. By interpreting the clergy as deathworkers the chapter presents this group as an important who, similar to the undertakers, could improve their own social status by cultivating a professional reputation.

Chapter three examines the performance of ‘private funerals’ by members of the middling sort, which involved an intimate gathering of friends and family. The ‘private funeral’ has been described in existing literature but has not been analysed in the context of polite culture. It is argued that private funerals in the region, were intended to be intimate gatherings which remembered the achievements of the deceased and made a statement about their social status. In these funerals, the distribution of gifts acknowledged the relationships between people and the quality of gifted items reflected the status of relationships. The mourners’ use of space was similarly intended to draw distinctions between the specially selected members of the

funeral party and the rest of society. The chapter supports the interpretation of the funeral as a social opportunity by demonstrating that social relationships had a profound influence on the organisation and provision of funerals. The analysis of material goods in the private funeral shows the importance of conveying polite qualities such as respectability and tastefulness to invited guests.

The fourth chapter analyses the use of display in the funerals of a social elite who were buried in the region. The elites studied in the chapter comprise peers and gentry who were not continually resident in the region and required a long, overland journey to reach the destination of their burial. The chapter adopts an original approach by interpreting the journey and funeral as being two parts of the same funerary display. It is argued that this funerary journey celebrated the dead person through a meticulously organised display which used different spaces to afford privacy to the mourners. The first part examines how the transportation of the dead body was a visual display which used fashionable funerary goods to make a statement that bystanders could easily understand. The second part identifies the different relationships that were recognised in the funerary roles given to West Country inhabitants. This examination of elite funerals expands the thesis' analysis of how personality and achievements were qualifiers of status in funerals.

The fifth chapter examines how religious beliefs influenced the funerary display of three different nonconformist communities. The chapter argues that funerary display served to unify intimate, religious communities against the crisis of a death in their midst. This occurred because funerary display evoked the values which bereaved community was reminded of the values which they shared by funerary display that was influenced by their own doctrines and beliefs. This communal use of funerary display is examined through three focuses: the funerals of leaders, the use of popular funerary products and the development of

burial space. In each focus it is shown that the beliefs of the community were a source of justification and legitimisation for the use of funerary goods and services. The chapter contributes to the thesis' wider examination of funerary display by identifying how factors other than fashion or taste influenced consumers' behaviour. The focus on the nonconformist communities also provides valuable insight into how the funerary expenditures discussed in the opening chapters, were used by mourners outside of the established church.

The sixth and final chapter examines how mourning for others was an opportunity for social display. The chapter analyses 'general' or public mourning for royals at the end of the long-eighteenth century because this is identified by historiography as a period in which displays of loyalty were common. The chapter argues that it was fashionable to participate in public mourning and both consumers and retailers wanted to appear prompt and comprehensive in the response to events. A competitive climate existed in times of mourning; retailers asserted their preparedness and communities described their own activities in comparative language. The act of public mourning transformed the urban environment through the use of purchased goods and the decoration of public spaces. This chapter expands the thesis' focus on social display through funerary practices by examining how social and status claims could be made through mourning for others. Public mourning was an opportunity for retailers and consumers to demonstrate their awareness of fashion and knowledge of distant events. Periods of public mourning involved a suspension of daily routines and performance of acts that represent civic display more than mournful intent. The closure of shops and staging of public mourning were testaments of the local inhabitants' quality and good taste.



## The West Country Undertaking Trade

### Introduction:

This chapter intends to examine the development of the undertaking trade as evidence for change in the funerary customs of the eighteenth century West Country. Existing studies have identified the undertakers as evidence of changing attitudes to funerals and the means through which change was achieved. The chapter will consider these two arguments in the context of the region.

To understand whether the undertaking trade was evidence of changing attitudes in the region during this period, the chapter will commence by examining how regional undertakers emerged. This chapter will argue that manner in which the trade began can reveal a significant amount of information about contemporary attitudes to funerals and undertaking. This is because the trade could not have come into existence without some regional knowledge of the role; amongst those who established the business and the market which provided early custom.

Secondly, the chapter will consider how the regional undertakers contributed to funerary change through their services and products. These will be examined individually with the intention of understanding how these are evidence for adoption or rejection of customs which are commonly associated with changing funerary culture. This approach also addresses whether the undertakers' innovations were primarily influenced by metropolitan examples, as indicated in the literature.

### Existing Literature

It is important to commence the chapter by considering how the origins and operation of early undertakers have been analysed in historiography. Firstly, we must acknowledge that there is a metropolitan bias in research, which has informed our general understanding of the trade and its consequences on the common funeral.

Secondly, it is evident that the long-eighteenth century is significant, because it is perceived to be a period of expansion and development for the undertaking trade.

Litten states that neither William Boyce nor William Russell had an ‘absolute monopoly’ over the funeral trade in the early eighteenth century and existing literature has afforded an insight into the scope of the nascent trade. The number of practicing undertakers is unclear but the individuals identified as examples of early undertaking indicate that the trade was overwhelmingly metropolitan. The ephemera of the early trade provides one platform to demonstrate the London-bias in early undertaking. Litten’s examples of invitations and trade cards confirm the presence of London-based undertakers who were trading in the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries such as Eleazar Mallory, William Boyce and Kendall.<sup>75</sup> These contain many of the recognisable signifiers of the trade that were commonplace in the nineteenth century such as the coffin, mourning decorations and in the latter example, the spectacular black procession. By comparison, a collection of Bristolian trade cards contains undertakers’ cards from the nineteenth century onwards.<sup>76</sup> It is plausible that the metropolitan trade was more established in the art of self-promotion but this absence of sources contributes to the bias in evidence.

Evidence for the early trade in London appears to be reinforced by a divide in the metropolitan and provincial experience of funerary consumption. The rural communities of the provinces in particular, are presented as being beyond the influence of the undertaking trade for all of the period addressed by this thesis, and well into the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Distance is viewed as having a profoundly isolating influence on rural communities which Gittings argues was broken only by the advent of motor transportation.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, the metropolis witnessed the burgeoning of the early funeral trade whilst the

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<sup>75</sup> Litten, *English Way of Death*, pp. 17, 78, 165.

<sup>76</sup> J. Winstone, *Bristol Trade Cards: Remnants of Prolific Commerce* (Bristol: Reece Winstone Archive, 1993).

<sup>77</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England*. p. 94.

provinces remained dependent on traditional sources of funerary organisation. In this interpretation, the respectable funeral was the result of the labour of artisans, notably carpenters, and support from the community of the deceased individual. This is observed as a persistence of longstanding, 'folk' customs for dealing with the dead in communities.<sup>78</sup>

This is not to suggest that the provinces were devoid of undertakers or the influence of their trade until the late Eighteenth Century. Existing literature even identifies a few provincial undertakers who acted solely in the trade, of which the earliest is Richard Chandles of Shrewsbury, who operated in 1718.<sup>79</sup> Fritz observes that the emergence of provincial undertakers following the form of their metropolitan counterparts was limited to the 'last quarter' of the Eighteenth Century and this accounts for the scarcity of named tradesmen in records.<sup>80</sup>

Whilst the metropolitan and provincial undertaking trade may have developed at different paces, the career origin of the undertakers is notably similar. Almost all of proponents of the developing trade had worked, or continued to work, in trades with traditional roles in the supply of funerals, such as carpenters, cabinet-makers, upholsterers, painters and glovers. It is argued that carpenters were the most dominant presence in the early trade and this is certainly present in Howarth's appraisal of an early undertaker as 'little more than a speculative carpenter.'<sup>81</sup> The success of carpenters may be attributed to a longstanding responsibility for the production of coffins and resulting centrality to the supply of a funeral in pre-industrial England.<sup>82</sup> Trades allied to carpentry such as joinery and cabinet-making are

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<sup>78</sup> This is evident in several studies of folk custom and tradition in provincial funerary rites: E. Roberts, 'The Lancashire Way of Death', in R. Houlbrooke (ed.) *Death, Ritual and Bereavement* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 188-208 and R. Morris, 'The "Innocent and Touching Custom" of Maiden's Garlands: A Field Report', *Folklore*, 114 (2003), 355-87.

<sup>79</sup> Chandles is identified by Litten, 'The Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England, 1714-1760.' p. 51; Another provincial undertaker in the literature is John Miller of Ipswich (c.1788): Fritz, 'Undertaking Trade' p. 248.

<sup>80</sup> Fritz, 'Undertaking Trade', p. 248.

<sup>81</sup> Howarth, 'Professionalizing the Funeral Industry' p. 55. On the large number of carpenters: Fritz, 'Undertaking Trade' p. 247; N. Llewellyn, *The Art of Death* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), p. 79.

<sup>82</sup> Litten, 'The Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England, 1714-1760' p. 52.

also acknowledged within literature as paths to the undertaking trade and it is apparent their respective skills were applicable to coffin manufacture.<sup>83</sup>

But the hegemony of the carpenters is not universally accepted. Fritz argues of the composition of early undertaking that, 'one trade more than any other dominated – the upholsterers.'<sup>84</sup> It is asserted that the diversely skilled company of journeymen normally employed by upholsterers gave them easy access to the trades necessary for supplying a respectable middling funeral.<sup>85</sup> Matthew Craske agrees with this evaluation, identifying undertakers as 'upholders in the sphere of death,' whose management of diverse trades mirrored the organising and centralising behaviour of the upholsterers, or upholders.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the upholsterers gained an advantage from the structure of their businesses, much as the carpenters had benefited from their pre-existing knowledge and authority.

It is evident that many early undertakers continued to operate in their established livelihoods, despite their establishment in the funeral trade. In such circumstances, the supply and organisation of funerals supplemented existing work. Such an arrangement compensated for the lack of a broad customer base and provided an additional source of custom during periods of unexpected or seasonal inactivity.<sup>87</sup> Gittings observes that this supplemental approach to trading as an undertaker predominated in the eighteenth century.<sup>88</sup> This supports the representation of early undertakers as opportunistic and entrepreneurial tradesmen who entered into a fast-developing market, as a trade which would be directed and developed by their ingenuity. This trade is therefore presented as an unregulated and disparate institution,

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<sup>83</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Fritz, 'Undertaking Trade' p. 248.

<sup>85</sup> Fritz, 'Undertaking Trade', p. 248. The trades indicated by Fritz include: carvers, woollen drapers, linen drapers, cabinet-makers and smiths.

<sup>86</sup> M. Craske, "Design and the Competitive Spirit in Early and Mid-Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of Design History* 12:3 Eighteenth Century Markets and Manufactures in England and France (1999). p. 215.

<sup>87</sup> P.A. Kirkham, 'Samuel Norman: A Study of an Eighteenth-Century Craftsman,' *The Burlington Magazine* 111:797 (1969). p. 503.

<sup>88</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual* p. 95;

which had no criteria of entry nor rules of operation, as Litten summarises, ‘anyone could set themselves up as an undertaker.’<sup>89</sup>

Existing literature seeks to understand how the irregular circumstances of the early undertakers influenced the wider trade in funerary goods. Litten argues for the existence of a tripartite funeral trade in Eighteenth Century England, comprised of ‘undertakers,’ ‘coffin-makers’ and ‘funeral furnishers.’<sup>90</sup> Within this informal structure the ‘undertakers’ benefitted from the greatest autonomy; manufacturing their own coffins in addition to provisioning and organising funerals. The limited number of undertakers may be explained by the lack of capital available to prospective undertakers and the originally limited demand for their services. Litten posits that the other two branches overcame these shortcomings due to their focus on specific aspects of the funeral. Coffin-makers produced their own coffins and funeral furnishers specialised in the upholstering and decoration of coffins or funerary attire.<sup>91</sup> Both of these performed funerals by engaging the services of funeral warehouses, which rented or sold the wide array of funerary goods which would have been otherwise too expensive to stock. All of the branches of Litten’s tripartite model of the funeral trade may be identified as undertakers, because they all undertook funerals, regardless of their title. This is a reflection of undertaking’s status as a nascent trade which had not firmly established a regular workforce or a popularly-recognised identity.

### The Identities of West Country Undertakers

We can gain a useful insight into the identities and backgrounds of the early West Country undertakers from the variety of sources which were used to advertise their businesses. Newspapers, directories and magazines were developing media forms in the

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<sup>89</sup> Litten, ‘Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England’, p. 54.

<sup>90</sup> Litten, ‘Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England’, p. 59.

<sup>91</sup> Litten, ‘Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England’, p. 60.

Eighteenth Century and can provide evidence of undertakers who were financially capable of advertising and receptive to this innovative concept. This material supplements other printed and written sources which resulted from the interaction between undertakers and their consumers. Items such as trade cards, funeral invitations and bill heads were pre-existing forms of promotion, established in the Seventeenth Century.<sup>92</sup> These may have been exchanged with customers or funeral guests and therefore. The handwritten funeral bills and correspondence which were produced during the organisation of funerals are a less numerous but useful source of information for the identification of undertakers.

It is possible to predict certain biases which will result from the use of such sources. The emergence of newspapers and directories was not a uniform process and therefore certain settlements may be documented for a longer period of time or they may be thoroughly represented than others. The absence of local newspapers did not preclude the opportunity for promotion. For example, undertakers from the woollen towns of West Wiltshire advertised in the *Bath Chronicle*.<sup>93</sup> We should not overlook the correlation between the presence of newspapers and undertakers in provincial communities. Existing literature has suggested that the early undertaking trade found custom in London with the expanding middle classes, who have also been identified as the prime audience for newspapers.<sup>94</sup>

#### i. Knowledge of the Role of Undertaker

In response to the ambiguity of people's involvement in the early trade, this chapter will specifically study the West Country tradespeople who publicly identified themselves as 'undertakers.' It is important to clarify this approach, because many urban and rural

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<sup>92</sup> Lloyd observes that in 1700s the funeral ticket was common enough to be a device for satire: S. Lloyd, 'Ticketing the British Eighteenth Century: "A Thing...Never Heard of Before"', *Journal of Social History*, 46 (2013), p. 845.

<sup>93</sup> These include: William Davis of Bradford on Avon, 18th September 1788; William Pitman of Trowbridge, 16th April 1780 and William Beene of Melksham, 1st April 1784.

<sup>94</sup> R.B. Walker, 'Advertising in London Newspapers, 1650-1750', *Business History*, 15 (1973), pp. 115-17.

tradespeople in the provinces provided for, or organised funerals, but did not choose to adopt the title of undertaker. A total of 103 undertakers have been identified and whilst this data does not represent a comprehensive survey of West Country undertaking, it accounts for both urban and rural communities.<sup>95</sup> These individuals' adoption of the title was significant because it demonstrated an awareness of the role of 'undertaker' throughout the West Country.

It is plausible that some of the early West Country undertakers had become aware of the title as a consequence of their previous businesses. Visits to the warehouses and shops of London were common in the fabric and furnishing trades from which many early undertakers had originated. Although these visits were intended for purchasing stock, they provided tradesmen with an opportunity to interact with members of the metropolitan funeral trade and observe their operation. West Country undertakers consequently alluded to knowledge of their metropolitan counterparts in advertisements which reported that the proprietor had 'just returned from London' or promised 'the same terms as the warehouses in London.'<sup>96</sup> It is also apparent that some undertakers had worked in metropolitan businesses such as these, prior to establishing themselves in the West Country. William Bartlett of St. James Street, Bath had worked for the undertaker Francis Deschamps at Rathbone Place in London, during the 1750s.<sup>97</sup> It is plausible that Bartlett's decision to diversify his upholstering business was influenced by his experience of the funeral trade in London. Bartlett's business differed from the majority of Bath undertakers because he chose the dual titles of 'undertaker' and 'coffin maker,' perhaps reflecting a particular specialism that he had learned whilst working for Deschamps. Another Bath undertaker, named Treacher, advertised his former duties as a groom of the suite as evidence for his pedigree as an upholder, appraiser and undertaker.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>96</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 17 December 1784; *Bath Chronicle*, 4 December, 1788. Issue 1482.

<sup>97</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 27 October 1768.

<sup>98</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 14 May 1767.

The language of advertisements such as these also contributes to our understanding of West Country consumers' knowledge of undertaking prior to its popularisation in the region. This is because the promotional language of the advertisements was intended to appeal to customers and their perceptions of the trade. Details such as the references to London, even in the form of the statement, 'from London,' indicate that West Country undertakers expected their consumers to regard this information as important. It is difficult to discern how many consumers might actually have been aware of the role of undertaker, however, it may be argued that a tradesman would not adopt a title which would have been unfamiliar and therefore meaningless to, at least some of, their potential customers. The popular profile of the undertaking trade may have been complemented by fictional depictions in the print culture and theatre of the period. These were often brief, satirical lampoons of the London-based trade, which focused on the sham quality of products and questioned the motives of undertakers. Richard Steele's *The Funeral or Grief a-la-Mode*, an influential play which inspired many imitations on stage and in print, was widely performed in the towns of the West Country throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>99</sup> Such fictional depictions and the advertisers' references to London are a reminder that the undertaking trade was foreign to the West Country in the early years of the eighteenth century. The tradesmen's adoption of the title 'undertaker' is therefore significant to this thesis, because it introduced the role of 'undertaker' into the mainstream consciousness of the West Country communities. The inhabitants would consequently gain an understanding of the role of undertaker and appreciate the benefits of the trade or grow resentful of its perceived shortcomings.

## ii. Background of Undertakers

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<sup>99</sup> Some instances include: Bath: 1762 *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 20 May 1762; 1790, *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 22 April 1790; 1814, 'A Collection of Playbills from Theatre Royal, Bath, 1812-14' in *Nineteenth Century Collections Online* <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/Acgq6>> [accessed 10 October 2013]. Bristol:



It is apparent that the majority of individuals who identified themselves as undertakers were also engaged in other trades in which they had previously established their reputation. The continuation of their previous livelihood mitigated the financial risks of establishing an entirely new business, with a potentially low number of consumers and the accumulation of all the items necessary for operation. In this aspect, provincial undertaking compliments the example of the metropolis. The professional background of the provincial undertakers further parallels the metropolis, with textile and furnishing trades providing the majority of proprietors.<sup>100</sup>

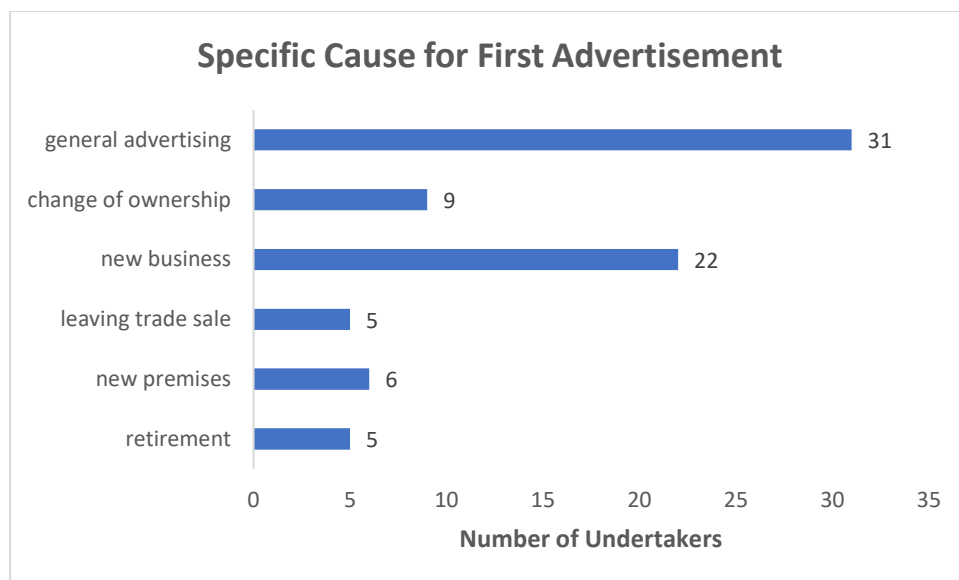


Figure 1. Table of Specific causes for first advertisements by West Country Undertakers, 1700-1820.

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<sup>100</sup> See fig. 2: Supplementary trades are based on information gathered for the list of West Country Undertakers in the appendix.

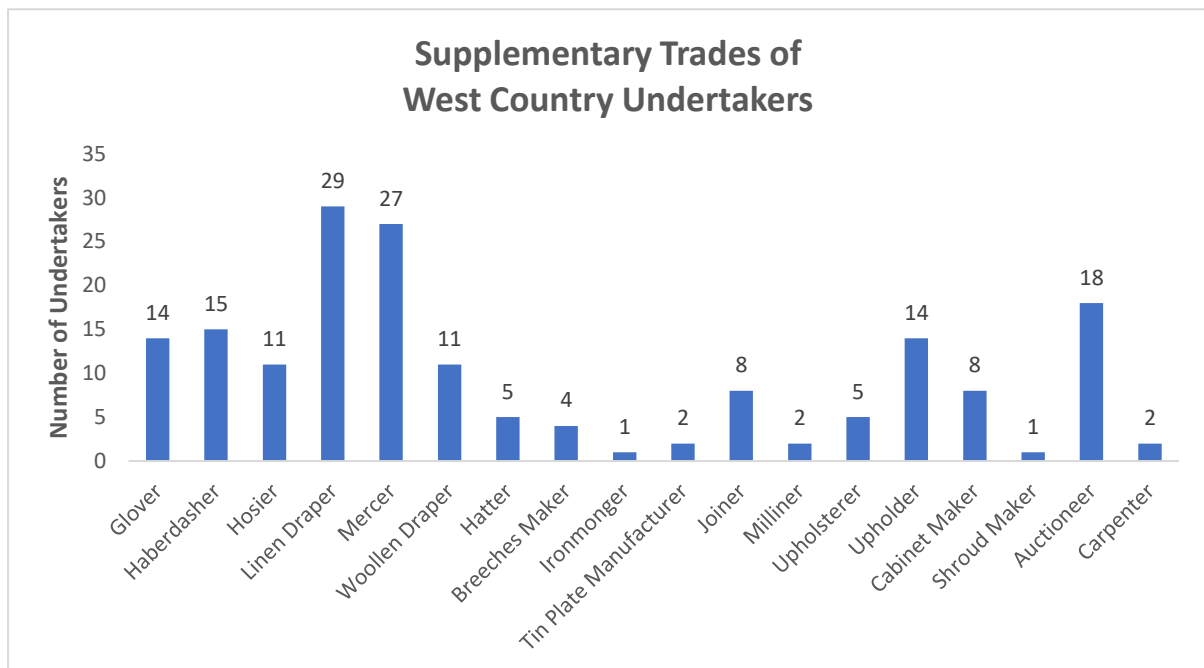


Figure 2. Supplementary Trades of West Country Undertakers, 1700-1820.

The majority of West Country undertakers identified within this chapter were concurrently working as textile traders. Within the textile trades, linen drapery was the most common supplementary occupation for West Country undertakers. This is an unsurprising development because of the longstanding importance of linen attire in funerary rites, specifically the shroud or winding sheet worn by the corpse. The popularity of linen led to the Burial in Woollen Acts of the late seventeenth century. These acts were intended to curb the use of linen by instructing the use of wool for burial clothes and imposing a £5 fine for transgression. Although the act was not repealed until 1815, its influence was challenged throughout the period by wealthy individuals' willingness to pay the fine and increasingly poor enforcement by local officials.<sup>101</sup> The trade in linen goods for funerary use would therefore have provided a means by which tradesmen were introduced to the commercial opportunities of funerals. It also created a situation in which the linen-draper was recognised as an essential tradesman for the supply of funerals, a status which would prove useful to

<sup>101</sup> Cunnington, *Costume for Births, Marriages & Death*, pp. 163-5.

anyone who wanted the public to trust his authority and veracity as a funeral supplier. The Bath-based undertaker and linen-draper, Abraham Holmes declared his entry into business in 1800 with the announcement that he just acquired a stock of Irish linen.<sup>102</sup> This was presented as an opportunity for customers to visit his new business and establish their relationship as customers; Holmes' funerary work was a secondary concern, a skill that could be relied upon later, perhaps. The extent to which linen-draper undertakers stocked goods that were not linen-ware is reflected in the stock appraisals that were produced to advertise 'leave of business' auctions. One such list was produced after the retirement of William Davis who traded as an undertaker and linen draper in the Wiltshire market town of Warminster until 1788. The list of items includes fashionable Irish linen alongside fabrics such as armozeen, cambrick, lawn and callico.<sup>103</sup> In addition to their primary use in the production of fashionable clothing, these fabrics were all used in the production of mourning wear and funerary decoration.

Mercery was the second most common supplementary trade for the undertakers identified in this chapter. The products of such a mercer were diverse, as demonstrated by the Salisbury undertaker Henry Gauntlet, who also traded as mercer. In 1751, Gauntlet asserted that business supplied 'all sorts of mercery' describing the products of his shop as 'trimmings of all sorts, rich ribbands, whitechapel needles, pins, cards, silk, handkerchiefs, and all sorts of ribbands, cauls and raw-silk.'<sup>104</sup> In many respects, the duties of a mercer were similar to the linen draper; mercers were involved in the trade of fabric and frequently consolidated several different clothing trades. For instance, the Marlborough undertaker, N. Merriman was a linen draper, mercer, woollen draper and haberdasher.<sup>105</sup> This practice of

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<sup>102</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 11 September 1800

<sup>103</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 18 September 1788.

<sup>104</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 14 October 1751.

<sup>105</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 26 Mar 1795.

diversification is evident in the sample of West Country undertakers in which, fifteen of the linen drapers who practiced as undertakers also identified as a 'mercier.'<sup>106</sup>

It can be argued that businesses which consolidated different textile and clothing trades were more likely to diversify into undertaking. The overlapping of stock of a highly diversified business was ideally suited to the apparel demands of the contemporary funeral because each different trade added skills and stock which reduced the undertaker's dependence on other tradesmen.

Different clothing trades contributed to the potential stock of early undertakers. Henry Collins of Bristol was concurrently engaged in leather trades and produced gloves, an item that was widely used in funerals.<sup>107</sup> Hatters such as P.Grigg in Bath and Stephen Wall often diversified in different trades which enabled them to provide a range of typical funeral items.<sup>108</sup> The skills of hosiers such as Mr. Smith in Bath, enabled them to produce knitted items, the former sold shrouds for a range of prices depending on quality.<sup>109</sup> The products of haberdashers, including ribbons and buttons, were used in the decorative attire of the funeral and practitioners such as Thomas Whitfield in Devizes, were capable of providing these.<sup>110</sup>

The second largest group in West Country undertaking are members of the furniture trade such as upholsters, upholders, cabinet makers and joiners. This trend complements Craske's argument about the importance of furnishing trades in the development of the undertaking trade.<sup>111</sup> It is argued that the undertakers' organisation and management of different trades depended on skills that had originated in the earlier trade of upholding. The professional knowledge possessed by the upholders made them ideal candidates to become

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<sup>106</sup> The undertakers who are identified working as both mercers and linen-drapers are: William Tayler, N. Colt, Thomas Whitford, William Trinder, G. Strawbridge, John Mayo, Hulbert & Porch, Joseph Legeyt, Skerratt & Royal, P. Grigg, N. Merriman, Michael Burroughs, Thomas Coward, Lionel Lee, George Chapman.

<sup>107</sup> *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 3 October 1789.

<sup>108</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 24 October 1782; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 27 July 1801.

<sup>109</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 4 November 1762.

<sup>110</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 22 Jan 1786.

<sup>111</sup> This is mentioned in the literature: Craske, 'Design and the Competitive Spirit' pp. 187-216.

the first undertakers. In the authorised history of the Worshipful Company of Upholders, J.F. Houston, identifies the longstanding use of ‘upholder’ and ‘undertaker’ as interchangeable descriptors.<sup>112</sup> The similarity between upholders and undertaking was acknowledged by contemporaries who presented the terms as synonymous. This was most clearly demonstrated in London where popular culture responded to the upholders’ status as funerary workers. In the early 1700s, John Gay commented on association the between upholding and death in his character of, ‘the rueful upholder, harbinger of death’ featured in *Trivia*, a comic account of life on London’s streets.<sup>113</sup> The upholders’ funerary work in London had been popularised in the business of the United Company of Upholders, whose involvement in high-profile obsequies made the association between the trades particular noteworthy. The funerary work of the company was critiqued by Susanna Centlivre in the dedication of her 1710 play, *A Bickerstaff’s Burying or Work for the Upholders* which was addressed to the ‘Magnificent Company of Upholders.’<sup>114</sup> Centlivre focused specifically on the funerary goods that were sold by the upholders: escutcheons, tapers, cloaks and hangings; items which formed the stock of the undertaking trade. The playful criticism of these examples confirms that the upholders were established in funerary work in the capital during the early years of the eighteenth century. Evidence from the West Country indicates that this relationship existed in the region, in the latter half of the century and although there was no association of upholders, the trade was present.

Diversification was equally common in the furnishing trades and many of the undertakers from the furnishing trades were also practitioners of different trades. In the 1790s, the undertaker George Tar also specialised in cabinet making and upholstery from his shop in

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<sup>112</sup> J.F. Houston, *Featherbedds and Flock Bedds: The early history of the Worshipful Company of Upholders in the City of London* (Sandy, Three Tents Press, 2006), p. 16.

<sup>113</sup> J. Gay, *Trivia: or, the art of walking the streets of London. By Mr. Gay* (London, 1716), p. 45.

<sup>114</sup> S. Centlivre, *A Bickerstaff’s Burying; or, Work for the Upholders. A Farce; as It Was Acted at the Theatre in the Hay-Market, by Her Majesty’s Sworn Servants.* (London, 1710), p. 1.

Fountain Buildings. The diversity of Tar's business was reflected by the wide range of items which he advertised, including furniture, different carpets and paper hangings.<sup>115</sup> Tar operated under the title of 'upholsterer' rather than using the similar 'upholder' which had common associations with undertaking in the wider country. The majority of individuals combined the trade of upholder with other artisanal trades that were associated with furnishing. The Bath undertaker, Treacher was both an upholder and cabinet maker, advertising his 'funerals decently performed and all sorts of household furniture bought and sold.'<sup>116</sup> Treacher's work as an appraiser reflects a wider trend because all of the undertakers who were upholders had a supplementary role as auctioneers.

In Bath and its rural localities, we may observe that a total of nineteen undertakers were trading as auctioneers. Auctioneers were often members of the furnishing trades who had elected to commercialise their evaluative knowledge. The effects of deceased individuals were frequently sold through auctions and the associated contact with bereaved or dying individuals presented the prospective undertaker with custom. For this reason, the professional circumstances of successful auctioneers, such as Samuel Nichols or John Plura, arguably encouraged their diversification into undertaking.<sup>117</sup> It is also worthwhile to note that auctioneers were particularly adept users of the media, as this was the medium with which they announced their auctions.<sup>118</sup> It is probable that this made them more willing users of the media as undertakers because they were already familiar with newspaper advertising and its benefits.

It is evident that some people recognised the roles of auctioneer and undertaker to be mutually compatible or intrinsically linked. In 1784, Charles Abbott abandoned his work in

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<sup>115</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 18 December 1793.

<sup>116</sup> Treacher's forename is not listed in his advertisement: *Bath Chronicle*, 14 May 1767.

<sup>117</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 4 November 1799; *Bath Chronicle*, 21 August 1794.

<sup>118</sup> C. Wall, 'The English Auction: Narratives of Dismantlings', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 31 (1997), p. 6-7; I. Asquith, 'Advertising and the Press in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: James Perry and the Morning Chronicle, 1790-1821', *The Historical Journal*, 18 (1975), pp. 717-8.

haberdashery, hosiery and lace to become an auctioneer and undertaker.<sup>119</sup> The furnishing of funerals was a minor part of Abbot's earlier business although he did not come from a typical auctioneer background. It can be argued that by adopting these two new titles at the same time, Abbott was motivated by the belief that the two trades were compatible and profitable. It is possible that Abbot was encouraged by the success of local tradesmen because at the time of his decision there were eight undertakers, already working successfully in auctioneering in the city of Bath.<sup>120</sup> Whilst most of the auctioneer-undertakers traded in the centre of Bath, the combination can be observed in the nearby Wiltshire town of Bradford on Avon. William Pitmam was an undertaker and auctioneer in the town of Bradford on Avon, whose 1788 advert in the *Bath Chronicle* was appended with the statement 'estates, household furniture &c. appraised and sold.'<sup>121</sup> The lack of advertisements for other auctioneer-undertakers in Bradford-on-Avon indicates that Pitmam had a monopoly over the business, which would have made it more profitable.

By contrast, the limited number of artisans who are recorded as members of the West Country undertaking trade may be a consequence of unfamiliarity with new forms of advertising. Existing literature demonstrates that, in London, it was common for artisans such as carpenters or ironmongers to establish themselves in the undertaking trade. Although West Country artisans arguably had the same useful skills as their metropolitan counterparts, it is plausible that in some parts of the region, they were less able to advertise or simply reluctant to do so. Their reluctance may be explained as a consequence of attitudes to the status of the undertaking trade outside of large and affluent settlements such as Bristol or Bath.

In the smaller towns, artisanal trades were a viable path into undertaking, as demonstrated by the case of William Beene, undertaker and ironmonger in Melksham. The stock of Beene's

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<sup>119</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 24 April 1794.

<sup>120</sup> The eight 'auctioneer-undertakers' in Bath at this time were: John Plura, Isaac Cooke, William Birchill, William Cross, Thomas Bird, Thomas Colebridge, James Evatt and Mr Treacher.

<sup>121</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 28 August 1788.

business illustrates how the production of a few funerary items provided a person with the opportunity to establish themselves as an undertaker. When Beene's business closed in 1784, a list of his goods included; 'locks, hinges, bolts, nails, plates and other buckles, a large assortment of coffin furniture, and almost every article in the ironmongery business.'<sup>122</sup> Beene did not possess a large stock of funerary goods, indicating that he was trading primarily as an ironmonger and relied on local tradesmen for the other main items of the funeral.

Diversification in a variety of trades was advantageous to an artisan-undertaker because it enabled them to be less dependent on other tradesmen. An example of such behaviour was the Gloucestershire undertaker Dan Fugill who also worked as carpenter, plumber, joiner and ironmonger in the town of Iron Acton in 1794.<sup>123</sup> These different trades enabled Fugill to produce a variety of different funerary items on his own premises including coffins, coffin ornaments and handles. Carpentry and joinery were fundamental skills for coffin making and ironmongery provided the means by which the coffin could be furnished or decorated.

Fugill's professional knowledge of lead-working is also significant because it enabled him to produce the shells which were used inside the 'lined' coffins of affluent funerals. Fugill's combined skills are well demonstrated in his production of a coffin for the expensive funeral of Rev. James Willis in 1794. Fugill built an oak coffin, decorated with plates and handles, and containing a lead shell that secured the body.<sup>124</sup>

Although there is no evidence that Fugill advertised his business, he is notable because he adopted the title of 'undertaker,' unlike a significant number of artisans whose similarly diversified businesses also served funerals. It is possible that these individuals were unaware of the title of 'undertaker' or they did not perceive enough awareness of the trade in their

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<sup>122</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 1 April 1784.

<sup>123</sup> GRO: 'D547a/F40, 'Receipt from Daniel Fugill for Coffin of Rev. Willis,' 1794.

<sup>124</sup> GRO: 'D547a/F40, 'Bill for Coffin of Rev. Willis,' 1794.



community to justify adopting the title. Such a conclusion suggests that some West Country communities remained separate from the funerary commercialism of the eighteenth century.

### Competition Between Undertakers

By the latter decades of the eighteenth century, satirical depictions of the trade commonly featured undertakers who were engaged in fierce competition for work. The importance of competition in the trade is arguably most apparent in the play, *Better Late Than Never* (1786), a rare, satirical depiction of the trade in the West Country.<sup>125</sup> In one scene, the three fictional Bath undertakers: Coffin, Grimly and Finis brawl twice on the doorsteps of potential customers, arguing over who arrived first at the property. The former dispute establishes the importance of being the first person to arrive at the property as cause of the undertakers' dispute and aggression. Complimenting this, the latter presents a scene of aggressive jostling between the undertakers which is punctuated by an 'out-cry of I'm dead! I'm kill'd', indicating that the competition has become violent.<sup>126</sup> During the brawl, the stage-undertakers also make numerous attempts to force entrance into the house, they 'press violently upon the door' and 'one gets half in at the window, he is pulled out again.'<sup>127</sup> These incursions communicate the undertakers' eagerness to be identified as first at the household, even if that entails breaking onto property.

The aggression of this scene has many parallels with the Thomas Rowlandson's *Undertakers in at the Death!*<sup>128</sup> In this caricature, three undertakers, distinguished by items of the trade, charge upon an elderly man who is being slain by death. The undertakers' eagerness to outrun their opponents is conveyed through their anxious glances and an outthrust hand of the

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<sup>125</sup> William Davies, *Better Late Than Never* (London, 1786).

<sup>126</sup> Davies, *Better Late Than Never*, p. 326.

<sup>127</sup> Davies, *Better Late Than Never*, p. 325

<sup>128</sup> T. Rowlandson, 'Undertakers in at the Death!!', (London: William Holland, 1794), pp. Hand-coloured etching.

leading undertaker. Similar to Davies' scene, Rowlandson's undertakers abandon their decorum and sobriety in their desperate competition for business. The humour of these scenes was dependent on the audience's belief that there were many undertakers and that the market was crowded.

In the eighteenth century, there were two forms of competitive behaviour with which West Country undertakers could attempt to bolster and improve their status as professionals. Public claims of experience and qualification are the first example which will be considered, these were often incorporated into advertisements. The relocation and redesign of shops was a second form of competitive behaviour which similarly indicated the status and quality of the business.

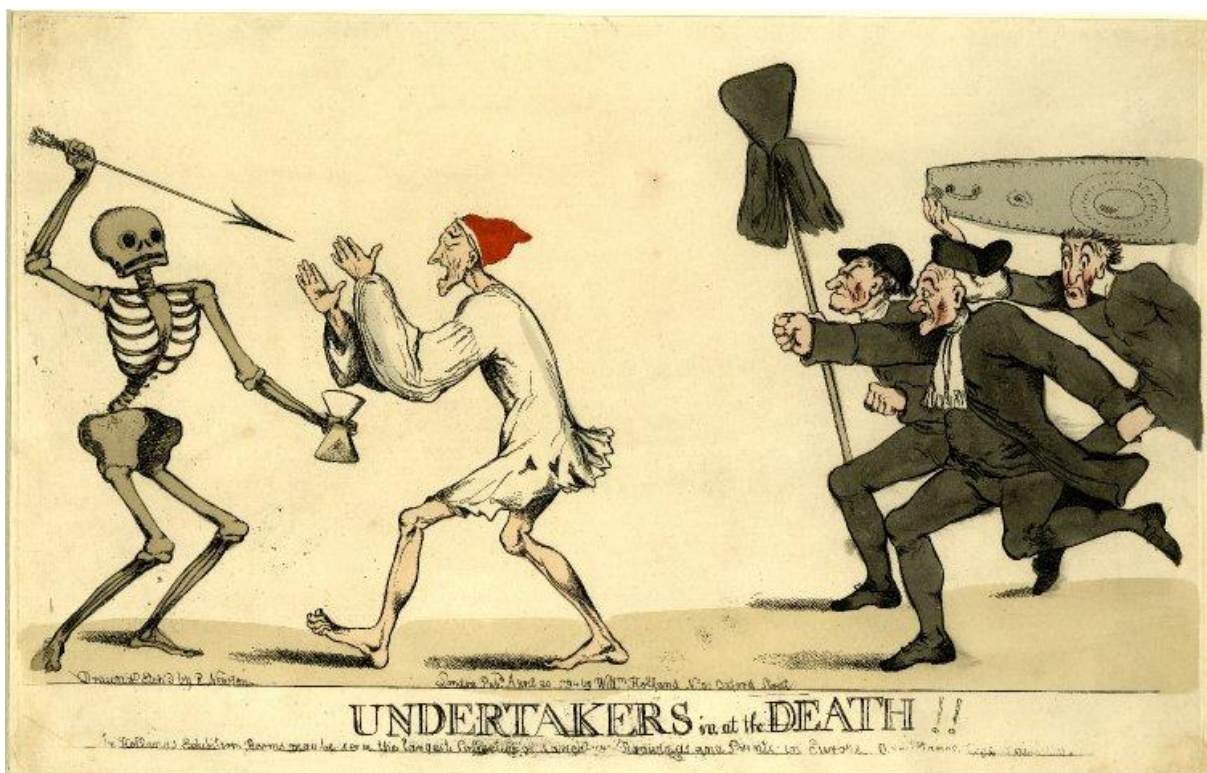


Figure 3. T. Rowlandson, 'Undertakers in at the Death!!', (London: William Holland, 1794), Hand-coloured etching.

## i. The Language of Undertakers' Advertisements

The verbal conflicts between undertakers and competitors presented statements of authority and attempts to appear qualified in matters regarding death. Discrediting the authority and qualifications of his peers, Richard Steele's undertaker Mr. Sable seeks to present himself as the most knowledgeable and experienced vendor.<sup>129</sup> In *The Dead Alive!*, the unnamed undertaker argues with the tailor, Mr. Sheers whom he has mistaken for another undertaker.<sup>130</sup> This argument is precipitated by the undertaker's anxious assumption that the other tradesman has usurped his monopoly over the burial.<sup>131</sup> The undertaker is so distracted in defending his abilities through questions and boasts, that he does not acknowledge Mr. Sheers' references to his work as a tailor. These aggressive disputes between fictional undertakers were an exaggerated version of the professional disagreements which existed between many tradesmen including undertakers. Such disputes prompted the Bradford-on-Avon undertaker William Pitmam to explain that 'various efforts have been artfully made use of to injure me, (particularly in the funeral way by my opponents in that line).'<sup>132</sup> It is significant that Pitmam identified his denigrators as workers in the funeral trade because he was concurrently involved in auctioneering and upholding, neither of which caused him the same damage.

A total of one hundred and three undertakers have been identified in the West Country during the period 1700-1820 and fifty-five of these advertised their businesses in local newspapers.<sup>133</sup> The majority of these advertisements were promotional descriptions of undertaking businesses which adhered to contemporary advertising conventions.

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<sup>129</sup> R. Steele, *The Funeral or Grief a-la-Mode* (London, 1701), pp.11-2.

<sup>130</sup> J. O'Keefe, *The Dead Alive!: A Comic Opera. In Two Acts. As It Is Performed at the Theatres in London and Dublin. By John O'keefe, Esq.* (Dublin: 1783), p. 26.

<sup>131</sup> O'Keefe, *The Dead Alive!*, p. 25.

<sup>132</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 28 August, 1788.

<sup>133</sup> See table in figure 1.

Advertisements frequently consisted of a list of the services or products which were accompanied by the name and address of the undertaker. This was a simple format which was repeated many times, although some undertakers sought to distinguish themselves by using a larger or bolder typeface for their title. The language of these advertisements was intended to convince potential customers that the undertaker had specific qualities that defined them as a professional and a person of unique skill.

Longevity was an important quality of a 'good' undertaking business because it indicated that the business was successful and its proprietor was adequately skilled. In a period when many new undertakers were establishing themselves, the businesses which had existed for an extended period could boast greater experience and rely on established relationships with customers. When an undertaker died or retired it was often necessary for their successor to publish an announcement identifying themselves. This was important because convention dictated that the business would continue in the name of the successor and it was therefore necessary that customers associated the new name with the old business. The language of these advertisements consequently emphasized the continuity between predecessor and successor. Familial ties were stressed by individuals who had inherited the business of a deceased relative but it is apparent that familial ties were not entirely adequate in all instances, particular those in which women inherited businesses, such as Jane Rily of Wilton. Rily succeeded her father in an undertaking, grocery and haberdashery business, but made specific reference to the 'assistance of her brother.'<sup>134</sup> Rily's example is similar to that of Elizabeth Francis, who briefly managed her husband's business in 1788 until it was seceded to his assistant, John Arnold.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 15 February 1802.

<sup>135</sup> William Francis died 24<sup>th</sup> October 1788: *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 25 October, 1788; Elizabeth Francis takes control: *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 25 October, 1788; John Arnold inherits business: *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 22 November, 1788.

The advertisement which announced John Arnold as the eventual successor to William Francis made particular reference to his professional experience in the undertaking trade. By identifying Arnold as ‘many years an assistant,’ the advertisement confirmed a contemporary belief that knowledge of the trade could only be gained through experience, rather than education. In the mid-eighteenth century, Robert Campbell noted the absence of any particular qualification for undertaking and unfavourably concluded that undertakers ‘require more money than brains.’<sup>136</sup> He suggested that artisans became undertakers through their employment in the trade and consequent experience of its unique duties. Such vocational instruction had been the premise of an earlier satirical ballad, *Funeral Discipline* (1725), which depicted the tutelage of an undertaker’s assistant named Paul Meagre. Knowledge of the secretive practices of the trade was received by Meagre whilst he assisted the chief undertaker with the preparation of a funeral. Meagre was a senior member of the undertaker’s retinue and it is made apparent that his instruction was intended to lead to his eventual inheritance of the business.<sup>137</sup> Many West Country undertakers followed a similar career path to the fictional Paul Meagre by rising from the position of assistant to inherit the business of their deceased or retired employer. In 1793, George Tar advertised his business with a prominently placed reference to his 25 years employment as foreman to the Bath undertaker William Cross.<sup>138</sup> Tar appealed to his former master’s customers because Cross had left the undertaking business and no other members of his family intended to continue in the trade. The length of Tar’s service was important because it assured customers that they could expect the same service they had become accustomed to with Cross. Tar’s claims were made in the context of competition with the undertakers, William and John Evill who had been trading for

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<sup>136</sup> R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman. Being a compendious view of all the trades, professions, arts, both liberal and mechanic, now practised in the cities of London and Westminster* (London: 1747), pp. 329-30.

<sup>137</sup> *Funeral Discipline: Or, the Character of Strip-Corps the Dead-Monger. According to the Instructions of Paul Meagre, Once Mourner in Chief to the Funeral Undertaker* (London: 1725), p. 4.

<sup>138</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 18 December 1793.

many years in Milsom Street, Bath.<sup>139</sup> The Evills courted Cross' customers with claims of a close relationship with the retired undertaker, although this was a professional relationship and the Evills had not worked for Cross.<sup>140</sup>

The longevity of an undertaker's service for their successor was frequently testified by advertisements which announced their establishment. Such behaviour clearly emphasized the continuity between predecessor and successor, assuring customers that they would receive the same service which they expected. This was particularly important because the undertaking business would assume of the name of an individual who did not share the surname of their predecessor. For example, when the widow of Thomas Kidman of 1 Colonnade in Cheltenham, died, her business was taken over by Nicholas Colt, who also inherited all of his products and her rare hearse.<sup>141</sup> Although he did not share the Kidman name, Colt had been a member of the Kidman family business for many years and had lived in the Kidman household.<sup>142</sup> This gave credibility to Colt because it assured prospective customers that he had shared the values of his predecessors and could be expected to follow their practices. In 1809, Richard Davis inherited the undertaking business of his former employer, Richard Priest at Clare Street in Bristol. This occurred after Priest had been killed in a duel and his business partners had chosen Richard Davis because they decided not continue in the undertaking businesses.<sup>143</sup> Priest's business was successful and untainted by his untimely

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<sup>139</sup> William Evill and John were undertakers at 18 Milsom Street, they had advertised as early as 1778: *Bath Chronicle*, 11 June 1778.

<sup>140</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 26 December 1793.

<sup>141</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 28 July 1816. Mrs Kidman had taken over the business from her husband in 1811: *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 27 February 1811.

<sup>142</sup> 'Classified Advertisements', *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 18 July 1816.

<sup>143</sup> Richard Priest was gravely injured in a duel with following a disagreement at the theatre. Henry Smith's side of the story is discussed in: T. Rooth, *A fatal duel: Bristol 1809 : the fugitive's story* (Redcliffe Press: Bristol, 2013). Henry Smith surrendered to the assizes in 1810: *Bristol Mirror*, 1 April 1810.

death, making it a valuable asset and prompting Davis' advertisement to assert that he was 'successor to Priest & Co.'<sup>144</sup>

For a newly established undertaker, such as Nicholas Colt or George Tar, claims of long service in the trade were evidence of experience which might distinguish them from other competitors. There were many non-undertakers who traded in funerary goods in the eighteenth-century West Country and it is plausible that established undertakers competed with these individuals by using their own professional experience.

## ii. Undertakers' shops

The premises of West Country undertakers may be examined as another platform for competitive behaviour and displays of professional status. This is possible because design and location gave a shop with a sense of status of significance. Indeed, it is arguable that the undertakers' premises were representative of 'high-status' shops. In contrast to the panoply of items sold by petty shopkeepers, these 'principal' or 'high-status' shops are understood to have specialised in the retail of specific goods or services. Some of these are observed to have already been in existence over a considerable period of time, such as mercers and drapers, trades which were well-represented in West Country undertaking.<sup>145</sup> Luxuries had also been proffered by retailers whose shops were dedicated to specific goods such as tea, china or gold and their proliferation within the period is interpreted as a reflection of growing affluence of the urban communities in which they existed.<sup>146</sup> Increasing demand has also

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<sup>144</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 1 April 1809.

<sup>145</sup> C. Fowler, 'Changes in Provincial Retail Practice During the Eighteenth Century, with Particular Reference to Central Southern England', *Business History*, 40 (1998), p. 40; P. Glennie, 'Consumption, Consumerism and Urban Form: Historical Perspectives', *Urban Studies*, 35 (1998), p. 934 and Nancy Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: A Study of Retailing, 1550-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). p. 81.

<sup>146</sup> McInnes, 'Emergence of a Leisure Town', p. 61; Stobart and Hann, 'Retailing Revolution', p. 180; Stobart, 'Shopping Streets as Social Space' pp. 13-4.

been implicated in the emergence of specialist retailers such as cabinet-makers or booksellers who are identified as having ‘evolved’ from more generalised artisanal trades.<sup>147</sup>

These ‘principal’ shops are widely presented as the apogee of urban retailing, serving an affluent market comprising the middling sort and gentry. Concurrently, the proprietors of these premises are observed to have shared some of the wealth and status of their customers. The studies of Mui and Mui, and Mitchell concur that those engaged in specialist retailing possessed the considerable capital which was necessary for the acquisition of commodities for retail and maintenance of permanent premises.<sup>148</sup>

Existing literature has argued that a culture of innovation existed in the specialist or high-status retailing of the long-Eighteenth Century.<sup>149</sup> Such innovation manifested itself in the design of shops and the most profound example is arguably the introduction of glazed shopfronts. These spaces for the public display of goods are commonly associated with affluent, specialised retailers such as toysellers or mercers and this relationship was observed by contemporaries such as Defoe and Schopenhauer.<sup>150</sup> Glass was an innovative material as it was expensive and its use had been traditionally limited due to technological constraints.<sup>151</sup> The use of glass windows had profound consequences for the customers’ experience of a shop. Nancy Cox notes that the traditional practice of selling directly from a shopfront had necessitated the use of wooden sashes which could be opened to provide customers with access to the shopkeeper within.<sup>152</sup> Glass enclosed the shopfront and accompanied the internalisation of retailing, a development which meant that the shop became a space for

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<sup>147</sup> The use of the term ‘evolved’ is attributed to: Stobart and Hann, ‘Retailing Revolution’, p. 189.

<sup>148</sup> Mui and Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 232; Mitchell, "The Development of Urban Retailing, 1700-1815." p. 277.

<sup>149</sup> Mitchell, 'The Development of Urban Retailing, 1700-1815', in P. Clark (ed.) *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p. 275.

<sup>150</sup> For the use of glazed shop-fronts by ‘high-status’ or affluent trades: References to shop-fronts in contemporary literature are discussed in: H-C. Mui, and L. Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping*, p. 221; Davis, *History of Shopping*. p. 192.

<sup>151</sup> Technological constraints are acknowledged by Cox, *Complete Tradesman*, p. 96.

<sup>152</sup> Cox, *Complete Tradesman*. p. 81.



browsing and buying, rather than producing goods. The decoration of these interiors and the shopfronts is accordingly interpreted as a response to the shopkeepers' need to draw customers into their premises.<sup>153</sup>

The design and appearance of undertakers' premises was frequently mentioned in advertisements and indicates that these businesses were both successful and aware of fashion. The importance of shop interiors beyond the urban centres of Bath and Bristol is apparent in the description of a 'very desirable' shop belonging to an undertaker in Devizes.<sup>154</sup> These premises were located in the centre of the market town and were owned by an undertaker who also traded as a draper and haberdasher, trades which have been identified as operators of high-status shops. The focus on interior aesthetics was evident in the description of G. Strawbridge's 'commodious premises' which offered him greater space for his goods than his original shop.<sup>155</sup> There are several reasons why these qualities would be desirable for an undertaker, even if a visit to the shop was not entirely necessary for the organisation of a funeral. The quality of the building demonstrated that the tradesman was successful because large premises and new stock required capital. Furthermore, the size of the shop was an implied that the undertaker had a comparatively large range of goods.

Warehouses were a greater indicator that a tradesman had a large and comprehensive stock of items, a detail which was an attractive quality for a specialist retailer who claimed to be able to serve all aspects of their trade. In the West Country undertaking trade several undertakers operated or opened 'warehouses' which accumulated their funerary goods with items from their other additional trades. The operation of warehouses was dominated by undertakers who

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<sup>153</sup>C. Walsh, "Shop Design and the Display of Goods in Eighteenth-Century London," *Journal of Design History* 8:3 (1995), p.160 and 175; R. Porter, "Material Pleasures in the Consumer Society," in R. Porter and M. Mulvey Roberts (eds.) *Pleasure in the Eighteenth-Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996). p. 25; N. Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: A Study of Retailing, 1550-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 97. and Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 263.

<sup>154</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 27 December 1787.

<sup>155</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 16 March 1769.

also worked in the textile trades, such as drapery, haberdashery or silk mercery. The undertaker S. Wall opened his warehouse in Salisbury in 1801 and used it to combine the goods of a variety of different textile trades such as hats, gloves, hosiery, haberdashery and linen.<sup>156</sup> Locals were invited to inspect Wall's range of items at the warehouse which included funerary items such as 'sarsenet silk handkerchiefs, modes black and colour' and was capable of 'in town and country on the very lowest terms.'<sup>157</sup> As Wall's advertisement in the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* indicates, the opening of a warehouse was an important occasion which made a positive statement about the capability of an undertaker's business. In Bath, Lawton & Marsh, declared their partnership as undertakers after opening a warehouse alongside Lawton's woollen drapery shop in the Abbey Churchyard in 1788. The warehouse performed an important role in their new business by enabling them to merge the stocks of their silk mercery and woollen drapery businesses which included items that were useful in the funeral trade. As a consequence, they could promise to serve funerals as cheap as in London because the warehouse possessed a 'great stock of SILKS and SATTINS for funerals.'<sup>158</sup> The warehouse reduced an undertaker's dependency on other tradesmen for the supply of funerary goods. The ability to stock a large range of items was positive for the consumer because it enabled a West Country undertaker to compete with both the prices and the range of goods available in the capital. William and John Evill hosted their business in a 'Sheffield, Birmingham and London warehouse' a title which drew emphasis to the scope of their stock.<sup>159</sup> The Evill's business was distinguished by its retail of items from 'northern manufactories' and 'London tradesmen.' Later in the period the term 'funeral warehouse' was applied by B. Belcher, undertaker in Bristol during the first decades of nineteenth

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<sup>156</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 27 July 1801.

<sup>157</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 27 July 1801.

<sup>158</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 27 November 1788.

<sup>159</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 11 June 1778.

century.<sup>160</sup> It is arguable that this reflected Belcher's decision on commit himself to undertaking duties, as he was an early undertaker who practiced solely in the trade.

The location of the shop was an informal indicator of the status of an undertaker's business. The siting of shop in a fashionable location carried the benefits of more affluent customers and greater prestige for the business. The company of popular, successful neighbouring shops conferred some status, as noted in Michael Burrough's announcement that his Salisbury shop was 'next door to Mr. Sharp's linen-draper.'<sup>161</sup> In Bath, the concentration of undertakers in Milsom Street and Queen's Square was arguably a reflection of the additional trades performed by undertakers in the city. Four undertakers opened prominent businesses in Milsom Street, a street which was occupied by fashionable textile and luxury tradesmen.<sup>162</sup> Two undertaker-auctioneers, William Birchill and Thomas Bird, operated their businesses from the fashionable Queen Square during the final two decades of the eighteenth century and Birchill had a warehouse there.<sup>163</sup> The region around Bath Abbey was a similarly popular location, particularly Wade's Passage where three different undertakers traded from shops.<sup>164</sup> The business of Mayo & Co. is significant because it occupied a shop in the passage and a warehouse in the market place.<sup>165</sup> This arrangement enabled Mayo & Co. to have a shopfront in a fashionable part of the city, whilst maintaining a warehouse that testified to their appropriateness to undertake large funerals.

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<sup>160</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 21 June 1817.

<sup>161</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 25 September 1775.

<sup>162</sup> Milsom Street undertakers: William Cross 1781; Percival & Cunditt 1787; John Plura 1780; William Bally 1794.

<sup>163</sup> Birchill advertised his warehouse in: *Bath Chronicle*, 14 March 1776. Birchill's business closed in 1784.

Thomas Bird was in Queen Sq.: W. Bailey, *Bailey's Western and Midland Directory; or, Merchant's and Tradesman's Useful Companion, for the Year, 1783*. (Birmingham: 1783), p. 196.

<sup>164</sup> Undertakers include: John Bowden & John Gale, 3 Wade's Passage: *Bath Chronicle*, 28 September 1787; Meredith 'Wade's Passage': *Bath Chronicle*, 13 Jan 1785; Mayo & Co. 'Wade's Passage': *Bath Chronicle*, 24 November 1785.

<sup>165</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 13 Jan 1785.

In some instances, the operation of a series of successful businesses could transform the reputation of a location as we may observe in the Redcliff area of Bristol. Redcliff Hill was a prime location with three established undertaking businesses in the late 1700s.<sup>166</sup> Since the early 1780s, the coffin and shroud making business of Richard Peters, one of the earliest trades solely dedicated to funeral trade, had operated from premises on the hill.<sup>167</sup> The property served as a coffin manufactory, which likely served many of the other undertaking businesses in the city; these were primarily textile based businesses which had access to clothing and mourning decoration. Peters' premises at 31 Redcliff Hill were home to three businesses between the 1780s and early 1800s. In 1813, John Hewlett was third undertaker to occupy the premises and he acknowledged the heritage of the building.<sup>168</sup>

### iii. Failure

One notable consequence of the competitive environment was the closure of undertaking businesses which failed to establish themselves. The process of 'leaving' or 'declining' the undertaking business may have been occasioned by the cost of stock, an increase in competition or the individual's decision to pursue new opportunity. Two examples from the market towns of Warminster and Devizes involve undertakers who declined their business in the mid-1780s despite a full stock of items for both their funerary and supplementary trades.<sup>169</sup> The Devizes undertaker was not named in the 1787 article but it is probable that he was Thomas Whitfield, who also worked as a hosier, draper and mercer in the centre of Devizes.<sup>170</sup> Whitfield became an agent for the Sun Fire Office in 1786 and his decision to

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<sup>166</sup> Undertakers on Redcliff Hill: Richard Peters, 1782: *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 31 August 1782; H.Collins, 1789: *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 3 October 1789; John Hewlett, 1812: *Bristol Mirror*, 31 October 1812; B. Belcher, 1813: *Bristol Mirror*, 31 October 1813.

<sup>167</sup> *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 24 August 1782.

<sup>168</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 16 October 1819.

<sup>169</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 18 September, 1788. Issue 1451; *Bath Chronicle*, 8 November 1787.

<sup>170</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 16 April 1780.

cease using the title ‘undertaker’ in a later advert indicates that he was the anonymous undertaker who left his business ‘in favour of another trade.’<sup>171</sup>

If two undertakers were collaborating, it was possible for their partnership to separate so that one party declined their opportunity in the funeral trade. Many partnerships were unions of convenience which helped two retailers to combine their stock and for early undertakers this act of collaboration could bring together the necessary skills for funerary work. In an example from Devizes in 1804, we can observe how the business of undertakers J. Holloway and William Crook separated ‘by mutual consent.’<sup>172</sup> Holloway retained their shop at Long Street, Devizes and continued in the title ‘undertaker’ whilst Crook returned to working solely as a grocer.

The act of ‘leaving’ the trade was arguably a consequence of the entrepreneurial character of early undertaking. Retailers who adopted the title of ‘undertaker’ hoped to exploit an unsaturated market and establish their status as a dependable provider of funerary business. For many undertakers the act of leaving the trade was permanent and they did not return to funerary business. This was not the case for all undertakers, however, as we may observe in the case of Mr. Belcher, a Bristolian undertaker who left his funerary work to focus on auctioneering at a warehouse in Bridge Street.<sup>173</sup> Belcher left his undertaking business to John Hewlett, a cabinet maker and upholsterer who operated from Belcher’s former premises. Although Belcher had left the trade he advertised to his former customers that ‘if they should prefer his attendance, he will, in behalf of his successor, most readily give it’<sup>174</sup> This meant that Belcher did not damage any relationships with existing customers who might be displeased with his decision to decline from the role of undertaker. There is evidence that he

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<sup>171</sup> Advert confirming Whitfield as a Sun Fire Office Agent, he is still undertaking at this point: *Bath Chronicle*, 6 July 1786. 1787 advert without ‘undertaker’ title: *Bath Chronicle*, 15 February 1787.

<sup>172</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 4 July 1804.

<sup>173</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 31 October 1812.

<sup>174</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 31 October 1812.

maintained a collaborative agreement with Hewlett in which customers could request funerary work from the auctioneering warehouse in Bridge Street. In an unexpected development, Belcher returned to his funerary business in late 1813 following the sudden death of Hewlett.<sup>175</sup> This decision demonstrates that Belcher believed that the undertaking business was still viable, even though it had not been his priority in the previous years. In a plea to his customers, Belcher stated his intention ‘to regain that decided preference, so many years shewn towards his establishment’ by the people of city.<sup>176</sup> This was an attempt by Belcher to use his personal legacy and reputation as an undertaker to give credibility to the new business that had formed after Hewlett’s death. Unsure or sceptical customers could be reassured that Belcher’s long career gave him the knowledge of funerary organisation. The reference to the customers’ ‘decided preference’ is a reminder that the undertaking market was competitive in early-nineteenth century Bristol and the people of the city had a choice of different undertakers.

Instances of bankruptcy reflect the fragility of such wealth and status; a reflection of the significant risk which accompanied specialisation in retailing during this period.<sup>177</sup> The Bath undertaker, Thomas Bird provides an example of how a previously successful business could find itself in bankruptcy. In the early 1780s Bird had a successful undertaking business which supplemented his work as an auctioneer.<sup>178</sup> Bird followed a similar path to other Bath undertakers in relocating his business from Kingsmead Street to the vicinity of Queen’s Square, a location in which successful Bath undertakers such as William Birchall, were

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<sup>175</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 31 October 1813.

<sup>176</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 31 October 1813.

<sup>177</sup> J. Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business, 1700-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) ; Davis, *A History of Shopping*. p. 182.

<sup>178</sup> Bird advertises at his Kingsmead Street location: *Bath Chronicle*, 2 Mar 1780.

trading.<sup>179</sup> Bird's business failed in 1789, a period when there were a significant number of undertakers were trading in the city, although the cause of his bankruptcy was not explained.

### The Products of the Undertaking Trade

Existing studies have examined the products or services of early undertakers through written sources such as accounts of funerals and the paperwork which was produced as consequence of trade. These sources embellish our understanding of the expenditures and products involved in a funeral but they are subject to several limitations. For example, it is apparent that evidence for the funerary rites and expenditures of affluent individuals is the most survivable and therefore the most available. This is demonstrated by the detail of existing research into the funerary arrangements of the aristocracy or affluent industrialists.<sup>180</sup>

In the context of these limitations to textual sources, it is useful to consider how archaeological studies have contributed to the broader understanding of the undertakers' goods and practices. The archaeological analysis of post-medieval burial grounds has produced significant data on the material culture of internment, a subject which was heavily influenced by the undertaking trade. This is beneficial because it commonly concerns the form and composition of funerary items, which are also addressed by the documentary research of historical scholarship. This will now consider the consumption of particular funerary goods which were indicative of change, archaeological contributions are important because they embellish the example.

#### i. Coffins

It is appropriate to start with coffins because these were the item which was most-widely associated with the trade and they are observed to have been emblematic of undertakers

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<sup>179</sup> W. Bailey, *Bailey's Western and Midland Directory; or, Merchant's and Tradesman's Useful Companion, for the Year, 1783*. (Birmingham: 1783).

<sup>180</sup> Gittings, 'Eccentric or Enlightened?', pp. 330-1.

during the Eighteenth Century.<sup>181</sup> Coffins were used in all of the funerals studied by this thesis and this represents a widespread adoption of the coffin by West Country funeral parties ranging from the most affluent to lower middling members of rural communities. Indeed, the absence of a coffin was regarded as an undignified and improper treatment of the dead. This is evident in a magazine account of a Bristolian woman who discovered her sister's remains in a lead shell at the premises of a Salisbury undertaker. Although this was arguably intended to be a temporary situation, the undertaker responsible was critically described by the magazine as 'the hardened dealer in death' who had treated the remains with, 'as little decency as humanity.'<sup>182</sup> The account is significant because such treatment was considered to be inadequate even though the lead shell would have hygienically and aesthetically concealed the remains of deceased woman.<sup>183</sup> It is apparent from such an account that coffins were as integral to West Country perceptions of funerary decency as they were in the metropolis. It would be inaccurate, however, to assert that all coffins were identical because existing research identifies a variety of coffin styles which corresponded to the affluence of the deceased. Archaeological studies of various sites in Bath and Bristol have provided valuable detail on different styles of coffin in use.<sup>184</sup> It is worthwhile to observe that the coffin's physical survivability and consequent numerousness has made it a predominant focus of archaeological studies of burial sites. Intramural sites are studied in particular detail because the insulation of vaults and shafts may have protected the interred contents from decay or damage. The resulting research into the materials and techniques employed in coffin manufacture compensates for the sparse documentary evidence regarding this subject,

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<sup>181</sup> The coffin became an integral part of undertakers' advertising as illustrated by: Litten, *The English Way of Death*, p. and Berry, 'Polite Consumption', p. 328.

<sup>182</sup> *The County Magazine* (Salisbury, B.C. Collins, 1786-1792), p. 360.

<sup>183</sup> *County Magazine* (1786-1792), p. 359.

<sup>184</sup> M. Ponsford et al., 'Archaeology in Bristol 1986-89', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 107 (1989), pp. 243-51. Quaker burials in Bath are detailed in: L. Bashford and L. Sibun, 'Excavations at the Quaker Burial Ground, Kingston-Upon-Thames, London', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 41 (2007), pp. 100-54.



because only a few pattern books and patents survive and these are mostly related to anti-theft devices.<sup>185</sup> Theft did not appear to be an important influence for the purchases made by West Country inhabitants studied by this thesis. This may be due to the lower population and consequent lack of burial overcrowding, which has been argued to have been one of the causes of burial crime. Variations in West Country coffin design were arguably a reflection of the importance of the coffin as a means of expressing status and affluence. This could be expressed through the form of the coffin or the materials from which it was made.

It is plausible that the majority of coffins purchased in the eighteenth century West Country were simple wooden containers with lids. However, there is evidence that West Country undertakers sold coffins which followed a particular metropolitan fashion for the use of several 'shells' or coffins-within-coffins. The most popular of these were the 'double' or 'triple' shell coffins which were purchased by affluent consumers. Regional evidence indicates popularity outside of the urban centres in rural communities such as Iron Acton, where the Rev. Henry Willis was interred in a double shell coffin worth £2-15s-6d. The considerable cost of such a coffin was arguably a consequence of the time and labour required for construction. Willis' coffin required the work of a local plumber and carpenter who were employed by the undertaker, Joseph Wallis.<sup>186</sup>

The involvement of the plumber reminds us that the multiple shelled coffin was intended to serve a practical purpose, as well as being a representation of status or affluence. This is because the internal, lead shell hygienically contained the remains of the deceased and prevented the contamination of the vault in which they were buried.

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<sup>185</sup> Litten, *English Way of Death*, p. 109; Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*. pp. 80-82.

<sup>186</sup> GRO: D547a/F40, 'Receipt from Daniel Fugill for Coffin of Rev. Willis', 1794.

Funeral bills further indicate that regional trends in coffin manufacture followed a nationwide fashion for the use of oak by affluent consumers which was prevalent throughout the national in the eighteenth century. In the late-Eighteenth Century, Bristolian undertaker Elizabeth Fry sold a Dutch oak coffin for the funeral of wealthy spinster Jane Whitchurch, mother-in-law of Jarrit Smyth.<sup>187</sup> Oak coffins of this kind were expensive and frequently sold for several pounds; Whitchurch's cost her executor £4-14d-6s and outside of Bristol, the Rev. Willis' oak, outer coffin cost his executors £2.<sup>188</sup> It is unclear whether Fry manufactured the coffin or purchased it from another source such as a warehouse or an artisan. There were several of the latter operating in the West Country during this period, advertising coffins for sale to the funeral trade. The Bristolian tradesman, Richard Peters, defined himself as a 'coffin maker' and produced a wide variety of coffins in different sizes and woods.<sup>189</sup> A 1765 advertisement by Peters' suggests that a decently decorated coffin could be purchased for between 9s and £2.

Despite variations in material composition, it has been observed that the eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of a standard coffin shape and the popularisation of decorative devices which had previously been limited to the most affluent. This was made possible by a shift in coffin design from a gabled lid to the 'single break' design with distinctive shoulders and a flat lid.<sup>190</sup> The interior of the coffin provided undertakers with an opportunity to sell more products that were intended to convey status and satisfy the requirements of bereaved relatives. The upholstering of this predominantly-concealed space was a development of the eighteenth century which had not be practiced in the early periods of coffin production.<sup>191</sup>

The coffin-upholstery performed by West Country undertakers indicates that the regional

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<sup>187</sup> BRO: AC/WH/17/31/a, 'Thomas Smyth paid bill from Elizabeth Fry', 1799-1800.

<sup>188</sup> BRO: AC/WH/17/31/a; GRO: D547a/F40.

<sup>189</sup> *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 24 August, 1782.

<sup>190</sup> L. Bashford and L. Sibun, 'Excavations at the Quaker Burial Ground', p. 129.

<sup>191</sup> The coffin as simple wooden container: Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 339-40.

trade was willing and able to exploit this opportunity. For many of the upholsterers who also worked as undertakers this was a convenient application of their existing skills. The practice was not commonplace in this period and the augmentation of the coffin in this manner suggested that the deceased, or their family, were sufficiently wealthy. As with other elements of the funeral, the use of more expensive materials implied higher status and offered more opportunities to demonstrate personal taste.

Bristolian undertaker Joseph Sheppard provided a coffin 'lined with flannel' for the funeral of William Hawkes Merriman in Bristol. Sheppard's bill also included one shilling and six pence of bran, a material that was commonly used to absorb liquid from the corpse.<sup>192</sup> This is reflective of the practical considerations that faced undertakers who had to keep a body for a long time or were intending to bury it in a vault. Bran was common for vault burials where it could prevent the contamination of the vault space. Elizabeth Fry's coffin for Jane Whitchurch was lined with 'fine flannel',<sup>193</sup> Fry added a bushel of bran to Whitchurch's coffin before its interment in the vaults of Stapleton church. Coffin upholstery was not required in instances where the dead body was contained within a lead shell.

The popularity of crape as a funerary fabric extended to its use as lining material for coffins. The undertaker of the funeral of Ann Hen from Wiltshire produced a coffin that was 'lined and ruffed with fine crape',<sup>194</sup> Similarly, in the same county Thomas Nettleshill used seven yards of white crape to line the interior of John Sturmy's coffin for eight shillings and two pence.<sup>195</sup> The cost was a minor element of his expensive seventeen pounds funeral bill.

Preparing the body of John Mabbett for burial in Stinchcombe, William Plomer used seven

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<sup>192</sup> BRO: 38169/W/Me/2 'Expenses for the Funeral of William Hawkes Merriman', 22 June 1810.

<sup>193</sup> BRO: AC/WH/17/13/c 'Thomas Smyth paid bill from Elizabeth Fry', 1799.

<sup>194</sup> WSHC: 1390/107, 'Account of expenses at funeral of Ann Hen', 1730.

<sup>195</sup> GRO: D2375/F6 'Bill for the Funeral of John Sturmy of Swindon', 1742.

yards of what he described as ‘burial crape’ for the inside of the coffin.<sup>196</sup> This terminology served to differentiate the seven yards used inside the coffin from those which were used for clothing and accessories. It is also possible that the ‘burial crape’ was white, rather than the black that was used for clothing items.

The Trimnell brothers coffin for James Blathwayt of Dyrham Park provides an indication of how greater expenditure contributed to a more ostentatious and arguably luxurious, upholstery of the coffin. Blathwayt’s coffin was lined with white quilted satin and the body rested on a ‘mattress’<sup>197</sup> The deceased man’s head was supported by a pillow that provided as part of the coffin upholstery.

We must remember that the practice of upholstery was successful because the customers felt that it was worthwhile. We cannot be certain about the motives of West Country consumers but it is arguable that the popular perception of death as sleep had an influence on the ‘comfortable’ designs of coffin. Whilst relatives did not sincerely believe that the deceased had merely fallen asleep, the contemporary descriptions of death presented death as a ‘restful’ experience.<sup>198</sup> This sanitised image of the corpse as a sleeping body was particularly clear in the arrangements for Blathwayt’s coffin which additionally included a half-sheet to be tucked in underneath the body, as if in a bed.<sup>199</sup> It is probable that this presentation was useful for the display of the body prior to the funeral, but we must remember that these items were interred in the grave with the coffin. The undertaker’s goods had therefore softened the pain of separation and uncertainty caused by death by transforming the body’s isolation inside the buried coffin into a sort of comfortable hibernation.

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<sup>196</sup> GRO: D9125/1/13208, ‘Receipted Account for the Funeral of John Mabbett’, 1792.

<sup>197</sup> GRO: D1799/A382 ‘Receipted Account for the Funeral of James Blathwayt’, 1789.

<sup>198</sup> Death as sleep in the eighteenth century: Rugg, ‘From Reason to Regulation’, pp. 203-4; R. Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 222-3.

<sup>199</sup> GRO: D1799/A382 ‘Receipted Account for the Funeral of James Blathwayt’, 1789.

It is arguable that this also provided comfort to people preparing for their own death, as we may observe in the funerary instructions of Jane Edwards. Edwards requested ruffled crape upholstery for her coffin but stated that she wanted ‘no ornaments’ on the outside.<sup>200</sup>

Edwards’ instructions indicate that she believed the upholstery of the coffin was more necessary than exterior design. It is plausible that she was motivated by her anxieties about premature burial and contemplation of being inside her own coffin. These anxieties were exposed in another instruction that her inner coffin should be sealed long before the outer and an arched ceiling to be created over her coffin, as if to lessen to sense of entombment.

## ii. Coffin Ornaments and Decorative Items

Concerns about the interior of the coffin were paralleled by a belief that the exterior should befit the status and taste of the deceased person. Affordable coffin ornaments were a major innovation of the long eighteenth century which demonstrated the changing role of the coffin as an avatar for the dead person. Until this period the coffin was primarily a practical receptacle for human remains, a role which was most clearly performed by the anonymous and re-usable parish coffin. Different forms and styles of metal ornament introduced the means by which the deceased could be identified and also commemorated by their coffin.<sup>201</sup> Nameplates were the most the basic form of ornamentation and the most widely consumed by all levels of society throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>202</sup> It is arguable that perceived importance of using a nameplate was demonstrated by contemporary revulsion at the use of unmarked coffins in pauper burials. There were other forms of coffin ornamentation which were primarily decorative adaptations of functional parts, such as handles or nails. All forms of ornamentation could be used as indicators of personal status because the design and material composition of such items varied depending on cost. The metal ornaments on the

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<sup>200</sup> Edwards’ rejection of pomp is discussed later in the chapter. GRO: D2002/14/3.

<sup>201</sup> E. Boore, ‘Burial Vaults and Coffin Furniture in the West Country,’ in Margaret Cox (ed.) *Grave Concerns: Death and Burial in England, 1700-1850*, (London: CBA, 1998), p. 70.

<sup>202</sup> Boore, ‘Burial Vaults’, p. 75; Bashford and Sibun, ‘Excavations’ 2007, pp. 113-4.

coffin of Rev Henry Willis cost £1-5-4 and comprised eight handles, ornamental nails and a breastplate.<sup>203</sup> The breastplate described in the source was an ornate nameplate, named for its position on the coffin over the chest of the deceased person. The decorative items used for the coffin of Ann Hen were similar ostentatious and featured ‘a double plate with inscription, three pairs of handles, a set of two rows of nails’ in addition to a baize covering.<sup>204</sup> Significantly, the cost of Hen’s coffin and decorations was less than the sole cost of Willis’ ornaments, demonstrating that it was possible for similar items to be acquired for a lower price.<sup>205</sup> Both individuals’ funerals were overseen by undertakers from rural towns outside of the urban centres of Bath and Bristol and it is arguable that supply was a determinant in the cost of ornamentation for some regional consumers. If a local undertaker had a greater range of ornamental items or a good relationship with a local metalworker, it was possible that the cheaper items could be offered for sale. As the century progressed, the accessibility of coffin ornaments improved because they were mass-manufactured from the mid-eighteenth century and therefore became considerably less expensive. By the late 1770s Birmingham had already established itself as the dominant producer of coffin ornaments as observed by the *Birmingham Directory*.<sup>206</sup> Therefore, it may be argued that the potential for national hegemony existed, in which the coffin ornamentation fashions of the metropolis and the West Country were influenced by the same source.

It is plausible that Birmingham-manufactured coffin ornaments were sold by West Country undertakers who had either sourced them during travel or through local warehouses. The retail of items from outside of the region is suggested by the promise of the Bristolian

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<sup>203</sup> GRO: D574A/F40.

<sup>204</sup> WSHC: 1390/107.

<sup>205</sup> WSHC: 1390/107. The cost of Ann Hen’s coffin & decorations: £1-15-0.

<sup>206</sup> *The Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Bilston, and Willenhall Directory; or, Merchant and Tradesman’s Useful Companion* (Birmingham: 1777), p. xxvi-ii.

undertaker, Richard Peters, to provide ‘all sorts of new invented coffin ornaments’<sup>207</sup> It would be incorrect to assert that the popularity of coffin ornamentation increased demand exclusively for items manufactured outside the region. The establishment of regional businesses which manufactured coffin ornaments provides some evidence for a strong regional market for these items, arguably one which could support competition in the West Country. The auction of the estate of tin-plate manufacturer Ambrose Poarch included ‘a large assortment of coffin-plate furniture, well worthy the notice of those in that branch of business.’<sup>208</sup> As Poarch worked with tin, it is plausible that he created the coffin ornaments which he sold because tin plate ornaments were popular in the period. More complete evidence that large-scale production existed in the West Country is observable in the business of Benjamin Lewis who owned a ‘tin plate and coffin plate manufactory’ in Bristol and identified himself as a ‘coffin-plate chaser.’<sup>209</sup>

Poarch and Lewis are significant because both businessmen advertised their products to local members of the funeral trade. Wholesalers such as these have been identified by Howarth as essential to the success of the early undertakers in London, because they provided a source for many products which would have been too expensive for new undertakers to produce or acquire. It is arguable that a similar situation existed in the West Country, where many undertakers either purchased some of their products or sold items to other members of the trade. This enabled undertakers to offer ‘an entire stock’ of funerary items, regardless of their personal specialism. Therefore, T. Kidman, was able to promise ‘a complete and elegant assortment of funeral articles’ even though his primary trade was wool and linen drapery.<sup>210</sup> Equally, an undertaker might sell or hire items to other undertakers, which had been produced

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<sup>207</sup> *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 24 August, 1782.

<sup>208</sup> *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 30 August, 1783.

<sup>209</sup> *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 1 March, 1788.

<sup>210</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 25 January 1810.

in their parallel business. The extent to which they sold or hired these items was dependent on the size of their own stock. Therefore, prosperous tradesmen such as S. Wall of Salisbury and William Birchill of Bath offered items to other undertakers, from the stock warehouses which they owned.<sup>211</sup> The lack of specialised ‘funeral warehouses’ is a notable difference from London, which is arguably a consequence of the smaller size of the trade in the West Country. The first funeral warehouse in the West Country did not begin until 1788, when it was mentioned in an advert from John Arnold.<sup>212</sup>

### iii. Hearses

The need for a hearse developed as a consequence of the increasing distances between the location of the funeral and the place of burial. As burial grounds became more distant from the communities which used them, the traditional methods of funerary transportation became less useful. This was a gradual process however, and one which created a growing, but limited, demand for the hearse. A hearse or accompanying coaches were significantly large in size and it is arguable that most undertakers did not possess enough space to keep such vehicles in their urban shops. It is consequently apparent that hearses were particularly novel items in the eighteenth century West Country. Few individuals advertised hearses for hire, and those who did sought to assert the uniqueness of these items. This can be observed in the case of Richard Crook, linen draper and undertaker in Chippenham who offered his hearse ‘be lett on the most reasonable terms to travel to any part of England.’<sup>213</sup> The Cheltenham undertaker T. Kidman declared that he had constructed a hearse ‘in consequence of the inconvenience occasioned by there being no hearse near that Gloucester’<sup>214</sup> Although Kidman was the only undertaker to hire out a hearse in Cheltenham, it is evident that two hotels: The

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<sup>211</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 27 July, 1801.

<sup>212</sup> *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 22 November, 1788.

<sup>213</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 18 May 1780.

<sup>214</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 25 January, 1810.



Plough and The George, also hired funerary vehicles during the following decade.<sup>215</sup> This service was performed by other hostleries in the late-eighteenth century West Country as we may observe in the notable example of Bath. In the affluent city, the only available set of mourning vehicles, known as ‘The Black Works,’ was owned by the landlord of a large tavern, The Bear in the 1780s.<sup>216</sup> Hostleries such as The Bear and its equivalents in Cheltenham, made a significant contribution to the wider use and awareness of hearses because they hired to local undertakers. It is plausible that a significant number of hearses used in the West Country funerals had been hired by the undertakers. The hearse remained a non-essential item throughout this period, as evidenced by its absence in the funerals of individuals who were affluent enough to afford the cost. At the funeral of Charles Cobbe Esq. the omission of a hearse enabled the performance of respectful ritual in which members of his Royal Volunteers company carried the coffin on their shoulders.<sup>217</sup>

There is also evidence that the use of hearse was declined by individuals who believed that they were neither decent nor appropriate. Jane Edwards of Redland, Bristol refused a hearse and specifically requested that coffin should be carried by members of her parish.<sup>218</sup>

Edwards’ choices reflected her dislike of funerary ‘pomp,’ and many popular and innovative funerary goods were criticised in this manner. A rural, Wiltshire yeoman named Richard Bowman had specifically refused any unnecessary expense or pomp at his funeral. These attitudes were not restricted to the West Country and may be observed throughout the country, although no formal movement for funerary reform existed until the mid-nineteenth century. It is disputable that these attitudes had a damaging effect on the success of the early

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<sup>215</sup> The Plough: *Cheltenham Chronicle* 5 December 1811; William Hughes at the George Hotel advertised his hearse and coaches to undertakers: *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 19 July 1818.

<sup>216</sup> Fawcett, *Bath Commercialis'd*, p. 123.

<sup>217</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 19 July 1798.

<sup>218</sup> GRO: D/2002/14/3.

because, as the example of Jane Edwards demonstrates, a disapproval of pomp did not mean that an individual would refuse the service of an undertaker.

The ‘pomp’ which drew criticism from individuals such as Edwards was typified by the large, elaborate processions which undertakers organised around the hearse as it travelled through a town. The philosopher William Combe imagined the opinion of a spectator to a Bristolian funeral.

‘when the train of death blackened the way beside him, as they attended, in all the pomp of funeral obsequies, some breathless body to its long home, - he would look grave and say that there was a great deal of money thrown away to very little purpose!’<sup>219</sup>

Combe’s fictional spectator espoused a common criticism that the contemporary funeral involved many expensive items which served no practical or useful purpose. These were the decorative devices carried in the funeral procession, placed around the house of mourning and used within the church during the service. These items are an important demonstration of changing funerary customs in the West Country because they originated in the funerary rituals of the elite, which will be examined in the fourth chapter.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that a large and diverse undertaking trade existed in the urban centres and smaller towns of the West Country. It has been shown that undertakers predominantly supplemented their funerary business with work from pre-established livelihoods. It was argued that these undertakers operated in a highly competitive environment in which claims of status and professionalism were based on the personal

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<sup>219</sup> W. Combe, *The Philosopher in Bristol* (Bristol, 1775), p. 49.

qualities and reputation. This competitive behaviour is evident in the language of advertisements, some of which were directly confrontational, and the adoption of new premises that testified to the success and ambition of the undertaker. A range of ostentatious funerary items are identified with various grades of quality being offered by the early undertakers. Through these examples we can observe that metropolitan trends in coffin design and ornamentation were achievable by West Country undertakers. The following chapter will examine how these funerary goods were used as part of a more private funeral ritual that was organised by the undertakers and became popular with affluent mourners who wanted to display their taste and status.

## The Clergy as 'Deathworkers'

### Introduction

This chapter examines the funerary duties of the clergy in the established church during the eighteenth century. In this period, most funerals occurred in a church and the burial of the dead in churchyards had not yet been challenged by the cemeteries. Consequently, the clergy performed an important role in the commercialised funeral, both as performers and facilitators. The clergy can be overlooked as an inevitable presence in the funeral who represent a less significant influence than the undertakers, particularly when the trade's items were secular in origin. This chapter will challenge that appraisal by demonstrating how the clergyman was an important figure in the professionalised eighteenth-century funeral.

The chapter interprets the clergyman as a 'deathworker,' a professional who manages death through specialist knowledge. To advance this argument three aspects of the clergy's duties regarding death will be examined. Firstly, the chapter will examine the specific roles performed by the clergyman and identify how they were influenced by professional ideas. The clergy were bearers of special knowledge which was essential to the respectable funeral, much as undertakers were, and their involvement in the funeral required transactions and negotiation. Secondly, the chapter will briefly consider how the exchange of funerary gifts recognised the clergymen's role in the funeral. The clergy received payments, but the exchange of informal gifts represented the mourners' personal acknowledgement of the clergyman's contribution. Finally, the perception of the clergyman's funerary roles will be examined through an analysis of popular culture. The satirical depictions in theatre and caricature represented contemporary beliefs about the clergyman as deathworker, drawing upon common beliefs that would be recognisable to audiences.

### Existing Literature

## i. The Roles and Duty of the Clergy

It is important to acknowledge the historiography of attitudes to the established church in the late eighteenth century. In particular, the assertion that the established church was ‘distant’ and did not engage people, resulting in disaffection and the consequent abandonment of the church by congregants. It is evident in the late eighteenth century, the established church faced dual challenges of competing Christian denominations and secularist ideas. Following the Act of Toleration, the church had lost its power to compel congregants to attend but this prompted the clergy to appeal to the needs of those who remained loyal. There is much in historiography to suggest that the clergy were attendant to the needs of their people, for example F.C. Mather’s study of churchmanship observes that many clergymen maintained local traditions and customs against the directives of the established church.<sup>220</sup> We may also observe that clergymen maintained their traditional responsibility to provide education; a role which was expected by church authorities and congregants. Catechistic instruction was popular and W.M. Jacob identifies this as evidence that the church was a neither neglectful to its congregants nor unrequired by them.<sup>221</sup> Pasi Ilhalainen has presented the sermon as a means of introducing new ideas to the laity, a form of theological education.<sup>222</sup> R. Barry Levis contrastingly identifies sermons as an ‘important form of entertainment,’ which were eagerly consumed by congregants, throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>223</sup> Corfield has identified the existence of competition between clergymen to produce material that would be

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<sup>220</sup> F.C. Mather, 'Georgian Churchmanship Reconsidered: Some Variations in Anglican Public Worship 1714–1830', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1986), 255-83.

<sup>221</sup> W.M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.

<sup>222</sup> P. Ilhalainen, 'The Enlightenment Sermon: Towards Practical Religion and a Sacred National Community' in J. van Eijnatten (ed.), *Preaching, Sermon and Cultural Change in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 219-60.

<sup>223</sup> R.B. Levis, 'Preaching Styles in the Church of England, 1660–1760', *Journal of Church and State*, 56 (1989), pp. 462-463.

more widely received.<sup>224</sup> Although the situation in the Anglican church was not perfect, there were many examples of clergymen who sought to engage with their congregation and many congregants. Jeremy Morris describes how the content of sermon was intended to respond to the pastoral needs of parishioners.<sup>225</sup> Morris demonstrates how the act of visitation was important as a means of informing the clergyman of the demands of his parishioners, enabling him to calibrate church teaching. It was a clergyman's responsibility to educate and instruct his congregation, this is important because the funeral was an opportunity to encourage the congregants to consider their own mortality. Spaeth noted a contemporary concern that the motives of clerical preacher were not entirely focused on the edification of their parishioners.<sup>226</sup>

The content of catechistic instruction demonstrates why it is plausible that a funeral would be intended to provide religious instruction. Within the period studied by this thesis, there was a shift towards religious instruction which focused on personal improvement rather than interpretation of biblical language. a 'mild' church focused on 'practical' messages rather than churchmanship. Sykes argues that the Latitudinarianism of the Georgian church caused the abandonment of traditional, aspects of churchmanship in favour of focus on secular behaviour.<sup>227</sup> He is supported by others including R.W. Greaves who presents a tolerant, calm-tempered, plainly-spoken church, caused by anxieties regarding mysticism.<sup>228</sup> Anthony Russell similarly argues that the mildness of Georgian Anglican practice was a response to concerns about enthusiasm and superstition.<sup>229</sup> Thus the teaching focused on aspects of the daily lives of congregants: personal conduct, relationships and attitudes to consumption. The

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<sup>224</sup> P.J. Corfield, 'An Age of Infidelity': Secularization in Eighteenth-Century England', *Social History*, 39 (2014), pp. 229-47.

<sup>225</sup> J.N. Morris, *The High Church Revival in the Church of England: Arguments and Identities* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2016), pp. 416-17.

<sup>226</sup> D.A. Spaeth, *The Church in an Age of Danger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 53.

<sup>227</sup> N. Sykes, *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Octagon Books, 1975)

<sup>228</sup> R.W. Greaves, *On the Religious Climate of Hanoverian England* (London, 1963).

<sup>229</sup> A. Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (London, 1980), pp. 104-5.

latter is particularly important because it was possible for the funeral to be a demonstration of appropriate behaviour, by the deceased, their mourners or most significantly the officiating clergyman.

It has been argued that the clerical specialisation on moral and spiritual instruction was a response to the growing influence of the professions. Penelope Corfield observes that the clergy were forced to specialise in these roles because their traditional duty as adviser on a broad variety of secular matters had been undermined by new professions such as law and medicine. In Corfield's argument, this specialisation is identified in the personal advice and sermons given to parishioners regarding spiritual matters such as prayer and sinfulness.<sup>230</sup> It is apparent that death presented an opportunity for clergy to advise and instruct, even though the professions had eroded their influence over matters such as deathbed care and post-mortem finances. Donald Spaeth, offers a similar appraisal of clerical specialisation, in which the clergy fulfilled their duties through counsel provided to the dying and the edification of bereaved parishioners through sermons.<sup>231</sup> Spaeth attributes this transition to the short term influence of the professions and the long term influence of Reformation ideas which diminished the role of intercessional prayers and talismanic devices.<sup>232</sup> The diligence with which clergymen performed their duties to the dead and dying has been noted by David Albert Jones, who analyses parochial duties through diary evidence.<sup>233</sup> This is illustrated with the testimony of clergymen which provides a good indication that the clergy felt that their parochial duties were important and expected by their parishioners. Jones' analysis also traces the eroding influence of the professions by noting the decline of clerical involvement in will-making, which was adopted by notaries from the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>234</sup> Jones

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<sup>230</sup> Corfield, *Age of Infidelity*, p. 237.

<sup>231</sup> Spaeth, *Church in an Age of Danger*, p. 215.

<sup>232</sup> Spaeth, *Church in an Age of Danger*, p. 215.

<sup>233</sup> D.A. Jones, 'Pastoral Care', in W.M. Jacob (ed.) *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1680-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 210-11.

<sup>234</sup> Jones, 'Pastoral Care', p. 212.

provides significantly less detail regarding the clerical specialisation in funerary activities, which he states are not adequately documented.<sup>235</sup> The funerary role of clergymen is briefly summarised in a wider discussion of rituals in which the clergy were pivotal. Jones interprets the funeral as an opportunity for clergymen to demonstrate their authority, by sanctioning burial and officiating over the funerals within church grounds. It is also, in his opinion, important for the clergymen to have the approval of their parishioners.<sup>236</sup> Rosemary O'Day argues that the relationship with the parishioners could be damaged by the qualities which gave the clergyman his professional status. O'Day suggests that the clergyman's assertion of his expert status or the claim of dues could alienate members of his congregation.<sup>237</sup> Jones' conclusions provide many opportunities for further study and elaboration because he states that the clergy played an important, enabling role in the funeral but it doesn't explain specifically what the funerary duties of the clergy were, or how they were influenced by clerical specialisation. It is arguable that an analysis of different source materials would enable a close study of the specific funerary roles of the clergy.

## ii. The Term 'Deathworker'

It is useful to consider the eighteenth century clergyman as a 'deathworker,' a term used in sociology to describe individuals who managed death through specialist activity. The status of 'deathworker' is frequently used in sociological literature to describe the professions which interact with the dead body such as funeral director, mortician or medical examiner but it has also been used to discuss those who assist the dying.<sup>238</sup> Several studies have classified religious ministers as deathworkers, citing the specialist knowledge possessed by ministers and their involvement in the funeral ritual. In his study of modern death, Tony Walter defined

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<sup>235</sup> Jones, 'Conducting Worship', 2007, p. 202.

<sup>236</sup> Jones, 'Pastoral Care', p. 222.

<sup>237</sup> R. O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450-1800* (Harlow: Pearson, 2000), p. 105.

<sup>238</sup> The funeral director as deathworker is discussed in detail in: G. Howarth 'Investigating deathwork: a personal account' *Sociological Review* 40: S1 (1992), pp. 221-237.



ministers as ‘intercessional deathworkers’ whose prayers are enabled spiritual communication between the living and the dead.<sup>239</sup> Whilst this is a fairly general appraisal of the role of ministers, it is useful because Walter identifies the qualities which make ministers’ deathwork different to that of undertakers, medical examiners and even obituarists.<sup>240</sup> Juanita Wood examined the role of religious minister as a ‘deathworker’ and identified that ministers are providers of guidance and comfort in the aftermath of a death.<sup>241</sup> This study focused on modern practices but its conclusions on the behaviour which defined the minister as a deathworker are arguably relevant in a historical context. The responsibilities of the minister as described by Wood, are similar to duties in which Eighteenth century clergymen were argued to have specialised in. Indeed, the clerical duty of providing guidance and comfort is identified by Bernard Spilka et al. as a valid and useful form of deathwork which has a significant role in the modern, Christian funeral.<sup>242</sup> Mary Bradbury identifies the clergy as members of community of deathworkers who must collaborate for the successful organisation of a funeral.<sup>243</sup> Bradbury observes that the cooperation between the groups conceals a ‘mild war’ between two parties with different understandings of the purpose of the funeral.

Other studies have discussed the clergy’s relationship with funeral directors as a struggle between two different deathworkers. Robert L. Fulton examines the struggle which occurs because the two parties’ deathwork is influenced by their contrasting attitudes to death. It is argued that clergy were critical of funeral directors because they believed that the trade was

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<sup>239</sup> T. Walter, ‘Mediator Deathwork’, *Death Studies* 29:5 (2005), pp. 383-412.

<sup>240</sup> Walter identifies undertakers/funeral directors as ‘barrier deathworkers’ who insulate or shield people from death or the dead body. He identifies medical examiners, coroners and obituarists as ‘mediator deathworkers’ whose recreate and present the narrative of the deceased person: Walter, ‘Mediator Deathwork’ p. 383-4.

<sup>241</sup> J. Wood, ‘The Structure of Concern: The ministry in death-related situations’ *Urban Life* 4:3 (1975), pp. 369-384.

<sup>242</sup> B. Spilka, J.D. Spangler, M.P. Rea and C.B. Nelson, ‘Religion and death: the clerical perspective’, *Journal of Religion and Health* 20:4 (1981), pp. 299-306.

<sup>243</sup> M. Bradbury, *Representation of Death: A social psychological perspective* (London: Routledge: 2012), pp. 185-6. Bradbury described a ‘mild war’ between clergy and undertakers that was concealed for the purpose of professionalism during the funeral.

intruding on their authority and encouraging a focus on the dead body, rather than the spirit. This is an interpretation of the clergy who had a clear sense of their identity as deathworkers and an understanding of their role. Fulton discusses customs and criticisms which exist in modern America but the fundamental ideas which cause the disagreement existed in eighteenth century.<sup>244</sup> The ideological differences identified by Fulton were examined in greater detail by studies which consider the role conflict that exists between the clergy and undertakers. In her wider study of commercial funeral culture, Nancy Mitford argued that the ritual performed by the funeral directors is at odds with the values of temperance and modesty encouraged by the clergy.<sup>245</sup> Mitford dedicated a chapter to the role of the clergy and presented the clergymen as resentful of the authority and influence enjoyed by undertakers.<sup>246</sup> This was an appraisal of the modern funeral in which the established undertaking trade had more authority than the clergy. The resentment which Mitford identified has been discussed in a modern British context by Robert Atwell, who argued that clergymen identified themselves as 'funeral director' and rejected the authority of undertakers.<sup>247</sup> Atwell acknowledged that the interaction between clergymen and funeral directors is an important part of a modern funeral. This is similar to Kathleen Garces-Foley who suggests that the funeral is a result of collaboration between different deathworkers.<sup>248</sup> Tony Walter outlines how the clergy are subservient to the undertakers because the latter organises the funeral.<sup>249</sup> In this interpretation the clergy are another service which is organised and acquired for the mourners by the undertaker. Walter notes that this clergy is still 'on a stage' during the funeral service, albeit within a wider ceremony that has been directed by the undertaker.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> R. Fulton, 'The clergyman and the funeral director: a study in role conflict', *Social Forces* 39:4 (1961), pp. 317-323.

<sup>245</sup> J. Mitford, *The American Way of Death* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1963), p. 247.

<sup>246</sup> Mitford, *American Way*, pp. 240-253.

<sup>247</sup> R. Atwell, *Peace at The Last: Leading funerals well* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014), pp. 30-1.

<sup>248</sup> K. Garces-Foley, *Death and Religion in a Changing World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 143-4.

<sup>249</sup> T. Walter, *The Eclipse of Eternity: A sociology of the afterlife* (London: MacMillan, 1996), pp. 95-6.

<sup>250</sup> Walter, *Eclipse of Eternity*, p. 96.

Ronny Turner and Charles Edgely discuss how funeral directors attempt to curb the interference of the clergymen in their secular ritual.<sup>251</sup> This study uses a dramaturgical approach to examine the services of the funeral director through the metaphor of theatre. In this interpretation, the funeral directors' organisation and execution of the funeral is intended to convince their audience (the mourners) that they are competent, dignified and respectful.<sup>252</sup> The clergy are merely supporting performers whose actions can challenge the funeral directors' attempts to perform successfully and present them audience with confusing messages. Turner and Edgely identify this relationship in the language of trade manuals which instruct funeral directors on how to control clergymen and identify them as problematic.

The notion of classifying the clergyman as a deathworker is an original approach for a historical study but it is viable because many of the qualities which define the modern religious minister as 'deathworker' can be observed in the clergy of the eighteenth century. The importance of professionalism, the clergy's specialist knowledge and payment for services are defining qualities of what contemporary studies have identified as 'deathwork.' The relationships and rivalries described in socio-cultural studies were also existent in the eighteenth century, although they were less developed and arguably less acknowledged because interactions between undertakers and clergy were still new. The relationship which socio-cultural studies describe has a foundation in the fundamental differences between the two roles of clergyman and undertaker; differences which have existed since the foundation of undertaking businesses in the late-Seventeenth Century. The literature also indicates that the status of 'deathworker' was accompanied by specific perceptions and expectations from members of the public. The mourners anticipate the clergyman's ability to perform specific

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<sup>251</sup> R.E. Turner and C. Edgely, 'Death as theatre: a dramaturgical analysis of the American funeral', *Sociology and Social Research* 60 (1976), pp. 377-392.

<sup>252</sup> Turner and Edgely, p. 286.

specialist duties in a predictable manner and that they would work with other deathworkers in a professional and productive manner. As literature has demonstrated the reality of the deathworkers' interactions are often more complicated and strained than the orderly display of a funeral may suggest.

### The Funerary Roles of the Clergyman

We commence by examining the roles of the clergyman at a typical common funeral of the eighteenth century: the funeral service, the burial and management of parish workers. Many West Country priests were responsible for more than one congregation and therefore they were required to travel to funerals in neighbouring villages or towns. The manner of the clergyman's travel depended on the affluence of the deceased person, wealthier mourners might provide a coach but if there was no provision, the clergyman would use his horse. Both forms of transport to the funeral were susceptible to adverse weather conditions and the poor quality of rural roads. The time required for travel was complicated by the practicalities of informing and recruiting a clergyman for the funeral. In one particularly complicated instance, a Somerset parish clerk had to travel over eight miles to find a clergyman to perform a funeral for a man who was incorrectly believed to be dead.<sup>253</sup> Regardless of the farcical nature of this account it illustrates the inconvenience of organising a funeral in rural communities where clergymen were limited and constrained by other factors such as personal commitments and even, environmental conditions. Such inconvenience was expressed by the rural clergyman, William Holland, who was requested to perform a funeral in the neighbouring parish of Cannington, Somerset. The adverse weather prompted Holland to

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<sup>253</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 23 July 1778.

remark that it was ‘not a very pleasant request at that time’ but one that he nonetheless fulfilled.<sup>254</sup>

Holland’s reluctant attendance at the funeral was a consequence of the atmosphere of expectation under which the contemporary clergy worked. The laity expected the clergymen to perform funerals and were critical of attempts to delay or refuse the duty. It is notable that laypeople were confident to express their criticism publicly, as we may observe in the account of a man who told the cleric John Skinner that a corpse had waited for twenty minutes before his arrival.<sup>255</sup> Here, as in other instances, the congregants’ urge to acknowledge a failure was greater than any reverence for the cleric title or authority.

Contemporary critics asserted that clergymen were often late or refused to attend funerals because they were preoccupied with personal commitments. This argument was espoused in a widely-printed letter by the pseudonymous ‘Indignatus’ which stated that after their funerary duties, clergymen ‘returned to the convivial company they had left on their call of duty.’<sup>256</sup> It is arguable that such criticisms exposed an anxiety that pluralist clergymen with cosmopolitan lifestyles, were socially distant from their congregation and lacked an attachment to the rural parishes which they oversaw. In this context, the clergy and their supporters were eager to emphasize their punctuality and willingness to serve. The divine, Montagu Pennington argued that congregants were frequently to blame for delays because of their ‘drinking or chatting at leisure’ before the funeral, whilst the clergyman had been drawn away from purposeful pursuits such as study.<sup>257</sup> In his interpretation the clergyman lacked

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<sup>254</sup> W. Holland, *Paupers and Pig Killers: The Diary of William Holland, a Somerset Parson, 1799-1818* (A. Sutton: London, 1984), p. 24.

<sup>255</sup> Coombes and Bax, *Journal of a Somerset rector*, p. 36.

<sup>256</sup> Indignatus, ‘For the London Evening Post’, *London Evening Post*, 12 December 1778.

<sup>257</sup> M. Pennington, *Letter to the Author of “Hints to the Clergy of the Established Church* (Canterbury, 1814), p. 17.

influence over the punctuality of the funeral because the time was chosen by the mourners and it was subsequently delayed by their behaviour.

#### i. The Funeral Service

The burial service was a sacrament which was part of the clergy's core duties to their congregation. The words of the service originated from the Book of Common Prayer, which outlined the prayers and readings to be read in the church and at the graveside. The text noted that the clergyman was able to omit the service within the church and proceed directly to the grave.<sup>258</sup> Critical contemporaries subsequently argued that the service had been commoditised by members of the clergy whose ministry was dictated by payments received from mourners. Francis Sadler, a fervent critic of parish fees, stated the poor would suffer because they could not pay 'as if the soul of the deceased was of the less value, because he died poor.'<sup>259</sup> It was thusly argued that the practice of reading only the graveside service denied less affluent funeral parties of the full service. This can be observed in the practice of staging unattended funerals for the burials of paupers in the village of Holford. It can be argued that this was a pragmatic choice which fulfilled the spiritual requirement but did not require the ornaments or decoration which would be afforded to a typical funeral party. In William Holland's village of Stowey, the funeral of Ben Hunt, was performed without a graveside reading, despite the warmth of local feeling towards him.<sup>260</sup> It is arguable that the act of burial within the consecrated ground of the churchyard was the primary mark of respect.

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<sup>258</sup> Abridgement of the Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, And Other Rites and Ceremonies Of The Church, According to the Use of The Church of England: together with the Psalter, or Psalms of David, Pointed as they are to be sung or said in Churches (London, 1773).

<sup>259</sup> F. Sadler, *The Exactions and Impositions of Parish Fees Discovered* (London, 1742), p. 60.

<sup>260</sup> Holland, *Paupers and Pig Killers*, p. ADD

Concerns about commoditization and the influence of money were most keenly focused on the performance of sermons or orations. There was a contemporary awareness that the reading of sermons was declining but it is evident that the practice was still important to some congregants in the established church.<sup>261</sup> The inclusion of a sermon was favoured by those who believed that clergyman should edify and inform the congregation. Contemporaries did not share the intercessional beliefs of their Catholic forebears, but they were encouraged to use funerals as opportunities for reflection on mortality and prepare for their own death. A respectable clergyman was expected to present his congregants with the example of the deceased person and direct them to emulate good behaviour. This ideal was challenged by the perception that payments from the deceased person could influence the language of the funeral sermon. In 1803, William Holland criticised the funeral sermons in the neighbouring parish of George Nympton, where he argued that congregants were ‘bribing the pulpit.’<sup>262</sup> Holland supported his accusation with the example of a drunken farmer who had died by falling into a pit; he noted that the sermon failed to condemn the man’s misadventure and ‘whitewashed’ his reputation.<sup>263</sup> The divine, John Jones, warned of funeral sermons such as these, in which the reputation of an individual was purposefully aggrandised. The result was an oration which transformed an ‘ill liver or unbeliever’ into an exemplar.<sup>264</sup> John Fletcher, a dissenting critic of the established church, asserted that the clergy’s willing misrepresentation of the dead was merely an extension of their flattery of the dying at the deathbed.<sup>265</sup> This

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<sup>261</sup> The decline of sermon use was noted by: W. Kennett, *A vindication of the Church and Clergy of England, from some late reproaches rudely and unjustly cast upon them* (London, 1709), p. 76; D. Defoe, *A Hymn to the Funeral Sermon* (London: 1703) and later by: W. Paley, *The use and propriety of local and occasional preaching: a charge, delivered to the clergy of the diocese of Carlisle, in the year 1790, by William Paley* (London, 1790).

<sup>262</sup> *Pig Killers and Paupers*, p. 135.

<sup>263</sup> *Pig Killers and Paupers*, p. 135.

<sup>264</sup> J. Jones, *Free and Candid Disquisition Relating to the Church of England, and Means of Advancing Religion Therein. Addressed to the Governing Powers in Church and State; and More Immediately to the Two Houses of Convocation* (London: 1749), p. 134.

<sup>265</sup> J. Fletcher, *An appeal to matter of fact and common sense. Or a rational demonstration of man's corrupt and lost estate* (Bristol, 1773), p. 63.

behaviour was advantageous to a clergyman because it satisfied listeners in the congregation but, as Fletcher cautioned, it was a dereliction of their religious duties.

A preacher's use of undeserved praise was injurious to their professional reputation because it interfered with the true, didactic purpose of the sermon. Addressing clerics in 1790, William Paley justified the declining use of sermons by arguing that they did not prompt mourners to focus on their own mortality. Paley asserted that preachers' use of 'unseasonable and undeserved panegyric' encouraged mourners to reflect primarily on the life and achievements of the deceased person.<sup>266</sup> This aggrandising account of the deceased nurtured gossip and conversation, rather than encouraging a beneficial, spiritual reflection. Paley argued that sermons could be improved if clergy directed and closely instructed their congregants to prepare themselves for death, using the deceased as an example. It was also important for a clergyman to refuse congregants' demands for oration which might interfere with their professional, pastoral duty. An anonymous pamphlet of 1745 challenged the clergy not to comfort mourners with language which softened the horror of death.<sup>267</sup> Sentimental and comforting oration was clearly more desirable to mourners who wanted support during their bereavement and it is probable that many clergy felt affection for their bereaved congregants. Nonetheless it was warned that sentimental messages could undermine church teaching about the severity of death and discourage preparedness.

It is arguable that these warnings were also intended to check the intentions of clergymen who recognised the funeral sermon as an opportunity for financial gain or social advancement. It was customary for a clergyman to earn a monetary reward for a sermon which had pleased mourners and in instances where the bereaved were of high status, it was

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<sup>266</sup> Paley, *Use and propriety of local and occasional preaching*, pp.29-30.

<sup>267</sup> Anon, *A Brief Dissertation on Funeral Solemnities. In a Letter to a Friend* (London: J. Buckland, 1745), p. 34.



possible to improve one's standing and reputation. The clergy were consequently cautioned that the importance of funeral sermons could be diminished if they were exploited for gain. Early in the eighteenth century, the cleric White Kennett had argued that less-affluent mourners were declining sermons because they believed it was intrusive of the clergy to include a sermon within the funeral fee.<sup>268</sup> In this early interpretation, the sermon was perceived as superfluous and its didactic contribution was unacknowledged by people who regarded it as an adjunct to a product which they were paying for. Later commentary developed the idea the congregants would recognise the sermon as a product, to be bought and sold. In the 1740s the clergy were cautioned that, 'the common people will look upon preaching as a business for a man to get his bread by or at best to keep the parish in a little order.'<sup>269</sup> Here, it was warned that the worth of the sermon would be diminished if contemporaries believed that the clergyman had commercial motives. It was implied that a clergyman who wanted to satisfy his 'customers' would therefore be influenced by temporal factors such as fashion, reputation or status. The content of sermons was less likely to include meaningful spiritual messages or church teachings that might present a dead person's lifestyle in a critical manner. For example, a clergyman would not want to condemn expenditure if it offended a tradesman or his family.

The status of clergymen, as holders of authority and specialist knowledge, was challenged by the perception that they were retailers who received payment for sermons. Kennett had made an early comparison, noting that undertakers argued with clergymen because the sermon was 'not put into their bill and rather retards their ceremonies.'<sup>270</sup> The causes of dispute which Kennett identified were typical of competition between tradesmen; both parties wanted to defend their authority and income was at the root of animosity. It is important to

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<sup>268</sup> Kennett, *A vindication of the Church*, p. 77.

<sup>269</sup> *A Brief Dissertation on Funeral Solemnities*, 1745, p. 35.

<sup>270</sup> Kennett, *A vindication of the Church*, p. 78.

acknowledge that Kennett was not seeking to criticise clergymen, or the sermon, and alluded to the undertakers to suggest that critics of the custom were few and motivated by non-spiritual interests. A less supportive interpretation of clergyman and sermon as tradesman and product was offered by Defoe in his *Hymn to the Funeral Sermon*.<sup>271</sup> This attack on funeral sermons criticised the clergy by presenting them as tradesmen and comparing them to the undertakers who also charged for funerary services.

The accusation of insincerity was an inevitable consequence of the belief that some members of the clergy were motivated by commerce. Claims of insincerity were similarly made in a widely printed letter by the pseudonymous 'Indignatus' which presented a clergyman who was 'as little impressed with the awfulness of the service they essayed to perform, as the gravedigger himself.'<sup>272</sup> Whereas one source criticised clerical indifference, others sought to warn against behaviour which was contrary to the sombre tone of the funeral. The divine, John Edwards cautioned fellow clergy against the mirth and jollity which fomented in funeral parties noting that, 'it will be long before a merry preacher shall bring us to heaven. Jigs at a funeral, and laughter at a sermon are prodigiously unreasonable'<sup>273</sup> Edwards argued that the clergyman was responsible for such behaviour because his tone and language set a bad example for his congregation. It was therefore important that the sermon and service were not opportunities for grandstanding or effusive behaviour by the clergyman. The clergyman could not always expect to be in control of his funeral, for example, Richard Davidge was arrested in 1792 for assaulting Rev Thomas Street, the curate of St. James in Bath.<sup>274</sup> The inebriated

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<sup>271</sup> Defoe, *Hymn to the Funeral*.

<sup>272</sup> Indignatus, 'For the London Evening Post', *London Evening Post*, 12 December 1778.

<sup>273</sup> J. Edwards, *The Preacher. A Discourse, Shewing, What Are the Particular Offices and Employments of Those of That Character in the Church. To Which Is Added, a Catalogue of Some Authors Who May Be Beneficial to Young Preachers and Students in Divinity. By John Edwards, D.D.* (London: 1705).

<sup>274</sup> Bath Chronicle, 5 July 1792.

Davidge had entered a funeral and challenged the curate as he performed his duty. In this instance the prominence of the clergyman, stood in the pulpit, caused him to be targeted.

## ii. Burial

The clergy were custodians of the church grounds and their responsibilities regarding burial involved restricting and responding to the desires of their congregants. This gave them considerable authority, but it caused them to be caught between the doctrines of the church and the demands of congregants who saw their

The prime duty of the clergy was to permit or deny burials in the church or churchyard. The denial of burial was partly inspired by religious doctrine; preventing the burial of those who such as suicides and the unbaptised. It also provided a countermeasure against the burial of people from outside of the parish community. A curate in Frome disallowed the burial of an individual ‘who had been baptised by immersion,’ a description which indicated that the deceased was a member of a Baptist congregation.<sup>275</sup> This was a particularly important duty in the period, due to the problem of overcrowding which faced many parishes. A good example of this may be observed in St. Mary’s, Dilton Marsh, a small rural parish in Wiltshire which suffered from significant overcrowding in the latter decades of the eighteenth century. In 1776, the churchyard was described as ‘so crowded with corpses that some bodies are dug up with hair upon their skulls.’<sup>276</sup> The vicar, Rev. Thomas Hewitt, blamed this overcrowding on outsiders who had been buried without his permission. Specific criticism was focused on inhabitants of neighbouring Westbury who had chosen to be buried in the village for personal, rather than practical reasons. Hewitt argued that the solution to the

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<sup>275</sup> Deputies and Committee Appointed for Supporting the Civil Rights of Protestant-Dissenters, *An abstract of the proceedings of the deputies and committee appointed for supporting the civil rights of protestant-dissenters from the commencement of the institution.* (London, 1796), p. 10.

<sup>276</sup> WSHC: PR/Dilton, St Mary/1427/68, ‘Dilton: St Mary. Register: baptisms and burials’, 1763-1812.

overcrowding problem lay in thorough vetting of burials, rather than the demolition of the vicar's house and orchard, which had been suggested by villagers.<sup>277</sup>

Payments for burial were received by the church for the use of the plots in the churchyard and within the intramural vaults of the church. The cost of burial fees was determined by the minister and varied between parishes. There were no universal rules about which activities were covered by a burial fee; the fee primarily covered the breaking of ground for a grave but it could also include the attendance of clerics, use of bells, parish palls which might otherwise be paid for separately. A selection of burial costs for regional parishes illustrates that fees for congregants were typically less than a shilling in the mid-century. The lowest fee was 2d paid per burial to the minister of St. Mary and St. Sampson, Cricklade.<sup>278</sup> In the rural Wiltshire parish of Easton Royal the clergyman received 4d for each burial.<sup>279</sup> The urban grave of a Salisbury resident Mrs. Brown cost her executors 5d.<sup>280</sup> The fees were considerably higher in the market town of Marlborough, where 10s was charged by the parishes of St. Mary and St. Peter & St. Paul respectively.<sup>281</sup>

It was common to impose higher fees for the burial of people who were not resident in the parish, even if they had died locally. This practice was intended to deter outsider burials which could be a burden on burial capacity and this pressure was increasingly felt in rural parishes as well as urban parishes. Double fees were intended to make burial less attractive to outsiders, but it is apparent that congregants were content to pay regardless. The parents of James Axford paid 10s 8d for his burial in Dilton churchyard, despite being promised a free

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<sup>277</sup> WSHC: PR/Dilton, St Mary/1427/68. Hewitt said: "I am determined they never shall lay the vicar's orchard to the chapel yard, neither shall they carry so many of the dead to Dilton without my leave as they have done"

<sup>278</sup> WSHC: PR/Cricklade: St. Mary and St. Sampson/1189/3, 'Cricklade St. Mary and St. Sampson. Register: baptisms, marriages, burials', 1683-1796.

<sup>279</sup> WSHC: PR/Easton Royal, Holy Trinity/615/1, 'Easton Royal: Holy Trinity. Register: baptisms, marriages, burials', 1580-1741.

<sup>280</sup> WSHC: 546/275, 'Funeral Bill for Mrs Brown'.

<sup>281</sup> WSHC: PR/Marlborough St Mary/1050/4, 'Marlborough: St Mary. Register: baptisms, marriages, burials', 1702-1715 and WSHC: PR/Marlborough St Peter and St Paul/1050/20, 'Marlborough: St Peter. Register', 1705-1774.

burial in their local parish in Westbury.<sup>282</sup> The fee of 10s 8d was matched by several other parishes.

The imposition of fees was a subject of dispute between those who argued that the payment of fees for burial plots within the churchyard should be free and those who argued for the recompense of clergymen. The barrister and writer, Simon Degge identified burial as a right to which congregants were entitled without the requirement for any payment.<sup>283</sup> This had been similarly argued by Solicitor General, John Strange who championed a parishioner's 'undoubted right to be buried in the church-yard.'<sup>284</sup> Strange's argument was later used by Sadler in his criticism of burial fees; suggesting that clergymen were ignoring the entitlement and expectations of congregants. Sadler emphasized the unwillingness of mourners to pay by comparing the clergyman to a highwayman, demanding money under duress.<sup>285</sup> The threat which contemporaries faced was the refusal of burial and the prospect of indecent burial outside of appropriate ground.

Criticisms of fees in the period balanced the condemnation of exceptional or excessive behaviour with an acceptance of the practice. The *Clergyman's Vade Mecum*, condemned the practice of clergymen requesting payment for the digging as 'direct cannonless simony.'<sup>286</sup> The instructional text did, however, concede that payment for burial had become a common custom and was probably expected.<sup>287</sup>

Intramural burial, in vaults beneath the church floor, was performed at the discretion of the clergyman. Despite the popularity of intramural burial, there was criticism of the clergy for

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<sup>282</sup> WSHC: 1427/68.

<sup>283</sup> S. Degge, *The parson's counsellor, with the law of tythes or tything: in two books, 2<sup>nd</sup> Book* (London: 1703), p. 175.

<sup>284</sup> J. Strange, *Reports of Adjudged Cases in the Courts of Chancery, King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer: From Trinity Term in the Second Year of King George I. to Trinity Term in the Twenty-first Year of King George II. 1716-1747*, Vol. 1 (London, 1782), p. ix.

<sup>285</sup> Sadler, *Exactions and Impositions*, p. 25.

<sup>286</sup> J. Johnson, *The Clergyman's Vade-Mecum* 6<sup>th</sup> edition (1731, London), p. 263.

<sup>287</sup> Johnson, *Clergyman*, p. 263.

permitting a practice which was deemed to be an unnecessary expense and a health hazard. Concerns about the hygiene of intramural burial prompted an article in the *Bath Chronicle* to assert that ‘churches were for the living and church-yards are for the dead.’<sup>288</sup> The article argued that the infectious vapours from remains of the buried dead could fill the confines of the church. The historian, Treadway Nash had proposed countermeasures which would dissipate these vapours through ventilation and ensure that the congregation were not sitting in dangerous air. Nash argued that ‘casements ought to be made to all church windows, which should be opened every fine day, particularly very early every Sunday morning, some hours before service begins. Narrow slits should be cut in all the church-doors, that the putrid air arising from dead bodies, and other offensive matter, might be constantly ventilated. To these regulations should be added constant sweeping, frequent white-washing and painting.’<sup>289</sup> It is clear from these instructions that Nash believed the risks caused by intramural burial were a problem for church officials to confront. These countermeasures required labour and expense from the church, which would have made them less attractive to parishes that were struggling financially and may have eliminated the incentive of intramural burial in the process. The health risks of burial within a church were demonstrated by contemporary instances in which congregants had been made ill by exposure to the graves of disease victims. Although knowledge of how disease was transferred was limited, there was there was an awareness that particular diseases remained potent after death. This knowledge was supplemented by instances such as an outbreak of smallpox which followed the opening of a grave in Chelwood, south of Bristol.<sup>290</sup> The Rev. George Heath recalled how the disease fatally afflicted two Chelwood congregants after a coffin was damaged and ‘a very putrid

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<sup>288</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 21 October, 1790.

<sup>289</sup> T. Nash, *Collections for the History of Worcestershire* (London, 1781), 73.

<sup>290</sup> G. Heath, *The New Bristol Guide: Containing Its Antiquities, Deduced from the Best Authorities: Historical Annals From...1066 to 1799;...Also...Accounts of the Hotwells and Clifton...Memoirs of Chatterton* (Bristol: 1799), p. 179.

effluvia came out.<sup>291</sup> The incident was similar to other infectious outbreaks Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. The clergy were responsive to the dangers posed by the bodies of disease victims and took precautions which were intended to protect their congregants. An anxiety about the spread of virulent disease prompted William Holland to hold a funeral later in the day 'I had the service at five in the afternoon purposely to prevent any infection spreading if there was any and to keep the people from being present but alas this was to little purpose.'<sup>292</sup> Holland's account conveys his desire, albeit failed, to protect the congregants. A similar response may be observed in the use of night burial by Rev. John Skinner during a particularly virulent measles epidemic in 1813.<sup>293</sup> These instances demonstrate that hygiene was a cause for the refusal or modification of a specific interment rather than a cause to deny the custom entirely. In this regard the clergymen's precautions are similar to Nash's countermeasures, which responded to the hazards of intramural burial but also accepted that it was a popular practice which the clergy were unlikely to prohibit. It is arguable that the clergy were unwilling to outlaw a practice which was widely popular with congregants. He reflected on the pressure which popular demand placed on the clergymen noting that, 'many weak persons would be offended if a minister was to deny this liberty'<sup>294</sup>

Intramural burial was always more expensive, due to practical factors such as opening the church floor and the construction or maintenance of vault space. It was consequently a commodity which could bring revenue to the parish, and this drew criticism from contemporaries. In 1726, the clergyman and propagandist, Thomas Lewis rebuked fellow clergy for permitting a practice that had no justification in the theology of the established church. In *Churches No Charnel Houses* Lewis outlined that intramural was a consequence of

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<sup>291</sup> Heath, *New Bristol Guide*, p. 179.

<sup>292</sup> Holland, *Pig Killers*, p. 77.

<sup>293</sup> Coombes and Bax, *Journal of a Somerset rector*, pp.138-9.

<sup>294</sup> Nash, *Worcestershire*, p. 123.

superstition, pride and gain.<sup>295</sup> In alleging that his fellow clergymen had succumbed to superstitious beliefs, Lewis, asserted that intramural burial was a relict of Catholic beliefs that burial within the church afforded a spiritual advantage the souls of the dead because they were closer to the relic, which was contained in the altar.<sup>296</sup> He emphasised the parallels between the interment of congregants under the church floor and the reverence of relics in Catholic churches. It is not clear that individuals in West Country elected to have intramural burials due to religious beliefs, but it is apparent that the cost of such interment would have made it a sign of status and prosperity. For this reason, Lewis' assertion that intramural burial was a consequence of pride and gain offers more significance to our study of the services provided by the church. Lewis noted the financial gain that was experienced by clergy who received payment for the use of their churches. He was unsympathetic of the clergymen's circumstances, arguing that they had exploited the popularity of intramural burial for their own gain.

Lewis' criticism of the clergy challenged a contemporary belief that the payment of fees was a customary act. This belief was significant because the interpretation of payments as custom diminished the responsibility of the clergy as the exactors and demanders of payment. The customary nature of payments was mentioned by Andrew Hewitt, vicar of All Saints, Westbury, who defended his receipt of fees as the fulfilment of 'the ancient usage of paying the vicar for the breaking of the ground.'<sup>297</sup> Hewitt was responding to the criticisms of 'litigious men' who argued that he should not receive fees because he was exempted from poor rates.

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<sup>295</sup> T. Lewis, *Churches No Charnel Houses: Being an Enquiry into the Profaneness, Indecency and Pernicious Consequences to the Living, of Burying the Dead in Churches and Churchyards. By a Clergyman.* (London: 1726), p. 38.

<sup>296</sup> Lewis, *Churches No Charnel Houses*, p. 50.

<sup>297</sup> WSHC: PR/Westbury All Saints/1427/8, 'Westbury: All Saints. Register: baptisms and burials' 1759-1809.



The persistence of payments for burial indicates that the practice remained a popular gesture of privilege and status for those who could afford it. The amount of money paid for burial varied significantly between parishes and was also influenced by the location and size of each plot. For instance, the intramural burial of Willoughby Trevelyan required two payments to two different clergymen who were resident within the church.<sup>298</sup> The two payments served specific purposes: the first was for the act of making the grave itself and the second payment secured permission for burial within the chancel of the church. Burial under the chancel was traditionally a privilege for ministers and patrons of the church, and in this particular instance Trevelyan's executors were fortunate enough to purchase this privilege for him.

It was also expected that the clergy would be paid for the placement of a grave marker, either inside or outside of the church. This was a viable source of revenue in the period due to the increasing use of markers by middling mourners. The popularisation of grave markers introduced a variety of different styles into English churchyards, such as headstones, footstones or slabs. Parishes charged a different fee for each marker which was representative of the size of the object and the amount of space which it occupied. We can observe this ordering of fees in the parish of St. Andrew, Castle Combe which charged congregants 1s for a headstone, 5s for a flat stone and 6s for a footstone.<sup>299</sup> The fees reflect the increasing amount of space occupied by each item; the footstone is of significance because it was often used with a headstone and therefore represented an additional marker on a grave, its elevated position also made it a more obstructive presence than a supine flat stone. The rates charged depended on the attitudes of specific parishes and local variation. Significantly higher costs were charged by St. Cyriac in Lacock where the head and footstone, used as set, were

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<sup>298</sup> SHC: DD\Wo/54/11/13, 'Account for the funeral of Willoughby Trevelyan', 1785

<sup>299</sup> WSHC: PR/Castle Combe St Andrew/2234/3, 'Castle Combe, St Andrew. Register: baptisms, marriages, burials', 1732-1797.

charged as 10s 6d.<sup>300</sup> This was a small congregation in an equally modest church and the local variations in pricing can be explained by the limited space available to the parish. There were some similarities in pricing for specific markers, for example, the headstone was consistently the cheapest marker, even in rural parishes such as Castle Eaton, where local authorities charged ‘5s for leave to put up a headstone’.<sup>301</sup> Intramural markers and monuments had a higher cost which was reflective of the greater expense of burial plots within the church and the affluence of the people who would be buried there. In addition to giving permission for the erection of markers, the clergy could be expected to vet and approve congregants’ designs for headstones. This was a duty which enabled a clergyman to protect the religious integrity of the churchyard by preventing the erection of blasphemous or offensive monuments. A monument could also be refused if its design interfered with other burial plots or if it was too large for the churchyard. To this end, Richard Scrope, rector of St. Andrew, Castle Combe requested to see the inscription of each headstone installed in his churchyard.<sup>302</sup>

### iii. The Work of Parish Officials

Many of the funerary tasks for which the clergy was paid, were performed by laypeople who were subordinate to the clergyman. Bell ringing, grave digging and the placing of memorials were important elements of the respectable funeral and this gave the laypeople a status that could bring them into conflict with the clergyman. The successful organisation of a funeral depended on clergyman effectively managing his relationships with the lay workers.

The use of the church bell was a service, performed by laypeople, for which a parish would receive payment. The ringing of the bell was a traditional practice which had folk origins and

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<sup>300</sup> WSHC: PR/Lacock St Cyriac with Bowden Hill St Anne/1654/2, ‘Lacock St Cyriac with Bowden Hill St Anne. Register’, 1653-1736.

<sup>301</sup> WSHC: PR/Castle Eaton St Mary/637/3, ‘Castle Eaton, St Mary. Register: baptisms, marriages, burials’, 1720-1812.

<sup>302</sup> WSHC: PR/Castle Eaton St Mary/2234/3.

had been a part of the catholic funeral rite.<sup>303</sup> The spiritual justifications for the ringing of bells had been lost because of the Reformation but the practice remained significant as a means of conveying the status of the dead individual. The church bell could be rung for a long period; in one notable case the bell of tolled for twenty hours at a cost of one pound, this was more than half of the payment made to the church.<sup>304</sup> A similarly expensive fee was paid by the executors of Mrs Jane Whitchurch for the ringing of the bells at St. James' in Bristol. Sixteen hours of ringing cost Whitchurch's mourners, one shilling and sixpence per hour and this was the most expensive item at her funeral.<sup>305</sup> Bell ringing was therefore a signifier of status because the length of the peal was evidence of the wealth of the deceased person. Bell ringing was also an important element of the funerary atmosphere because the tolling of a funeral bell was a recognisable sign that a funeral was in process. At the start of the eighteenth century, John Doleman explained how bell ringers at a funeral were expected to perform 'peals very different from those for mirth or recreation',<sup>306</sup> Doleman regarded this as an essential skill of bell-ringers in London and the provinces. Appropriate bell-ringing set the tone for a funeral but errant or mirthful ringing could compromise the solemnity of proceedings. In Bristol, a contributor to the *Bristol Mirror* criticised the ringers of the Mayor's chapel for 'striking up a merry peal just as the funeral of the lamented colonel Frith was passing.'<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> P. Morgan, 'Of Worms and War, 1380-1558' in P. Jupp and C. Gittings (eds.) *Death in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 142.

<sup>304</sup> BRO: AC/JS/50/13/b, 'Receipt for Gravedigging and Bellingringing', 1727.

<sup>305</sup> BRO: AC/WH/17/31/b, 'Bill for 16 hours bell ringing', 1799.

<sup>306</sup> J. Doleman, *Campanalogia Improved: Or, the Art of Ringing Made Easie: By Plain and Methodical Rules and Directions, Whereby the Ingenious Practitioner May with a Little Practice and Care, Attain to the Knowledge of Ringing All Manner of Double, Tripple, and Quadruple Changes. With Variety of New Peals Upon 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 Bells: As Also, the Method of Calling Bobs for Any Peal of Triples, from 168, to 2520, (Being the Half Peal:) Also for Any Peal of Quadruples or Cators, from 324, to 1140. Never before Published. the Second Edition Corrected.* (London: 1705), p. 188.

<sup>307</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 10 November 1810.

The organisation and execution of a funeral produced several opportunities for clerical authority to be challenged by the actions of parish officials. The clergyman was expected to be the custodian of the church and figurehead of the congregation but this status was occasionally challenged because pragmatism or inconvenience required the parish officials to make their own decisions. This would be more common in a rural parish where the absence of a permanent clergyman, or a busy schedule of services, caused the clergyman to be frequently absent. Difficulties in the relationships between clergy and parish officials are significant because they represent a struggle for professional authority which was similar to conflicts in the commercial world.

The Wiltshire reverend, Thomas Hewitt, was highly critical of his sexton for digging graves without permission. In one particularly egregious occasion, the sexton, James Gunstone, opened and lined a brick grave with the assistance of a mason, before interring several bodies within. The tasks performed by Gunstone were representative of typical sexton work and it was the absence of permission for these actions was the prime cause of Hewitt's grievance. The vicar noted that the location and type of grave was decided 'without my leave' and 'without my knowledge,' betraying his anger that his authority had been circumvented.<sup>308</sup> It can be argued that it was problematic for parish officials to act with permission because it provided congregants with a method of undermining their clergyman's will. Francis Sadler had described a situation in which congregants resorted to, 'begging and praying to the church wardens' instead of seeking permission from clergymen.<sup>309</sup> The situation which Sadler described was one in which the lay workers were socially close to the congregants and were perceived to be more reliable or dependable.

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<sup>308</sup> WSHC: PR/Dilton, St Mary/1427/68.

<sup>309</sup> Sadler, *Exactions and Impositions of Parish Fees*, p. 60.

The payment of parish officials was another cause of disputes between officials and clergy. It was common for mourners to give monetary gifts or payments to parish officials such as clerks and sextons. The different preparatory and performing roles of the parish officials meant that they were recognised to have been an important part of a successful funeral. The amount paid to parish officials was dependent on the affluence of the mourning party, as it was primarily an act of custom. For example, the clerk and sexton were paid in addition to the parson at the funeral of William Green.<sup>310</sup> We can deduce that this was a gift, rather than a payment for specific services, because the funeral account records a separate payment made to the sexton, presumably for digging the grave. By contrast, the sexton of the Bristolian parish of St. John's was included amongst a list of 'poor people' who were indicated to receive half a crown.<sup>311</sup> Although the sexton's inclusion on this list may be interpreted as a negative it was arguably an act to recognise the official's specific contribution to the funeral. The act of giving money to parish officials caused upset because some clergymen suspected that they were deprived monies for the funeral. These anxieties were exacerbated because parish officials commonly collected payments to the church; an arrangement which isolated the cleric from the responsibility of chasing debts but also produced an atmosphere of uncertainty regarding the destination of money. A good example of this can be observed in the funeral of affluent Somerset girl named Nancey Dawe; who was buried in a walled grave in the burial ground of Wells Cathedral. The physician Claver Morris paid for the burial and had specifically attended to see the walling of the burial plot and the fitting of the covering stone, indicating that these were important stages which he wanted personal affirmation of. Following the funeral, Morris paid the full fees for the burial to the sacrist of Wells Cathedral, a figure whose authority extended to the collection of fees and preparation of the

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<sup>310</sup> BRO: 2293/144/1/8, 'Green Family Papers, Account for Funeral of William Green', 1781.

<sup>311</sup> GRO: D2002/14/3.

church.<sup>312</sup> In his instructional text *Parson's Counsellor*, Simon Degge responded to concerns about the destination of funeral fees by asserting that it was appropriate for the clergyman to receive fees rather than the parish official.<sup>313</sup> Degge's appraisal is interesting because it was founded on a hierarchy in which the clergyman's spiritual authority was reflected in their payment.

What status did the parish officials hold? It is arguable that this would vary between parish and could also depend on the personal relationship between the cleric or congregant and the parish official. A dispute between John Skinner and his sexton, Charles Dando demonstrated how officials could assume or anticipate an increased status because of their duties. Dando did not reside in the parish but believed that he should be exempted from the additional fees; he was personally insulted when the clerk charged him a guinea.<sup>314</sup> Skinner defended the action by explaining that the clerk was following his instructions, which had stated that he should charge all outsiders, and that Dando's complaint was frivolous.

### Gift Giving to Clergymen

Many of the funerary duties of the clergy were also accompanied by payments from mourners. These payments were supplemented by informal but equally significant acts of gift-giving which recognised the contribution of the clergyman and facilitated their performance in the funeral. Clergymen were commonly the recipients of clothing items such as gloves, scarves and hatbands, given by the executors of the deceased and varying in quality depending on the affluence of the deceased. Gloves were a common funerary gift which served as both a functional item and a commemorative token. The funerary scarf was an item which adorned the neck or could be worn as a sash. A hatband could be easily worn

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<sup>312</sup> E. Hobhouse (ed.) *Diary of a West Country Physician* (London, 1934), p. 77.

<sup>313</sup> Degge, *Parson's Counsellor*, p. 176.

<sup>314</sup> Coombes and Bax (eds.), *Journal of a Somerset Rector*, pp. 65-6.

around the base of hat, making it an easy item for clergyman to wear. Identified as an important precursor to funerary participation by contemporary critics, 'because not only a comfortable Piece or two may chance to appear, but in case of a Funeral, a Ring and Scarf into the bargain.'<sup>315</sup>

This attire was an important part of a respectable funeral and ensured that the clergyman's appearance would befit the status of the occasion. Contemporary depictions of the funeral indicate that attire such as the hatband and gloves could be worn by the clergy during the public procession. The grand funeral procession depicted in Picart's *Ceremonies* includes two clergymen who are the recipients of mourning wear.<sup>316</sup> In this example, the gloves are held in each clergyman's hand and a long hatband trails from his hat. The clergyman's appearance is subsequently similar to the mourners' and he is primarily distinguished by his gown and collar.

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<sup>315</sup> Anon, *The Modern Christian*, 1738, p. 11.

<sup>316</sup> Picart, *Ceremonies and Religious Customs*.



Figure 4 'An English Funeral Ceremony' from B. Picart, *Ceremonies*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1733).

The funeral of Thomas Edwards Freeman presents a good example of funerary gifts which were intended as functional. Freeman's executors provided the Rev. Thomas Kirkman with two sets of mourning items: a valuable set of armozeen apparel and a less expensive set consisting of a crape hatband and gloves. The latter set was intended to be worn by Kirkman when he 'went as mourner on the road' and accompanied the funeral procession on its journey to the burial site.<sup>317</sup> The reduced quantity and cost of these items was appropriate because they would be only be visible during the brief period in which the funeral procession

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<sup>317</sup> GRO: D2002/15/7.



passed through a community. In such an instance the use of simple hatband and scarf ensured that the clergyman's appearance was conversant with the other mourners. It is significant that Kirkman was not provided with gloves, a discrete item, which would not have been as visible as the hatband or scarf worn over his clerical attire.

It can be argued that funerary gifts also performed another, significant role, affirming the relationship between the mourning congregants and their clergyman. An analysis of glove-gifting in eighteenth century faith communities has observed that gloves did not have any religious connotations but were widely recognised as an indicator of status.<sup>318</sup> Although this study draws from American evidence its conclusions are upheld by the West Country experience. Funerary gifts recognised the status of the clergyman and specifically acknowledged the seniority of the clergyman within the parish community. As figures of high status in both the ritual of the funeral and the community performing the funeral, the clergy were frequently rewarded with the most exquisite gloves.

The ministers at the funeral of Jane Edwards were presented with scarves and hatbands which were of equivalent value to the entire cost of all six coffin bearers' uniforms.<sup>319</sup> The higher expense of these items was complemented by an additional gift of a mourning ring. Although it was more discrete than the other items provided to the ministers, the mourning ring was an important, personal gesture which was widely recognised as a sign of close affinity. It is arguable that personal gifts of this nature were motivated by an expectation that the gesture should complement the social standing of the giver. The quality and expense of the Edwards' gifts reflected her status as an important and affluent member of the parish community.

We can observe the sense of expectation in the testimony of a rural clergyman who did not receive funerary gifts from the executors of prominent community figure. William Holland

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<sup>318</sup> Bullock and McIntyre, 'Handsome Tokens of a Funeral', pp. 305-46.

<sup>319</sup> GRO: D2002/14/3.

felt slighted at the apparent denial of gifts by the family of a deceased parishioner named, Nathaniel Poole. Holland expected gifts from the bereaved family and interpreted the absence as a personal insult by the deceased. He described his feelings thusly:

‘not the least mark of respect paid to me, his legal and proper minister - twas unhandsome and unprovoked – a concealed dislike discovers itself’<sup>320</sup>

Holland misunderstood the situation and eventually received a mourning wear consisting of a hatband, satin gloves and a scarf. His account of this gift demonstrates how the exchange of gifts could be perceived as a customary act and also a testament of personal respect.

‘I expected a hatband but not a scarf and it is not the value of either I regard so much as the intimation of respect it conveys’<sup>321</sup>

Holland’s language recalls the how the material quality of specific items had an important influence on the statement which the gift made. When presenting a clergyman with funerary wear, the mourners’ choice of specific materials could be an important method of affirming the importance and significance of their relationship.

### The Popular Perception of Clerical Deathwork

The funeral was frequently represented in popular culture, either as the focus of a particular work or as recognisable scenery for dramatic events. These depictions of the funeral are not a facsimile of the contemporary experience but they offer a valuable insight into beliefs, prejudices and observations of the period. These details were condensed in characters whose exaggerated and cartoonish depiction would have been enthusiastically understood by contemporaries. Depictions of the clergy in the funeral reflected a contemporary belief that clerical authority over the funeral was challenged. This was realised in the potent challenge

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<sup>320</sup> Holland, *Pig Killers*, p. 18.

<sup>321</sup> Holland, *Pig Killers*, p. 18.

posed by undertakers, whose products and services transformed the funeral rite into an opulent, materialistic display.

The imagined conflict between clergymen and undertakers emphasized the areas in which their influence overlapped. Both the clergyman and undertaker sought financial gain and reputation, and each possessed specific knowledge about how a respectful funeral should be performed. The struggle between the competing ideologies was particularly apparent in Evan Lloyd's *The Curate*, which depicted a churchman who was being instructed by a domineering undertaker.<sup>322</sup>

Lloyd presents a curate who is instructed and criticised by an undertaker who regards him to be another part of his funerary spectacle. The poem depicts the undertaker's rude attitude to the curate and compares to his treatment of his retinue, noting that 'you'd swear he sold the curate with the shroud.'<sup>323</sup> It is apparent that the clergyman's behaviour is problematic for the undertaker who accuses him of lateness, recalling contemporary criticisms of clerical timekeeping. Lloyd narrates the funeral from the curate's perspective, conveying how the curate regards the undertaker as an inferior person. The criticisms of the undertaker focus primarily on the undertaker's status as a tradesman, belittling him as a 'vile mechanic,' 'taylor to the dead' and commenting that he 'trafficks in his brethren's dust.'<sup>324</sup> The grounds for a conflict between deathworkers are clear, with the curate asserting his own significance as one who wears 'the livery of Christ'<sup>325</sup> The curate's claims to superiority are supported by the significance of his specialism over the undertaker's unique skills. The poem mentions that the clergyman attends to the soul, which survives after death, whereas the undertaker's specialism focuses on the dead body, which is an empty shell after death.

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<sup>322</sup> E. Lloyd, *The Curate. A Poem. Inscribed to All the Curates in England and Wales*. (London: 1766), pp. 15-6.

<sup>323</sup> Lloyd, *Curate*, p. 15.

<sup>324</sup> Lloyd, *Curate*, p. 15.

<sup>325</sup> Lloyd, *Curate*, p. 16.

Contemporary depictions of tension between undertakers and clergymen imagined a contest between two professionals with important responsibilities at the time of death. It was credible to imagine such a struggle because the undertaking trade was increasingly viewed as an authority with parallel significance to the clergy. Robert Southey imagined this relationship in *The Surgeon's Warning*, a moralising poem in which a dying surgeon prepares for his imminent death by summoning an undertaker and clergyman.<sup>326</sup> The men are summoned because they are essential to the dying man's future security. The dying surgeon's instructions delineate the purpose of each professional. This depiction is significant because Southey presents the clergyman as a deathworker, who only has a purpose when the man's life has been given over by the doctor.

Contemporary texts frequently record that the dying individual was attended by a physician in their period preceding their demise. The departure of the physician came to be understood as a moment of resignation at which the clergyman is frequently sent for. In such circumstances the physician was said to have, 'given over' the dying individual, a phrase which communicated the sense of transition by which the clergyman assumed responsibility. The departure of the physician was accepted to represent the point at which the previously sick individual had been resigned to their mortal fate. Concurrently this moment of capitulation was accompanied by the instruction to 'send for the divine' calling for a clergyman.<sup>327</sup> Contemporary writing sought to alert society to the spiritual danger of relegating clergyman to such a late stage in the dying process. 'Tis certainly a very unwise course' warned John Ellesby, 'to stay till the physician retires, before a spiritual guide is

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<sup>326</sup> R. Southey, *The Surgeon's Warning* in *Poems, by Robert Southey. The second volume* (Bristol, 1799), pp. 163-4.

<sup>327</sup> J. Dunton, *The hazard of death-bed-repentance, argued from the remorse of conscience of W- late D- of D- when dying; the Earl of Marburg, the Lord Rochester, Sir Duncomb Colchester and John Hampden* (London, 1728), p. 53.

requested to come.’<sup>328</sup> Ellesby argued that in such circumstances it was ‘too late for him to begin his enquiries and applications’ and even then the opportunity could be spoiled by a individual ‘whose senses have lost their natural offices.’<sup>329</sup> Contemporaries also argued that by delaying the physician an individual, whose condition was worsening, could miss a vital opportunity to make an act of repentance. Repentance and adequate spiritual preparation for death remained as important for some in Eighteenth Century England they had been in preceding centuries. It was asserted that urgent, deathbed repentances, although common, were unsuccessful because the sense of hope which motivated them was damaging for the soul. A person near death would therefore be in an improper position to attempt a spiritually successful repentance. Furthermore, it was argued by Challoner that such an attitude to repentance, had the potential to anger God.<sup>330</sup>

The representation of overlapping responsibilities arguably reflected the increasingly crowded marketplace of death in the period. In addition to services of clergyman, the dying and their relatives relied on the assistance of a physician in the final hours, the administrative guidance provided by a lawyer and finally the undertaker’s management of the funeral. The services of the clergy remained significant despite and were for those who remained in the established church. It is for this reason that a clergyman appears in Thomas Rowlandson’s *The Churchyard Debate*, a satirical depiction of a meeting between death and several death professionals. The location of this gathering alludes to the persisting importance of the church, as an institution which was responsible for the burial of many of the local inhabitants. The artefacts of the graveyard are a reminder that the environs of the church are a receptacle for the dead, the uninterred coffins and loose skulls are an overt reminder of the dead buried

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<sup>328</sup> J. Ellesby *The sick Christian's companion: consisting of prayers, meditations and directions* (London, 1729), p.61.

<sup>329</sup> Ellesby, *Sick Christian's Companion*, p. 62.

<sup>330</sup> R. Challoner, *Considerations upon Christian truths and Christian duties digested into meditations for every day in the year. Part I.* (London, 1759), p. 90.

below. The arrival of a hearse in the background, is a further reminder of the centrality of the church and it's burial ground to the routines of the common funeral.



Figure 5. T. Rowlandson, *The English Dance of Death*. Plate 29: *The Churchyard Debate* (London, 1816)

The main message of *The Churchyard Debate* was that each of the depicted professions was able to gain financially from death. This was expressed in this accompanying motto, 'death affords the means of life.'<sup>331</sup> The professionals' unusual relationship with death is conveyed in the conviviality of the scene, which is a contrast to solemn behaviour prescribed for churchyards. The professionals are celebrating with death, enjoying tobacco and accompanied by drinking paraphernalia. This behaviour further emphasizes the subversive nature of their attitude to death because it contrasts with contemporary images which presented an encounter with Death as a horrifying event. Such horror can be observed in

<sup>331</sup> T. Rowlandson, 'Plate 29: The Churchyard Debate', (London: R. Ackermann, 1816).



other images from Rowlandson's series, *The English Dance of Death*, in which figures from daily life are startled and confronted by Death.<sup>332</sup>



Figure 6 Thomas Rowlandson *The English Dance of Death: Winding the clock*, (London, 1814)

An accompanying verse, written by William Combe identifies how each profession gains from death. Combe highlights specifically how the clergyman benefitted from the fees and the gifts received from funeral parties. 'So let it be, hatband and scarf and gloves and fee will well my friend your pains repay in mingling him with common clay'<sup>333</sup> The statement asserts that they were motivated by gifts and fees, which served as both an emolument and also compensation for the nuisance of burying a person.

It was commonly asserted that the receipt of gifts influenced the clergyman's performance of his funeral duties. Fictional clergymen were thankful to attend funerals which involved gifts. Combe's *The Fall of Four in Hand* depicts a clergyman who thankfully receives a horse presented by the gift of a dead man.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> A good example of the chaotic imagery is in *The Winding of the Clock* which depicts death aiming his arrow as a clergyman tumbles from a mantelpiece (see fig 3).

<sup>333</sup> W. Combe, *The English Dance of Death* (London: 1815), p. 252-3.

<sup>334</sup> W. Combe, 'The Fall of Four in Hand', in *The English Dance of Death* (London: 1815), pp. 50-61.

The act of giving gifts to the clergy was addressed frequently in popular culture and it was commonly asserted that gifts influenced how a funeral was performed. The length and detail of the service could be improved through the offering of enticements to the clergyman. Contemporaries identified the sermon as the aspect of the funeral which was most deeply influenced by the by payments given to the clergyman. The poet, Thomas Cooke interpreted the funerary gifts as a form of bribery in an imagined conversation between a parson and the friend of a deceased doctor.

‘A Humorous Friend of the physical Tribe ,  
For a funeral Sermon, a Parson would bribe.  
Talk'd of Gloves, and of Scarfs, and of Rings, and a Will,  
In which he should find a Reward for his Skill.’<sup>335</sup>

The opening four lines of the poem establish the close relationship between funerary gifts and a good sermon. In this interpretation, the skill of clergyman is to present a favourable, aggrandising appraisal of the deceased, rather than a faithful account of their character. This is significant because such behaviour would contradict the intended, didactic purpose of the sermon, encouraging preparation and extolling the pious behaviour of good people. It can be argued that the poem represented the clergyman as tradesman whose sermonising skill could be bought, rather than being used for the advancement of the congregation. The motif of clergyman as salesman was replicated by other works

Earlier in the century Daniel Defoe alluded to the importance of payment as a determinant of the funeral sermon. In the language of satirical *Hymn to the Funeral Sermon*, Defoe criticised the practice of paying for sermons and questioned the value of words which had been bought.

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<sup>335</sup> T. Cooke, ‘A true tale of an eminent physician’ in *A Collection of Letters and State Papers* (London, 1756).



And Those who for thy *Sermon* paid;  
Ten Guineas down, as wise a Bargain made;  
Affected *M---t* was demurely bit,  
And lost as much by't as she thought to get.<sup>336</sup>

In this particular stanza, it is asserted that the falseness of praiseworthy language was as damaging to the reputation of the deceased person, as the misdemeanours which they sought to conceal. This can be interpreted as a criticism of those who paid for celebratory language which could be easily questioned by others. However, it may also be interpreted as a riposte to clergy who were content to celebrate the lives of people whose actions were a poor example. For Defoe, this problem was exemplified by the celebratory and commendatory sermons given to convicts. He argued that sermons for criminals demonstrated the church's willingness to prioritise gain over religious duty and contradicted teachings about pious, lawful conduct.

The motif of clergymen selling sermons to condemned convicts was repeated in later works, such as Henry Fielding's *The Welsh Opera*. In this play, Fielding's parson Puzzletext advertises his services to a convict, 'when thou art hang'd, I will for so low a Price as Ten Groats preach thy Funeral Sermon, wherein I will say of thee as many good Things as if thou hadst dy'd a Martyr'.<sup>337</sup> This sequence is particularly significant because the parson is aware that he has a lucrative position and demonstrates his willingness to exploit this position. Equally, the parson's behaviour conveys his disdain for the sermon, which Fielding represents as a commendation of earthly achievement.

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<sup>336</sup> Defoe, *Hymn to the Funeral Sermon*, p. 1.

<sup>337</sup> H. Fielding, *The Welsh Opera* (London, 1731), p. 32.

John Wolcot elaborated on the idea that the language of funeral sermons was primarily intended to satisfy the desire of mourners. Writing under the pseudonym Peter Pindar, the satirist described how a clergyman's use of latin defined a fashionable 'pretty sermon':

For every wife that is *genteelly* bred

Orders a sprig of Latin for the dead.

And of a sprig of Latin what's the cost?

A poor half-guinea at the most<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> P. Pindar, 'Old Simon, a tale' in *The Works of Peter Pindar* (London, 1816), p. 301-2.

Wolcot compares the carefully chosen words of the funeral sermon to the sprigs of rosemary which mourners used to conceal the unpleasant smell of the dead. It is therefore argued the

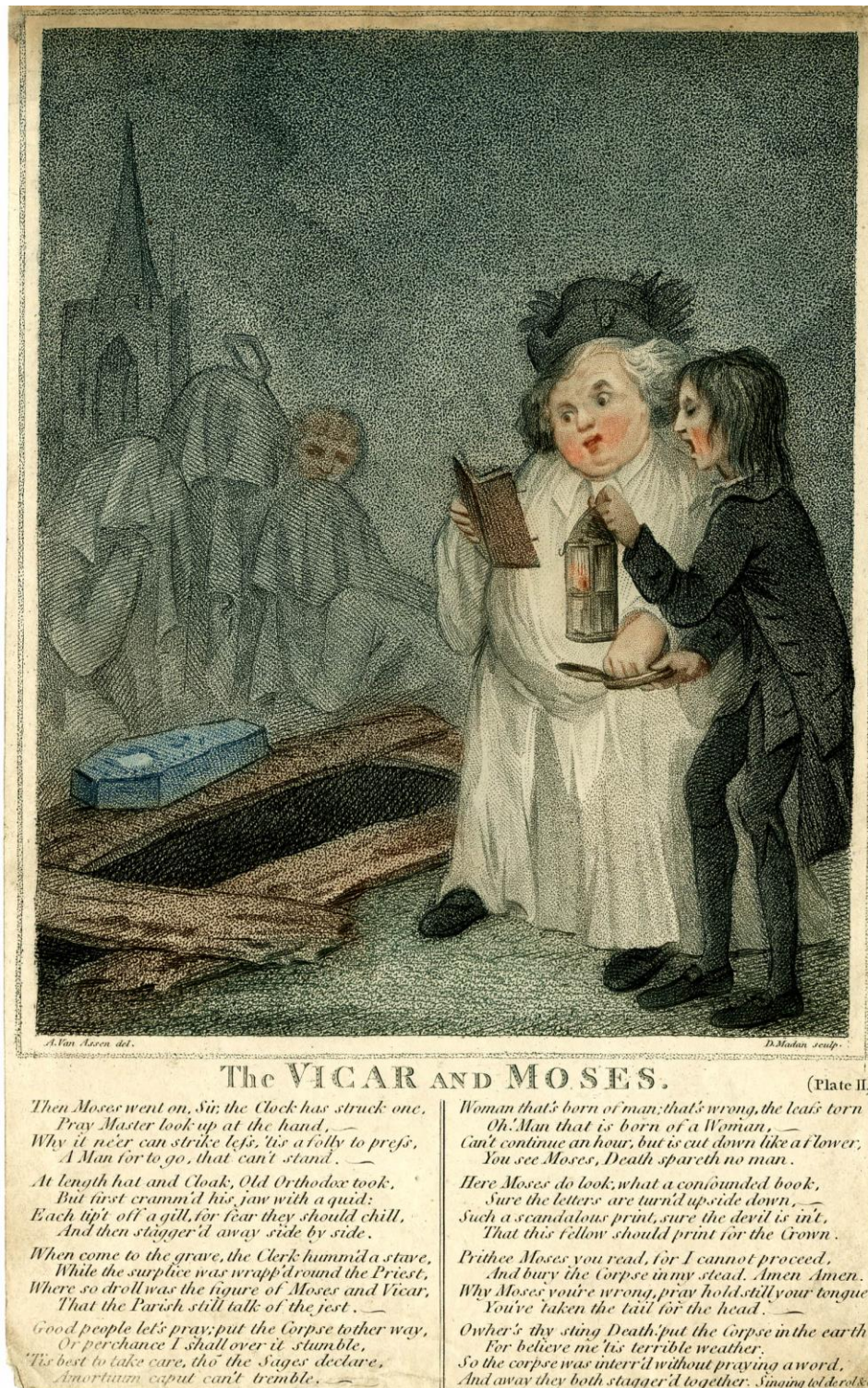


Figure 7. D. Madan, *The Vicar and Moses* (London, c.1790)

elegant Latin vocabulary disguises the undesirable truths about the deceased and is ultimately ephemeral, with little purpose beyond the funeral. The ephemeral qualities of the

aggrandising sermon were emphasized by the low cost, a half-guinea being considerably cheaper for a person of ‘genteel’ background.

The transaction of giving gifts and payment for funerary duties was a common trope in popular culture and in some instances it prompted accusations of simony. Simony, the act of unlawfully receiving payment for church practices was against the laws of the established church and was a practice which Catholic forebears had been traditionally accused of. Daniel Defoe criticised the motives of clergymen who gave effusive sermons in *A Hymn to the Funeral Sermon*.<sup>339</sup> Money was key determinant to the content of a sermon, as Defoe argued ‘pulpit praises may be had, according as the man of God is paid’<sup>340</sup> Defoe’s verse described the misleading testimony in sermons and questioned the clergy, ‘where lies the secret, let us know, to make a sheep-stealer a Saint?’ It was implied that as a result of his simony, the clergyman would willingly conceal any misdemeanour and transform the sinful person into an exemplar.

The notion that clergymen were motivated to perform their funerary duties by the promise of enticements, underscored a general argument that clerics regarded the funeral as a nuisance. This was the primary theme of an anonymously authored cartoon and verse titled *The Vicar and Moses*.<sup>341</sup> The cartoon depicts a graveside scene, with a vicar, his clerk ‘Moses’ and a small gathering of mourners who are huddled in a darkened churchyard. The funeral has been delayed until the middle of the night because the vicar preferred a drinking session with his clerk to the performance of his pastoral duties. His inattentive attitude to the funeral is confirmed by his consumption of snuff, an activity which alludes to his status and suggests a detachment from the sobriety of the occasion. The vicar’s earlier behaviour has also left him

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<sup>339</sup> Defoe, *Hymn to the Funeral Sermon*, p. 1.

<sup>340</sup> Defoe, *Hymn*, p. 2.

<sup>341</sup> D. Madan, ‘The Vicar and Moses’ (London, c1790). See fig 4. for illustration.



incapable of performing the service, as he is drunk. This is embellished by the accompanying verse which describes the staggering steps of the vicar and his inability to read the bible, 'sure the letters are turn'd upside down, such a scandalous print, sure the devil is in't.' The reader is confronted by a character who regards his spiritual duty as a nuisance and a responsibility which he is ill-suited to. This failure extends to the vicar's inability to provide a good, pious example to his congregation; he cannot do this because his over-engagement in worldly behaviour has disorientated him. The cartoon presents a clergyman who disregards the importance of funerary duties and the cause for this behaviour may be observed in lack of incentivisation from his congregation. The funeral party is modest with only three members and they are burying a plain coffin, these are details which suggest a plain funeral. Furthermore, it is apparent from the verse that they have contributed no gifts or items to the vicar, as he takes his own scarf and hat.

## Conclusion

This examination of the role of clergy in the funeral has identified the different roles performed by the clergy and addressed how their performance of these roles was perceived in popular culture. Each of the clergyman's roles depended on specific knowledge and each conferred authority. The funeral service was an opportunity for the clergyman to perform the pastoral duty of informing and educating his congregation for their own death. The conflict between pastoral responsibility and commercialisation was present in the clergyman's role as custodian over burial space. The ability to permit or refuse burial placed the clergyman in a position of authority, albeit one that drew him into conflict with individuals whose desire for burial was contradictory to the rules of the church. We can observe this in the demand for intramural burial, a fashionable act which was allowed for an extra cost, even though it was challenged by contemporaries as irreligious and unhygienic. The ornaments and equipment of the church were an important part of a respectable funeral; the bells, church decorations and

pall had a longstanding place in the funeral. The devices were often provided and operated by the parish officials and this conferred a significant responsibility on the officials, whilst causing payments to be diverted to them, rather than the clergy. There were many similarities which the clergy shared with other deathworkers such as the charging of fees for specific services and the ownership of devices or equipment which performed an important role. This conferred some authority to the clergyman, although it is evident that congregants were willing to dispute decisions which they did not agree with. The disputes and criticism of clerical deathwork focus on a belief that the monetisation of death rites was compromising the clergyman's pastoral responsibilities.

An analysis of popular culture indicates that clerical deathwork was a cause of satirical comment. The relationships between clergymen and their fellow deathworkers are represented in contrasting ways which convey the popular concerns and suspicions about the motives of those who managed the funeral. The depiction of an antagonistic relationship between undertaker and clergyman illustrates the perception that the two parties were competing authorities in funerary matters. The clergy are subordinate in this relationship and are depicted as elements of the undertaker's funerary display. The contrasting image of the clergyman as a member of a convivial club of deathworkers presents a less favourable image of the clergy as complicit members of a trade in other people's demise. This representation condenses anxieties about the various trades who were necessary for a good death and respectable funeral. We are reminded that, as with their counterparts, the clergymen were selling the rites of the funeral and benefiting from death. Concern about the influence of payments on clergyman's funerary performance prompted questioning of the clergyman's motives and suggested that the spiritual efficacy of the funeral rites had been compromised.

## Private Funerals in the West Country

### Introduction:

This chapter discusses the performance of ‘private’ funerals in the eighteenth-century West Country. It is argued that privacy was an important factor in performance of a respectable common funeral, a trend which can be most clearly observed in urban communities such as Bath and Bristol. It is important to explain the term ‘private funeral’ which was widely used by contemporaries and did not describe a secretive event. The private funeral was an exclusive occasion involving kith and kin, but not local townspeople or the poor who had traditionally participated in respectable funerals during the preceding century. The act of funerary almsgiving consequently declined and hospitality was provided to a smaller, more exclusive group of guests.<sup>342</sup> In this context, it was important to acknowledge familial and filial ties, rather than the needs of the wider community in which the deceased person had lived. Spectatorship of private funerals was possible for members of the local community and this frequently drew criticism or praise depending on the behaviour of the crowd.

The introduction will briefly outline the contemporary evidence of the private funeral in eighteenth century England before considering the conclusions of existing literature. This information, which describes the typical private funeral and explains how these events have been studied, will provide the foundation for the chapter’s three points of examination.

#### i. What is a Private Funeral?

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<sup>342</sup> The earlier importance of communal gatherings is identified by: D. Beaver, 'Sown in Dishonour, Raised in Glory': Death, Ritual and Social Organisation in Northern Gloucestershire, 1590-1690', *Social History*, 17 (1992), pp. 402-3; F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 372-3. The role of hospitality in the Seventeenth Century is discussed in: L. Clarkson, *Death, Disease and Famine in Pre-Industrial England* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), pp. 161-7; Gittings, *Death, Burial and Individual*, pp. 151-8 and Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, pp. 373-6.

The form of a private funeral is adequately described in an illustrated account published in 1739, in the sixth volume of *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of all the Peoples of the World*.<sup>343</sup> This widely published work was compiled by the engraver Bernard Picart and publisher Jean Frederic Bernard; it was intended to document the ritual practices of communities as diverse as a European Christians and aboriginal communities in Central America.<sup>344</sup> *Ceremonies* condensed English funerary customs into a pair of images depicting the reception and funerary procession.<sup>345</sup> These illustrations were inspired by an earlier account of funerary practice from Henri Misson, and many of the Swiss traveller's observations were featured in the images.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> B. Picart, *The ceremonies and religious customs of the various nations of the known world*, Vol 6 (London, 1739).

<sup>344</sup> On the publication of *Ceremonies*: Margaret C. Jacob and Lynn Hunt, *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart & Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010), pp. 25-45; Lynn Hunt and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Bernard Picart and the first global vision of religion* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research, 2010), pp. 17-35.

<sup>345</sup> See Fig 1: Bernard Picart, *The ceremonies and religious customs of the various nations of the known world*, Vol 6 (London, 1739).

<sup>346</sup> H. Misson, *M. Misson's Memoirs and Observations in His Travels over England. With Some Account of Scotland and Ireland. Dispos'd in Alphabetical Order. Written Originally in French, and Translated by Mr. Ozell* (London: 1719). The placing of a facecloth on the deceased is mentioned on p. 90 and fragrant use of rosemary is mentioned on p. 91.



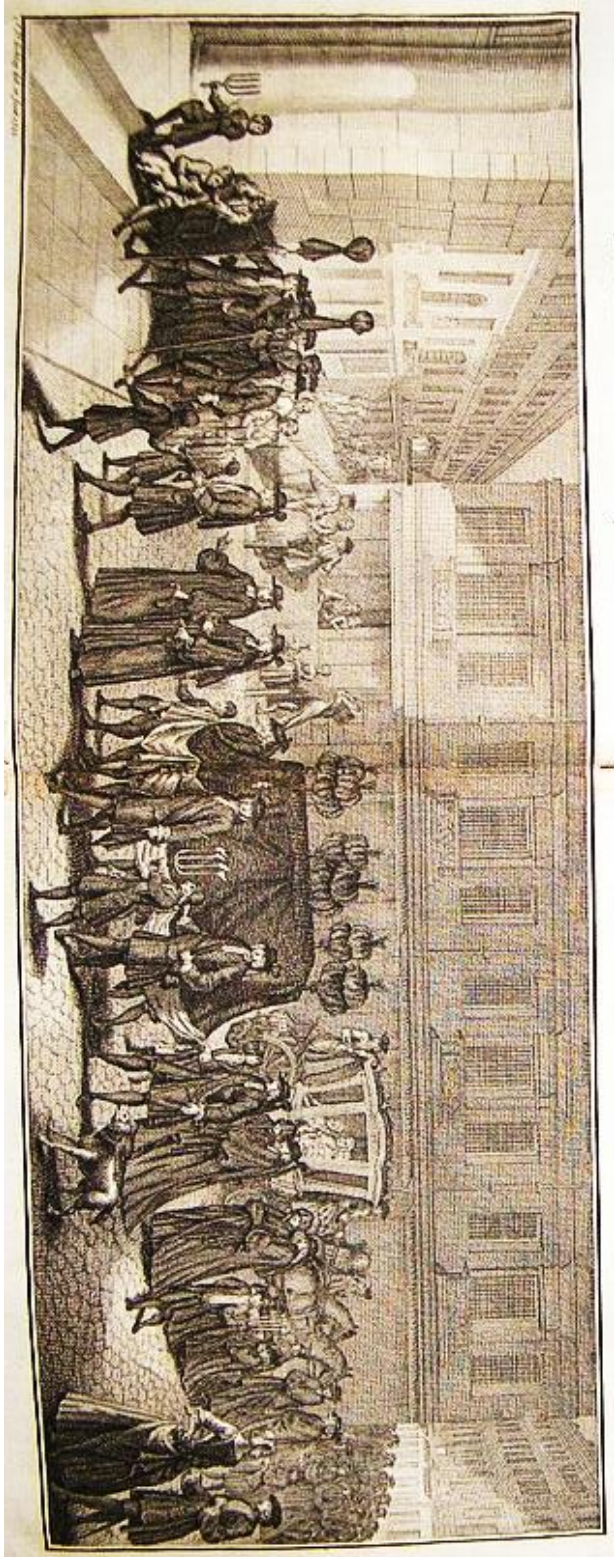


Figure 8: Bernard Picart, *The ceremonies and religious customs of the various nations of the known world*, Vol 6 (London, 1733).

Picart depicts the English funeral as an exclusive occasion. The distinctive black costumes and symbolic devices distinguish the mourners from the surrounding neighbourhood, which was not in mourning and was populated by locals who continue about their daily lives. The indifference of local people is further demonstrated by details such as passing coach traffic, gossiping women and a man asleep at the door of the church. The funeral is successful because it focuses on the close relationships between the mourners, as well as their intimate ties to the deceased person. This is most evident in the funeral reception, in which all guests are dressed in mourning and the room is decorated with symbolic devices. The scene emphasizes the small size of the funeral party and alludes to its intimacy because the depicted mourners were all middling men, except a few female attendants dispensing drinks. These were consumed as part of a polite, civil gathering in which the dispensation of hospitality between peers was a more important concern than the performance of any ritual or spiritual activity. The importance of filial hospitality in this scene is indicative of *Ceremonies*' appraisal of the broader funeral as an occasion which was intended for a limited group of friends and relatives of the deceased person. The translator of sixth volume summarised this exclusivity and intimacy with the title, 'a typical English private funeral.'<sup>347</sup> Such a title prompts one to consider how widespread the 'private' funeral was in eighteenth century England. Picart's engravings were plausibly intended to depict London but were the same funerals being organised in West Country, and if so, what did they consist of?<sup>348</sup>

It is apparent that 'private' funerals were practiced in the West Country, as we may observe in an example from 1810. In June of that year, John Ward of Marlborough wrote to the Bristolian attorney, John Choules, regarding his organisation of the funeral of William Hawkes Merriman. Ward was a business partner of Merriman's father and his message was

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<sup>347</sup> Picart, *Ceremonies and Religious Customs*, p. 81.

<sup>348</sup> Misson, whose account the description is based on, attended a funeral in London: Misson, *M. Misson's Memoirs and Observations in His Travels over England*, p. 91.

intended to allay Choules' concerns about the haste with which the funeral had been organised, due to warm weather. Ward disregarded problems such as the lack of time and absent guests, reassuring Choules of his confidence that the attorney would stage a funeral that was 'as private as decency and propriety will permit.'<sup>349</sup> The successful staging of a 'private' funeral was important to both Choules and Ward, but what did such a funeral consist of? Choules' bills indicate that it was a small occasion performed by the local undertaker, Joseph Sheppard, at a cost of eight pounds.<sup>350</sup> A considerable amount of this expenditure was spent on the coffin, which was both lined with flannel and filled with bran, indicating that it was to be buried in a vault. The undertaker, Sheppard provided the bearers to carry the coffin, hired at six shillings per man and equipped with mourning wear. The funeral was attended by a small group of individuals who were closely associated to the deceased, the absence of two groups of relatives had been one of Choules' main concerns. The attorney's concern illustrates that this funeral was intended for a small group of people, intimately associated to the deceased by family or friendly relationships.

The funeral of William Hawkes Merriman possesses many of the characteristics of private funerals which have been identified by existing literature. Choules' organisation of a small, modestly decorated funeral for Merriman's close friends and relatives demonstrates Clare Gittings' assertion that private funerals were intended to 'emphasize private loss,' which could only have been felt by such guests.<sup>351</sup> The funeral expenditures indicate that the public were consequently not involved, either as participants or gift recipients, a detail which illustrates the argument by Houlbrooke and Gittings that the organisers of private funerals rejected traditional responsibilities and entitlements to the poor. It is argued that this transition occurred in the long eighteenth century and the customs of the private funeral

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<sup>349</sup> BRO: 38169/W/Me/2, 'Letter to Mrs. Choules regarding funeral of William Hawkes Merriman'.

<sup>350</sup> BRO: 38169/W/Me/2, 'Bill for the funeral of William Hawkes Merriman'.

<sup>351</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 197.

defined the mainstream funeral of the nineteenth century, as described by Julie Marie Strange and Pat Jalland.<sup>352</sup> The Hawkes-Merriman funeral is significant because it is evidence of the importance of privacy in the funerals of the West Country and this has not been widely discussed in existing literature.

## ii. Existing Literature

The chapter demonstrates that the lack of discussion about private funerals in the West Country reflects a historiographical bias towards the funerals of London, rather than a lack of evidence from the region. The bias occurred because many studies have focused on the metropolitan origins of the private funeral. Gittings' presents the private funeral as a courtly innovation which demonstrated the individualism and affective character of affluent mourners in the Seventeenth Century. The importance of the London-centric royal court is also addressed by Paul S. Fritz's analysis of royal private funerals which describes how privacy in the royal funerals was emulated by members of the court. Both Gittings and Fritz assert that the undertaking trade, a metropolitan innovation, enabled the staging of private funerals because they allowed their customers to dictate the form and style of the event.<sup>353</sup> This is significant to the chapter's analysis of private funerals because the undertaking trade was present in the West Country and therefore may have performed a similar role in the region's transition from public to private funerals. Neither Gittings, nor Fritz address this, due to their limited social or geographical focus, and within wider death history the discussion of funerary change outside the capital is dominated by arguments for the persistence of public funerals, featuring communal customs. Studies of specific aspects of the provincial funeral

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<sup>352</sup> Strange, 'She Cried a Very Little', p.158; Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, pp. 194-9.

<sup>353</sup> The undertakers' adoption of funeral responsibilities is interpreted as a convenience by Fritz: Fritz, 'Undertaking Trade', pp. 242. It is negatively interpreted by Howarth and Gittings who argue that undertakers had a disabling influence on popular knowledge of funeral organisation which resulted in the decline of traditional hospitality: Howarth, 'Professionalizing the Funeral Industry', pp. 120-34; Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 98. The disabling influence of the trade is situated in a broad historical context by: Tony Walter, *The Revival of Death* (London: Routledge, 1994).

such as Vic Gammon's analysis of funerary singing and Rosie Morris' study of maiden's garlands, have identified longstanding communal customs which persisted regardless of change elsewhere.<sup>354</sup> These studies demonstrate the diversity of private funerals but the customs which they identify were minor and novel. The eighteenth-century evidence consulted by Morris, illustrates how the traditional custom of funerary garlanding fell out of repute.<sup>355</sup> Indeed, there were no folk customs at the Hawkes-Merriman funeral and the administrator's belief that the occasion was respectful and adequate indicates that such behaviour was not regarded as common or essential. It is notable that contemporary writers documented the unusualness of traditional customs, such as Richard Warner, who identified 'much singularity' in rural Welsh communities and Henry Bourne who described folk funeral practices as the behaviour of 'some country churches.'<sup>356</sup> This reminds us that surviving folk customs were not mainstream and therefore a more developed funerary culture must have existed.

### iii. Responding to the Literature

The chapter examines evidence for the importance of privacy in three aspects of the common funeral: the location of the funerary activity, the invited guests and finally, the gifts which mourners received. It is argued that the popularisation of private funerals was a consequence of secular, rather than religious, factors. The chapter demonstrates that the new practices which typified private funerals, were devised in response to secular concerns such as cost or the maintenance of social status. The new practices were made possible due to innovative

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<sup>354</sup> V. Gammon, 'Singing and Popular Funeral Practices in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in *Desire, Drink and Death in English Folk and Vernacular Song, 1600-1900*, ed. by Vic Gammon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 177-207; and Morris, 'Innocent and Touching Custom', pp. 355-87.

<sup>355</sup> Morris, 'Innocent and Touching Custom', p. 356.

<sup>356</sup> R. Warner, *A Second Walk through Wales, by the Rev. Richard Warner, of Bath. In August and September 1798* (London: 1799), p. 302; H. Bourne, *Antiquitates Vulgares; or, the Antiquities of the Common People. Giving an Account of Several of Their Opinions and Ceremonies. With Proper Reflections Upon Each of Them; Shewing Which May Be Retain'd, and Which Ought to Be Laid Aside. By Henry Bourne, M. A. Curate of the Parochial Chapel of All-Saints in Newcastle Upon Tyne.* (London: 1725), p. 25.

products which enabled a funerary celebration of the dead person's relationships and achievements. The undertaking trade was responsible for many of the innovative items discussed by the chapter and therefore it is argued that upstart, local undertakers were fundamental to the viability of private funerals in the West Country. The role of local undertakers in the organisation of private funerals is analysed, with a specific focus on their provision of innovative goods which were new to the region.

The location of funerary activity is a significant focus because it indicates whether the occasion was intended to be public or private. Throughout the period, the church or religious meeting place, was unchallenged as the location of the funeral service but there was significant variation in the locations of the funerary activities which preceded and followed the service.<sup>357</sup> For this reason, the chapter analyses the use of space and location at three key stages of the funeral: the procession, the church service and the return to the bereaved household, as evidence of contemporaries' desire for a private funeral. This approach expands on research which has argued the urban environment was divided into public and private spaces.<sup>358</sup> The chapter identifies evidence for the pursuit of private funerals in mourners' use of restricted or enclosed spaces and the management of spectators within urban spaces such as the street or the church. The importance of separation between the funeral party and the uninvited spectators is observed as a motivating factor in mourners' use of space. It is concluded that this demonstrates that the funeral was intended to be private occasion for people who were closed to the deceased in life.

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<sup>357</sup> On the persisting importance of the church in the eighteenth century funeral: Houlbrooke, *Death Religion and the Family*, pp. 323-6; Clarkson, *Death, Disease and Famine*, pp. 160-1.

<sup>358</sup> C. Estabrook, *Urbane and rustic England: cultural ties and social spheres in the provinces, 1660-1780* (Manchester, 1998). For discussion of urban space as an 'arena' or venue: Stobart, and Hann, 'Retailing Revolution', p. 377; L.E. Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), p. 888; Berry, 'Polite Consumption', pp. 384-6; Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p.217

The invitation of guests was intended to ensure that private funeral was attended by a specific group of people and as the Hawkes-Merriman funeral demonstrates, the attendance of these people was fundamental to the success of the occasion. For this reason, the invited guests are the second aspect of the funeral analysed by the chapter, with specific focus on the guests' relationship to the deceased and their purpose in the funeral. This responds to historiographical arguments for the social importance of friendship amongst peers of equal status and the concurrent increase in affective mourning, which recalled broken relationships. The chapter addresses that the invited guests illustrated the temporal successes of the deceased person, such as close friendship amongst people of status or involvement in philanthropic causes. Charitable investment in local institutions grew in popularity during the period and this was reflected by the invitation of mourners from local almshouses, schools or hospitals.<sup>359</sup> Guests such as these demonstrate the variety of relationships which were understood to be appropriate to bolster the posthumous reputation of the deceased.

The giving of gifts was an important aspect of the funeral because it was an act which recognised the relationships which had been important to the deceased. The communal ritual of the traditional funeral included the act of charitable giving to anonymous members of the local poor. By contrast, the intimate, affective relationships honoured by the private funeral were acknowledged by the giving of gifts to a limited group of friends or relatives. The chapter's analysis of funerary gift-giving is influenced by a body of literature that originated with Marcel Mauss' anthropological study of gifting as a social act.<sup>360</sup> Mauss argued that the exchange of gifts strengthens relationships because the recipient is obliged to reciprocate the

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<sup>359</sup> For the boom in middling investment in charitable institutions: W.K. Jordan, 'The English Background of Modern Philanthropy', *The American Historical Review*, 66 (1961), pp. 401-08.

<sup>360</sup> Mauss pioneered a way of seeing gifts as a form of obligation to continue relationship & reciprocate: M. Mauss, *The Gift: forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*, translated by Ian Cunnison (New York, 1967). On the idea of cultural biography of things: C. Gosden and Y. Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects,' *World Archaeology* 31:2 (October, 1999), pp. 169-78.



gift and thus to continue their relationship with giver. We can apply this theory to funerary practices because the distribution of mourning gifts was an important part of the eighteenth-century funeral. Existing discussion of funerary hospitality indicates that guests felt obliged to reciprocate the gifts and refreshments they had received. Gittings and Houlbrooke observe that the reciprocation of funerary gifts emphasized the affective ties between the bereaved guests.<sup>361</sup> This anthropological interpretation of gifting is complemented by research which presents the reciprocation of hospitality as an opportunity to protect and secure posthumous reputation. Keith Thomas asserts that distribution of gifts continued regardless of religious change because of the important role which refreshments and items served as evidence for the quality and status of the deceased person.<sup>362</sup> Felicity Heal similarly argues that the provision of lavish food and drink continued to be important because organisers wanted to match the entertainments of funerals staged by their peers or kin.<sup>363</sup> The chapter responds to these conclusions by analysing how notions of privacy influenced change in the distribution of gifts at West Country funerals. It is argued that the decline of charitable giving reflected the growing importance of the funeral as an occasion which celebrated temporal achievements rather than an occasion for public acts of posthumous benevolence to the poor.

### The Locations of Funerary Activity

The chapter commences with an analysis of the locations of funerary events such as the procession, service and post-funeral gathering, as evidence of contemporaries' desire for a private funeral. This approach expands on research which has argued that different kinds of spaces were fundamental to the public and private spheres which co-existed in society.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 159; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, pp. 250-3.

<sup>362</sup> K. Thomas, *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 243.

<sup>363</sup> Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, p. 361.

<sup>364</sup> J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1962; translated 1989); P. Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 79-82; On the use of space in particular spheres: Estabrook, *Urbane and Rustic England*.



Habermas argued that the public sphere depended on coffee houses, because they provided an ideal venue for unrestricted contact with newspapers and interaction between middling tradesmen.<sup>365</sup> Although the importance of this particular location is widely observed in historiography, successive studies have identified other locations which performed the same role. Margaret Jacob argues that the coffee houses were just one example of the venues which emerged in the period such as masonic lodges, salons and libraries.<sup>366</sup> By contrast, the historiographical discussion of the private sphere demonstrates the importance of the home and in particular, the domestic developments within the home which facilitated the rites of the private sphere.<sup>367</sup> Studies indicate that different rooms of a house possessed significance in the polite sociability of the public sphere in a salon and the intimacy of the private sphere in a morning room.<sup>368</sup> The characteristics of these spaces directly influenced the activities within, for example, the closed confines of the household permitted private, gossip between friends, unheard by strangers, whereas the open surroundings of a masonic lodge provided the middling sort with a platform for public debate. Historiography indicates that different kinds of private or public space possessed similar qualities which made them ideal for the activities of each respective sphere. Locations used for private sphere activities such as the domestic morning room or the parlour were typically restrictive and personal. The venues for public sphere activities are identified as being inclusive and prominently located in urban

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<sup>365</sup> The role of coffeehouses as venues which facilitated the public sphere has been developed by: S. Pincus, "'The Coffee Politicians Does Create": Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture,' *The Journal of Modern History* 67:4 (1995), pp. 814-8; B. Cowan, 'The Rise of the Coffeehouse Reconsidered,' *The Historical Journal*, 47:1 (2004), pp. 21-46.

<sup>366</sup> M.C. Jacob, 'The Mental Landscape of the public sphere: a European perspective', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28 (1994), p. 96 & p. 100.

<sup>367</sup> Private sphere activities include tea drinking, card play: S. Varey, 'The Pleasures of the Table', in R. Porter and M.M. Roberts (eds.) *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1996), p.210-3 and J.E. Mullin, 'We had carding': Hospitable card play and polite domestic sociability among the middling sort in Eighteenth Century England' *Journal of Social History*, 42:4 (2009), pp.989-1008.

<sup>368</sup> On the co-existence of public and private spaces within a house: A. Vickery, "'An Englishman's home is his castle?' Thresholds, boundaries and privacies in the eighteenth-century London house' *Past and Present* (2008), pp. 147-73. Although he disapproves of use of public/private terminology, Benjamin Heller describes how space within the household was divided for the use of either the family or their external guests: B. Heller, 'Leisure and the use of domestic space in Georgian London', *The Historical Journal* 53:3 (2010), pp. 634-6.

areas; qualities which can be observed in the coffeehouse, masonic lodge or the lending library.<sup>369</sup>

This is not to say that all private or public spaces were the same, but the existence of these shared qualities means that we can examine mourners' use of location to determine whether the funeral was intended to be a public or private occasion. The relationship between attitudes to death and the location of death rites has been discussed by studies which focus on the 'space' or 'place' of the dead in society.<sup>370</sup> These studies expand on Philippe Ariès' concept of a 'hidden death' in which all evidence of death, including the traditional customs of the funeral, was concealed within private spaces. Ariès argues that this behaviour occurred because death was no longer used as a didactic experience and was regarded as dangerous and threatening.<sup>371</sup> Studies have questioned the extent to which Ariès' 'hidden death' occurred; particularly in eighteenth century England which was socially and religiously different to the French communities which he had analysed.<sup>372</sup> Nonetheless, Ariès' concept of 'hidden death' is valuable to this chapter's study of privacy in funerals because it argues that innovations in funerary goods were intended to conceal signs of death.<sup>373</sup> This argument has been made by later studies of English funerals in the long-eighteenth century. The widespread use of coffins and the success of coffin vendors are cited by Gittings and David Cressy as

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<sup>369</sup> The relationship between the public sphere and urban environments is discussed by: R. Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), p. 361; Stobart, and Hann, 'Retailing Revolution in the Eighteenth Century? Evidence from North-West England', *Business History*, 46 (2004), pp. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 207-8.

<sup>370</sup> This concept is discussed in: B. Gordon and P. Marshall (eds.) *The place of the dead: Death and remember in late medieval and early modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-17; K.D.M. Snell, 'Gravestones, Belonging and Local Attachment in England, 1700-2000', *Past and Present*, 179 (2003), pp. 101-3; J. Rugg, 'Defining the Place of Burial: what makes a cemetery, a cemetery?'. *Mortality*. 5:3 (2000), pp. 259-275.

<sup>371</sup> P. Ariès, *The Hour of our Death* (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 476-450.

<sup>372</sup> Criticism of Ariès include: R. Porter, 'The Hour of Philippe Ariès ', *Mortality*, 4 (1999), pp. 85-8; several sociological studies have criticised Ariès' argument for death denial including T. Walter, *The Revival of Death* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. ; A. Kellehear, *A Social History of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>373</sup> Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, p. 476.

evidence that contemporaries wanted to protect funeral guests from witnessing the remains of the dead or being exposed to the health hazards of a corpse.<sup>374</sup>

The notion that the visual signs of death had become repellent is also noted by Nigel Llewellyn, whose examination of mortuary art elaborates on Ariés' 'hidden death' to conclude that death was increasingly depicted using abstract imagery. Llewellyn demonstrates that the decoration of items such as funeral invitations, mourning jewellery and memorial monuments was dominated by classical motifs, rather than traditional signifiers and icons of death such as skulls and skeletons.<sup>375</sup> The examples used by Llewellyn indicate a gradual marginalisation of these traditional motifs and the popularisation of wholly classical imagery in the first decade of the nineteenth century (defined by the absence of traditional motifs). Similar imagery is presented to support Houlbrooke's periodization of these years as an 'Age of Decency,' which was defined by restrained responses to death and the expectation of separation between the dead and living.<sup>376</sup> It can be argued that changes described in existing literature, represent evidence that the funeral had gradually shifted from the public sphere, where it was of significance to all members of a settlement, to the private sphere in which it was of importance to a much smaller group of people.

The private funeral was not a secret funeral because travel from household to the parish church required it be in environments that were within the public sphere; such as the streets

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<sup>374</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England*. p. 100; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 247.

<sup>375</sup> P. Ariés, *Images of Man and Death*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1985); N. Llewellyn, *The Art of Death* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991).

<sup>376</sup> Houlbrooke, 'The Age of Decency, 1660-1760', in Peter Jupp and Clare Gittings (eds.) *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 174-201. On decency in burial conditions: M. Jenner, 'Death, Decomposition and Dechristianisation? Public Health and Church Burial in 18th Century England', *English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), pp. 615-32; A.J. Arnold, and J.M. Bidmead, 'Going 'to Paradise by Way of Kensal Green': A Most Unfit Subject for Trading Profit?', *Business History*, 50 (2008), pp. 328-30.

and open spaces of towns. By examining funeral parties' use of these spaces, this chapter responds to existing literature on the urban environment in eighteenth-century England which has discussed the function of the private and public spaces. The creation and development of these spaces is a key theme in the historiography of urban space in the long-eighteenth century. Borsay and McInnes explain the development of urban space and concur that the polite, social culture of the middling sort played a significant role in this process.<sup>377</sup> This is an interpretation of urban space as venue for leisurely activity and an argument that attributes urban development to the people who were key customers for the early undertakers. The increasing development of spaces for socialisation and culture is also addressed by Michael Reed, whose study of urban transformation discusses both the provinces and London.<sup>378</sup> Reed outlines that the construction of new venues such as theatres and assembly halls was paralleled by changes to the furnishing of streets and attempts to regulate which traditional activities could occur in a public spaces. John Stobart correspondingly observes that urban developments such as paving, renovation and the reconstruction of buildings were motivated by an intention to create desirable spaces that would attract affluent people to particular streets.<sup>379</sup> The analysis of redeveloped streets by Reed and Stobart suggests that different factors threatened their respectability, such as unruly public behaviour and the presence of daily traffic.<sup>380</sup> This is important because funerals used these urban spaces and were subject to the same unpredictable forces which had frustrated civic attempts produce respectable spaces. The chapter therefore analyses how funerals used these spaces and specifically how

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<sup>377</sup>Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).; McInnes, "The Emergence of a Leisure Town: Shrewsbury, 1660-1760." p. 79.

<sup>378</sup> M. Reed, 'The transformation of urban space' in Clark, Peter (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: volume 2, 1540-1840* (Cambridge, Cambridge University: 2000), p. 630.

<sup>379</sup> Stobart, 'Shopping Streets as Social Space', p. 18.

<sup>380</sup> Reed, 'Transformation of urban space', p. 638.

funerals responded to the challenges which were posed by the unexpected, transgressive behaviour of spectators.

#### i. The Funeral Procession in Urban Streets

We commence with the procession which was the most public stage of the funeral, traversing the urban streets from the bereaved household to the church. This was a longstanding practice which was complicated during the late-eighteenth century by the additional need to take the deceased to a new, distant place of burial. Despite using public space, the funerals were still private because members of public were spectators, rather than participants. By contrast to the traditional ideal of a funeral in which an entire community were participants, the increasingly private funerals of the eighteenth century were spontaneously witnessed or read about by the people they passed. Consequently, it was common for passing funerals to be anonymous to bystanders and it was accordingly argued that the meaning of funerals had changed for these people.

It is evident that some West Country inhabitants viewed local funerals with intrigue rather than personal sorrow. In 1820, the *Bath Chronicle* speculated that a large crowd gathered watched the funeral of eminent Bristolian surgeon William Henry Goldwyer because ‘the procession was extremely interesting and excited the curiosity of an immense assemblage.’<sup>381</sup> Critical voices warned that the public no longer responded to the presence of a funeral with appropriate solemnity. Anglican John Moir commented that the public, ‘have too little value for holiness, to be suitably effected with the death of the righteous’ suggesting that the traditional, didactic purpose of the funeral had been ignored.<sup>382</sup> Moir believed that bystanders were more attracted to the visual spectacle of the funeral and cautioned that this detracted

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<sup>381</sup> 'Masonic Funeral', *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 23 March 1820.

<sup>382</sup> J. Moir, *Discourses on practical subjects*. By John Moir (London: 1776), p. 235.

from the spiritual value of funerals. His criticisms were paralleled by the nonconformist, George Burder, who argued that 'criminal vanity' of funerary display endangered the spiritual fortunes of both the mourners and their spectators.<sup>383</sup> Despite religious criticisms, the processions continued to be important throughout the century, as testified by the high frequency of processions in urban streets noted by both Moir and Burder.

The route of a funeral procession was an important consideration for funeral organisers and for this reason it was frequently mentioned in the directive texts produced by dying individuals. The routes which they chose represented a compromise between the practicalities of transporting the deceased and the desire to stage a display which aggrandised the deceased's reputation. The urban environment made this possible because busy streets provided potential spectators and the social quality of streets on the route conferred significance to the procession that passed through them. Existing studies have observed that specific streets of towns were associated with particular ranks of social status, such as the high-status shopping streets and the downmarket shambles.<sup>384</sup> High status streets, gentrified and populated by fashionable premises, were the centre of polite social activity. Research indicates that fashionability and popular significance made these spaces attractive to those who organised civic or public events, because the social importance of these spaces conferred significance to the occasions and promised a high-status crowd.<sup>385</sup> Funerals used these spaces for the same reason, the importance and social quality of the deceased was demonstrated by the presence of their funeral procession in a street of corresponding high status.

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<sup>383</sup> G. Burder, 'A Sermon on Matthew Xxi4', in *Village Sermons; or, Sixteen Plain and Short Discourses on the Principal Doctrines of the Gospel; Intended for the Use of Families*. (London: 1800).

<sup>384</sup> P. Corfield, 'Walking the City Streets: The Urban Odyssey in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Urban History*, 16 (1990), pp. 10-11; Steven Poole's research on Bristol has uncovered significant divisions within the city and the animosity which accompanied them: S. Poole, 'To Be a Bristolian: Civic Identity and the Social Order, 1750-1850', in M. Dresser and P. Ollerenshaw (ed.) *The Making of Modern Bristol* (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp. 76-99.

<sup>385</sup> L. Colley, *Britons*, pp. 222-8; Borsay, 'All the Town's a Stage', pp. 233-9 and in a Bristolian context: Harrison, *Crowds and History*, p. 87-88.

In large, urban communities such as Bath and Bristol it possible to observe the frequent use of procession routes through streets. High status thoroughfares such as Park Street, Bristol and Milsom Street in Bath were an important part of gentrified urban environment focused on sociable interaction and polite activities such as shopping or walking.<sup>386</sup> The affluent and socially significant people who populated spaces such as these were a preferable audience because their interest was interpreted as an indicator of the deceased's reputation.

The closure of shops in the parish of St. Michaels in Bath during the funeral of John Richards was presented as evidence for the sorrow felt by the high-status shopkeepers.<sup>387</sup> Similarly, in the Wiltshire market town of Warminster, the closure of the town's shops during a funeral was interpreted as evidence that the deceased was 'lamented by a numerous family, and extensive circle of friends, and a populous town.'<sup>388</sup> In this account the closure of shops reinforced the positive reputation of the deceased because it emphasized the relationships which the deceased had formed in a successful commercial community.

Processional routes were also influenced by the increasing importance of visiting locations which had been of significance in the life of the deceased person. We can observe many funeral processions which commenced from, or visited, institutions which the deceased had been a member of, such as masonic lodges or charitable institutions. These are good example of change in the funeral because these subscription or affiliation organisations involved were

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<sup>386</sup> For historiographical discussion of streets as places of social activity: Corfield, 'Walking the City Streets', pp. 138-9; M. Girouard, 'The Georgian Promenade,' in J. Plumb et al, *Life in the Georgian Town: Georgian Group Annual Symposium Proceedings* (The Georgian Group: London, 1986), pp. 26-33; Borsay, 'The Rise of the Promenade: The Social and Cultural Use of Space in the English Provincial Town, c. 1660 - 1800', *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 9 (1986), pp 125-40.

<sup>387</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 5 May, 1825.

<sup>388</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 22 July, 1824.

founded in the mid-Eighteenth century and their respective halls were commonly constructed during the late-Eighteenth century.<sup>389</sup>

The use of a masonic hall was subject to the approval of the lodge and the building was used within a masonic funeral ritual that combined the customs of freemasonry with a respectful, Christian burial service.<sup>390</sup> During this ritual, the hall was a space in which lodge members could assemble privately and perform the specifically masonic elements of the funeral away from curious spectators. The circumstances of masonic meeting places were different, and this is arguably a reflection of the developing nature of the organisation during the latter-eighteenth century. In affluent Bristol, the Freemasons Hall in Bridge Street was a clearly recognisable location, but other lodges met in such as taverns or urban halls. The location of a masonic lodge was known within the community, even if it was a bespoke building. For example, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* recognised the Assembly Rooms as the meeting place of the Apollo lodge and the *Taunton Courier* identified the The West End Inn during the funeral of Clarence Lodge brother, J. Collard.<sup>391</sup>

The role of masonic hall in the funerary procession demonstrates the difference between funeralgoers and spectators in a private funeral. The masonic hall served as the starting point of the funeral's public journey to the church. It was the location at which the masonic mourners first appeared in full attire and the precisely staged display commenced. The newspaper accounts of these events convey the significance of this moment, when the and organisation of the masonic mourners was finally revealed. The *Bristol Mercury* noted the

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<sup>389</sup> The two institutions were both established in the mid eighteenth century. Their respective meeting houses were both established at the end of the period studied by this thesis: Freemason's Hall, Bridge Street, Bristol constructed in 1818. Royal Clarence Lodge, Frome, originated 1790, located in George Hotel, Market Place, 1790.

<sup>390</sup> The form of this ritual was described in: T.S. Webb, *The Freemason's monitor, or illustrations of masonry* (London, 1797), pp. 146-58. Also in secondary literature by: A. Piatigorsky, *Freemasonry* (Harvill Press, 2013), p. 307.

<sup>391</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 22 April 1811.



time when the procession for William Goldwyer departed Freemasons Hall and a similar awareness was shared by the account of the Wiveliscombe lodge's departure for the funeral of J. Collard.<sup>392</sup> Descriptions of the event convey the sense of anticipation and expectation which occurred at the moment of departure. The *Taunton Courier* reported that the event 'excited a high degree of interest' and noted that 'a great concourse of people had assembled from the town to witness the scene.'<sup>393</sup> Through such language we are reminded that the public are merely spectators at private funeral and can perform no role in the ceremony. As a result, there was difference between the large amount of public knowledge about the funeral procession and the meagre knowledge about what happened inside the buildings which the procession visited. In contrast to the detailed lists and diagrams of the procession which were published, we can observe ambiguity in the accounts of the closed ceremonial which in was recounted in generalised vocabulary, noting that 'the usual masonic ceremonies were given' and 'an appropriate rite was followed.'<sup>394</sup> A similarly ambiguous tone is present in the *Bristol Mercury's* concession that 'we understand the accustomed masonic ceremonies were performed' within the closed doors of Freemasons Hall.<sup>395</sup> Events which occurred in the privacy of the masonic hall, the bereaved household and the church were embellished by second-hand reportage or assumption. It is arguably for this reason that the Goldwyer funeral article closes with an apology for omitted details, citing, 'the short time we had to collect our information.'<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> 'Masonic Funeral', *Bristol Mercury*, 20 March 1820; *Taunton Courier*, and *Western Advertiser*, 10 November 1822.

<sup>393</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 10 November 1822.

<sup>394</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 22 April 1811; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 10 November 1791.

<sup>395</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 20 March 1820.

<sup>396</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 18 March 1820.

*Order of the Procession.*  
 Two Mutes, with emblazoned Masonic emblems.  
 A Tiler, with drawn sword.  
 Visiting-Brethren, from the neighbouring Counties, four abreast.  
 The Lodge of Virtue, from Bath.  
 BRISTOL LONGES, viz.  
 The Moira.  
 The Royal Sussex Lodge of Hospitality.  
 The Royal York Lodge of Union:  
 The Jerusalem.  
 The Beaufort.  
 The Royal Mariners.  
 Visiting Grand Officers.  
**THE GRAND LODGE OF BRISTOL, viz.**  
 Grand Tiler.  
 Trumpets.  
 Kettle-Drums.  
 Two Stewards.  
 Grand Organist.  
 Grand Director of Ceremonies.  
 Past Grand Superintendants of Works.  
 Grand Superintendant of Works.  
 Past Grand Deacons.  
 Grand Deacons.  
 Past Grand Secretaries.  
 Grand Secretary.  
 Past Grand Registrar.  
 Grand Registrar.  
 Past Grand Treasurers.  
 Grand Treasurer.  
 Past Grand Wardens.  
 Three Visiting Chaplains.  
 The Holy Bible, open, with a Square and Compass thereon, upon a purple velvet and gold cushion, with the word "Bristol" in large gold letters in front; carried by Brother T. Fry, supported by two Stewards, with wands.  
 Grand Chaplains, Brothers Bedford, Edwards, and Evans.  
 Grand Wardens, Brothers Harril and Clift.  
 Grand Sword of the Province, Col. F. Coke.  
 Deputy Provincial Grand Master, H. Smith.  
 Pursuivant at Arms, Brother J. Russell.  
 Two Mutes.  
 Steward. | Board of Plumbers. | Steward.  
 Two Mutes.  
 Mr. Arnold, the Undertaker.  
 PALL-BEARERS. PALL-BEARERS.  
 J. A. Stansbury THE BODY. C. F. Husenbeth  
 Richard Smith covered with a Pall of black James Lean  
 Henry Shew Genoa velvet embroidered R. E. Case  
 H. Marshall with gold lace. F. Grigg.  
 Upon the Pall were eight escutcheons, (painted by Brother W. Edkins,) of the Arms of the deceased, emblazoned on separate shields, with those of the Craft. Upon the lid were placed the regalia of the deceased, consisting of the gauntlets, collar, sword, hat, and Masonic jewels, and cross sprays of Acacia; in front hung his Banner, as Grand Master of the Province.  
 The deceased's four Sons, as Chief Mourners.  
 Two Pages.  
 Friends of the deceased.  
 Two Stewards.  
 A Tiler, with drawn sword.

The Inner Guard of the Wellington Lodge,  
 With a drawn Sword, decorated with the Badges of Office;  
 The Senior and Junior Deacons,  
 With their Insignia;  
 The Secretary, bearing a Scroll;  
 The Treasurer, carrying the Bag;  
 The Senior and Junior Wardens,  
 With their respective Ensigns;  
 The Past-Master;  
 The Worshipful Master;  
 A Brother carrying a Cushion, supported on each side by a Steward carrying a Standard;  
 A Band of Music;  
 The Tyler of the Wiveliscombe Lodge,  
 Bearing a drawn Sword;  
 The Senior and Junior Deacons;  
 The Secretary, with a Scroll;  
 The Treasurer, with a Bag;  
 The Brethren out of Office,  
 Two and Two  
 The Senior and Junior Wardens;  
 Brother carrying a Cushion, whereon was placed the Holy Bible, the Square and Compass;  
 The Chaplain, accompanied by another Clergyman;  
 The Deputy P. G. M. in the superb costume of his office, and supported by the W. M. and the P. M. of the Lodge, and followed by two Deacons, bearing the Standard.

Figure 9. Bristol Mercury 20 Nov 1820 and Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser 10 Nov 1822.

For the invited masons, the act of starting the procession at the hall was significant because it was a reminder of the fraternal bond which they shared. The organisation of the procession emphasized this fraternity over individuality because the home of the deceased was customarily visited afterwards. Status within the lodge did not affect the route, as we may observe in the Goldwyer funeral, an event which celebrated the deceased man's seniority

within freemasonry and his national importance.<sup>397</sup> It would have been easy for the funeral to have commenced from Goldwyer's house which was in the same street as the Freemasons Hall, but this would arguably have detracted from the purpose of the procession. Indeed the pattern demonstrated in Goldwyer's procession was followed by mourners of the Apollo Lodge in Salisbury who processed to the house of fellow brother George Fry and also at the funeral of Edward Culverhouse, a tyler at the lodge in Frome.<sup>398</sup> Both Fry and Culverhouse were masons of lesser standing than Goldwyer but the prominence afforded to the meeting place was a token of their shared status as brothers of a lodge.

A celebration of individual achievements can be observed in funeral processions which visited locations such as libraries, schools or hospitals, all of which demonstrated the personal, philanthropic efforts of the deceased. In contrast to the masonic structures, these benefactor institutions could vary significantly, such as the charity school funded by Bath resident John William and the lecture room of Stokes Croft Academy where the guests of the Ryland funeral assembled.<sup>399</sup> These locations contributed to the reputation-bolstering display of the funeral by emphasizing the deceased person's participation in activities which were regarded an important part of social life. Visiting these institutions reminded the invited guests of the deceased person's involvement and provided the guests with an opportunity to witness the dead person's philanthropy at first hand.

The streets provided the primary venue for outsiders to witness a private funeral because most of the funeral was concealed within the household and the church. Contemporaries who wanted to speculate on the whether the dead person was well received by their neighbours could, and did, analyse the behaviour of spectators. An informal series of expectations

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<sup>397</sup> Goldwyer was Provincial Grand Master and his funeral was attended by representatives of local lodges, as well as freemasons of national standing: *Bristol Mercury*, 20 March 1820.

<sup>398</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 22 April 1811; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 10 November 1791.

<sup>399</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 2 March, 1780; *Bristol Mercury*, 6 June, 1825.

governed what was understood as respectable behaviour from funerary spectators, although this had little effect on the people's true behaviour. In a period in which social reputation was an important matter, the silence of a funeral crowd was widely interpreted as evidence of respect for the deceased. Accounts of funerals accordingly described the silence of crowds in vivid language such as 'breathless', 'respectful' or 'affecting'.<sup>400</sup> These terms conveyed the belief that the spectators were engaged and touched by the funerary spectacle they were witnessing, even if they did not interact with it. Such decorous behaviour was favourably interpreted, whereas a wide range of inappropriate acts were understood to be injurious to a successful procession.

The appropriate gestures of mourning emphasized the separation between silent spectators and mourners, because it was important that only the invited people were participating in the funeral. Spectators were discouraged from making informal mournful gestures such as singing, chanting or shouting expressions of grief. One such example can be observed at the 1769 funeral of the actor, William Powell in Bristol, an occasion which would be remembered as an exemplar several decades later.<sup>401</sup> As the cortege travelled through the streets, large crowds gathered to watch but their noise and enthusiastic statements about Powell's career proved to be disruptive. The mournful statements shouted by the crowd at were dismissed as 'fruitless and inadequate testimonies' because they came from the uninvited masses, rather than Powell's peers.<sup>402</sup>

Instances of crime were physically damaging to the procession because the theft of decorative items compromised the visual spectacle of the funeral. This was important to funeral

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<sup>400</sup> Descriptions from the funerals of: W.H. Goldwyer: 'Masonic Funeral', *Bristol Mercury*, 20 March, 1820; Rev Dr. Ryland: *Bristol Mercury* 6 June, 1825; Sarah Harford: Madge Dresser, ed., *The Diary of Sarah Fox, Née Champion: Bristol 1745-1802. Extracted in 1872 by John Frank., Bristol Record Society's Publications* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 2003), p. 203.

<sup>401</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 18 November, 1819.

<sup>402</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 13 July 1769.

organisers who intended to demonstrate claims of affluence and taste using fashionable, personal items.<sup>403</sup> The items required for an impressive spectacle were available to an increasingly larger market in the eighteenth-century, but they were nonetheless small and vulnerable. Thefts from funeral processions were opportunistic acts which involved the snatching of escutcheons or ostrich feathers, both of which were abundant in contemporary display.<sup>404</sup> A notable example involved the theft of escutcheons from the procession of merchant Cornelius Stephens by members of the crowd who had gathered in the city streets.<sup>405</sup> This example presented no evidence of malice towards the deceased individual but reflected the commonplace hazards of urban streets. Although they were impersonal and did not physically inhibit the funeral, instances of theft were regarded as a credible threat because they demonstrated a deviation from the solemnity which was expected from spectators. In addition to the threat of criminals, contemporaries were also concerned by the possibility of disruptive behaviour from the spontaneous crowds which frequently gathered to watch processions. Disruption occurred because people in the crowd wanted a better view of the procession and subsequent jostling caused noise and aggression. Whilst this demonstrated the preoccupation with display that concerned religious commentators such as Burder and Moir, it also compromised the mourners' plan for their ritual. The threat of disorderly or misbehaved crowds was an increasing concern through the long eighteenth century and this arguably demonstrates the growing popular importance of private funerals, typified by order and decency. As more individuals chose private funerals, the concerns about crowd propriety became more widespread and the methods for dealing with these became more apparent.

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<sup>403</sup> Litten, *The English Way*, pp. 192-4; Cunnington, *Costume for Births, Marriages & Death*, pp. 128-35.

<sup>404</sup> A contemporary London newspaper described theft of ornamental items as a 'mobbish and scandalous Practice, that hath hitherto too much prevail'd': *Evening Post*, 12 October 1725.

<sup>405</sup> Escutcheon theft at the funeral of Cornelius Stephens: 'Bristol, July 19', *Daily Journal*, 22 July 1729.

Funeral parties employed a variety of strategies to mitigate the threats posed by urban streets. Early proponents of private funerals had staged nocturnal obsequies.<sup>406</sup> This was not a viable option because the increasing number of private funerals made it less likely that a funeral could be staged in isolation at night. Equally, the privacy afforded by night-time was less attractive to people who wanted spectators. Evidence for the time of funerals indicates that daytime funerals were considered to be common, one account describes the morning as ‘the usual time for funerals’ in Gloucester.<sup>407</sup>

The hiring of guards afforded some security from disorderly crowds. This practice originated in the heraldic rite, as many of the undertakers’ products had; although expenditures illustrate that the guards were not provided with the traditional, ostentatious clothing.<sup>408</sup> Their purpose in the private funeral of the eighteenth century was unchanged and they accompanied the funeral during its procession through the streets. Nonetheless, guards were only used by a limited number of funeral parties because they were only viable for larger funerals and affluent mourners who could afford the extra cost. For example, the horseback guards at the funeral of Mrs Popham, which was more than the cost of a typical common funeral.<sup>409</sup> Riders were an intermittent presence in funerals which travelled long distances such as the journey of Mr. Warburton, whose expensive cortege travelled to Glastonbury in 1788. The funeral party included a large party of riders who accompanied them during the urban stages of the journey, providing protection from locals and adding to the spectacle of the procession.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Early nocturnal funerals are discussed in detail by: Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, pp. 194-205; J. Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570-1625* (Boydell Press Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 140-3.

<sup>407</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1806. Morning funerals at 10am were also noted for Dr. Rev. John Ryland in Bristol: *Bristol Mercury*, 6 June, 1825.

<sup>408</sup> Eight riders were not given any special attire at the ostentatious Somerset funeral of William Phelps, even though each was paid four pounds for the journey: SHC: DD\PH/180.

<sup>409</sup> *London Chronicle*, 27 September, 1791.

<sup>410</sup> "London, Tuesday Jan. 29." *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 31 January 1788. The travelling funeral procession of a Mrs. Popham was escorted by hired riders as it passed through Bath: *Bath Chronicle*, 17 August 1797.

Funerals of substantial scale involved the presence of constables, requested from the local Justice of the Peace. In 1820, the masonic funeral of Bristolian surgeon W.H. Goldwyer was protected by local constables, whose participation can be explained by the ‘one of the most impressive we have ever witnessed...nothing so superb of the kind, indeed, has occurred within the memory of man in this city.’<sup>411</sup> Although the use of guards is good evidence of an intention to stage a private funeral, it is important to acknowledge that their presence did not guarantee the ideal of a peaceful separation between mourners and spectators. Almost a century earlier, in 1729, the mounted guards employed for the funeral of Cornelius Stephens, failed to quell the disruptive behaviour and escutcheon theft.<sup>412</sup>

## ii. Enclosed Spaces in the Private Funeral: The Church and the House of Mourning

Funeral processions were still limited by practical demand of transporting the deceased from a household to the location of the funeral service or burial. During the eighteenth century it was customary for funeral processions to terminate at a church or religious meeting house at which the funeral service was held and respite could be found from the unpredictability of the street. These religious meeting places had a longstanding role in the English common funeral and this was transformed by the increasing importance of privacy, as we can observe in the West Country. Throughout the region, churches were frequently shaped by the specific intentions of mourners who used the space for privacy. For some funeral parties the church became a refuge from the threats posed by uninvited funeral spectators. The beleaguered funeral party of Cornellius Stephens closed the doors of St. James, Horsefair on a Bristolian crowd whose aggression had caused them to abandon their pallbearers outside.<sup>413</sup> The use of church space in this manner demonstrates the anxiety which contemporaries felt towards

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<sup>411</sup> ‘Masonic Funeral,’ *Bristol Mercury*, 20 March, 1820.

<sup>412</sup> ‘Bristol, July 19’, *Daily Journal*, 1729.

<sup>413</sup> *Daily Journal*, 1729.

disorderly crowds and illustrates how firmly some mourners believed that the church was a place of security. Locking disruptive mourners outside of the church was not always possible and there were instances in which the uninvited public were allowed into the church during a funeral. These uninvited mourners were a supplemental presence and their numbers depended on the size of the church and the amount of space which was not occupied by the invited mourners. There were overt attempts to segregate the different groups within the body of the church, to prevent the disruption that could be caused by uninvited people whose inquisitiveness or enthusiasm was perceived as a threat to decorum.

This was apparent in the tension between the invited and uninvited mourners at the funeral of W.H. Goldwyer in 1820. The funeral party's urgent desire for decorum from the anonymous public arguably reflected a wider belief that the space of the church should be an orderly 'theatre of mourning' contrived by the funeral party.<sup>414</sup> It was expected that the carefully choreographed funeral ritual should be complemented by the aesthetic transformation of the church space with a variety of decorative items. The hanging of black cloth was a fundamental part of this transformation which was widely adopted.<sup>415</sup> During this period churches possessed and hired mourning hangings and palls which were similar to earlier items such as the pall. Black was the predominant mourning colour and its use identified the church as a place of mourning and therefore indicated the tone of behaviour which would occur in the space.<sup>416</sup> Mourning decoration could also personalise the space of the church with emblems or insignia displayed on banners or hatchments. These were evidence of the greater individualism present in West Country funerals because the iconography was used to

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<sup>414</sup> This term was used to describe the contrived space in which mourning occurred in the context of earlier, Elizabethan funerals in: Woodward, *Theatre of Death*.

<sup>415</sup> Historiography references to the importance of black cloth: Litten, *English Way of Death*, pp. 127-8; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 438-43.

<sup>416</sup> Historiography acknowledges a variety of colours for mourning including purple, red and white. However black is identified as the dominant mourning colour: L. Taylor, *Mourning Dress: A costume and social history* (London: Routledge, 1983), pp. 248-62, esp. 252); Cunnington, *Mourning Dress*, pp. 145-6.



convey the personality and achievements of a wider socio-economic group. The popularisation of these items was a commercial development which depended on the undertaking trade. Prior to the establishment of the undertakers, mourning decorations such as the insignias and hangings were restricted to the heraldic funerals of the most affluent.<sup>417</sup> Until the undertaking trade the organisation of labour, cost of materials and the cost of some finished decorations had made it difficult to stage such a funeral. For example, the black baize, hung at the funeral of Elizabeth Lawford cost £4-18-5 and took several days to arrange; a less affluent executor could not afford such cost or time.<sup>418</sup> Expenditure, rather than rank determined the degree of church decoration and greater affluence manifested in ornamental items such as sconces and candlesticks. These items mirrored the levels of ostentation present in the funeral procession but an example from Wiltshire, around 1763, indicates that separate items were used for funeral procession and church. Mrs. Brown had a nocturnal funeral which used torches as a practical source of illumination and candles as ornaments to accompany the coffin inside the church at Calne.<sup>419</sup> The church ornaments served a similar purpose to ornaments within the procession; demonstrating socially significant qualities such as affluence and taste which were also illustrated by the processional items. The imposition of personal taste on the space of the church required the complicity of the clergy and the widespread use of decorations illustrates that the clergy were predominantly willing to permit the use of items. There were exceptions and an account from 1820 noted that litigation between undertakers and clergy was increasing throughout the country. A contemporary judge explained that ‘no individual had a right to hang up what are ornaments in a church, without leave of the rector, because the freehold of the church was in

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<sup>417</sup> Howarth, ‘Professionalising the Funeral Industry’, p. 53; Fritz, ‘Undertaking Trade’, pp. 246-7.

<sup>418</sup> BRO: AC/JS/50/13/I, ‘Receipt from William Whitaker for the funeral of Mrs. Lawford’, 1727.

<sup>419</sup> WSHC: 546/275, ‘Funeral bill for Mrs Brown’. c1763.

him, and he might make his own terms for that leave.<sup>420</sup> Clerical disapproval was focused on the outsiders' authority over their space, rather than an opposition to decorative items.

At the culmination of funeral ceremony, the gathering at the bereaved household was the most overt example of the how privacy and intimacy were key to a respectable funeral.

Whilst the mourners' use of space on the streets and in churches depended on the complicity of others, the bereaved household was a comparatively more predictable environment. The household was a space that could be isolated from the outside world and segregated internally to reflect the different strata of guests' relationship to the deceased. This was a stark contrast to traditional post-funeral gatherings which commonly assembled in the parish churchyard.<sup>421</sup>

The open space of the parish churchyard had been suitable to accommodate a large group of mourners, drawn from various levels of society, rather than the intimate gatherings staged in mourning households.

The bereaved household could be easily decorated to indicate that the inhabitants were in a state of mourning. The muffling of a door knocker was an established sign that a death had occurred in household, which only required a piece of fabric. In the early 1700s, the fictional undertaker Mr. Sable was drawn to houses by the muffled door knocker and his verse counterpart, Strip-Corps preyed upon a household where 'as a token of sickness, the knocker was bound, with a glove or a stocking to lessen the sound.'<sup>422</sup>

The hiring of mutes provided an alternative solution for indicating that a household was in mourning and the funeral was underway. The mutes were stationed on the doorstep of a house to indicate the mournful status of the family within but the presence was also an

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<sup>420</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 23 November, 1820.

<sup>421</sup> Churchyard gatherings are discussed in: Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, pp. 156-7; F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 373.

<sup>422</sup> R. Steele, *The Funeral, or Grief a la Mode* (London, 1701); Anon, *Funeral Discipline*, p. 5.

indication of the family's status. The mutes were an added expense for mourners, for example, two mutes cost the executors of Jane Edwards a considerable fourteen pounds.<sup>423</sup> The mutes were defined by their solemnity and this quality was questioned by critics who argued that their behaviour represented, 'a solemn mockery of woe.'<sup>424</sup> William Roberts imagined a scene in which, away from gaze of the mourners, 'the mutes fell to singing with the greatest possible joviality.'<sup>425</sup> Roberts' depiction was humorous because it juxtaposed the familiar motif of the mute, solemnity personified, with ribald and joyful behaviour. The mutes were attired by the undertaker but it was possible for the bereaved family to provide them with token items that would add individuality to their appearance. At the Gloucestershire funeral of John Mabbett, the mutes were each provided with a silk hatband.<sup>426</sup> Jane Edwards' two mutes were both provided with a suite of mourning by executors, which was a bold demonstration of her affluence, despite her declaration that she did not want pomp.<sup>427</sup>

Isolated from the street, the mourning household, the decoration of this space was intended to direct the mournful tone of the occasion. The preparations for the funeral William Hearst the elder, involved the hanging of the rooms of his house with mourning cloth.<sup>428</sup> The decoration of a household in Bristol involved 295 yards of 'hanging bayes' which was augmented by 'fine black cloth,' in smaller quantity, intended for more prominent areas that would be seen by many guests.<sup>429</sup> Candles were included to illuminate the deliberately darkened household with fifty-nine sconces to hold them and eight silver candlesticks.

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<sup>423</sup> GRO: D2002/14/3.

<sup>424</sup> 'To The Printer', *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 23 August 1788.

<sup>425</sup> W. Roberts, *The Looker-on, a periodical paper, by the Rev. Simon Olive-Branch A.M.* Vol. 3. (London, 1795), p. 99.

<sup>426</sup> GRO: D9125/1/13208.

<sup>427</sup> GRO: D2002/14/3.

<sup>428</sup> WSHC: 727/2/16, 'Funeral Expenses for William Hearst the Elder of the Close, Salisbury. Interred in the Cathedral Burial Ground', 1703.

<sup>429</sup> BRO: AC/JS/50/13/i.

Although it was not stated in the bills for this funeral, it is plausible that the eight silver candlesticks were positioned around the coffin in the laying-in room. The display was assembled by members of the undertaker's party and a team of porters.

As part of the private funeral, the consumption of food and drink was an exclusive gesture which depended on the wealth and taste of the deceased. The distribution of funeral food and drink was no longer considered to be a public, charitable activity or an act of communal solidarity. The sharing of food in the privacy of the bereaved home reinforced bonds with guests who had close social and familial ties to the deceased. We can observe this in 1799 when the physician, Claver Morris invited the bearers from his niece's funeral to return to his house after the funeral 'as is usual.'<sup>430</sup> The bearers were ideal candidates to attend the household because they were close friends of the family but it is notable that Morris 'invited' them, indicating that there was no expectation that they would attend.

The undertaking trade performed an important role in organising the funerary food as part of the many different services they took control over. In 1760, the undertaker John Matthews oversaw the organisation of a funeral meal for the invited mourners of Bristolian sea captain, John Clayton. The meal provided was simple and involved bread, cheese, butter and five gallons of ale.<sup>431</sup> These provisions were billed alongside payments for laying out, indicating that they were consumed as part of a 'wake' before the funeral. The food provided for the funeral of William Green was more considerable, bread and beer were purchased for three shillings and accompanied by sixteen shillings of meat.<sup>432</sup> The funerary guests were also provided with liquor and wine, which was considerably more expensive than beer. Hospitality to guests demonstrated that the family was affluent and ensured that they would

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<sup>430</sup> Hobhouse, *West Country Physician*, p. 77.

<sup>431</sup> BRO: SMV/9/3/3/1/38, 'Bill for the Funeral of John Clayton', 1760.

<sup>432</sup> BRO: 2293/144/1/8, 'Account for the Funeral of William Green', 9 Nov 1781.

be positively regarded by their peers. We can observe this in the example of ‘a very handsome entertainment of cold meats’ enjoyed by Claver Morris at the funeral of Mrs. Malet; a reminder that funerary food could impress and satisfy guests, even if the occasion was intended to be sombre.<sup>433</sup> Similar praise was offered by William Holland who was grateful for ‘an abundance of good wine’ at the funeral of a local farmer.<sup>434</sup> The distribution of alcohol was part of respectable funerary hospitality; for example at the burial of Nancy Dawe, a tradesman assisted with serving wine to the invited guests.<sup>435</sup> Jane Edwards’ mourners were supplied with nine pounds worth of wine despite the insistence that the funeral was to be from pomp or excess.<sup>436</sup> The presence of sweet foods illustrates how the funerary hospitality was a demonstration of personal affluence and taste, providing mourners with food that was not simply for sustenance. At the funeral of Edward Clarke, the executors spent nine pounds on ‘funeral cakes.’<sup>437</sup> The composition of these cakes is indicated by bills for sugar, fruit and spices suggesting a sweet cake that would parallel contemporary descriptions of a plum pudding. This was a food for mourners to enjoy and a reminder that the family could afford such commodities.

The charitable distribution of food was still possible, but this did not occur during the private funeral, instead it was performed away from the funeral. The will of Francis Mitchell provides an example of how philanthropic gestures could be performed in a rural community without compromising the privacy and intimacy of the funeral. Mitchell’s funeral was a private occasion and his executors distributed the charitable gifts of bread directly to the neighbouring villages of Bulkington and Seend.<sup>438</sup> Mitchell’s instruction to distribute bread

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<sup>433</sup> Hobhouse, *West Country Physician*, pp. 87-8.

<sup>434</sup> Holland, *Pig Killers and Paupers*, p. 198.

<sup>435</sup> Hobhouse, *West Country Physician*, p. 77.

<sup>436</sup> BRO: D2002/14/3.

<sup>437</sup> SHC: DD/SF/6/2/8.

<sup>438</sup> WSHC: P1/11REG/285, ‘Will of Francis Mitchell’, 1756.

‘to and amongst such persons of each place as my executors herein aforementioned shall see in need’ indicates scepticism towards the deservingness of the poor recipients.<sup>439</sup>

## Invitation to Funerals

The private funeral was an intimate and discrete event because guests were personally invited by the bereaved family. The practice of invitation was a contrast to traditional methods of announcing a funeral such as bell ringing and declarations in churches, which show that the date and time of a funeral were intended to be public knowledge. It is equally significant that attendance at a funeral traditionally followed the visitation of a dying person and as this custom declined, people became less aware of deaths in their neighbourhood.

Invitation cards were the primary method for informing mourners of the time and location of a funeral. Invitation cards had been distributed in London since the 1680s and their early development appears to have been related to the growing undertaking trade in the metropolis.<sup>440</sup> This is understandable because the invitation card was one of the contemporary products which made the organisation of funeral easier for the executors. The card was a convenient item because it spared the executor from the necessity of producing hand-written letters of invitation for all the expected guests. The design of the card also made it convenient because the message of invitation was almost entirely printed, except for a few spaces for specific information such as names and locations. It is evident that these cards were an opportunity for early undertakers to advertise themselves to potential customers, albeit with discrete methods. In William Davies’ play *Better Late Than Never*, the waiting woman

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<sup>439</sup> WSHC: P1/11REG/285.

<sup>440</sup> Invitations as studied in existing literature: Llewellyn, *Art of Death*, pp. 73-79; Houlbrooke, ‘The Age of Decency’, pp.191-2, p.207; Litten, *English Way of Death*, p. 76, p. 79, p. 130-1.

Cadgut complains that the desperate undertakers of Bath have been ‘perpetually teasing me with cards of invitation.’<sup>441</sup>

The design of West Country funeral cards indicates that local printers did not directly copy the metropolis but were influenced by metropolitan fashions. This can be observed in an invitation to the 1749 funeral of Jane Blackwell, at Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, which is decorated with imagery that is comparable to metropolitan examples.<sup>442</sup> The depiction of time as an old man, reflects a trend towards the softening of mortuary imagery which is evident in metropolitan cards of the period. The memento mori motifs of skeletons became rarer as engravers favoured abstract imagery inspired by classicism, such as vases and putti. These were less macabre and were often combined with depictions of the act of mourning, which reflected the increasing importance of death as a personal, private loss. The Blackwell invitation reflects this period of transition which occurred in both the metropolis and the West Country during the mid-eighteenth century, because the engraver accompanied his depiction of time with traditional details such as the skeletal death and a didactic verse.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> William Davies, 'Better Late Than Never', in *Plays Written for a Private Theatre. By William Davies* (London: 1786), p. 260.

<sup>442</sup> GRO: D1842/H3/4, 'Invitation to funeral of Mrs. Blackwell of Chalford', 1749.

<sup>443</sup> The rise of classicism and mourning is discussed by: J. Rugg, 'From Reason to Regulation, 1760-1850', in P. Jupp and C. Gittings (eds.) *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (Manchester Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 202-7.

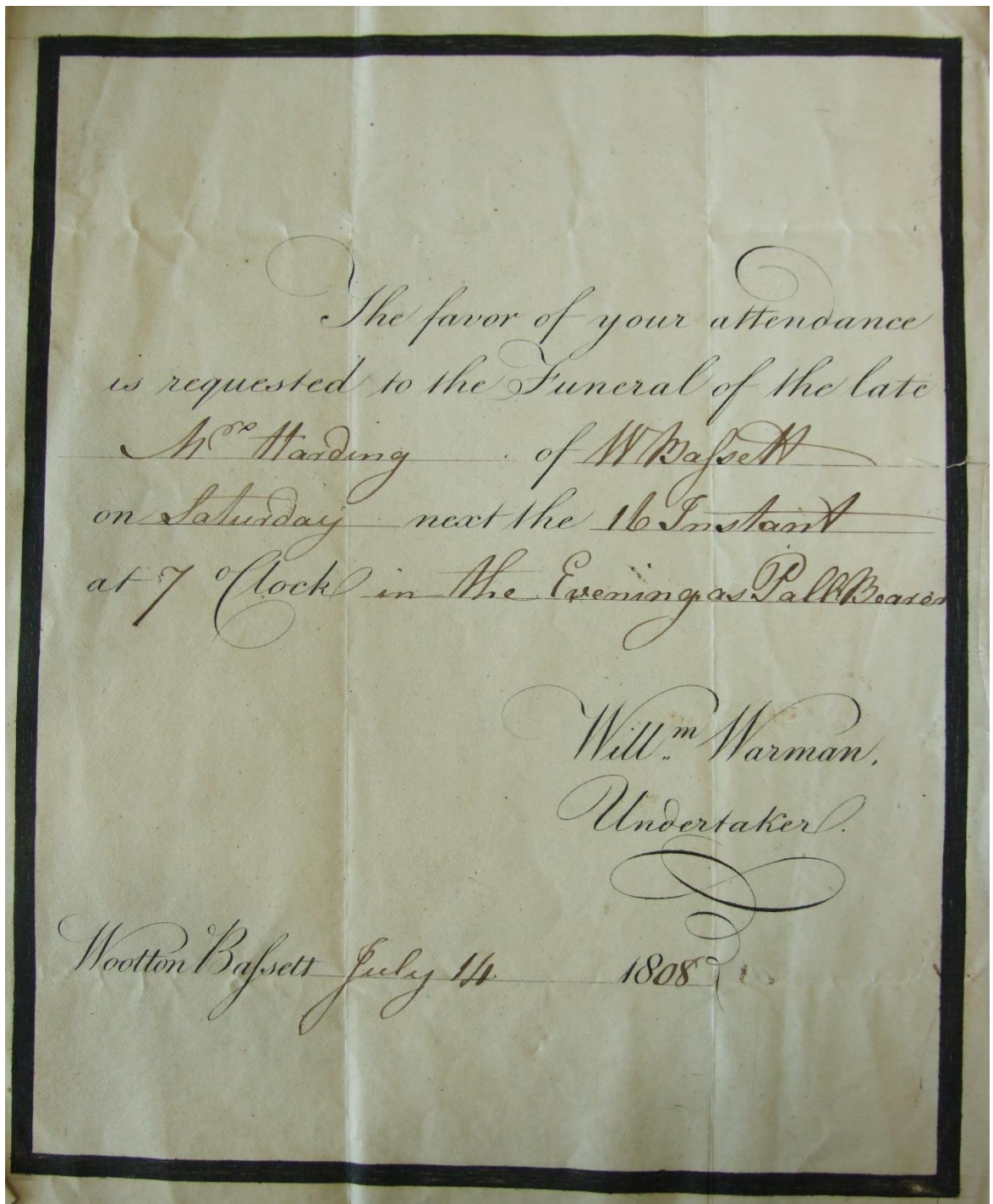


Figure 10. WSHC: 1235/94, 'Invitation to Attend Funeral as a Pall Bearer', 1808.

William Warman, undertaker at Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire provided a plainer invitation card for his customers in the early 1800s. The card had a thick black border but there was no printed design or visual motifs. Despite the differences it followed the contemporary custom for a pre-prepared form with blank spaces for event-specific information. Warman's



invitation was handwritten in advance in a neat, secretary hand and each blank space was marked by a fine line. The example in this thesis was used to invite Mr. Wooley to attend the funeral of Mr. Harding and the empty fields were filled with names, date and time of the funeral and the notice that Wooley was to be a pallbearer.<sup>444</sup> The simplicity of Warman's card should not be interpreted as evidence of provincial simplicity; by the early nineteenth century the omission of death it was fashionable, the skeletal imagery of the previous example had declined in popularity.

The invitation of guests was intended to ensure that a private funeral was attended by a specific and appropriate group of people who had been associated with the deceased in life. This group commonly comprised family and friends of the deceased, as well as representatives of affiliations and philanthropic grants. It was fundamentally important to the organisation of private funeral that such people were present, as we can observe in John Choules' concerns regarding absences from the funeral of William Hawkes-Merriman.<sup>445</sup> The chapter analyses these guests as evidence for privacy by examining how their presence was part of the positive life-review of the deceased that was expected at a private funeral. We commence by considering the identities of funeral guests because the invitation

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<sup>444</sup> WSHC: 1235/94, 'Invitation to attend as a pallbearer', 1808.

<sup>445</sup> BRO: 38169/W/Me/2.



Figure 11. GRO: D1842/H3/4, 'Invitation to funeral of Mrs. Blackwell of Chalford, 1749', 1749.

of closely related people secured posthumous reputation in two clear ways. Primarily, the act of inviting a person to a funeral acknowledged the relationship which they had shared during life and avoided any resentment which could occur if they were uninvited. Secondly, the funeral was an opportunity for a social gathering, at which people would expect to see others in their familial or friendship groups. Having considered the identities of the guests we focus specifically on the roles which some of them served in the funeral. These responsibilities placed an individual in a position of prominence which was important because claims of status or personal quality were made by the choice of who was prominent in the funeral.

The presence of friends and kin in the funeral party was a distinguishing feature of a private funeral which differed from the broader socio-economic composition of earlier funerals. The participation of both groups demonstrated that the deceased was a figure of significance within the private sphere of friendships and family relationships. John Choules' concerns about the Hawkes-Merriman funeral were founded on the belief that the attendance of his closest peers would not be possible. Absence were dangerous because the lack of relatives indicated that the deceased was not sufficiently important or lacked the network of friends.<sup>446</sup>

By contrast, the presence of one's peers, particularly those of high status, transformed the funeral into an exemplar occasion. In 1810, the Bath funeral of Italian castrato, musical director and singing teacher, Venanzio Rauzzini, was such an occasion and was specifically described as the most well attended funeral since that of local notable, Beau Nash.<sup>447</sup> The celebrated attendance included many high status individuals who had been pupils or friends of Rauzzini and whose participation was described as 'unequivocal tokens of regard' for the

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<sup>446</sup> On the importance of friendships and relationships: D. Cressy, 'Kinship and kin interaction in early modern England,' *Past and Present* 113 (1986), pp. 38-69; N. Tadmor, *Family and friends in eighteenth century England: household, kinship and patronage* (Cambridge, 2001); Thomas, *The Ends of Life*, pp. 207-13.

<sup>447</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 19 April, 1810. On Rauzzini's life in Bath: K. James, 'Venanzio Rauzzini and the Search for Musical Perfection', pp. 90-113.

deceased.<sup>448</sup> It is clear that the guests' relationships were more significant to the success of the funeral than their celebrity because they illustrated the funeral's narrative of Rauzzini's life and career. These relationships were formed, as one newspaper described, 'in private life' and were evidence Rauzzini's sociability and intellect, both of which were positive, polite qualities.<sup>449</sup>

The funeral of Venanzio Rauzzini demonstrated that the celebration of the deceased's life became more important to the success of a funeral than any acts performed on their behalf during the occasion. Eliminating the presence of the indiscriminate poor, whether by excluding them entirely or restricting their attendance, was a method of ensuring reputation by guaranteeing that there would be no sources of unwanted or unexpected behaviour. Nonetheless, a person could publicly demonstrate their philanthropy by including local benefactors in their funeral procession. This practice was more common in urban funerals because the distance between the mourning household and the church permitted a public procession before the service. The benefactors who participated were typically inmates of institutions funded by the deceased person such as almshouses, hospitals or schools. These were represented in the funeral procession of Bristolian merchant Edward Colston which featured participants from two hospitals and two almshouses in the city.<sup>450</sup> These people differed from the indiscriminate local poor because they had been specifically invited and were present as participants rather than guests, which meant that their attendance was defined and limited.

It was common for some guests to be invited to participate in the ritual activities of the funeral, either in the procession or at the bereaved household. This is further evidence for the

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<sup>448</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 19 April, 1810.

<sup>449</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 19 April, 1810.

<sup>450</sup> BRO: SMV/8/1/3/2, 'Edward Colston's Funeral Directions', 1712.

staging of private funerals because it gave prominence to people whose presence was beneficial to posthumous claims of status or personal quality. It demonstrated that the chosen person was important to the deceased and this message would have been understood by the funeral guests, whose long-term opinion mattered. Equally important is the positive impression which must have resulted from being invited to participate in funeral rites, this would have nurtured a positive impression of the deceased. Evidence from the West Country indicates that there were three roles which guests commonly performed: coffin bearers, ornament bearers and processional mourners.

The role of 'bearer' was arguably the most important duty that a funeral guest could perform because the coffin was at the centre of the funeral ceremony. Proximity to the coffin symbolised the bearer's closeness to the deceased person, either as a family member or a friend. The persisting importance of the coffin explains the continuing importance of the role throughout the eighteenth century.

Similarly, the role of bearer could demonstrate the importance of philanthropy in the life of the deceased person. Various philanthropic activities were recognised in West Country funerals throughout the eighteenth century and these instances illustrate how contemporaries' use of beneficiaries made a bold statement because of the significance of bearing the coffin. The 'six poore barers' at the funeral of Redlands widow, Jane Edwards, were the central feature of a ceremony which eschewed the popular pomp and decoration of the period.<sup>451</sup> These paupers differed from traditional poor mourners because they were not anonymous members of the community and Edwards had named each them in her funerary instructions. Some beneficiaries would have been more familiar to the funeral guests such as the itinerant preachers who were invited to carry the coffin of J. Batten of Hanham.<sup>452</sup> These men

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<sup>451</sup> GRO: D2002/14/3 'Funeral Directions of Jane Edwards' 1752-1770.

<sup>452</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1821.

frequented the local chapel and their presence recalled Batten's important role in the foundation and maintenance of institution.

Beneficiaries contributed to the visual spectacle of the funeral procession, swelling the size of the mourning party and complementing the spectacle of the close relatives with their special uniforms. In the early 1700s, the affluent merchant, Edward Colston personally dictated the number of representatives that would attend from each of his sponsored institutions and stipulated when they would join and leave the funeral mourners. The beneficiaries were solely intended to be part of the visual spectacle of the funeral procession but Colston did not believe that such display could be considered pomp. Earlier in his instructions he had stated that he 'would not have the least pomp used' in his funerary procession, asserting that the benefactors had a sincere and meaningful role to perform.<sup>453</sup> This belief reoccurs throughout the eighteenth century in West Country funeral instructions which denounced pomp but requested the presence of mourners. In a directive written several decades after Colston's, the Redlands widow, Jane Edwards specifically refused items such as escutcheons and a pall but instructed that she wanted to pay and clothe 'six poore barers.'<sup>454</sup> It is unclear why Colston or Edwards regarded benefactors as different from the funerary display which they denounced as pomp, although evidence suggests that contemporaries shared this belief. An account of Colston's funeral described the benefactors as 'a splendid assembly' and over a century later, the pupils of Stokes Croft Academy who attended the funeral of Rev. John Ryland, were similarly described as 'highly impressive.'<sup>455</sup> The mourners' behaviour was described favourably because it was believed that their actions were evidence of a bond of respect between benefactor and philanthropist. The *Bristol Mercury* observed of the mourners, that

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<sup>453</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1821.

<sup>454</sup> GRO: D2002/14/3.

<sup>455</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 6 June, 1825.

‘every one present seemed to consider that he had lost a friend’<sup>456</sup> The explanation that the benefactors saw the Rev. Ryland as a ‘friend’ is important because it reassured readers that the benefactors attended for sincere reasons, rather than duty or a sense of intrigue. The suggestion of sincere sentiment therefore justified the benefactors’ presence because it equated their motives to those of Ryland’s peers or colleagues.

### Funeral Gifts

The practice of gifting affirmed the relationships between the deceased and the funeral guests and it consequently was a valuable indicator of these bonds. Benefactors such as the students of Stokes Croft Academy were not the same as kin and their difference was to be communicated by their physical appearance. Mourners from institutions such as the Academy were commonly uniformed, either by the institution which they came from or by the mourners. These uniforms also ensured that benefactors appeared orderly and decorous, thereby contributing to the spectacle of the procession in which they would walk. We know that this was important to mourners because mourning outfits were commonly provided to benefactors who were not from an institution. Jane Edwards rejected the fashionable apparel of contemporary funerals but still paid for each of her poor coffin bearers to receive ‘gray cloth coats waistcoats and britches, shose, stockings and gloves & hats.’<sup>457</sup> This ensured that Edwards’ funeral would be respectable because the bearers were prominently positioned in the funeral and would have endangered the decorum if they had been untidy. The grey chosen by Edwards was an appropriate mourning colour although it was common for benefactors to be dressed in the same black as the other mourners in the funeral party.

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<sup>456</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 6 June, 1825.

<sup>457</sup> GRO: D2002/14/3.

These mourning outfits demonstrate how undertakers' products were important elements of a private funeral because they reminded the spectators of the benefactor's relationship to the deceased. This was important because it was expected that the private funeral would be seen and evaluated as it travelled through public space. The outfits distinguished the mourners from the public and created a clear division between those who were participating in the funeral and those who were not. Contemporaries acknowledged the separateness of uniformly attired mourners when they described mourning parties as a 'black train' or 'train of sable-wearers' processing through busy streets.<sup>458</sup> In funerals such as these the organisation and attire of the mourners emphasised that it was a private occasion because the guests were visually different from bystanders.

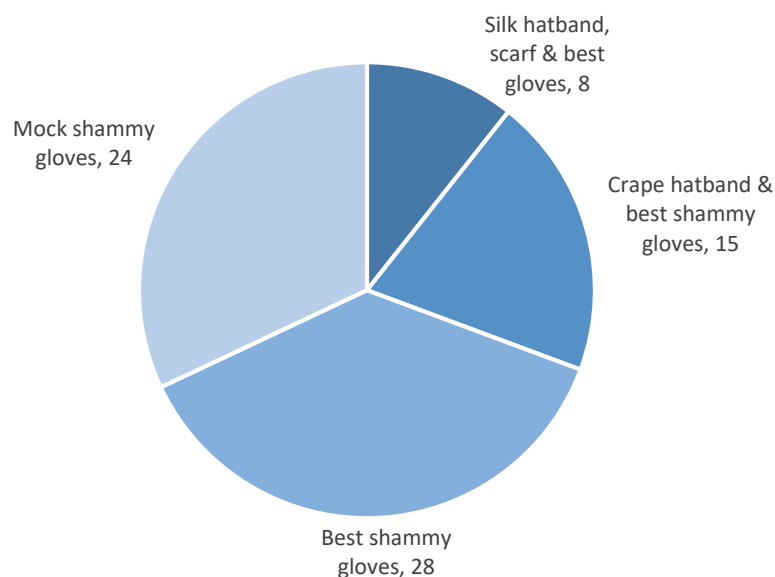
An ideal private funeral was attended by people who had been significant in the life of the deceased person. In such funerals, the social hierarchy which had existed in life was honoured through the quality and quantity of gifts distributed to invited guests. The clothing worn by mourners was an important means of visually communicating social status to both the guests and the bystanders. More elaborate and expensive mourning was provided to those who had been closest to the deceased during their life, such as the immediate family and friends.

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<sup>458</sup> G.A. Stevens, *Songs, comic and satirical*. By George Alexander Stevens (Oxford, 1772), p. 217.



### Distribution of Gifts at the funeral of Robert Curtis, 1740



*Figure 12 Distribution of gifts at the funeral of Robert Curtis, Bristol, 1740. BRO: AC/JS/58/11/a-b, 'Account of William Tilly with Mrs. Abigail Curtis, for the funeral expenses of Robert Curtis'*

The 1740 funeral of Bristolian wine merchant Robert Curtis is a good example because four different grades of mourning wear were distributed amongst the guests.<sup>459</sup> The most elaborate grade of mourning wear was distributed to a small group of eight individuals including his executors and friends. This group was exclusively male and for this reason it is probable that these were the bearers of his coffin, performing an important role in the funeral and occupying a prominent visual position. The silk hatband, scarf and gloves which these eight mourners received were consequently a form of decoration as well as a memento of a loved one.

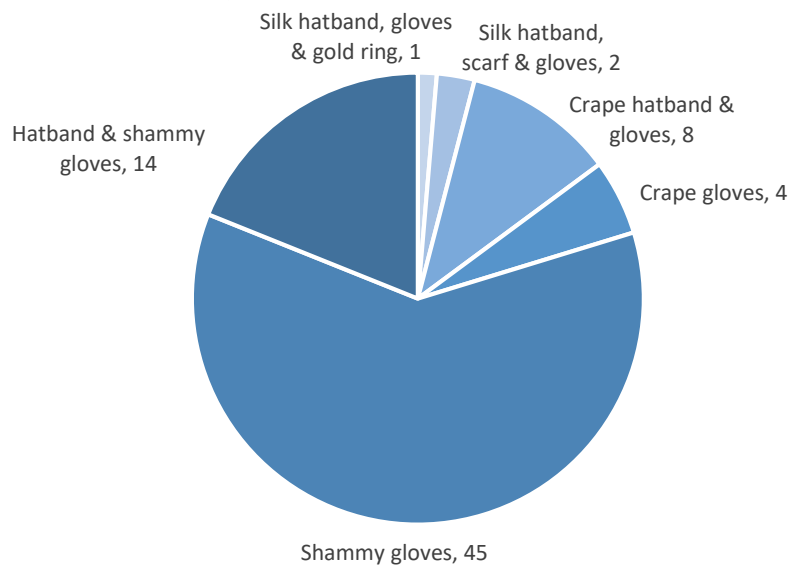
Each successive grade of mourning was of lesser quality and was distributed to an incrementally larger group of people. The largest group of recipients had twenty-eight

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<sup>459</sup> BRO: AC/JS/58/11/a-b, Account of William Tilly with Mrs. Abigail Curtis, for the funeral expenses of Robert Curtis.

members who each received a single pair of mock chamois gloves. This was a diverse group which included a few distant members of the Curtis family as well as a tenant and his wife, and the household of staff of several guests. The gloves which these mourners received arguably reflected their lack of prominence in the visual spectacle of the funeral, because they would have participated at the rear of the funeral procession.

**Distribution of gifts at funeral of Elizabeth Nicklus, 1731**



*Figure 13 Pie chart of gifts distributed at the funeral of Elizabeth Nicklus, of Bristol, 1731.*

BRO: Ac/Wo/9/77/a-B ‘Memoranda Concerning Bearers and Mourners at the Funerals of Elizabeth Nicklus and Matthew Nicklus’, 1731.

The 1731 funeral of Bristolian widow Elizabeth Nicklus further demonstrates how the varying levels of relationship in the funeral were displayed through the gifts which mourners received.<sup>460</sup> Nicklus was the widow of a successful sea captain and her wealth probably afforded greater expenditure and therefore a larger selection of gift items than Curtis, the most expensive of which was a gold ring. This was not a particularly important part of the

<sup>460</sup> BRO: AC/Wo/9/77/a-B, ‘Memoranda Concerning Bearers and Mourners at the Funerals of Elizabeth Nicklus and Matthew Nicklus’, 1731.

funeral procession, but it recognised Nicklus' close personal relationship with the trusted acquaintance and executor, Henry Woolnough. The ring personally distinguished Woolnough from the other prominent guests whose importance in the funeral was identified by the hatband which they received in addition to their gloves. The distribution of hatbands to these mourners and two other groups reflects their visibility in the procession. Similar to the funeral of Robert Curtis, the largest group of recipients received modestly priced shammy gloves. This was a diverse group, largely comprised of the wives and family members of prominent guests and including some children of guests; it can be argued that these people were most socially distant from the deceased. The larger amounts of goods distributed at the Curtis and Nicklus funerals contrast with those distributed at the later funeral of John Mabbett, from Stinchcombe, Gloucestershire in 1792. Mabbett's executors distributed gifts to small number of mourners who were all in positions of significance in the funeral, either as officials, bearers or underbearers.<sup>461</sup> Within this smaller group of recipients there was an attempt to stratify the gifts by quality because the less visible underbearers were only provided with scarf. Two people were recipients of crape hatbands, although their identities were not listed in the instructions provided by Mabbett's executors.

The undertaker's men at the funeral of Elizabeth Nicklus were only provided with affordable shammy gloves because they would have been equipped with their own scarves and hatbands.<sup>462</sup> It is arguable that this depended the on executor however, because at the Mabbett funeral a satin hatband and scarf were distributed a group which included the undertaker and church officials.<sup>463</sup>

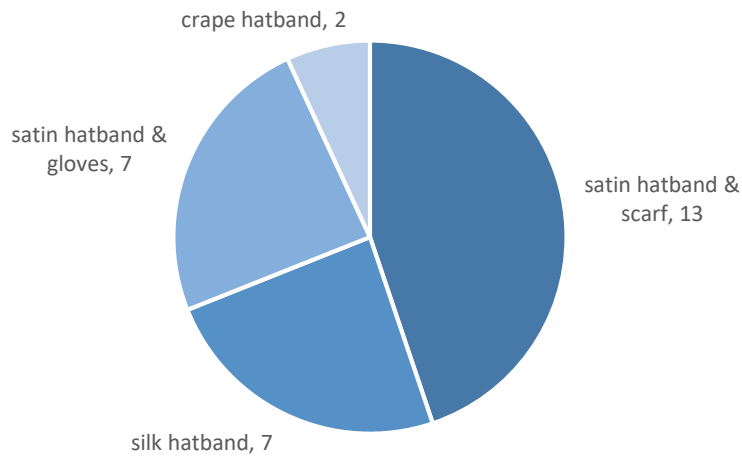
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<sup>461</sup> GRO: D9125/1/13208, 'List of mourners to receive goods at the funeral of John Mabbett', 1792.

<sup>462</sup> BRO: AC/WO/9/77/A-B.

<sup>463</sup> GRO: D9125/1/13208.

**Distribution of gifts at the funeral of John Mabbett, 1792**



*Figure 14. Pie chart of gifts distributed at the funeral of John Mabbett of Stinchcombe, Glos., 1792. GRO: D9125/1/13208, 'List of mourners to receive goods at the funeral of John Mabbett', 1792.*

The presentation of mourning gifts to household staff reflects the aesthetic importance for the uniformity of those who were to be seen in the funeral party. The mourning provided for one's own household staff could be more extravagant, with West Country individuals' expenditures of several pounds.<sup>464</sup> The provision of such elaborate mourning wear arguably served two important purposes. Aiding the posthumous reputation of the deceased as a caring and generous individual, or conveying the same message about their surviving heirs. The wearing of such elaborate mourning superficially suggested that the staff shared some of emotional anguish of the relatives and friends who had been close to the deceased. Such behaviour would have been attractive in the culture of affective mourning which would dominate the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, it is difficult to gauge whether the affection of household staff was authentic, however we can observe that it was important for staff to be

<sup>464</sup> WSHC: P1/11REG/358, 'Will of John Powell'. Powell paid two pounds for mourning. WSHC: 132/35 'Will of John Langley', 1799. Langley paid his maid five pounds.

seen in full mourning. The money left to pay for mourning could cover a significant period of time, such as the five pounds paid by Devizes resident John Powell, to enable his maids to remain in mourning wear for two months.<sup>465</sup> Powell ensured the complicity of his staff by dictating that they were to be paid after the period had been completed.

The distribution of mourning wear transformed the mourners into an aesthetically uniform spectacle because the size of funeral party and the identity of the mourners were known prior to the occasion. For this reason, funeral instructions from the eighteenth century were frequently accompanied by lists of the funeral guests and information about what mourning wear they were entitled to receive.<sup>466</sup> These documents ensured that all mourners would be appropriately provided for, whether they were to receive full mourning or a single, token item such as a hatband or pair of gloves.<sup>467</sup> This was possible because the executors had personally invited their funeral guests beforehand and therefore knew exactly which individuals would attend. This behaviour indicates that such a funeral was intended to be a private occasion, which would be attended by people who were particularly relevant to the deceased.

## Conclusion

This chapter has identified the importance of privacy in respectable, urban West Country funerals. Executors wanted to perform a funeral which celebrated the individual with an appropriately decorated ritual, attended by an intimate group of friends and relatives.

Evidence for the importance such privacy can be observed in three reoccurring aspects of the urban funeral: the location of funerary activities, the identities of mourners and the gifts

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<sup>465</sup> WSHC: P1/11REG/358.

<sup>466</sup> It was common for names of mourners to be grouped into specific divisions of families: D2455/F5/7/8, 'Bill for Gloves at Hunt Wither's Funeral' *Hicks Beach family of Coln St Aldwyn and Great Witcombe, Netheravon, Fittleton and Keevil and Oakley*', 1718.

<sup>467</sup> For existing literature on the distribution of gloves: S.C. Bullock and S. McIntyre, 'The Handsome Tokens of a Funeral: Glove-Giving and the Large Funeral in Eighteenth-Century New England' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 69:2 (2012), pp. 305-346.

which mourners received. The funeral parties' use of urban space demonstrates the importance of achieving separation from the members of the public, who were not invited and were present to spectate. Spectatorship was welcomed by funeral parties who saw this interest as evidence of esteem or appreciation. On the urban streets, the desire for separation was motivated by the threat of enthusiastic or criminal spectators whose actions could spoil or disrupt the funeral. These threats were mitigated by countermeasures but the use of these methods was tempered by the desire to produce a good display and the desire to avoid expense. Privacy was most clearly achieved within the enclosed spaces of the urban environment, where unpredictable spectators could be kept out by closed doors and the intimate gathering between peers could be carefully managed. The church and mourning household could be transformed into places of mourning.

The composition of funeral parties demonstrates the importance of a private gathering of people who were specifically selected for their relationship to the deceased. The family and friends of the deceased were the primary participants in the funeral and their attendance was secured through the act of invitation. This practice was made possible by the. The funerary invitation was a development of the period, which was enabled by improvements in printing and disseminated by the undertaking trade. The eighteenth century funerary invitations followed uniform designs and mass printed which made them a less expensive and more convenient solution to inviting guests than hand-written correspondence.

The funeral guests' relationship to the deceased was commonly recognised by the distribution of gifts and hospitality. The act of gift giving was intended was more restricted than in preceding centuries and the gifts were intended to recognise specific relationships. It was common for the quality and quantity of gifts to reflect the significance of the recipient's relationship to the deceased. Clothing gifts were predominant such as gloves, hatbands and

scarves; these items had an immediate purpose in the funeral, where they could be openly worn as a reflection of the social ties. Clothing gifts were provided to the less-affluent guests whose presence testified to the deceased person's charity and philanthropy. For these poorer guests, the outfits represented a lasting memento of the deceased and importantly ensured that the mourners' appear would be neat and uniform during their role in the funeral ritual. All of the gifts of the private funeral were made more accessible by the development of an undertaking trade. Gift items were widely produced and sold by undertakers, ensuring that middling mourners could easily equip a funeral with items which would previously have been limited to the most affluent in society.

## The Elite Funeral

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the funerary customs of the social elite who were brought from London to be buried in the West Country in the eighteenth century. This expands upon the earlier discussion of undertakers and ‘private’ funerals by identifying how people at the top of the social pyramid used funerary practices to make a social statement about their personal role and status. The chapter examines the transportation of the dead person and the funeral ritual as one, highly-organised display that celebrated the individual. This is an original approach which does not follow the existing historiographical emphasis on the funeral, but recognises that all elements of the journey from London to the grave were the result of specific choices and consumable products.

The chapter follows the stages of the funerary journey chronologically and commences by examining the transportation of the body. The journey from London will be presented as an opportunity for an expressive display that symbolised the status of the dead person. The privacy of the funerary journey is identified in the deliberate use of stops and selective manner in which funerary display was deployed to appeal to specific audiences on the journey. The funeral ritual is interpreted as a highly personalised ceremony which focused on the dead person’s relationships with the provincial community in which they were being buried. The chapter identifies the different groups that participated in the funeral as evidence of ceremonial celebration of the dead person’s different roles: landlord, employer and military leader. Through the participation of each group, the quality of the dead person was shown to be a person of quality.

### Historiography

#### i. The Elite



This chapter examines the funerals of an elite formed of nobility and gentry who were resident in the West Country. The nobility are defined by their hereditary titles which were conferred by birth. This was not an entirely closed group however, because aristocrats had family members in the gentry and it was possible for members of the gentry to marry into noble families.<sup>468</sup> Harold Perkin argued for the existence of an ‘open aristocracy’ of peers and gentry into which people could ascend to status from the middling ranks and unfortunate elites could fall.<sup>469</sup> The existence of an open elite was criticised by Lawrence and Jean Fawtier Stone who focused on the highest level of the landed elite and excluded the gentry.<sup>470</sup> Mingay and John Cannon similarly caution against the homologation of the elite, arguing that there was a significant distance between the conditions of the gentry and the peerage; it is also argued that the gentry did rise but it was not commonplace.<sup>471</sup> The gentry are defined in historiography as those who did not earn money through work and had the time to engage in leisurely pursuits. The landed gentry are distinguished by their country estates which they rented to tenants and their armigerous status. The new members of the gentry were primarily middling people who had left their trades to live and engage in leisurely lifestyles and agriculture. Toward the end of the period studied by this thesis, there were many affluent, retired businessmen who relocated to country houses.<sup>472</sup>

Some studies have argued for the existence of an ‘urban gentry’ which was comprised of merchants and professionals who assumed the title of ‘gentleman’ and adopted the leisurely lifestyle of the landed gentry. Francois-Joseph Ruggiu argued that an urban gentry developed

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<sup>468</sup> G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 263.

<sup>469</sup> H. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society* (Routledge: London, 1972), pp. 50-2.

<sup>470</sup> L. Stone, and J.C.F. Stone, *An Open Elite?: England 1540-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>471</sup> Mingay, *English Landed Society*, pp. 9-10; John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 16-21.

<sup>472</sup> P. Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry 1640-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 196-8; D. Rollison, "Property, Ideology and Popular Culture in a Gloucestershire Village 1660-1740." *Past and Present*, 93 (1981) pp. 81.

after the Restoration and was formed of commercial men and artisans whose contribution to local society earned them the status of gentlemen. Ruggiu interprets this group as a 'model of landed elite' and suggests that their usage of the title 'gentleman' may have popularised it to the middling people who chose the title in the later eighteenth century.<sup>473</sup> Stobart analyses the urban gentry in late eighteenth century Chester and presents them as being closed tied to both the urban middling sort and rural landed gentry.<sup>474</sup> The notion of an urban gentry. Alan Everitt described these individuals as 'pseudo-gentry'; urban people who lived comfortable lives that were comparable to the gentry but did not possess an estate.<sup>475</sup> Corfield uses the contemporary term 'town gentry' to describe a socially heterogenous group including urban-dwelling aristocrats, retired businessmen, investors and renters who adopted similar lifestyles and customs.<sup>476</sup> Pursuant with the heterogenous nature of this group, Corfield notes that some members of the town gentry were still engaged in work.<sup>477</sup>

The permeability of genteel society is explained in historiography as a consequence of a shift in the qualities that defined status. Genteel status had traditionally been associated with birth, landed wealth and family heritage; which were all difficult for an outsider to achieve. By contrast, the determinants of genteel status in eighteenth century are identified as consumption, lifestyle and accomplishments. Corfield argued that gentlemen were defined by the choices which they made in their lives and therefore anyone with the means could claim status by receiving education or making appropriate purchases.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> F-J. Ruggiu, 'The Urban Gentry in England, 1660-1780: A French Approach', *Historical Research*, 74 (2002), p. 269.

<sup>474</sup> J. Stobart, 'Who Were the Urban Gentry? Social Elites in an English Provincial Town, C.1680-1760', *Continuity and Change*, 26 (2011), pp. 89-122.

<sup>475</sup> A. Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (Hambleton Press: London, 1985), pp. 248-9; A. Everitt, 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), 56-73.

<sup>476</sup> P. Corfield, 'Business Leaders and Town Gentry in Early Industrial Britain: Specialist Occupations and Shared Urban', *Urban History*, 39 (2012), pp. 31-2.

<sup>477</sup> Corfield, 2012, p. 33.

<sup>478</sup> Penelope Corfield, 'The Rivals: landed and other gentlemen' in N. Harte and R Quinault (eds) *Land and Society in Britain, 1700-1914. Essays in honour of F.M.L. Thompson* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 1-33.

## ii. Elite Ceremonial

Historiography outlines that elite status was asserted through the successful execution of ceremonial. This increasingly private ceremonial was an opportunity for targeted displays of status and the provision of hospitality which, if performed successfully, would demonstrate the status of the elite individual.

The eighteenth century has been presented as a period in which expenditure on public display and indiscriminate hospitality declined and participation in public ceremonies became less common. Thompson termed this a 'crisis of paternalism' in which the elites retreated from public life in provincial communities and reduced their interactions with the public to a one-sided 'theatre of the great.'<sup>479</sup> The decline of display is noted by Purdue and Golby, whose examples from the end of the century show that elites sought privacy and limited their benevolence to special occasions and the distribution of gifts.<sup>480</sup> The country house is widely noted as an important venue for the new forms of social display and hospitality that became popular. Christopher Christie observes that the country house was still a venue for the celebration of tradition into the nineteenth century. However, Christie concedes that the hospitality was less lavish and the recipients were fewer; his evidence indicates that effort was made to recognise significant dates and occasions in the year.<sup>481</sup> Philip Jenkins similarly argues that the wealth and power of elites was demonstrated in the ceremonies performed at country houses.<sup>482</sup> Rosenheim notes that the house was an important identifier of elite status because its design recalled the leisurely and affluent lifestyle of the inhabitant.<sup>483</sup> Using examples from the gentry of Glamorganshire, Jenkins shows that country house enabled

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<sup>479</sup> E.P. Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebian Culture', *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974), pp. 389-90.

<sup>480</sup> J.M. Golby and A.W. Purdue. *The Civilization of the Crowd* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1984), p. 56.

<sup>481</sup> Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2000), pp. 296-8.

<sup>482</sup> Jenkins, *Making of a Ruling Class*, pp. 197-8.

<sup>483</sup> Rosenheim, *Emergence of Ruling*, pp. 105-6.

contact with the elite individual to be carefully managed and ensured that display could be targeted to a very specific audience.<sup>484</sup>

Langford argues that there few instances of face-to-face contact between elite landlord and tenant in the eighteenth century.<sup>485</sup> Rosenheim observes that elite individuals were rarely present for the distribution of charity which was performed away from the country house.<sup>486</sup> Furthermore, several studies have noted that a member of the elite was only present to mark an occasion of great personal significance such as a wedding, christening or funeral.<sup>487</sup>

Historiography has identified cost as another factor that influenced the provision of hospitality and contributed to more selective acts of giving. Stone and Stone argue that the provision of hospitality continued in a limited form because elites had to balance their desire to decrease expenditure with an anxiety that 'ruthless' cost-cutting would undermine deference.<sup>488</sup> Mingay similarly noted that entertainment provided for tenants declined significantly in the early nineteenth century as deference diminished.<sup>489</sup> Both of these interpretations acknowledge that the gesture of giving hospitality was still important, even though less was offered and the audience for hospitality declined.

It is relevant to this thesis that existing historiography on the elite has identified death as one of the significant occasions which they chose to assert their status and authority over social inferiors. Rosenheim argues that the funeral was the most important of the rites of passage that were marked by the elites because it would occur in the provinces where the dead

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<sup>484</sup> Jenkins. *Making of a Ruling Class*, p. 198.

<sup>485</sup> Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798: The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 383.

<sup>486</sup> Rosenheim, *Emergence of Ruling*, p. 104.

<sup>487</sup> Golby and Purdue, 1984, p. 56; Trumbach, R., *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Academic Press, 1978), 1978, p. 34.

<sup>488</sup> Stone and Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p. 422.

<sup>489</sup> Mingay, *English Landed Society*, p.

person's tenants lived.<sup>490</sup> In this argument he specifically references the targeted charity shown to tenants as evidence that the funerary customs were intended to communicate directly to those who had a relationship with the deceased. Rosenheim's interpretation of the elite funeral as a private occasion finds earlier comparisons in Thompson and Jenkins' respective comments on the purpose of elite funeral. In his wider argument on elite recidivism, Thompson describes the funeral as a highly-organised encounter between elites and inferiors, in which the elite paternalism was performed through the giving of charity and hospitality.<sup>491</sup> Jenkins' interpretation of the funeral as a display of gentlemanly status, focuses on the importance of confronting a small, intimate audience with an expensive and visually striking display. This chapter will expand on these useful but limited observations about the social purpose of the elite funeral by examining how specific elements of the funeral conveyed messages of authority and benevolence. This detailed examination of the elite funeral must begin with a consideration of how the elite funeral has been interpreted in the history of death.

### iii. The Historiography of Elite Funerals

The provincial funerals of absentee aristocrats and gentry present a worthwhile topic with which to continue this study of funerary customs as a social opportunity. These funerals were staged to honour individuals who were at the apex of the national society and who were commonly, although not exclusively, resident in London. The importance of recognising familial ties necessitated interment in an often distant provincial community with ancestral significance. The funerary ceremony and the overland journey which preceded it should be considered as prime opportunities for both intentional and spontaneous contact between elites and their social inferiors. We should note that the elite provincial funeral and the funerary

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<sup>490</sup> Rosenheim, *Emergence of Ruling*, p. 110.

<sup>491</sup> Thompson, 1974, p. 389.

journey are the oldest forms of contact considered by the thesis, having been practiced for many centuries.<sup>492</sup>

The elite funerals which had traditionally visited the provinces were the heraldic rites organised and executed by the Royal College of Arms. The Royal College's autonomy over even the smallest aspects of these funerals ensured a uniform style throughout the nation and precluded the contribution of local influences. Such uniformity owed to the intertwined purposes of the heraldic funeral, identified by historiography as the preservation of social hierarchy and the projection of monarchic authority. Rank was the prime determinant of social standing prior to the Eighteenth Century and the entitlement to heraldic rites was limited to those of the most senior rank. Within this narrow subsection of society the seniority, or inferiority, of an individual's rank was visually communicated by the form of funerary display arranged by the heralds. The occasions were replete with apparel and although it was ostentatious, heraldic funeral display was not merely a simplistic comment on the affluence of the deceased. The style, quantity and composition of these items reflected longstanding codes of entitlement. This meticulous influence was also exerted over the identity of funerary participants whose personal rank complimented that of the deceased. Familial ties or temporal relationships were of marginal significance to the heralds' invitation policy and female members of the family would be customarily excluded. When male family members did participate this was commonly to assert the continuation of the family line and the title which accompanied it. It has therefore been conjectured that the heraldic funeral honoured a system rather than the deceased individual.

By celebrating the institution of the aristocracy, the heraldic funeral ultimately championed the figure at the apogee of this hierarchy, the monarch. Heraldic funerals subsequently served

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<sup>492</sup> N. Llewellyn, 'Honour in Life and Death and in the Memory: Funeral Monuments in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1996), p.183.

as an instrument for the projection of monarchic authority into distant provincial communities which the normally static monarch would never personally visit. The heraldic funeral was a public occasion and the Royal insignia was borne by the heralds during the funeral procession. Such symbolism was widely understood and represented what Gittings observes as, 'a salient reminder of the origin of aristocratic power.'<sup>493</sup> It has been argued that the flourishing of the heraldic rite corresponded to the monarch's desire to consolidate power, a factor which had dominated the heraldic heyday of the Sixteenth Century. Wunderli and Broce observe that during the reign of Henry VIII, the proponent of the heralds' funerary authority, the ostentation and frequency of rites diminished following the suppression of rebel threats in the provincial North.<sup>494</sup> Whilst the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I witnessed abundant support for the heralds and occasional engagement in their activities, this would notably decline in the Seventeenth Century. Gittings cites the lack of monarchic appreciation for the role of the heralds as a factor which contributed to the performance of funerals outside of heralds control by the Jacobean nobility.<sup>495</sup> The ever-important endorsement of the monarch would cease near the end of the century with the discontinuation of the royal commission during the reign of William III.<sup>496</sup> The absence of the commission had profound consequences for the official status of the heralds. In acknowledgement of the authority granted by the royal commission, it had been customary for the Lord Chamberlain to defer to the heralds, the responsibility of deciding whether an aristocratic or royal funeral might be determined 'public' or 'private'. In such circumstances, the heralds would decide whether or not the funeral should be 'public' and would therefore require their involvement and the

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<sup>493</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 174. Also see: G. Broce and R.M. Wunderli, "The Funeral of Henry Percy, Sixth Earl of Northumberland," *Albion* 22:2 (Summer) (1990). for a discussion of the use of heraldic display as a projection of monarchic authority by Henry VIII.

<sup>494</sup> Broce and Wunderli, "The Funeral of Henry Percy", p. 214.

<sup>495</sup> C. Gittings, 'Sacred and Secular, 1558-1660', in P. Jupp and C. Gittings (eds.) *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (Manchester Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 161.

<sup>496</sup> T. Laqueur, "Bodies, Death and Pauper Funerals," *Representations* 1: Feb. (1983). p. 113.

attendant expenditure or organisation. Fritz observes that this practice was terminated in the mid-eighteenth century, when the Lord Chamberlain assumed the responsibility as his own.<sup>497</sup> These developments may be observed to contribute to an atmosphere in which the presence of the heralds was neither necessary nor compulsory.

The heralds possessed the right to censure those who breached their rules or ignored their authority over the funerary ceremonial.<sup>498</sup> Their primary mechanism for achieving this was the Court of Chivalry; a body through which the Earl Marshal could issue fines and reprimands to violators, whether they were vendors or consumers.<sup>499</sup> The court's authority to oversee these matters depended on the complicity of the common law courts and this is observed to have been effectively terminated in the closing decade of the Seventeenth Century. Particular attention is drawn to the House of Lords' decision to uphold the Court of Exchequer's ruling in favour of the cheesemonger and undertaker, Charles Domville.<sup>500</sup> The Lords' decision was significant as it didn't simply favour Domville but also denied the heralds' right to prosecute those who defied their authority in funerary matters.<sup>501</sup>

The consequences of these developments are clear. By the eighteenth century the heralds were fundamentally powerless to prevent members of the elite from choosing a heraldic funeral which could be supplied and performed by undertakers. Unfavourable political decisions had wrested power from the heralds to the indirect advantage of early undertakers. It is widely observed that whilst the heralds continued to oppose and censure those who

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<sup>497</sup> P.S. Fritz, "From 'Public' to 'Private': The Royal Funerals in England 1500-1830," in J. Whaley (ed.) *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death*, (London: Europa, 1981). p. 78.

<sup>498</sup> This responsibility had been granted by Henry VIII: Broce and Wunderli, "Funeral of Henry Percy, Sixth Earl of Northumberland", p. 199.

<sup>499</sup> The Court of Chivalry also sought to prosecute individuals for producing unlicensed reproductions of the funeral display which they provided: N.M. Dawson, "The Death Throes of the Licensing Act and the 'Funeral Pomp' of Queen Mary II, 1695," *The Journal of Legal History* 26:2 (2005). p. 137.

<sup>500</sup> Domville won his case in the Court of Exchequer to challenge the Court of Chivalry's decision against his activities as an undertaker, see: G. Squibb, *High Court of Chivalry: A Study of the Civil Law in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

<sup>501</sup> P.S. Fritz, "Undertaking Trade", p. 244.



breached their directives, the lack of political support rendered them impotent to enact their will.

It would be incorrect to interpret the success of early undertakers as a reflection of contemporaries' dislike for the social display offered by the heraldic funeral. As Litten suggests, the imagery and symbolism of the heraldic ritual was integral to the funerals performed by the undertaking trade, well into the Nineteenth Century.<sup>502</sup>

The elaborate visual display prescribed by the heralds could not be altered to reflect the taste of character of the deceased individual.<sup>503</sup> This was partly a consequence of the rigid criteria for the funerary display afforded to particular degrees of rank and also a reflection on importance which the heraldic funeral attributed to the monarch. The result was a funerary display which had changed very little since the reign of Elizabeth I, a problem which was exacerbated by its high cost.<sup>504</sup> The efforts of early undertakers established a funerary market which was increasing motivated by fashions and trends and by contrast the static ritual offered by the heralds offered little opportunity for personalised or commemorative display.

The desire to freely express oneself in the funeral extended beyond physical display to the act of mourning. The public expression of familial affection is argued to have grown increasingly important from the early-Seventeenth Century and a significant consequence was the desire to openly mourn and commemorate one's relatives.<sup>505</sup> Such mourning was, however, prohibited by strict heraldic directives which had prohibited the presence of mourners of the opposite

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<sup>502</sup> Litten, *English Way of Death*, p. 30. (Litten cites Edwin Chadwick's comparison of the mid-nineteenth century funeral with heraldic motifs and devices: mutes represent castle porters, the master of the procession, the bearers of ostrich feathers recalled esquires who bore plumes of feathers and the baton-wielding pall bearers mirrored the knights'-companions-at-arms)

<sup>503</sup> Cressy observes that the heraldic funeral did not permitted, 'little freedom for idiosyncrasy or innovation within set forms', D. Cressy, "Death and the Social Order: The Funerary Preferences of Elizabethan Gentlemen," *Continuity and Change* 5:1 (1990). p. 100.

<sup>504</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 280.

<sup>505</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, pp. 200-201; and Gittings, "Sacred and Secular", p. 167.

sex from the deceased: wives could not mourn husbands, brothers could not mourn sisters. Furthermore, it is argued that family members and friends were marginalised, regardless of gender, due to the necessity of incorporating mourners whose rank corresponded to that of the deceased.<sup>506</sup> Gittings argues that the obligatory nature of attendance at heraldic funerals meant that in the worst scenario ‘most of the official mourners had little regret at the passing of the deceased.’<sup>507</sup>

The undertaking trade existed in a state of expansion and development during the long-Eighteenth Century. This is chiefly attributed to the recent establishment of undertaking as a trade in the latter decades of the Seventeenth Century. The coffin maker William Boyce and the herald painter William Russell, are the two London tradesmen who are most frequently cited as the ‘first’ undertaker.<sup>508</sup> Boyce is identified through the ephemera which he produced to publicise his business in the late 1670s, a further sign of sparse source materials utilised by scholars of the early trade. However, it is Russell who is most frequently presented as the ‘first undertaker’; a characterisation which arguably results from his engagement with the Royal College of Arms and subsequent identification in the authorised histories of the College by both Johnson and later, Wagner.<sup>509</sup> It is also the case that Russell’s prior involvement in the supply of heraldic funerals entailed that his name was more broadly publicised and recorded than can be said of Boyce, or indeed the other individuals establishing themselves as undertakers at the start of the Eighteenth Century.

Historiography indicates that the early undertaking trade had proponents in various locations in the country but it is apparent that the literary bias towards London is a consequence of the

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<sup>506</sup>M. Greenfield, "The Cultural Functions of Renaissance Elegy," *English Literary Renaissance*, 28:1, (2008), p. 85.

<sup>507</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 175.

<sup>508</sup> A few notable examples include: R.A. Aubin, 'Behind Steele's Satire on Undertakers', *PMLA*, 64 (1949), p. 1018;

<sup>509</sup> J. Edmondson, *A Complete Body of Heraldry* (London, 1780) and more recently by: A. Wagner, *Heralds of England: A History of the Office and College of Arms* (London: H.M.S.O., 1967), p. 302.

strength of the trade in the city. London's undertakers were numerous and successful by the end of the seventeenth century. Concordantly, Gittings asserts that not only did the trade originate in London, as illustrated by Boyce and Russell, but that its influence was most profoundly felt in the city.<sup>510</sup> Fritz argues that, as a 'solely profit-driven enterprise', undertaking was dependent on a large and conducive customer base which was only present in an urban centre, such as London.<sup>511</sup>

We should not assume that the London-based undertaking trade had never visited the provinces or that their services were limited to the immediate locality of London. The funerals of the gentry had brought undertakers to the provinces as early as the late-Seventeenth Century and it seems plausible the affluent customers of the undertakers were the cause for these visits. To this end, Fritz reflects that it was not uncommon for London-based undertakers to accept funeral commissions from individuals outside the capital.<sup>512</sup> Their involvement in the funerals of the provinces was consequently limited to the gentry and wealthy families who could afford the cost. The experience of the London undertakers who had performed numerous high status funerals arguably qualified them for funerary requirements of a rural elite well into the long-eighteenth century. Clare Gittings presents an anecdote from Wordsworth, who observed that the funeral of Lady Diana le Fleming prompted a visit from a London undertaker as late as 1806.<sup>513</sup>

## The Transportation of the Dead Body

### i. Motivation, Cost and Organisation

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<sup>510</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 95.

<sup>511</sup> Fritz, 'Undertaking Trade'. p. 249.

<sup>512</sup> Morris 'Innocent and Touching Custom', p. 248.

<sup>513</sup> Gittings, *Death Burial and the Individual*, p. 52.

The decision to transport a dead body occurred because many elites had a primary residence in London and made infrequent visits to the provinces. Dead members of elite families were traditionally buried together in provincial churches, rather than the location of their death. The Thynne family of Longleat, Wiltshire are a good example of such elite absenteeism in our region. The family's involvement in national politics caused them to be absent from Longleat for varying periods of time. During these absences, they served a variety of significant political or social roles in the capital and the nature of these dictated the length of their absence. For example, Henry Thynne, son of the 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Weymouth (1675-1708) represented the constituencies of Weymouth and Melcombe, as well as Tamworth.<sup>514</sup> His great nephew, Thomas, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Bath (1734-1796) was a renowned statesman who served in several important government roles and occupied a privileged position in the Royal Household as Groom of the Stole.<sup>515</sup> Thomas did not abandon Longleat during these successes and his influence on the estate was significant because he was responsible for landscaping by Capability Brown. However, both individuals lived primarily in the capital and eventually died at their London residences at Soho Square and Arlington Street respectively.<sup>516</sup> Although their commitments had caused them to be distant from Longleat, they were returned to Wiltshire to be buried in the Thynne family vault in Longbridge, Deverill.

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<sup>514</sup> S. Handley, 'Thynne, Hon. Henry (1675-1708)' <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/thynne-hon-henry-1675-1708> [accessed 10/11/2016]

<sup>515</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 'Thynne, Thomas, third Viscount Weymouth and first marquess of Bath (1734–1796), courtier and politician' <http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/101027425/Thomas-Thynne> [accessed 10/11/2016]

<sup>516</sup> Handley, 'Thynne, Hon. Henry'.

The church of St. Peter and Paul, Longbridge Deverill was richly decorated with reminders of the Thynne family which acted as a permanent reminder of their status in the community. The Thynne family hatchment was a painted wooden board which displayed the deceased person's heritage in a rigidly dictated style that was traditionally overseen by the heralds. The family crest is supported by a lion and a deer, which indicate that the deceased was a peer of the realm and the family motto 'j'ay bonne cause' was contained in a banner below.



Figure 15. Thynne Family Hatchment (c.1700s, Longbridge Deverill) Britain Express [www.britainexpress.com/counties/wiltshire/churches/longbridge-deverill.htm](http://www.britainexpress.com/counties/wiltshire/churches/longbridge-deverill.htm) [accessed 23/12/2016]

These hatchments were used in heraldic ceremonies from the early Seventeenth Century although they became more popular in the eighteenth century. The increasing popularity of the hatchment has been explained as a result of the declining authority of the heralds, who had traditionally been responsible for the authorising and creating the devices. This is an example of how elite funerary customs were popularised by the new funerary trades that emerged in the eighteenth century. The hatchment is also a reminder of the long journey which was involved in the elite funeral because it was designed to be portable. As John Titterton argues, the hatchments were made in their traditional diamond shape because it was

easy to carry and self-stabilising when hung on a wall.<sup>517</sup> The Thynne family ceremonial armour is also present on the walls of St. Peter and Paul; where there are a pair of helmets, one of which is adorned with antlers that recall the family crest. Ceremonial armour was traditionally included in the heraldic funeral, where it was carried by page in the procession. Although it was purely ceremonial, the armour is a signifier of the deceased man's role as protector of his community and his rank as a peer. This secondary role, as a hanging, ensured that the devices would be seen by locals every time they attended church, as a reminder of the family's status and significance. This decoration of the church was not exceptional but it demonstrates the location to which elites would be returned at the end of their overland journey.

The example of the Thynne family demonstrates how elite individuals' lives limited their personal presence in the provinces. Elites were consequently denied the opportunity to personally perform roles which affirmed the status and reputation of their family, such as: providing hospitality, dispensing charity and occupying positions of authority. These roles were different from political representation because they were performed in the provinces and entailed contact with residents of lower status. Contact was not spontaneous but was highly managed and organised, so that elites were protected from any undesirable behaviour.



Figure 16. Thynne Family Mourning Armour (c.1700s, Longbridge Deverill) Britain Express [www.britainexpress.com/counties/wiltshire/churches/longbridge-deverill.htm](http://www.britainexpress.com/counties/wiltshire/churches/longbridge-deverill.htm) [Accessed 23/12/2016]

<sup>517</sup> P. Summers and J.E. Titterton. (eds.), *Hatchments in Britain. 10: The Development and Use of Hatchments* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1994).

Funerals may be understood as an opportunity this kind of organised contact between elites and provincial residents.<sup>518</sup> Funerals presented an opportunity for elites to perform an elaborate display which would emphasize their authority and support their claims to status to the inhabitants of the provincial seat. This was possible because elements of the funeral recalled the temporal relationships between the deceased and provincial inhabitants, which had been formed as a result of their involvement in provincial life.

The consequent journey was an expensive and complicated activity which demonstrated the wealth of the deceased person and testified to their social importance; it was a reminder that the dead person required this level of effort. The high cost of transportation was due to the numerous transactions that were necessary for a long road journey in the period such as turnpike fees, and horse fees. Road conditions improved significantly over the long century as increasing investment in turnpikes led to reduced journey times and mitigated the disruption caused by weather.<sup>519</sup> Turnpike fees are a reoccurring feature of funeral bills as affluent executors were charged for the journeys of funerary vehicles between the location of death and the burial site. In 1722, John Saunderson of The United Company of Undertakers charged the executors of the Earl of Suffolk, two pounds and fifteen shillings for the turnpike fees, 'comeing and going for coaches and saddlehorses.'<sup>520</sup> Similarly in 1731 the Company of Undertakers charged the executors of Thomas Chafyn one pound, eleven shillings and sixpence for the turnpike fees 'comeing and going' between London and Zeals in Wiltshire.<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> E.P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebian Culture." *Journal of Social History* 7:4 (1974), p. 389. Regarding absenteeism: Golby, J.M., and A.W. Purdue. *The Civilization of the Crowd* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1984) and P. Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798: The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 378.

<sup>519</sup> E. Pawson, *Transport and Economy: The Turnpike Roads of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Academic Press, 1977), p. 293.

<sup>520</sup> Bristol, Bristol Record Office (hereafter BRO): AC/F/9/2/a 'Account of John Saunderson and the Company of Upholders at Exeter Change for the Funeral of Charles William Howard Earl of Suffolk and Bindon', 1722.

<sup>521</sup> WSHC, 865/509.

Executors were also expected to pay the expenses of undertakers for their journeys during the organisation and preparation of the funeral. This was particularly expensive if the undertaker was based in London, as was common at the beginning of the period. For the funeral of Earl of Suffolk, Saunderson charged twelve pounds and twelve shillings for his eight-day return journey from London to Bristol to plan the funeral with the Earl's widow.<sup>522</sup> The executors of Thomas Chafyn were charged four pounds and thirteen shillings for the personal expenses and horse hire of the company undertaker who oversaw his funeral.<sup>523</sup> Later funerals still required the travel between the metropolis and the West Country venue, as these undertakers would be best placed to deal with the initial stage of the funeral. The undertaker John Linnell was paid for his involvement in all six days of the transportation of the body of Lady Mary St John. Linnell was an upholsterer and undertaker in Berkeley Square who performed two funerals for the Herbert family in the early 1790s.<sup>524</sup>

The post-mortem preparations which would follow were performed at the location of death, as the development of dedicated facilities at undertakers' premises would not occur until the late-nineteenth century. Members of the undertaker's company would therefore be required to travel to the place of death to prepare the remains and assemble the coffin.<sup>525</sup> Preparations for the funeral of Lady Herbert, wife of the Earl of Pembroke, required six members of the undertaker's company to convey her cumbersome coffin from the second floor of the house to the parlour, where it was to be viewed.<sup>526</sup> The problematic weight of this coffin was an inevitable consequence of the lead shell which contained Lady Herbert's body. Receptacles of this kind were necessitated by the length of funerary journeys and plumbers were therefore

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<sup>522</sup> BRO, AC/F/9/2/a

<sup>523</sup> WSHC, 865/509.

<sup>524</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/18, 'Account for the Funeral of Lady Mary St. John at Lydiard Tregoze', 1791. London: London Metropolitan Archives: LMA/4263/01/1198 London Land Tax Records 1692-1932.

<sup>525</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/19, 'Account for the Funeral of Lady Herbert; Lord Herbert to John Linnell', 1793.

<sup>526</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/19



required to solder lead, or occasionally to repair faults. The remains of Lady Herbert's son were attended twice by a plumber who travelled by coach at a cost of ten shillings.<sup>527</sup>

Journeys for the preparation of the dead did not represent the extent of professionals' travel because the locations involved in the organisation and execution of an elite funeral could be significantly dispersed. The journey to the potentially distant place of burial might furthermore be punctuated by visits to country residences and ensuring that all such locations were adequately prepared entailed a considerable number of journeys for the undertaker or his retinue. For the funeral of the Earl of Suffolk, the United Company of Undertakers employed a group of lone horsemen to distribute the items of funerary display to the family's residences at Henbury, Gloucestershire and Audley End, Suffolk.<sup>528</sup> Overseeing the funeral of Lady Mary St. John at Lydiard Tregoze in Wiltshire, the undertaker Mr. Crooks spent six days directing the display, at a cost of six pounds and six shillings.<sup>529</sup>

## ii. Display on the Road

### *The Travelling Procession*

The hearse was the focal point of the procession which served as an emblem of the deceased person contained within. The hearses of the elite were more spectacular than the modes of funerary transport used in the common funeral, with more horses, attendants and decorations than those used in private funerals. This is a reflection of the undertakers employed, whose businesses were more developed and were capable of operating hearses, rather than hiring, as local undertakers did.

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<sup>527</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/20, 'Account for the funeral of the hon. George Herbert (a child aged five); Lord Pembroke (lord lieutenant of Wiltshire) to John Linnell'.

<sup>528</sup> BRO: Ac/F/9/2/a.

<sup>529</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/18.

In 1731, the Company of Undertakers provided a hearse and six horses for the transportation of Thomas Chafyn's body to Zeals in Wiltshire. This set was typical of an elite hearse and the arrangement of six horses was used in the funerals of Lady Pembroke and Lady Mary St. John in the early 1790s.<sup>530</sup> These hearses required a team of attendants who were all specially attired by the undertaker at additional cost to the customer. A coachman and three postillions were necessary for a hearse and six. The coachman and postillions at the Chafyn funeral wore a hatband, gloves and a favour, ensuring that they had a uniform appearance around the hearse. The coachman and postillions. The body of Lady Pembroke's son, George was borne in a hearse drawn by four horses and it is plausible that this reflected the age of the deceased.

The decoration of the hearse demonstrated the wealth and good taste of the deceased because the items were expensive and reflected the fashionable customs of the period. The use of velvet coverings on the hearse was a particularly fashionable practice which continued throughout the period of study. In 1731, the hearse of Thomas Chafyn was covered with 'black velvett' that complemented the velvet worn by the horses of the procession. In contemporary bills, the velvet coverings of hearse and horses were commonly offered as a set, ensuring that procession was uniform. In the 1790s the hearse supplied by John Linnell for Mary St. John was covered with 'best black velvet' at a cost of and a similar covering was provided for the funeral of Lady Herbert.<sup>531</sup>

Feathers were another fashionable decoration which was included on the hearse in significant quantities. The dyed ostrich feather had been introduced in the West Country during the eighteenth century and middling mourners' use of feathers on the hearse was limited. By contrast to the middling funeral, the undertakers of elite funerals, each horse wore a plume of feathers and a large collection of feathers would be placed on the velvet hearse-cover. The

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<sup>530</sup> WSHC: 865/509

<sup>531</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/19

black ostrich plumes adorned the hearse ‘for the journey,’ as a constant visual motif of the deceased person’s wealth and sense of fashion.<sup>532</sup>

Feathers could also convey personal information about the deceased person within the hearse. The white plumes worn by the hearse and horses of George Herbert, reflected the fact that he died in his infancy.<sup>533</sup> This was possible because it employed colour coding that was widely understood, white had been used in the palls and mourning items of common funerals for children and unmarried people. When the unmarried son of William Blathwayt was transported to Dyrham for burial in 1783, his hearse was adorned with white feathers.<sup>534</sup>

More specific statements regarding the status and social superiority of the deceased were made by the symbolic devices such as escutcheons and shields. We can observe that these heraldic devices were liberally employed in the early decades of the eighteenth century. In 1722 the hearse of the Earl of Suffolk was arrayed with twenty-four escutcheons and twelve shields whilst twelve escutcheons were employed for the procession of William Phelips, in 1712. This form of display was significant because it emphasized the individual’s possession of arms and subsequent right to display them. This was particularly important in the declining culture which regarded rank and familial heritage as determinants of social superiority.

Armorial motifs could also be displayed on banners or pennants that were carried in the procession. In 1722, the instructions for the hearse of Thomas Chafyn Esq. indicate that small armorial devices should be placed ‘to intermix with the feathers on the top of the hearse.’<sup>535</sup>

If they were not placed on the hearse, pennants might accompany it at close quarters, borne by horseback ‘pencil’ carriers.<sup>536</sup> In the funeral of the Earl of Suffolk, there were twelve

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<sup>532</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/18.

<sup>533</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/20.

<sup>534</sup> GRO: D1799/A382

<sup>535</sup> WSHC: 865/509.

<sup>536</sup> SHC: DD\PH/180.

large pencills and thirty-six small pencills to be carried at the centre of the procession, they were billed alongside other armorial decorations to be used in the procession. The pencills described in this example were long, thin banners that had origins in the traditional heraldic display. These were intended to appear alongside the Earl's hearse in a prominent location in the funerary party.

The production and supply of heraldic devices had traditionally been undertaken by the heralds or businesses which had their endorsement. By the early eighteenth century the supply of heraldry was being performed by new companies in London and the West Country. For example, the heraldic devices at the Chafyn funeral were produced and supplied by the London-based United Company of Upholders, an organisation which amalgamated various different funerary trades.<sup>537</sup> In the early eighteenth-century West Country there were 'herald-painters' who had the skills to create heraldic devices in addition to other funerary services. In 1718, John Hervey, herald-painter in Bath, had produced escutcheons for the Duke of Beaufort.<sup>538</sup> In 1727, Edward Butcher, a painter from Bristol, created escutcheons and painting hatchments.<sup>539</sup> These individuals were popular in the first half of the century, but it is arguable that their heraldry production was supplanted by the early undertakers who became more common from the mid-century onwards.

The employment of armorial devices arguably reminds us that the display orchestrated by the funeral party may be interpreted as evidence of the heraldic origins of the elite funeral ceremonial. Under the direction of the Royal College of Arms, the funerary journeys of the aristocracy had projected monarchic authority into otherwise-distant provincial communities, because the monarch was represented in the iconography of the heraldic ceremonial and in

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<sup>537</sup> WSHC: 865/509.

<sup>538</sup> GRO: D2700/PA2/23 'Mr Harvey of Bath's Bill for the escutcheons at the Late Duke's funeral' (1718).

<sup>539</sup> BRO: AC/JS/50/13/A 'Bill for Heraldry' (1727).

the presence of the heralds, who acted as emissaries of the crown. This presence dually emphasized the elevated position of the aristocracy within the rank-based social hierarchy and affirmed the ultimate superiority of the monarchy. Despite the diminishing importance of rank as a determinant of social standing and the decline of the Herald's hegemony over elite funerary ceremonial, the elaborate display persisted as a statement about the power and authority of the individual rather than the monarch. Lavish display was intended to make the transportation of the deceased a significant or unique event for the communities through which the procession travelled, thereby impressing locals with a sense of the deceased person's importance.

The hearse and supporting vehicles were supplemented with an additional level of display when they entered or exited a town where a night stop was to occur. This was a practice that was intended to maximise spectacle and appeal directly to the greater number of spectators that would be encountered in a town. As a result, the hearse and coaches became a sort of miniature funeral procession within a short distance of the town.

Increased manpower was one way in which the elite funeral made a striking display as it passed through a town. During the transportation of Lady Herbert, a group of six, uniformed mourners walked with the hearse wearing caps and holding truncheons.<sup>540</sup> The party that transported Lady St. John included a feather man who carried a 'lidd' of fashionable ostrich feathers in towns.<sup>541</sup> In these examples it is apparent that it would be an unnecessary expense for these additional mourners to perform their aesthetic roles outside of the town, where there would be few spectators. Some of the additional mourners performed more practical duties in towns, such as the pages who opened the coach doors during the travelling procession of

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<sup>540</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/19

<sup>541</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/18

Thomas Chafyn.<sup>542</sup> These men added to the spectacle of the funeral party's arrival and departure and gave a sense of order to the transition from the inn to the road.

The ringing of bells to herald the arrival of a transported body gave the occasion a sense of significance and created a sombre atmosphere. It was an important, aural, method of setting the scene when a funeral party was travelling through the towns near its destination. The bells of Marlborough and Swindon were tolled for the passage of Lady St. John's body to her place of burial in neighbouring Lydiard Tregoze.<sup>543</sup> Similarly, the procession transporting Lady Herbert to Wilton was greeted by tolls from parish churches in Salisbury and Foulston as well as Salisbury Cathedral.<sup>544</sup> In each of these destinations, the act of bellringing disrupted the local routine to announce that a significant event was occurring; the death was marked as if it was for a member of the local community.

#### *Overnight Stops on the Road*

Delay, rather than damage, was the most common consequence of the unpredictable provincial roads. An outbound journey from London to the counties of the West Country could occupy almost a week in travelling time. Frequent night stops at taverns and inns along the route responded to the subsequent necessity of resting horses and men during this period. These pauses in the journey did not represent a cessation of the elaborate and rigidly-organised funeral display which occurred on the road and it was customary for the deceased to lie-in-state in specially prepared quarters.

In 1722, the Earl of Suffolk lay-in-state for five nights on the road at a cost of four pounds per night, which accounted for a pair of rooms, one hung in mourning cloth and decorated with

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<sup>542</sup> WSHC: 865/509

<sup>543</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/18

<sup>544</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/19

four candlesticks and twelve silver sconces. Another funerary journey organised by the United Company of Undertakers for Thomas Chafyn Esq included rooms decorated on three nights in a style which was identical to the Earl's, except for the absence of sconces.<sup>545</sup> The similarity of the items employed is evidence for the importance of maintaining an image of fashion and respectability at all times. Indeed, the items used by United Company of Undertakers were representative of contemporary trends in the decoration of households engaged in mourning.<sup>546</sup> Indeed, the Buckeram escutcheons which adorned the walls of the Earl's lying-in-state quarters were identical to those employed at his personal residences.<sup>547</sup> These examples demonstrate how the products of the early undertakers ensured that affluent funeral parties could transform unfamiliar or unpredictable provincial spaces to satisfy their own tastes. The persisting importance of fashion, regardless of location, is evident in the example of a lid of ostrich plumes which were placed upon the coffin of Lady Mary St. John, lying-in-state on the road to Lydiard Tregoze in 1791. Funerary directives instructed that this item was also to be placed upon the coffin before burial and borne in the funerary procession every day of the journey.<sup>548</sup> The repeated use of the ostrich plumes also reflects the pragmatic consideration of having to transport all the items for lying-in-state on the road journey with the funeral party.

Complementing the elites' adherence to fashion, an equally important consideration during the static intervals in the journey was the security of the coffin and this was reflected by the hiring of 'watchers.'<sup>549</sup> The custom of 'watching' a coffin was widely practiced in the period

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<sup>545</sup> WSHC: 865/509, 'Undertaker's Account for the Funeral of Thomas Chafyn, Esq., by the Company of Upholders at Exeter Change', 1731.

<sup>546</sup> A useful depiction of the laying-in-state of an elite gentleman, albeit not on the road, may be observed in: Litten, *English Way of Death*, p. 167.

<sup>547</sup> BRO: AC/F/9/2/a.

<sup>548</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/18.

<sup>549</sup> BRO: AC/F/9/2/a and Taunton, Somerset Heritage Centre (hereafter SHC): DD\PH/180, 'Funeral Expenses of William Phelips', 1714.

and served both to guarantee the terminal condition of the deceased and the security of their unburied remains.<sup>550</sup> The theft of these remains or coffin materials was omnipresent throughout the country and it is therefore unsurprising that precautions were taken during travel. Indeed, it may be argued that the unique qualities of elite funeral journeys contributed, if only in principle, to their susceptibility to crime. The material culture of elite funerals encapsulated numerous commodities upon which contemporary criminals preyed, most specifically lead. Triple or double leaden shells were regarded as the apogee of coffin design and were therefore commonplace in the funerals of the affluent elite.<sup>551</sup> Acquiring such a coffin was a demonstration of affluence but it also reflected the importance of containing remains both on the long journey and at the intramural destination which awaited many of the dead person.

## The Funeral as a Personalised Display

### i. Tenants

Tenants were significant participants in the funeral because they were the members of provincial society who had a relationship with the deceased. The tenants joined the funeral party at the boundary of a town or near to the familial estate and could easily swell the procession, creating a visual spectacle for bystanders. However, the invitation of tenants can be interpreted as an attempt to embellish the post-mortem reputation of the deceased person, by presenting the dead person as benevolent patrician. This favourable appraisal of the dead person was communicated to bystanders who saw the tenants and also to the tenants themselves, as recipients of funerary gifts.

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<sup>550</sup> G. Rundblad, "Exhuming Women's Premarket Duties in the Care of the Dead." *Gender and Society* 9:2 (1995), p. 179.

<sup>551</sup> C. Boston, A. Boyle, J. Gill, and A. Witkin. *'In the Vaults beneath' - Archaeological Recording at St. George, Bloomsbury*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph No. 8. (Oxford: The Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd, 2009), p. 150.



The funerary role of underbearer was given to tenants to ensure that the local community was represented at the very centre of the funerary ritual. The poorest of tenants were chosen for this role with 'poor labourers'. This practice involved a limited number of labourers, usually six people, carrying the coffin, standing beneath the pall. The men were flanked by the pall bearers, who were usually drawn from the friends and family deceased. This juxtaposition was important because it symbolized the appeal and influence that the dead person had on all levels of society. Locals were also reminded that they were not forgotten by the deceased, despite the impressive and unattainable pomp that filled the funeral.

The funerary organisers attempted to secure the post-mortem reputation of the deceased by providing gifts to the tenants. The gifting of mourning wear reflected the dual roles of the tenant mourner as both a recipient of memorial tokens and a performer in the funerary display. The distribution of mourning wear to tenants ensured that this group presented a uniform appearance that also adhered to contemporary fashions. This uniformity was important because the behaviour and condition of tenants, wherever they might be, was perceived to be reflective of the character of their landlord.<sup>552</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that this practice remained popular throughout the eighteenth century. In 1731, 129 tenants were provided with black coats, gloves and taffeta favours at the funeral of Thomas Chafyn.<sup>553</sup> In the 1790s, the funeral processions of the Marquis of Bath and Mrs. William Beckford had both been swelled by hundreds of tenants in mourning, riding in formation as they arrived at the respective estates of the deceased.<sup>554</sup> The mourners' identical clothing distinguished them from any locals who spontaneously followed or spectated the funeral. The uniformly-attired

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<sup>552</sup> D. Rollison, "Property, Ideology and Popular Culture in a Gloucestershire Village 1660-1740." *Past and Present*, 93 (1981), p. 77.

<sup>553</sup> GRO: 865/509

<sup>554</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 1 December 1796 and *Bath Chronicle*, 9 August 1798.

tenants appeared to be in a collective act of mourning which demonstrated that the loss of the dead person was felt throughout society, whether their sentiments were sincere, or not.

Furthermore, we may observe that mourning wear served to classify the tenants in the context of the other relationships acknowledged by the funeral. The aesthetic ‘quality’ or the craftsmanship of a funerary gift reflected the status of its recipient. For example, we may observe that ‘second best’ hatbands were provided to tenants in the funerals of Chafyn in 1731 and the Earl of Suffolk in 1778.<sup>555</sup> If full mourning was provided to tenant mourners the quality and colour of the material might indicate their relative inferiority to other members of the mourning party, without compromising the dignity of their role. This is particularly evident in the example of tenant farmers or labourers who carried the coffin of their deceased landlord. Labourer bearers at the funeral William Beckford received outfits made from ‘grey coarse cloth’ and plain, grey suits were worn by those who carried the Earl of Pembroke’s son in 1798.<sup>556</sup> At the Beckford funeral, the grey cloth distinguished the less-affluent labourers from the other tenants who attended in ‘deep mourning.’ In both instances, the plain attire of the underbearers conveyed their humble status and ensured that their status was not confused.

The reception of hospitality customarily marked the conclusion of tenants’ participation in the elite funerary ritual. As late as 1798, those who mourned the wife of Alderman Beckford assembled after the funerary procession to consume refreshments in the Grecian Hall of Fonthill House, in Wiltshire.<sup>557</sup> It is unclear what food was consumed in this instance but bills for food from comparable contemporary funerals indicate that cakes, cold meats, ale and

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<sup>555</sup> BRO: AC/F/9/2/a.

<sup>556</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/20; *Kentish Gazette*, 30 June 1770.

<sup>557</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 9 August 1798.

wine were popularly consumed by guests.<sup>558</sup> This was, as Houlbrooke observes, a reflection of metropolitan fashion in funerary hospitality for the consumption of wine and biscuits.<sup>559</sup> Concordant with other defining practices of the elite funeral, the provision of food and drink was founded in longstanding customs that had been modified by fashions. Within the earlier Catholic tradition food and drink were provided to the local poor, thus securing both their attendance at the funeral and the spiritual assistance of their prayers.<sup>560</sup> Although the latter motive was outlawed during the Reformation, the persistence of hospitality has been attributed to the importance of communally confronting death.<sup>561</sup> By contrast, the victualing of tenant mourners reflects the increasing privacy and intimacy of the funeral ritual in Eighteenth Century.

The funerary refreshments of the elite correspond to this shift to privacy and intimacy. The refreshments such as those at Fonthill House, were provided within a family home which was a private space. The use of the country house is also significant because, as Rosenheim has argued, the estate may be considered as emblematic of the oft-absent elite individual; a contrived space that enabled the owner to demonstrate their taste and personality through design.<sup>562</sup> Inviting the tenants into this space was therefore a gesture which could impress them with the message that the deceased and their family were powerful but benevolent people. It also provided a controlled environment in which the important patriarchal gestures could be performed without risk of intrusion. When the tenants of Lady Beckford entered the

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<sup>558</sup> SHC: DD\SF/6/2/8, 'Edward Clarke's Funeral Expenses', 1711; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 14 April 1825; Gloucester, Gloucestershire Record Office (hereafter GRO): D2002/14/3, 'Expences of the Funerall of Jane Edwards'.

<sup>559</sup> Houlbrooke, "'Public' and 'Private'", p. 175.

<sup>560</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin, 1971), p. 718.

<sup>561</sup> Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 98 and F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 374.

<sup>562</sup> Thompson, E.P. "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?" *Social History* 3:2 (1978), p. 139. The importance of estate design: L. Stone and J.C. Fawtier Stone. *An Open Elite?: England 1540-1880*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 300; J.M. Rosenheim, *The Emergence of Ruling Order: English Landed Society, 1650-1750*. (London: Longman, 1998), p. 105.

Grecian Hall a large crowd, estimated at around ten thousand people, remained in the estate grounds outside the house.<sup>563</sup> The indiscriminate poor had traditionally gathered at the church or graveside but were increasingly perceived as a threat to the decorum of well-orchestrated funerals. This anxiety was affirmed by instances such as the funeral of Lord William Powlett in Old Basing, Hampshire in which poor folk were accused of ransacking the ceremony and pillaging ‘a great quantity of viands.’<sup>564</sup> The maintenance of reputation had long been a motivating factor in the funeral hospitality of all classes and in the context of Eighteenth-Century elites it was integral to the success of relationships with tenants, which could have negative economic consequences if damaged.<sup>565</sup>

## ii. The Servants

Historiography has highlighted the importance attributed to the condition of household servants and the belief that the good condition of servants was evidence of the quality of their employer. These values can be observed in the distribution of gifts to servants at the elite funeral by affluent families who wanted to be seen as benevolent and generous employers. Some post-mortem directives identified that servants should receive mourning items comparable to more affluent mourners. In 1795, the servants of Thomas Edward Freeman received the same crape hatbands and gloves provided to the general mourners.<sup>566</sup> At the funeral of Lady Mary St. John, the servants of the Herbert family received silk hatbands and gloves which matched those given to the minister. These items showed the generosity of their employer, John Herbert, who was paying for the funeral of Lady Mary.<sup>567</sup> The items given to the servants of the Herbert family also demonstrate an attempt to acknowledge the hierarchies

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<sup>563</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 9 August 1798.

<sup>564</sup> *Daily Post*, 11 October 1729.

<sup>565</sup> G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 271.

<sup>566</sup> GRO: D2002/15/7, ‘Account for the Funeral of Thomas Edwards Freeman’, 1795; WSHC: 2057/A6/18.

<sup>567</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/18.

within the domestic staff. At the 1793 funeral of Lady Mary, the household butler and his wife received special, more expensive, items that distinguished them from the eight male and eight female domestics. Mr Retford, the butler, was provided with a black silk hatband and silk gloves and his wife, and the housekeeper, received black silk gloves.<sup>568</sup> The servants' clothing was modified to reflect the deceased person. At the funerals of Mary St. John and Mary Herbert, the female servants of the Herbert family were provided with 'flower'd kid gloves' which were more intricately decorated than the male servants' gloves.<sup>569</sup> These items were not provided at the funeral of George Herbert in the same year, 1793, arguably because the female servants' attire was intended to reflect the gender of the deceased. This practice is similar to the much earlier tradition of 'maidens' escorting the coffin of a deceased woman.<sup>570</sup>

### iii. The Militia

In some of the later funerals studied in this chapter, we may observe the presence of militia, particularly at the funerals of elites who had less heritage than the established aristocracy. This is no coincidence; the local militia were an institution through which elites could develop an association with their provincial seat or contribute to the daily life of the community. Participation in militia duty was also beneficial because the internal distinctions of rank and hierarchy reinforced elite authority and bolstered claims of status over competing locals. By participating in the funeral of a deceased commander, the militia therefore represented their superior officer's bond to the local community and recall. A complement of military volunteers was a spectacular addition to a funeral procession; attired in their own uniforms, bearing weapons and accompanied by musicians. These were all important

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<sup>568</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/19.

<sup>569</sup> WSHC: 2057/A6/19.

<sup>570</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 436.

elements of military life and in the funeral procession they were symbols of the order and discipline that the deceased person had imparted to his men.

Bandsmen marched as part of the militia complement, bearing fifes and drums. In the 1798 funeral procession of Charles Cobbe, nephew of the Marquis of Waterford, the Bath Volunteers had performed the *The Dead March in Saul*.<sup>571</sup> This was a popular choice; in the same year, the band of the Fonthill Militia had also performed it in the procession of the Hon. William Beckford's mother and the fifes and drums of the Bristol Volunteers would also perform it in honour of their deceased Captain, John Span, one year later.<sup>572</sup> This military music was a statement of association, not just with the provincial community and its militia, but also with the elite culture of funerary ceremonial practiced by monarchy. Marches performed on fife and drum were an important element of the funeral processions of the royal family and although the bandsmen were irregular soldiers they still followed the funerary practices of their full-time compatriots. The militia bandsmen of Fonthill muffled their instruments with crape just as army musicians had at the funeral of Princess Amelia.<sup>573</sup> A similar evocation of superior funerary practice can be observed in the bearing of arms by militiamen. The reversed arms of the Fonthill militia recalled the practices of the extinct heraldic funeral rite in which weapons were carried inverted to symbolize the deceased in the procession.<sup>574</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the funerals of the elite were opportunities for social display that was based on the status and relationships of the deceased person. The transportation of the

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<sup>571</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 19 July 1798.

<sup>572</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 9 August 1798 and *Bath Chronicle*, 28 February 1799.

<sup>573</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 9 Aug 1798 and "Some Particulars of the Princess Amelia's Funeral " *Public Advertiser*, 20 November 1786.

<sup>574</sup> *Bath Chronicle* 9 Aug 1798.

dead body, from a London residence to a rural vault, is a common aspect of elite funerals which has been traditionally overlooked by existing studies. This chapter has interpreted the journey as part of the broader social display of the funeral and argued that use of decorative items and local church bells indicates a deliberate attempt to stage a display on the road. The targeted use of decorative items during travel through towns ensured that bystanders would be impressed by a visual display, even if they did not know the deceased person. The funeral is interpreted as an opportunity for display that recognised the relationships between the dead person and their community. The participation of invited mourners reflected the different roles which the dead person performed in the community: employer, leader or benefactor.

We can observe that privacy was an important influence on the organisation of the transportation of the dead body and the funeral. The use of tavern space on the road and the invitation of specific community members ensured that the mourners were separated from the public during the funerary events. The preparation of specially-decorated spaces within local taverns ensured that each stop made by the mourners and the dead body was in keeping with their expectations of quality, regardless of local conditions. Special effort was made to perform acts of charity to participants in the funeral that would satisfy expectations of benevolence and secure the reputation of the deceased person. This evidence contributes to a new understanding of the elite funeral as a more intimate and personal occasion.

## Nonconformist Funerals

### Introduction

This chapter examines how nonconformist Christians' ideas of respectable funerary practice were influenced by their religious beliefs. The chapter analyses funerary behaviour from nonconformist communities of three different denominations in the West Country: The Society of Friends, Methodism and Baptist churches. This is neither an exhaustive analysis of nonconformist funerals, nor a comprehensive catalogue of the customs of the specific denominations. It is intended to show the diversity of approaches to the funeral outside of the established church and the influence of religious beliefs served to justify or condemn specific practices. The chapter argues that contemporary funeral culture was not entirely rejected but was used to unite and strengthen nonconformist communities in the aftermath of a death.

The chapter will commence by examining the act of mourning and commemorating leaders. Each of the three communities had leaders, although they lacked the formal status of priests, the figureheads of nonconformist communities were an important presence, providing guidance and meaning. For this reason, the death of a leader was significant because it had the potential to create a period of personal anguish for the mourners and uncertainty for the community. The chapter argues that the funerals of such individuals were intended to address the mourners' loss, without aggrandising the deceased or appearing to glorify earthly status over spiritual integrity. It is observed that funerary customs contributed to a highly personal funeral in which mourners expressed their esteem by recalling the leader's religious example and contribution to the community. The use of funerary goods was justified by the contribution of the leader and was accepted as a respectable response by the congregation.

Our second focus examines how the funerary practices of nonconformist congregations were a conscious expression of their communal identity; the shared customs and beliefs of the



congregation. This is important because the communal identity was a constant which could be relied upon to provide stability when death had removed a member of the community. The fear of ritual, importance of necessity and didacticism had an influence on the funerals which were performed by nonconformist groups. It is observed that in each denomination the structure of the funeral reflected beliefs about the dangers of ritual. The consumption of funerary items such as coffins, mourning wear and mourning decorations was intended to demonstrate a rejection of worldliness and an awareness of necessity. The performance funeral sermon was an opportunity in which the shared beliefs of the community could be overtly stated but it also required justification against accusations of vanity and aggrandisement. The language of sermons, both spoken and printed, identified the didactic worth of preaching and accordingly provided a commentary on the role of the funeral.

The final focus of the chapter concerns the development and use of nonconformist burial spaces in the late-eighteenth century West Country. The ownership of burial space provided nonconformist communities with the means to avoid dependence on the established church and perform respectable burials within the doctrines of their faith. Within these newly formed spaces, the use of a burial plot became an opportunity to demonstrate a person's own faithful qualities and their place in the community.

## Existing Literature

### i. Death as a Crisis

Anthropological literature has interpreted death as a crisis which threatens the community of the deceased person. The funeral is consequently presented as a ritual which responds to the crisis by separating the mourners from the deceased person and re-integrating them into society. Despite differing customs and practices, it is widely observed that the form of the funeral ritual is influenced by the values and demands of the bereaved community.

We can observe this in Emile Durkheim's early, influential research regarding the communal, social foundations of religion. Durkheim proposed that the mournful acts of funerary participants are neither spontaneous nor affective but are imposed upon the individual by their society.<sup>575</sup> The performance of these mournful acts mitigates the crisis of death by demonstrating the solidarity of the mourners. Durkheim argued that mourners found comfort from knowing that their grief was shared by others. This argument is presented with evidence from indigenous tribes whose practices of scarification and mutilation illustrate Durkheim's points but are difficult to reconcile with the evidence of the eighteenth century West Country.<sup>576</sup> Subsequent criticism and refinement of Durkheim's conclusions by Maurice Bloch challenged the motive for mourners and criticised the failure to address religious faith.<sup>577</sup> It is nonetheless evident that successive anthropological studies have discussed the importance of communal expression. For instance, Edward Shils similarly asserted that, by demonstrating communal consensus, funeral rites proclaim assuring message of the 'survival of the collectivity' in spite of crises such as the incidence of death.<sup>578</sup>

Robert Hertz's description of mourning as a 'collective representation' complements Durkheim's argument that mourning is an obligation, rather than personal act.<sup>579</sup> Hertz was a student of Durkheim and his research similarly focused on indigenous communities, whose burial practices were studied within a wider analysis of how obligatory activity shaped

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<sup>575</sup> E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. 2nd Edition (Surrey: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1976), p. 397.

<sup>576</sup> Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religion* (1976), pp. 323-3.

<sup>577</sup> M. Bloch, 'Durkheimian anthropology and religion: going in and out of each other's bodies' In H. Whitehouse and J. Laidlaw (eds.), *Religion, anthropology, and cognitive science* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007), pp. 66-88; M. Bloch, *In and Out of Each Other's Bodies* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 18.

<sup>578</sup> E. Shils, 'Ritual and Crisis', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London: Series B, Biological*, 251 (1966), p. 448.

<sup>579</sup> Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 27-8.

mundane communal activity. Significantly for this chapter, Hertz asserts that if religion influenced the lives of a community, it would inevitably influence their rites of mourning.<sup>580</sup>

In addition to ideas about the motivation for joining mourners it is beneficial to consider anthropological conclusions about the purpose of mourning behaviour. Arnold van Gennep interprets the funeral as an 'incorporative' rite which re-integrates mourners into society following their shared bereavement. Temporal relationships and social status are important to this process of reintegration because they determine the status of mourners and the duration of their involvement in the funeral rites.<sup>581</sup> Raymond Firth drew a similar conclusion regarding the importance of social ties in the funeral rites of small communities. Firth's studies address the rites of indigenous Pacific Island and African peoples whose overt similarities to the people of the eighteenth century are limited. However, we may note that both groups performed funeral rites which were primarily influenced by spiritual beliefs, rather than solely hygienic or social reasons. To a lesser extent it may also be noted that the indigenous communities' circumstances mirrored the experience of those in pre-industrial England who were not fully served by undertaking trade. The insularity of the communities Frith studies is significant because the nonconformists in this chapter were culturally insular, rather than geographically isolated. Firth asserted that small, insular communities are influenced by intrinsic values which are 'basic to their corporate existence' and accordingly manifest themselves in the form of their communal rites.<sup>582</sup> Funerals were inevitable rituals which reflected the social character of the society that performed them, including the values of its people. In Frith's interpretation the performance of rituals such as funerals was intended, 'to maintain and reinforce the system of sentiments on which the existence of a

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<sup>580</sup> Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*, p. 65.

<sup>581</sup> A. van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (Chicago IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 146-7.

<sup>582</sup> Raymond Firth, *Elements of Social Organization* (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 89.

society depends.’<sup>583</sup> Victor Turner drew an even more intimate focus in his conclusion that ritual serves to reaffirm relationships between real world individuals.<sup>584</sup> This is arguably the most applicable concept in the context of this study of individuals’ personal funerary choices, founded on documentary evidence, including personal correspondence.

The anthropological interpretation of the funeral as a communal response to a crisis supports the argument made by this chapter. Anthropological research justifies the argument that funerary practices are influenced by both the beliefs and requirements of the mourning community. However, the contemporary subject material of anthropologists’ research makes it difficult to apply their conclusions to historical evidence without generalisation. For this reason, it is appropriate to consider socio-historical research which discusses the funerary practices of the specific denominations discussed by this chapter.

## ii. Historiography of Nonconformist Funerary Practices

Dedicated studies of nonconformist funerary practices are extremely limited. Funerary practices are discussed within broader research into consumption, and faith practices. We can observe three clear points from this literature regarding the funerary practices of Baptists, Quakers and Methodists.

Primarily, it may be observed that funerary goods were consumed by all nonconformist denominations despite a shared distaste for material goods and ostentatious display. This is most evident in the Quaker aesthetic of ‘plainness’ which discouraged the consumption of material goods to convey status.<sup>585</sup> Restraint in consumption and was similarly practiced by Methodists, although not acknowledged as ‘plainness’ it was founded on a similar desire to

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<sup>583</sup> Firth, *Elements* p. 64.

<sup>584</sup> V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (London: Penguin, 1974), p. 177.

<sup>585</sup> On the Quaker aesthetic of plainness: F.B. Tolles, “‘Of the Best Sort but Plain’: The Quaker Esthetic,” *American Quarterly* 11:4 (Winter, 1959), p. 486-7; M. Pointon, ‘Quakerism and Visual Culture,’ *Art History*, 20:3 (1997), pp. 407-12; A.M. Gummere, *The Quaker: A study in costume* (Ferris & Leach, 1901); Joan Kendall ‘The Development of a Distinctive Form of Quaker Dress,’ *Costume*, 19:1 (1985), pp. 58-74.

avoid worldliness. As noted by Ian Mitchell and Eryn White, Methodist doctrine permitted the acquisition of items which could be considered to be necessitous.<sup>586</sup> Members of the Baptist denomination prescribed to restrained use of material goods to remove distractions to their personal piety. For example, Michael Haykin observes that the austere decoration of chapels was a conscious attempt to limit distractions for worshippers and a practice which complemented the plain, uncomplicated nature of Baptist prayer.<sup>587</sup> It is important to note that literature has identified that the two core purchases of the common funeral, the coffin and grave, were nonetheless consumed by all members of these denominations.

Secondarily, literature argues that the use of funerary goods was clearly influenced by the beliefs and customs of specific denominations. In this context the use of funeral goods can be interpreted as a testament of faith, demonstrating the core beliefs of the deceased individual and their surviving relatives. Documentary research of funerary expenditure is limited, however, we may benefit from the conclusions of archaeological studies at burial grounds. Research at Baptist burial ground in Poole has identified the use of simple coffins and low adoption of coffin ornaments, which suggest the influence of Baptist customs of simplicity and restraint.<sup>588</sup> Analysis of excavated Quaker funerary goods identifies that the quality of such items reflected the Quakers' adherence to plainness. The absence of decorative coffin furnishings in the Quaker burials at North Shields, Kingston, Bathford and Corsham is interpreted as a physical manifestation of their belief burials should not show evidence of social difference.<sup>589</sup> This complements wider studies of contemporaneous Quaker artefacts

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<sup>586</sup> Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation in English Retailing*, p. 47; E.M. White, 'The Material World, Moderation and Methodism in Eighteenth Century Wales', *Welsh History Review* 23:3 (2007), pp. 44-64.

<sup>587</sup> M.A.G. Haykin, "'Draw Nigh unto My Soul": English Baptist Piety and the Means of Grace in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 10:4 (2006), p. 57.

<sup>588</sup> J.I. McKinley, *The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Baptist Chapel and Burial Ground at West Butts Street, Poole* (Salisbury: Wessex Archaeology, 2008), p. 47.

<sup>589</sup> J. Proctor, M. Gaimster and J.Y. Langthorne, *A Quaker Burial Ground in North Shields* (Pre-Construct Archaeology, 2016), pp. 143-4; L. Bashford and L. Sibun, "Excavations at the Quaker Burial Ground, Kingston-upon-Thames, London." *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 41:1 (2007), pp. 100-154; L. Bashford and T. Pollard

which identify the influence of plainness on the material culture of Quaker life.<sup>590</sup> The austerity of Quaker consumption makes the evidence from this denomination particularly compelling, it is apparent that they were not unique in eschewing fashionable burial goods.

The third, key point, which can be observed in literature is the importance of burial as a method of expressing group identity. The establishment of a burial ground was significant because it enabled a denominational community to distance themselves from the established church. Nonconformists were frequently buried in Anglican churchyards due to convenience or family factors, this was disenfranchising because funerals were performed by clergymen, in accordance with Anglican customs. Possession of a burial ground enabled a community to bury their dead in accordance with their own customs and in a manner which did not contravene their own rules about consumption.

The architecture and design of these burial grounds has been the focus of several studies which identify the expressions of group identity in the ornamentation and location of graves. Studies of grave ornamentation are the most numerous because the headstone or monument is a common, survivable source to study which was used widely from the late seventeenth century. This approach was pioneered by the Edwin Dethlefsen and James Deetz who argued that memorial design was a credible medium for the expression of religious beliefs. Their analysis of North American Quaker gravestones demonstrated that the changes in iconography reflected concurrent changes in religious belief.<sup>591</sup> The significance of this study can be observed in its influence on subsequent studies of memorialisation which have

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(1998) In the burying place — the excavation of a Quaker burial ground, in M. Cox (ed.) *Grave concerns: death and burial in England 1700–1850*, (York: CBA, 1998), pp. 154–66.

<sup>590</sup> J.P. McCarthy and J.A. Ward, *The Hexagonal Friends' Meetinghouse at Burlington, New Jersey: A consideration of Form, Function, and Influences*, Paper presented at the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology Annual Conference, St. Mary's City, MD (1999); Simon Coleman and Peter Collins 'The "Plain" and the "Positive": Ritual, Experience and Aesthetics in Quakerism and Charismatic Christianity', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 15:3 (1999), pp. 322-23.

<sup>591</sup> E. Dethlefsen and J. Deetz, 'Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow Trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries,' *American Antiquity* 31:4 (1996), pp. 502-510; E. Dethlefsen and J. Deetz, 'Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow,' *Natural History* 76:3 (1967), 29-37.

similarly identified evidence of religious change in specific regional areas. Differences are clearest for Quakers owing to their custom of austerity. The Quaker use of gravestones has been studied by Gaynell Stone who discusses how the language and iconography of stones conveyed the Quaker faith.<sup>592</sup> Elizabeth Crowell's study of gravestones in Philadelphia identifies how local Quakerism directly influenced a local trend in austere headstones. Significantly it indicates how different denominations occasioned a change in the ornamentation, including the introduction of new fashions and styles, which were not consistent with Quaker ideals.<sup>593</sup>

The importance which these studies attribute to religious belief is challenged by literature which asserts that consumerism was the dominant influence on memorialisation in nonconformist burial grounds. Richard Veit argued that the widely used motifs demonstrate that the design of burial monuments were dictated by contemporary fashion for neoclassicism, rather than religious beliefs, in his analysis of Baptist and Presbyterian memorials.<sup>594</sup> Adam Heinrich similarly uses nonconformist gravestones from the American Northeast to argue that trends in iconography were influenced by secular factors such as personal taste and the wealth of particular families.<sup>595</sup> Although these studies analyse a geographically distant source they are of value to this study because they demonstrate the local variation in memorial design which is acknowledged by those who argue for and against the importance of religious ideas. This variation is widely attributed to the parochial manner

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<sup>592</sup> G. Stone, 'Sacred Landscapes: Material Evidence of Ideological and Ethnic Choice in Long Island, New York, Gravestones 1680-1800' *Historical Archaeology* 43:1 (2009), pp. 142-159.

<sup>593</sup> E.A. Crowell, 'Philadelphia Gravestones, 1760-1820' *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 10:1 (1981), pp. 23-6.

<sup>594</sup> R.F. Veit, "'Resolved to Strike out a New Path": Consumerism and Iconographic Change in New Jersey Gravestones, 1680-1820' *Historical Archaeology* 43:1 (2009), pp. 115-141. Also: R.F. Veit, 'John Solomon Teetzel and the Anglo-German Gravestone Carving Tradition of Eighteenth-Century Northwestern New Jersey,' *Markers* 17 (1999), pp. 124-161.

<sup>595</sup> A.R. Heinrich, "'Remember Me..." But "Be Mindfull of Death": The Artistic, Social, and Personal Choice Expressions Observed on the Gravemarkers of Eighteenth Century Monmouth County, New Jersey.' *New Jersey History* 126:1 (2011), pp. 26-56.

in which gravestones were produced, by local craftsmen whose abilities and resources were uniquely different.<sup>596</sup> This explanation for local variation complements observations of the undertaking trade, where the basic form of products was determined by the tradesman and personal taste dictated which of the tradesman's items were acquired. Analysis of gravestones deviates from this model to suggest that personal taste could influence the modification of stones; an argument which therefore does not deny the importance of religious beliefs but argue that they were a lesser influence than commercial factors. This is significant because these contrasting arguments reflect the core theme of this chapter; the struggle between the religious ideas and the increasing consumerism of the eighteenth century.

### Respectability in the Funerals of Nonconformist Leaders

Leaders were present in the three nonconformist communities analysed by this chapter and were an important part of their respective communities. The form of leadership differed greatly from the established church because power rested with the congregation whose acceptance or consensus granted authority to the leader. In Baptist communities it was customary for the congregation to elect a minister and within the denomination a system of academies ensured that ministers received a level of theological instruction.<sup>597</sup> The minister was intended to provide guidance and direction to members of his congregation when required and to lead services.<sup>598</sup> Methodist societies were served by two sorts of leader in addition to the administrative roles performed by members of the congregation. Ordained ministers provided pastoral guidance and administered sacraments for the societies of a circuit. Additional supplementary preaching was provided by laypeople who were appointed

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<sup>596</sup> The importance of specific tradesmen's skills is acknowledged by: Heinrich, 'Remember Me' (2011), p. 38-48.

<sup>597</sup> H. Foreman, 'Baptist Provision for Ministerial Education in the 18th Century', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 27 (1978), 358-69.

<sup>598</sup> On Baptist ministry: L.G. Champion, 'The Social Status of Some Eighteenth Century Baptist Ministers', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 25 (1973), 10-14;



as preachers.<sup>599</sup> Following the secession from the established church a similar structure remained but the tenure of ordained ministers became longer.<sup>600</sup> As Methodism became more institutional an increasing number of ministers became static. This enabled greater attachment to particular communities and societies with the consequence of stronger identification between congregations and particular ministers.<sup>601</sup> Leadership within Quaker communities was more informal and it is evident that certain individuals assumed positions of significance within their meeting as a consequence of their contribution to communal life. Elders or overseers were appointed in recognition of their expertise and were expected to provide pastoral care of friends. The former were charged with maintaining order and providing spiritual guidance whilst the latter oversaw practical aspects of church management.<sup>602</sup> Societies also appointed recorded ministers was made in recognition of particular individuals' oration and religious insight.<sup>603</sup> Although these roles did not confer superiority to a particular individual they were a reflection of the community's respect and a recognition of the practical role which the individual performed. Evidence shows that ministers and elders gained respect of community for their actions.<sup>604</sup>

Having established that respected leaders existed within each of the denominations examined by this chapter, we must consider how the deaths of leaders were respectably memorialised. The leaders of each denomination will be examined separately, considering the similarities and differences in practice which existed between them.

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<sup>599</sup> W.R. Cannon, 'The Meaning of Ministry in Methodism' *Methodist History* October (1969), pp. 4-6.

<sup>600</sup> J. Kent, *Wesley and the Wesleyan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 27-8.

<sup>601</sup> Kent, *Wesley and the Wesleyans* (2002), pp. 66-7; V.M. Schuth, *Leadership Roles for Women in the Eighteenth Century Methodist Revival, and in particular female preaching*. Unpublished thesis. (1995), p. 8; D. Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion, 1750-1900* (London: Routledge, 2013), p.23.

<sup>602</sup> W. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (London, 1919), p. 248.

<sup>603</sup> J.E. Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 40

<sup>604</sup> H. Plant, 'Patterns and Practices of Women's Leadership in the Yorkshire Quaker Community, 1760-1820', *Quaker Studies* 10:2 (2006), p. 224-5.

The funerals of Baptist leaders at Broadmead, Bristol, are the most ostentatious ceremonies examined by this chapter. During the latter decades of the Eighteenth century a pair of elaborate funerals were staged, which conform to our understanding of mainstream funerary culture during the period. The funerals of two principals of the Broadmead Academy, Hugh Evans and John Ryland, are good examples of bold and striking public display. The mourners' use of decorative and fashionable ephemera contrasts quite strikingly with the Baptists encouragement of simplicity and dislike for decoration. We must therefore consider why such funerals were staged and how such expenditure was justified.

Bristol's significance within the Baptist faith in the eighteenth century is one justification for the scale of the funerals. The Baptist academy at Broadmead, a rare institution during the period, where many ministers received education and its national influence of the academy has been highlighted by Roger Hayden.<sup>605</sup> Hayden's research specifically focused on the spread of a moderate and evangelical form of 'Particular' Baptist worship which is attributed to the teaching of the early principals, Bernard Foskett, Hugh Evans and his son, Caleb Evans.<sup>606</sup> By training ministers who would preach throughout the country, the academy's principals had an influence and reputation beyond the city of Bristol. This was complemented by the publication of the principals' sermons and theological writing by print houses in the city.

The death of an academy principal was therefore a significant loss because it was important to both the local community and a wider, disparate group of mourners outside of the city. The people who organised these the funerals were responsible for ceremonies which

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<sup>605</sup> R. Hayden, *Continuity and Change. Evangelical Calvinism among eighteenth century Baptist ministers trained at Bristol Academy, 1690-1791* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 2006)

<sup>606</sup> The significance of these early principals of the academy is also discussed in: N.S. Moon, *Education for Ministry, Bristol Baptist College, 1679-1979* (Bristol: Bristol Baptist College, 1979); S.A. Swaine, *Faithful Men: or Memorials of Bristol Baptist College and Some its Most Distinguished Alumni* (London: Alexander & Shepherd, 1884). On Caleb Evans specifically: N.S. Moon, 'Caleb Evans founder of the Bristol Education Society' *Baptist Quarterly* (1995), pp. 171-189.

acknowledged the contribution which the deceased had made as a local leader and figure of national influence. The importance of the occasion also required a funeral which was commensurate with the status of the institution which was being represented. This was a fragile balance; too much ostentation might be deemed excessive and a severely modest display could be interpreted as a gesture of disrespect.

Hugh Evans died two years after retiring as the academy principal and the organisation of his funeral was overseen by his son, the serving principal, Caleb Evans. As the second principal of the Bristol Academy, Hugh Evans had overseen the education of ministers from 1758-79.<sup>607</sup> Evans' significance beyond the city was demonstrated by his involvement in the foundation of the Bristol Education Society, an organisation which provided education for ministers who would serve nationwide.<sup>608</sup>

The large funeral staged for Hugh Evans in 1781 was an event of local significance in terms of its scale which compared favourably with those of local gentlemen and civic dignitaries. Evans' funeral procession was one of the largest witnessed at the time, a quality which clearly testified to the significance of the Baptist community as well as their leader.<sup>609</sup> Such was the significance of the funeral that it was recorded in detail by the Baptist writer, John Rippon in his history of the early academy.<sup>610</sup> Rippon's account recognises the importance of the funeral to the academy, both as an academic institution and a gathering of Baptist worshippers. The author had been educated at the academy during the period of Hugh Evans' leadership and is a good example of how the influence of academy principals was felt beyond

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<sup>607</sup> Hugh Evans leadership of the college is discussed in greater detail in: Champion, L.G., 'The Social Status of Some Eighteenth Century Baptist Ministers', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 25 (1973), 10-14; R. Hayden, *Evangelical Calvinism among British Baptists with particular reference to Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evans and the Bristol Academy, 1690 - 1791* unpublished thesis (The University of Keele, 1991).

<sup>608</sup> Moon, 'Caleb Evans', pp. 169-73.

<sup>609</sup> BRO: 30251/BD/M1/3, 'Minutes of Church Meetings, 1779-1817'.

<sup>610</sup> J. Rippon, A brief essay towards an history of the Baptist Academy at Bristol; read before the Bristol Education Society, at their anniversary meeting, in Broadmead, August 26th, 1795. By John Rippon, D.D. (London, 1796), p. 32.

the local Baptist community in Bristol. The words of Caleb Evans' sermon at his father's funeral recall the significance of the occasion to academicians, 'I know you loved and honoured your deceased tutor whilst living, so I trust it will be your earnest desire to realize his hopes.'<sup>611</sup> Evans alludes to the affection of the students for their deceased tutor but his statement invokes a sense of obligation, indicating that students were expected to be a part of the obsequies. The students' presence was a reminder of Hugh Evans' contribution to evangelisation, an achievement which did not involve worldly matters such as wealth or fame, and one which justified the scale and ostentation of his funeral. It is arguable that Caleb Evans directed this justification to the funeralgoers, including members of the local congregation, who were capable of challenging or disapproving of their actions of their leaders. The oration also shows how the death of a minister could be employed as a didactic occasion, even though the ostentatious funeral was beyond the means of the congregants. Evans used the example of his dead father, reminding the congregants that 'even a minister may die.'<sup>612</sup> In such a case the seniority of the minister, even though it was informal, served as a reminder of the universality of death.

The second grand funeral at Broadmead was staged for the fifth principal of the academy, Rev. John Ryland in 1825. This funeral similarly recognised the dead man's pastoral role in Broadmead as well as his national significance. Ryland established himself as a minister at Northampton and would form many important relationships whilst preaching to the College Street meeting in the city.<sup>613</sup> His national reputation was arguably secured by his involvement in the foundation of the Baptist Missionary Society, an organisation which deployed

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<sup>611</sup> C. Evans, *Elisha's exclamation! A Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of The Rev. Hugh Evans, M. A. Who departed this Life, March 28, 1781, In the 69th Year of his Age. Preached at Broadmead, Bristol, April 8, 1781, Published at the Request of the Congregation.* (Bristol, 1781), p. 32.

<sup>612</sup> S. Stennett, *The mortality of ministers contrasted with the unchangeableness of Christ: in a sermon, occasioned by the decease of the Rev. Caleb Evans, D.D.* (London, 1791).

<sup>613</sup> J. Culross, *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of Various Christian Service* (London: Elliot Stock, 1897), p. 76.

evangelists into the nation and colonies.<sup>614</sup> Such was Ryland's reputation that two different Baptist churches competed for his leadership before he eventually chose Bristol.<sup>615</sup> It can be argued that Broadmead academy demonstrated its gratitude to Ryland by funding and organising his funeral at the cost of £91, the equivalent of an affluent gentlemen's ostentatious funeral.<sup>616</sup> This expenditure contributed to a large funeral that recognised the local and national contribution which Ryland had made to the Baptist faith. The two groups of invited guests recalled the local and national significance of John Ryland, the students from the academy and a pair of visiting ministers from outside of the city.

A considerable number of the mourners who attended the funeral were students of the academy and their presence reflected the local, often personal significance of the deceased. The associative bond which Caleb Evans had earlier alluded was recalled by the mourning apparel which was provided to the students by the college. This attire drew the admiration of those who attended the funeral of Rev. John Ryland, were similarly described as 'highly impressive.' The academicians did more than merely swell the funeral procession because they represented Ryland's temporal achievements, the individuals who had been nurtured and educated by his institution. In this regard, the students were proof of Ryland's greatness and their numbers were a testament to his legacy.

The national significance of Ryland was recalled by the presence of two individuals who were notable figures within the Baptist missionary movement: Rev. Joseph Hughes of London and Rev. Isaiah Birt of Birmingham. Both men were important figureheads whose presence was noteworthy enough to earn a reference in the *Bristol Mercury* account of the

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<sup>614</sup> M.A.G. Haykin, 'John Ryland Jr. (1753-1825)', *Dutch Review of Church History* 70:2 (1990), pp. 173-191. 'Ryland's contribution to education is discussed in earlier biographical works: Culross, *The Three Rylands*, pp. 83-8.

<sup>615</sup> G. Gordon, 'The Call of Dr John Ryland Jr' *Baptist Quarterly* 34:5 (1996), pp. 214-227.

<sup>616</sup> The provisioning of Ryland's funeral is documented in: BRO: 30251/BD/A1/3, 'Cash Account Book of Broadmead Meeting', 1813-1834.

funeral.<sup>617</sup> At the time of Ryland's funeral, Hughes was a pastor in Battersea but he had served as leader of the academy for a short period prior to Ryland's election.<sup>618</sup> Isaiah Birt was similarly involved in missionary work, establishing several churches within the country after his education at the academy. The two men walked in a central position in the funeral procession and read orations during the funeral service.

The funeral service of John Ryland was as spectacular as his procession and it too was a tribute to his work in the community. The Broadmead Academy funded funeral drapery worth to transform the deceased reverend's chapel into a mournful space that was not dissimilar to the grand private funerals of the late eighteenth century. The decoration of the church in mourning drapery demonstrated his significance to the local community and it complemented the mourning attire worn by members of the congregation.<sup>619</sup> *This temporary memorial recognised a space which had been significant to him during his career and location in which he had, as a minister, performed good works. In the public environs of the street, the funeral procession had extended this demonstration of Ryland's significance to recall his national importance, through the presence of guests from outside the community. All were ultimately participants in a funeral which, similarly to Hugh Evans', made a bold, expensive display for bystanders.*

These ostentatious acts of commemoration demonstrated a willingness to employ the ephemera and material culture of the fashionable funeral. By using these items, the Broadmead Baptists had communicated the importance of their leaders in a ceremonial language that could be understood by people from outside their community. The use of these

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<sup>617</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 6 June 1825.

<sup>618</sup> J. Leifchild, *Memoir of the late Rev. Joseph Hughes, AM* (London, 1835), pp. 153-4.

<sup>619</sup> BRO: 30251/BD/A1/3.

items was also justified by the personality and contribution of the dead person, which made such expenditure appropriate.

It may be argued that West Country Methodists were similarly influenced by the perception that greater funerary expenditure was appropriate for worthy people. Methodist teaching permitted this because directives on consumption encouraged that expenditure should be limited to necessary or respectable items. This instruction provided Methodist mourners with the autonomy to decide whether their expenditure was appropriate for the status of the deceased individual. Sanction might assume the form of disapproval from members of the community or damage to personal reputation, but if a consensus existed it would be possible for an ostentatious display to be staged. This is demonstrated by two instances in which Methodists from both the Arminian and Calvinist connexions commemorated their dead leaders with a significant and ostentatious display.

The deaths of John Wesley and George Whitefield were significant occasions for West Country Methodists who were members of their respective connexions. Wesley was an integral part of the Methodist movement as the charismatic leader and author of the faith, as testified by his close involvement in the production and dissemination of Methodist dogma. Wesley published and preached in different chapels around the country and America, he was consequently a widely recognised figure within and without the movement. Wesley's awareness of his own significance to the operation of the movement can be observed in his foundation of special council to control the faithful after his death.<sup>620</sup> The movement which he left was a popular, expanding organisation which was faced impending transformation to its status and structure. At the time of Wesley's death there were two divisions within Methodism: Arminians, who had been loyal to Wesley and Calvinists who followed the

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<sup>620</sup> K.J. Collins, 'Wesley's Life and Ministry', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. by Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 56-7.

teachings of figures such as George Whitefield and Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon. Whitefield was an established preacher whose open-air speeches had been heard by large crowds in Britain and America, where he resided for significant periods of his life. As a proponent of Calvinistic Methodism, he had founded the Methodist Associations and served as a chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon.<sup>621</sup> Despite his theological differences, Whitefield collaborated with Wesley but diverged because of his beliefs about predestination and differed to Wesley's Arminian views.

Both individuals had preached in the West Country during their ministry. Wesley had been a prominent figure in establishment of Bristol's New Room and a frequent preacher in the city.<sup>622</sup> Wesley's preaching also brought him to the towns of Wiltshire and the Methodist community in Bath. Whitefield's open-air preaching had brought him to Wiltshire and Bath. Whitefield's early preaching occurred in Bristol, he preached to the miners of Kingswood and he was responsible for the for the Tabernacle church in Penn Street.<sup>623</sup>

Neither Wesley or Whitefield died in the West Country: John Wesley died in London and was buried at the City Road chapel and George Whitefield died in Newburyport, Massachusetts and was buried in a vault beneath his chapel.<sup>624</sup> Both individuals were mourned by West Country congregations whose actions represent an attempt to express their own, local, sense of loss.

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<sup>621</sup> K.E. Beebe and C. Jones 'Whitefield and the Celtic Revivals' in G. Hammond and D.C. Jones eds. *George Whitefield: Life, Context, and Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 136; M. Davis, 'The Countess of Huntingdon and Whitefield's Bethesda' *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 56:1 (1972), p. 72.

<sup>622</sup> C.M. Norris, *The Financing of John Wesley's Methodism c.1740-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 202.

<sup>623</sup> M.G. Anderson, "'Our Purpose Is the Same': Whitefield, Foote, and the Theatricality of Methodism', *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 34 (2005), pp. 131-2. On Whitefield and the Tabernacle: J. Chilcott, *Chilcott's Descriptive History of Bristol, Ancient and Modern; or, a guide to Bristol, Clifton & The Hotwells* Seventh Edition (Bristol, 1849), p. 212.

<sup>624</sup> Collins, 'Wesley's Life and Ministry,' p. 54.



The Methodist congregation of King Street, Bath mourned for Wesley with a special service that was attended by the congregation dressed in ‘black, grey and brown-black’ clothing.<sup>625</sup> The eclectic range of mourning colours worn by the congregation illustrates how the Methodists’ attitude to respectability in mourning differed from mainstream fashion of black and the importance of uniformity in funeral wear. The King Street chapel service of commemoration for Wesley served as a sort of proxy funeral, in which black mourning cloth was hung in the chapel and a special oration was read to the congregation.<sup>626</sup> The *Bath Chronicle* described the Methodists’ behaviour as being similar to ‘general mourning,’ alluding to the fashionable custom of publicly mourning for deceased monarchs and national figures.<sup>627</sup> The extravagant memorial staged for Wesley illustrates how regional enthusiasm for commemorating a notable figure could contradict the values which that figure had upheld. Wesley’s own funeral followed a directive in his will that it should be ‘performed in the plainest manner consistent with decency.’<sup>628</sup> Contemporaries disputed that the regional acts of memorialisation were too ostentatious and were a reflection of the desires of locals, rather than Wesley. This attitude was expressed by a contemporary publication which observed that ‘Mr Wesley’s suspicions regarding his obsequies have been amply realised.’<sup>629</sup> This was not a concern when the members of Lady Huntingdon’s Connexion gathered in Bath to mourn the death of George Whitefield. The mourning hangings which adorned the chapel in Bath were an appropriate backdrop for a similar proxy funeral in which the congregation heard Whitefield’s funeral sermon read by their minister, Mr. Henry Venn.<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> *Bath Chronicle* 7 March 1791.

<sup>626</sup> *Morning Chronicle* 6 April 1791.

<sup>627</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 7 March 1791.

<sup>628</sup> *Evening Mail*, 4 March - 7 March 1791.

<sup>629</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 6 April 1791.

<sup>630</sup> J.K. Foster and A.C. Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon*. Vol. 2 (London: 1839). p. 44. Venn was a chaplain of Lady Selina Hastings: J.R. Tyson, ‘Lady Huntingdon’s Reformation’, *Church History*, 64 (1995), 580-93.

It was also possible for Methodists leaders of local significance to be commemorated with an ostentatious display that was justified by their respected status within a community. In Bristol, for example, the death of John Barber in 1812, was enthusiastically commemorated by the members of the Portland Chapel.<sup>631</sup> Barber's significance was felt at both a local and national level as he was a serving President of the national Methodist Conference and also a superintendent within his local circuit. Barber's funeral reflected this status within Methodism with a considerable procession comprising family members, senior Methodists and over 150 members of his local society. The *Methodist Magazine* justified such a spectacular procession and funeral as being the result of his colleagues and friends' intention to 'afford the society at large an opportunity of shewing their respect for the memory of the deceased pastor.'<sup>632</sup> It is apparent that expenditure and display were justifiable if they were clearly stated to be idea of those who had the interests of the community in mind, rather than their own intentions.

The ostentatious display afforded to Baptist and Methodist leaders did not occur in the funerals of leaders within Quaker societies. These funerals arguably appear sparse in comparison because of the lack of a formal funeral ceremony and the Quakers' dislike of self-aggrandisement contributed to a purposefully austere ritual. These funerals are important however because we can observe a compromise between the desire to recognise the loss felt by a community for a passing of an influential contributor and the will to remain within the restrictive boundaries of doctrine.

The death of Thomas Rutter, in 1779, was a significant event for the Quakers of the Friars meeting house in Bristol. Rutter had been a speaker in the society for years and was a prominent figure in the although his position in the society afforded him no financial benefits

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<sup>631</sup> 'Memoir of Mr. John Barber', *Methodist Magazine*, 41 (1818), pp. 321-28.

<sup>632</sup> *Methodist Magazine*, 41 (1818), p. 324.

or formally recognised status. Rutter's body was processed from his home to Friar's Yard by a large group of mourners who then attended a service to hear 'several lively short testimonies' from members of the congregation and local meetings. The modesty of Rutter's funeral when compared with those of Baptist academy leaders may also be explained by his personal finances. In contrast to the middling Baptist leaders, who were fully dedicated to religious learning, Rutter was an artisan, with a brush making shop in Castle Street.<sup>633</sup> Rutter's funeral was regarded as a respectable tribute, because of the large number of people who attended his funeral, rather than the material composition of his procession. This is also apparent in the earlier funeral of mercer and Quaker elder, Thomas Allway, at Thornbury in 1756.<sup>634</sup> In this funeral, the significance of the deceased leader was demonstrated by the attendance of a large, responsive crowd rather than a bold, expensive display. An account by a fellow Quaker noted of Allway that, 'he was much respected, which his neighbours manifested by giving their attendance at the meeting.'<sup>635</sup> Even though Quakers assigned no formal status to ministers and forbade displays of status, it was permissible to celebrate the deceased minister because of their actions and their contribution to the mourners' spiritual life.

### Communal Identity

When mourners gathered at the funeral, they were arguably strengthened by a sense of shared, communal identity; bonds of ideas, practices and beliefs which united them.

Communal identity was an important part of nonconformist life which was reinforced by many aspects of adherents' daily routines. Each denomination shared distinctive customs of

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<sup>633</sup> J. Sketchley, *Sketchley's Bristol Directory; Including Clifton, Bedminster, and the out-Parishes of St. James and St. Philip*. (Bristol: 1775), p. 85.

<sup>634</sup> London (Kew), The National Archive (hereafter TNA): RG 6/1426, 'Monthly Meeting of Frenchay: Thornbury: Marriages, Births, Burials', 1767-1798.

<sup>635</sup> S. Bownas, *An Account of the Life, Travels, and Christian Experiences in the Work of the Ministry of Samuel Bownas* (London: 1756), p. 209.

attire, leisure and expenditure, which distinguished them from their neighbours. Whilst these differences could be a cause of prejudice they were also an important source of strength for community members. For this reason it is unsurprising that the funeral practices of nonconformist communities emphasized the values and customs which distinguished them.

#### i. Attendance

Well-attended funerals were common in each of the three denominations studied in this chapter. Large crowds and gatherings of church members were a potent symbol of group stability in the face of a loss within their congregation.

We may observe that the comfort and re-assurance of a funerary crowd was not restricted to any particular denomination. The large, Quaker funeral parties attended by Sarah Fox in the 1770s illustrate how comforting messages of community solidarity were communicated by the presence of a large, solemn crowd.<sup>636</sup> Fox was heartened to see these large gatherings and her sentiments are mirrored by members of other communities. The decorum of such a large crowd was often presented as evidence that congregants were united in opinion regarding the upstanding quality of the deceased person.<sup>637</sup> It is apparent that contemporaries interpreted a silent, solemn congregation as one which was listening, to both the preaching and the testimony about the deceased person. Fox interpreted the silence of charity recipients at the funerals of Sarah Harford and Sarah Stevenson, as evidence for the sincerity of their sorrow for their deceased patron.<sup>638</sup> Methodist writer, John Allen similarly commented that the funeral of Jane Jeffs was ‘as crowded, and as attentive, and sympathising a congregation as I

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<sup>636</sup> M. Dresser, (ed.), *The Diary of Sarah Fox, Née Champion: Bristol 1745-1802. Extracted in 1872 by John Frank., Bristol Record Society's Publications* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 2003), p. 203 & p. 219.

<sup>637</sup> The behaviour of the crowd was noted in the funeral of Joseph Fry: H. Owen, *Two Centuries of Ceramic Art in Bristol, Being a History of the Manufacture of "the True Porcelain" by Richard Champion : with a Biography Compiled from Private Correspondence, Journals and Family Papers: Containing Unpublished Letters of Edmund Burke, Richard and William Burke, the Duke of Portland, the Marquis of Rockingham and Others, with an Account of the Delft, Earthenware and Enamel Glass Works, from Original Sources* (J. Bellows: Gloucester, 1873), p. 220.

<sup>638</sup> Owen, *Two Centuries of Ceramic Art*, p. 96.

almost ever saw.’<sup>639</sup> A large congregation confirmed the significance of the deceased individual and it also testified to the strength of the community who were in mourning. Charles Wesley believed that the ‘joyfull funeral’ of Mrs Richardson of Baptist-Mills was made possible because ‘the whole society followed her to the grave, through all the city.’<sup>640</sup> In this instance, the presence of the crowd strengthened the statement about the faithfulness of the Methodists, who were walking in the procession wearing full mourning wear. The importance of large gatherings prompts us to consider how such crowds were raised and how the process of organising a funeral could be shaped by the customs of nonconformist communities.

Invitation cards were the primary method for informing funeral guests. These printed tokens had been distributed in London since the 1680s and their early development appears to have been related to the growing undertaking trade in the metropolis. This is understandable because the invitation card was one of the contemporary products which made the organisation of funeral easier for the executors. The card was a convenient item because it spared the executor from the necessity of producing hand-written letters of invitation for all of their expected guests. The design of the card also made it convenient because the message of invitation was almost entirely printed, except for a few spaces for specific information such as names and locations. The treatment of these items reflects a significant evidence of what the denomination members regarded as necessary expenditure. The use of invitations was strictly forbidden by the Baptist, Edward Goff, whose funeral in 1813 in Bath eschewed contemporary fashions with its ‘total disregard of custom and opinion.’<sup>641</sup> This is not to suggest that Goff wanted an empty funeral because his instructions for the occasion directed

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<sup>639</sup> J. Allen, ‘Some Account of Margaret Smith’ *Arminian Magazine consisting of extracts and original treatises on universal redemption, Jan. 1778-Dec. 1797* 16 (Jul 1793), pp. 354-357.

<sup>640</sup> G. Whitehead, *Some account of the life of the Rev. Charles Wesley* (London, 1793), p. 156.

<sup>641</sup> *The Baptist Magazine for 1813*. Vol. 5 (London: 1813), p. 316-7.

that his neighbours should be provided with refreshments, if they chose to attend. Goff's statement shows us that he expected his neighbours would comprise the majority of his funeral party and this is perhaps an indication of why he believed that invitation would be unnecessary, even though it was a fashionable practice.

Ticketing could be justified in a series of instances in which it could be argued that it was necessary to regulate attendance or notify distant mourners. The need to regulate attendance caused the Methodists of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion in Bath to issue tickets for the large funeral of the Earl of Buchan in 1767. The three hundred tickets were mostly provided to people who were close to the deceased and George Whitefield would describe the chapel as 'more than crowded' but still 'hushed and solemn'<sup>642</sup>

Necessity could also be used as a justification in instances where members of the congregation lived in disparate locations and would require notification of the time of a funeral within the community. For this reason, the Men's Meeting of the Quaker meeting house at Redcliffe acknowledged in the necessity of notifying church members of an impending funeral in a limited manner.<sup>643</sup> This was to be practiced with restraint and in a manner that did not indicate that the funeral was more important than a normal meeting. We may observe that Quaker funerals were not restrictive and the congregation were both welcome to attend and expected to be present. Sarah Fox noted her own lack of invitation before attending the funeral of close friend, Sarah Hartford, and it is apparent that Hartford's crowded funeral was swelled by uninvited guests.<sup>644</sup>

As indicated by the widespread reluctance to use funerary invitations, the restrained consumption of material goods was part of the communal identity of each of the three

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<sup>642</sup> Foster, *Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon*, p. 16. The large number of people attending was acknowledged in *Oxford Journal*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1767.

<sup>643</sup> Mortimer, *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting* (Bristol, 1977), p. 95.

<sup>644</sup> Dresser, *Diary of Sarah Fox*, p. 219.

nonconformist communities studied within this chapter. It was intended to prevent an attachment to the ephemera of the temporal world, described by contemporaries as ‘worldliness,’ which was a distraction from spiritual matters. Restraint was practiced in varying degrees of severity by each community, and in many instances the level of restraint depended entirely on the choices of the individual. Within Baptist teaching, the absence of material goods was believed to limit distractions from the personal experience of faith. Members of Methodism were encouraged to limit their consumption to items which were necessary for the maintenance of respectability. The ‘plainness’ practiced by members of the Quaker community was arguably the most prominent example and a fundamental part of the Quakers’ reputation. Therefore, for all of the communities discussed herein, restrained consumption of funerary goods was both a personal testament of faith and a reminder of the shared values which united the bereaved community.

## ii. The Use of Coffins

It is important to consider the use of coffins within the nonconformist denominations studied by this chapter because the coffin was one of the few items consumed by congregants of all denominations. Ralph Houlbrooke asserts that the widespread provision of coffins in the funerals of Eighteenth Century reflected the prevailing belief that coffins were ‘indispensable’ for decent burial.<sup>645</sup> The notion of decency had prompted the provision of reusable ‘parish coffins’ in the two preceding centuries, although these were limited to burial grounds of the established church and not early dissenting chapels. The personal coffin was a commonplace element of the common funeral throughout this period because of the establishment of undertakers in the late-Seventeenth and early-Eighteenth Century.<sup>646</sup> As a

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<sup>645</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*. p. 339.

<sup>646</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*. p. 433.

consequence of this, the coffin is a significant item because it was a necessary item which was also mutable to contemporary fashions.

The different styles of coffin created options for individuals who sought decency without ornamentation or decoration. The Quaker custom of burying the dead in plain coffins represents the most overt example of this behaviour and was influenced by their aesthetic of plainness. The 'plain' coffin was devoid of any ornamentation which could communicate wealth or social status. Therefore, the unadorned coffin used in the 1731 funeral of affluent Quaker merchant Thomas Goldney II was aesthetically the same as that requested by salt-officer, Christopher Cole in 1737.<sup>647</sup> The reputation for austere design prompted other nonconformists to identify the plain coffin as a distinctly Quaker product. In 1797, the Baptist Dr. William Mason requested in his will 'to be put into a coffin the outside whereof shall be the same as those made use of by the people called Quakers, unornamented except a tin plate with the dates of my age and death.'<sup>648</sup> Mason's request shows that plainness of coffin design was perceived as a Quaker custom but it also indicates that people outside of the faith felt that it was an attractive gesture.

### iii. Sermons

The sermon was a part of the common funeral which had existed for several centuries and changed many times to reflect new religious beliefs and popular fashions. By the late eighteenth century, it is argued that the printed sermon was in decline and had been supplanted by the oration; an epitaph or life-review.<sup>649</sup> Nonetheless, the spoken testimony was a common element of the nonconformist funeral and mourners expected to hear some

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<sup>647</sup> J. Bettey (ed.), *The Goldney Family: a Bristol merchant dynasty*, Vol. 49 (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1998), p. 24; 'Country News', *Derby Mercury*, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1737.

<sup>648</sup> TNA: PROB 11/1297/323, 'Will of Joseph Mason Carpenter, Doctor of Physic of Bristol, Gloucestershire', 27 November 1797.

<sup>649</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, pp. 327-9.



form of speech. In each of the three denominations studied by this chapter the mourners could hear a speech at either the meeting house or the burial site. The style and performance of the sermon were determined by the attitudes and belief of the denomination which performed it.

It is important to acknowledge that funeral sermons also existed in the form of printed and published texts. These printed copies form the basis of historiographical analysis and are also significant to analysis in this chapter will examine them as commercial items, produced and consumed. Studies have associated funeral sermons with the wider genre of ‘funeral literature’ which was popular in the period. In a broad study of Protestant funeral sermons, Penny Pritchard, compares the didactic content of these texts to the guidance provided by instructional books and journals.<sup>650</sup> The studies of Eric Parisot and Jan Evert Van Leeuwen further observe similarities between funeral sermons and the popular medium of graveyard poetry. Van Leeuwen’s analysis of these language highlights similarities in the texts’ description of bodily resurrection and the afterlife.<sup>651</sup> These similarities between funeral sermons and different funerary text reflect a broader culture of personal religious education which was founded on reading. Parisot argues that reading was part of a culture of ‘closet piety’ which also included private prayer and reflection that enriched individuals’ spiritual lives.<sup>652</sup> These were consumed goods which were produced by communities which were cautious about the necessity and use of expenditure. The compromise to justify and explain their worth is important because it provided meaning. The existence of similarities between texts demonstrates how ideas and conventions could be copied or elaborated on to increase the popularity or relevance of the sermon.

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<sup>650</sup> This comparison is also made in other studies: E. Berry, ‘From epitaph to obituary: death and celebrity in eighteenth century British culture’ *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 11:3 (2008), p.259-75; H. Williams, “Alas, poor Yorick!”: Sterne’s iconography of mourning, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 28:2 p. 318.

<sup>651</sup> E.J.V. Leeuwen, *Funeral Sermons*, p. 356.

<sup>652</sup> E. Parisot, ‘Piety, Poetry and the Funeral Sermon,’ *English Studies* 92:2 (2011), pp.177-8

Quaker sermons are the hardest to study due to a lack of material resources. Michael Graves explained the lack of evidence as a consequence of the impromptu nature of speech and testimony in the Quaker community. Spoken testimony was intended to be spontaneously prompted by divine inspiration and therefore there was no preparatory writing and limited opportunity for the recording of written words.<sup>653</sup>

Methodist sermons are more accessible for study because examples of these texts survive in both printed pamphlets and the *Arminian Magazine*. Historiography has argued that the engaging style of Wesleyan sermonising occurred because speakers were chosen for their oratory skills and character, rather than their education.<sup>654</sup> Wesley believed that the body and voice were important to good preaching and directed his lay preachers on how to develop these assets in the instructional text, *Directions Concerning Pronunciation and Gesture*.<sup>655</sup>

Preachers were encouraged to convey themselves in a common manner which was more likely to be understood by their listeners. Studies of Methodist sermons argue that the content was similarly intended to reflect their audience by addressing temporal concerns such as morality, rather than theological or eschatological arguments.<sup>656</sup> For funerals, speakers were specifically instructed to adopt an emotionally relevant tone which would reflect the mood of their audience. Wesley directed his readers that ‘in congratulating the happy events of life we speak with a lively and chearful accent: in relating misfortunes (as in Funeral Oration) with a slow and mournful one.’<sup>657</sup> A respectable Methodist sermon was intended to instruct and

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<sup>653</sup> Graves, ‘The British Quaker Sermon’, p. 112.

<sup>654</sup> V.T. Burton, ‘John Wesley and the Liberty to Speak: The Rhetorical and Literacy Practices of Early Methodism’ *College Composition and Communication* 53:1 (2001), pp. 76-8.

<sup>655</sup> J. Wesley, *Directions Concerning Pronunciation and Gesture* (Bristol, 1749).

<sup>656</sup> R. Heitzenrater, ‘John Wesley’s Principles and Practice of Preaching’ *Methodist History* 37:2 (1999), pp. 99-101; D. Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion 1750-1900* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>657</sup> Wesley, *Directions* (1749), p. 7.

comfort the listener, rather than aggrandising the dead person or boastfully demonstrating the speaker's knowledge.

Methodist preachers attempted to show that they shared their listeners' grief with language that evinced a sense of sorrow and loss. This was significant because mourners could gain reassurance from the knowledge that their feelings were shared and understood by others. At the 1796 funeral of Captain Obadiah Webb, the minister John Pritchard, encouraged mourners to 'partake of the common sorrow.'<sup>658</sup> Pritchard showed his awareness of the mourners' feelings and thereby legitimised their sorrow as natural and acceptable; their sorrow was not to be condemned as immodest or as a sign of disbelief. The sermon for the Methodist, Elizabeth Phillips, recalled the bonds which the deceased woman shared with the members of the Melksham congregation. The minister, Thomas Parsons, described Phillips as, 'the affectionate wife, the tender mother, the sincere friend, and the valuable member of religious and civil society.'<sup>659</sup> By recalling these relationships the minister emphasized the reason which each member had for mourning. The motif of the grieving community also provided the mourners with strength because it was a reminder that the community would survive the immediate turmoil. The Methodist minister, John Clark used the death of a congregant, Joanna Turner, to encourage each listener to rally and fill the absent space that dead woman had left.<sup>660</sup> Clark presented the death as a challenge to the community stating that, 'we have been deprived of one of our most useful members; let us then endeavour to supply her lack of service by our efforts.'<sup>661</sup> Using this language, Clark represented the

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<sup>658</sup> J. Pritchard, *Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of the Late Capt. Webb; and Preached at Portland-Chapel, Bristol, December 24, 1796, at the Time of His Interment. By John Pritchard* (Bristol, 1796).

<sup>659</sup> Parsons, T., *A Funeral Discourse on the Much Lamented Death of Mrs Elizabeth Phillips, Preached in the Baptist Meeting House at Melksham, Wilts, May 3rd* (Bristol, 1799), p. 36.

<sup>660</sup> J. Clark, *Self-Annihilation: Being the Substance of a Sermon, Preached at the Funeral of Mrs. Joanna Turner, Wife of Mr. Thomas Turner, Who Died Dec. 24, 1784, at Trowbridge, Wilts. To Which Is Added an Elegiac Poem, Addressed by Way of Condolence to the Survivor. By John Clark, Minister of the Gospel* (Bath, 1784)

<sup>661</sup> Clark, *Self-Annihilation*, p. 22.

mourners' sorrow as evidence of their shared bonds, which would guarantee their future strength.

This is not to suggest that the language of sermons was entirely sanitised or sentimentalised, indeed it can be observed that many speakers were eager to remind their listeners of the omnipresent threat of death which they all faced. This was often presented in striking language, John Pritchard cautioned the Methodists of the Portland Chapel with the warning that 'there is no defence against death, nor any way to escape.'<sup>662</sup>

A popular custom in Methodist sermons during the period was the discussion of events which had occurred during the dead person's final hours.<sup>663</sup> This was comparable in tone and purpose to earlier forms of deathbed literature which had reached a peak of popularity in the early-Seventeenth Century. These didactic texts presented accounts of exemplar and cautionary deaths that became less popular as the vivid descriptions of death were deemed to be vulgar and macabre.<sup>664</sup> The discussion of deathbed events remained popular in nonconformist communities because the faithful sought to find evidence of salvation which they believed was confirmed in the final moments of life. Two examples from the 1780s illustrate how Methodists used deathbed narrative to engage with and instruct their authors. In his 1784 sermon for Joanna Turner, John Clark cautioned his listeners that although the woman died well, 'she did not prefer death; for she had no reason to.'<sup>665</sup> Turner's attitude was intended to reflect that of the mourners who may have been unwilling to prepare to die, either because they felt or found the subject distasteful. At the 1782 funeral of Ann Walcott, the Methodist preacher Thomas Pentycross used the coffin of as a vivid

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<sup>662</sup> Pritchard, *Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of the Late Capt. Webb*.

<sup>663</sup> R.J. Bell, 'Our People Die Well': Deathbed Scenes in John Wesley's Arminian Magazine', *Mortality*, 10 (2005), pp. 210-23.

<sup>664</sup> R. Porter and D. Porter, *In Sickness and in Health* (London: Fourth Estate, 1988), pp. 248-53; Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 211-3.

<sup>665</sup> Clark, *Self-Annihilation.*, p. 22.

reminder of the indiscriminate nature of death, ‘there lies one, cut off in the vigor of human life, at the age of six and twenty; her constitution too not infirm.’<sup>666</sup> The deceased Mrs Walcott was proof of Pentycross’ argument, a tangible example which his congregation could understand more clearly than a classical or scriptural reference. This was not a hopeless message, rather it was intended to encourage the congregants to prepare themselves and improve their own lives. By using the deceased individual as a didactic example, the preacher could give meaning and purpose to their death.

Baptist funeral sermons were more widely published and this can be attributed to the importance of preaching in Baptist faith. Preaching had been an important part of Baptist practice since the formative years of the church and its importance has been observed in the centrality of the pulpit in early church design.<sup>667</sup> The simplistic and clear style of Baptist preaching reflected their belief that the word of God should not be complicated or obscured by distractions. For this reason, contemporary directives encouraged ministers to use language which all of their congregants could understand.<sup>668</sup> It was concurrently expected that ministers would invest their preaching with emotion because this would make their words more authentic and appealing to listeners.<sup>669</sup> It is, perhaps, unsurprising that contemporaries discouraged a dependence on emotion, which was only temporarily effective in holding attention.

The Baptist notion of appealing to funeralgoers by acknowledging the grief which they felt can be observed in the sermons of Caleb Evans. At his father’s funeral, Evans described the emotions which mourners experienced; ‘awful breaches in mourning families, what heart

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<sup>666</sup> T. Pentycross, *A sermon, at the funeral of Mrs. Ann Walcott, Wife of John Walcott, Esq. and Daughter of John Lloyd, Esq. Of Bath. Delivered in the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel, at that Place, on Sunday the 24th of March, 1782* (Bath, 1782)

<sup>667</sup> D.M. Himbury, *British Baptists: a short history* (London: The Carey Kingsdale Press, 1962), p. 124-6.

<sup>668</sup> M.A.G. Haykin, “‘Draw Nigh Unto My Soul’: English Baptist Piety and the Means of Grace in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 10 (2006), p. 58.

<sup>669</sup> Haykin, ‘Draw Nigh’, p. 59.

rending grief, what complicated sorrow and distress.<sup>670</sup> This frank description of the painful emotion and difficult circumstances experienced by the bereaved was arguably relevant to the mourners' experiences of bereavement. These were realistic descriptions rather than the 'exemplar' responses of optimistic mourners whose faith insulated them from fear, anxiety or uncertainty. Caleb Evans similarly reminded his listeners of the severity of death by commenting on its ability to null the spirit of the even the most pious minister.<sup>671</sup>

Baptist sermons provided mourners with a message of reassurance that the pain of death could be overcome by a communal effort. Indeed, in 1791 Caleb Evans promised the mourners of Ann Tommas that earthly relationships would be renewed in the afterlife, noting that people would 'meet our departed friends in heaven and partake with them of sublime joys and ecstatic pleasure.'<sup>672</sup> In this positive vision of the afterlife, the bonds of the congregation were presented as eternal, surviving into the afterlife. Most importantly, this was a message which encouraged listeners of the superiority of the afterlife over the transient pleasure and pain of the temporal world.

The didactic role of the sermon, disseminating the exemplar account of a deceased person, is significant because it provided justification for its creation. Whether in spoken or published form, the sermon found numerous critics who believed that it was inappropriate or wasteful. Contemporaries feared that a focus on worldly issues and distract from a responsible dedication to spiritual matters. It was therefore believed that writing sermons for individuals was a form of vanity, celebrating worldly achievements and satisfying the demands of the living. Sermonising ministers were equally susceptible to criticism, from those who identified

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<sup>670</sup> Evans, *Elisha's Exclamation!*

<sup>671</sup> C. Evans, *The Faithful Servant Crowned. A Sermon, Preached April 13, at the Interment of the Late Rev. James Newton ... By Caleb Evans, D.D. Together with the Funeral Oration at the Grave, by John Tommas* (Bristol: 1790).

<sup>672</sup> C. Evans, *The Hope of the Christian. A Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of Mrs. Ann Tommas, Wife of the Rev. John Tommas, Who Died Nov. 13, 1783, ... Preached at the Pithay, Bristol, Lord's Day, November 23. By Caleb Evans* (Bristol: 1783).

their words as flattery or questioned the influence of money from wealthy mourners. In the context of these criticisms, sermonisers were eager to highlight the didactic quality of their work, providing a more favourable context for their account of the lives of dead people. The Methodist minister, John Pritchard alluded to these criticisms stating in his sermon for John Webb that, 'I do not intend to treat of him as is common in funeral orations.'<sup>673</sup> Pritchard referred to the custom of including biographical details in the sermons, a practice which was nurtured by a contemporary interest in the lives of deceased people. By contrast, Pritchard proposed to give a purposeful account of Webb which would focus on his ministry and service, activities which had spiritual merit. In the published sermon of Joanna Turner an accompanying poem was explained as 'by way of condolence to the survivors.'<sup>674</sup> The inclusion of an elegiac poem may have improved the popularity of the printed sermon, as historiography has indicated, these texts were widely read by those who purchased sermons. In the Methodist community, preaching and the dissemination of religious ideas was not limited to the spoken word. A significant local trend which must be addressed is the singing performed by members of the Wesleyan Methodist community in Bristol. A nineteenth century Methodist publication acknowledges the practice of funerary singing as a Bristolian innovation, which had spread widely in following years.<sup>675</sup> Singing is significant because it was both a reminder of the shared faith for those who were singing and also a communal act of evangelisation. The Methodists funeral singing usually occurred during the procession or after the burial, thereby occurring outside of the environs of the meeting house. This public dimension was arguably sought by mourners because it provided them with an opportunity to spread of the message of their faith.

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<sup>673</sup> John Pritchard, *Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of the Late Capt. Webb; and Preached at Portland-Chapel, Bristol, December 24, 1796, at the Time of His Interment. By John Pritchard* (Bristol: 1796).

<sup>674</sup> Clark, *Self Annihilation* (Bristol, 1784).

<sup>675</sup> 'Notes on Church Music and Singing', *The Methodist New Connexion Magazine and Evangelical Repository*, 41 (1873), 473-6.

The importance of preaching was recognised by Charles Wesley, who commented that ‘a funeral is one of our greatest festivals.’<sup>676</sup> Wesley offered this description in an account of a Bristolian funeral procession which had encountered disorderly behaviour from bystanders who were hostile to Methodists. For Wesley the funeral was an opportunity to preach and to withstand challenges to his faith, which would strengthen him in the long-term. Wesley’s description of his encounters with disorderly spectators illustrate how he interpreted disturbances as a form of spiritual test. He noted of a disorderly Bristolian crowd that ‘Satan raged exceedingly in his children who threw dirt and stones at us.’<sup>677</sup> At a later funeral of Bristolian, Mrs. Hooper; Wesley engaged his critics through the typically Methodist acts of preaching and song. Wesley describing how ‘a great multitude attended her to her grave, there we sang another hymn of triumph; and I found myself pressed to speak to those who contradicted and blasphemed.’<sup>678</sup> In this instance it is apparent that Wesley did not merely intend to resist the challenges of disorderly individuals, he chose to respond directly to them. It is important to note that, as with all of the funerary practices discussed in this chapter, the act of singing was not universally supported by all members of the faith community. Rachel Dyer, wife of Bristolian physician, William Dyer, commented of her dislike of funerary singing at the New Room, describing it as ‘the noise pomp of the burial house.’<sup>679</sup> Dyer’s assertion that it would dissuade her from being buried at that particular ground is perhaps an indication of the regionality of some practices, which were more vigorously adopted by one community than another.

### Nonconformist Burial Grounds

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<sup>676</sup> T. Jackson, (ed.), *The Life of Rev. Charles Wesley M.A.* (New York: 1849), p. 234.

<sup>677</sup> J. Whitehead (ed.), *Some account of the life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, A.M. late Student of Christ-Church, Oxford. Collected from his private journal* (London, 1793), p. 153.

<sup>678</sup> Whitehead, *Some account of the life of the Rev Charles Wesley*, p. 153.

<sup>679</sup> J. Barry, (ed.), *Diary of William Dyer: Bristol in 1762* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 2012), p. 151.



A nonconformist burial ground was a special location in which members could be buried without compromising or contradicting their own religious beliefs. Within the confines of this space burial was governed by the doctrines of the denomination and the deceased members of the congregation were gathered together. For this reason, it is arguable that these spaces became a reflection of the nonconformist communities who used them.

The burial ground was a space in which the deceased members of the congregation could be gathered together, as they had been in life. Contemporary preaching focused on the motif of former congregants gathered in the soil of the burial. The Baptist minister John Ash, preaching at the funeral of Caleb Evans' wife Ann, evoked the imagery of those who buried beneath the mourners' feet.

'here they lie;- the hoary of head and infant of days, the bound, the free, the rich and poor together, - here the lie undistinguished in the dust of death'<sup>680</sup>

Ash's statement is interesting because it represented the burial ground as a reassuring, rather than repulsive, place. The anonymity of the buried remains was described as a cause for hope, a reminder of the equality of all people and the permanent bond which was shared by worshippers. This is particularly significant because the anonymity and 'dust of death' described by Ash could have been causes for concern in a society which sought to conceal and avoid signs of death and decay.

The Baptists were not unique in their desire to seek burial amidst fellow believers as we may observe in numerous instances of Quakers who were transported from rural surroundings to the urban burial grounds such as Redcliffe in Bristol. Some of these were affluent individuals such as the affluent Mr. Samuel Lloyd, who was transported to Bristol after drowning in the

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<sup>680</sup> J. Ash, *A sermon occasioned by the death of Mrs. Sarah Evans, wife of the Rev. Caleb Evans, of Bristol, who died November 7, 1771, in the 33d year of her age. With the oration delivered at her interment* (Bristol, 1771), p. 2.

countryside.<sup>681</sup> The Quaker burial ground at Gigant Street in Salisbury was similarly used by Friends from rural hinterland such as the Wilton shopkeeper and undertaker Mrs Rily and the daughter of local gentleman, John Moore.<sup>682</sup>

A burial ground was more than a mere repository because it's organisation was influenced by the beliefs and values of the denomination which owned it. As a consequence, a burial ground became a didactic space in which the siting and marking of graves expressed the key values of the community.

The method by which a grave was constructed demonstrates the influence of differences in belief and the differing requirements of mourners. The simplest, respectable form of grave was an earth shaft in which the coffin would be placed amidst the soil of the burial ground. The simplicity of this grave made it popular with Quakers who preferred their dead to be, as Thomas Clarkson described, 'buried in dust.'<sup>683</sup> It is probable that the use of simple, earth graves had a secondary purpose of allowing the plot to be reused for future burials because it provided the least protection to the coffin, allowing decomposition to occur more quickly. The absence of Quaker burials tended towards an anonymity which reflected the denomination's belief that it was not appropriate to glorify or venerate an individual over others.

Different practices in the Methodist and Baptist burial grounds meant that plots could be claimed for longer periods of time and re-used for multiple burials. Members of both denominations used brick-lined burial shafts which were more stable and could be dug deeper. At the Redcross Street Baptist burial ground in Bristol, the use of bricks enabled graves to be excavated to ten feet deep and similar shafts were dug by the Baptists of

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<sup>681</sup> Country News', *Ipswich Journal*, 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1776.

<sup>682</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1772; RG 6/1312, 'Gloucestershire and Wiltshire: Monthly Meeting of Wiltshire: Lavington Division'.

<sup>683</sup> T. Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism* (London, 1806)

Maryport Street, Devizes.<sup>684</sup> Members of the Bath Wesleyan congregation termed this multiple-use shaft a ‘walled grave.’<sup>685</sup> These deeper, brick-lined graves were significant because they permitted families to be buried together in the same plot, a custom which was eschewed by Quakers. In a 1788 plan of Baptist burial grounds at Badcox, Frome, we can observe how this form of burial allowed families to make a more permanent claim on a particular site.<sup>686</sup> Three large graves in the burial ground were occupied by prominent families for the Bunn, Shepherd and Humphries families. In the diagrams of Maryport, Devizes and Badcox, Frome, the numbering of graves allowed for specific individuals’ burials to be identified and re-opened as dictated by requirement.

The placing of a grave marker was a practice which openly claimed a specific plot for an individual or family. This was an increasingly common activity in the eighteenth century and it is evident that some members of Baptist and Methodist communities sought to mark their burials similarly. If we consider the example of Redcross Street, we may observe that fifteen burials in the decade between 1780 and 1790 were marked with headstones and footstones.<sup>687</sup> It is probable that stones were considered novel by contemporaries as they were used to identify the location of specific burial plots, this is evident in the description of a Redcross Street grave for which was described as ‘next to the grave with stones.’<sup>688</sup> The use of gravestones may be interpreted as an example of the compromise between a personal desire to mourn and the community’s religious beliefs. Grave markers were a means by which people could memorialise their loved ones but the design and language of these objects could appear ostentatious or vain. In Bath, the Somerset Street Baptists addressed this problem with laws which prohibited any headstones or ornaments that were deemed to be ostentatious by

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<sup>684</sup> TNA: RG 4/1829: ‘Bristol, Broad Mead (Baptist), 1756-1827’; TNA: RG 4/2230: ‘Devizes (Baptist), 1772-1837.’

<sup>685</sup> TNA: RG 4/3251, ‘Somerset: Bath (Wesleyan), Burials’, 1815-1835.

<sup>686</sup> See figure 23.

<sup>687</sup> TNA: RG 4/1829.

<sup>688</sup> TNA: RG 4/1829.

the church council.<sup>689</sup> Dispensation for memorials in places where space is compromised, the community at Maryport Street in Devizes commemorated four congregants with plaques on

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<sup>689</sup> K. Birch, 'Baptist Burial Grounds in Bath', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 37 (1997), p. 25.

the meeting house wall.<sup>690</sup>

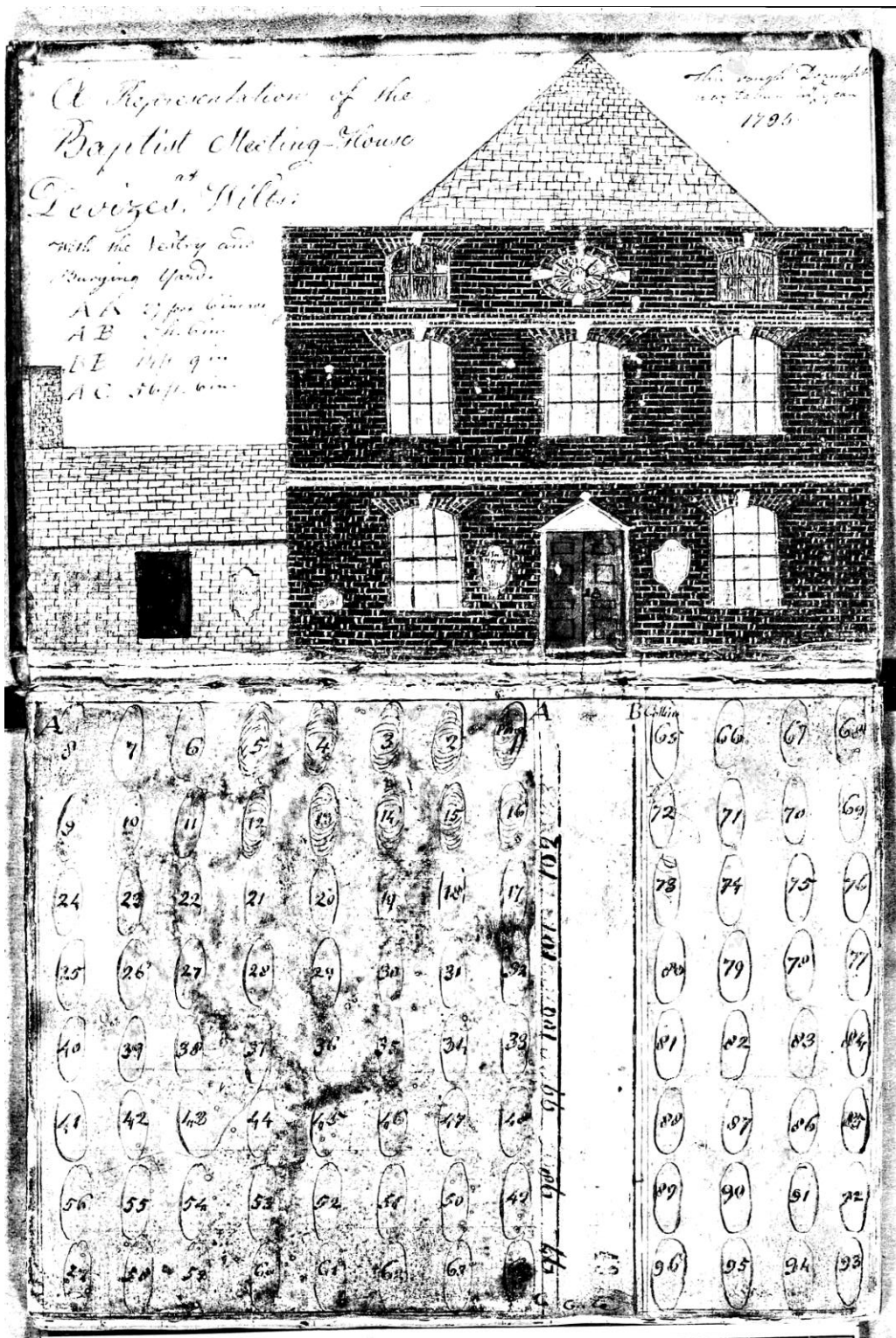


Figure 17: Maryport Street Baptist Meeting House and Burial Ground, c.1780 from: TNA: RG 4/2230, 'Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Devizes (Baptist)', 1772-1837.

<sup>690</sup> These can be observed in a contemporary image of the burial ground at Maryport depicted in fig 17. TNA: RG 4/2230 'Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Devizes (Baptist)', 1772-1837.



The use of burial vaults in Baptist burial grounds was a significant practice because it further reflects the compromises made within nonconformist, between religious doctrine and the personal desire to mourn. A vault was a burial space which required greater expenditure to construct than an earth or brick-lined shaft. Additional expense was incurred because it was necessary to be bury individuals in sealed, lead-lined coffins which prevented the remains from contaminating the vault. It is therefore understandable that the families who used burial vaults were affluent and occupied prominent positions in their respective communities. The Baptist community at Badcox in Frome had three vaults in their burial ground, each represented a different family from the congregation.<sup>691</sup> These were located prominently within the burial ground, on two pathways which approached the meeting house, a position which directed congregants and visitors to encounter them. It is arguable that the potentially ostentatious display of the burial vaults was permissible because they served as a didactic reminder of exemplar individuals who had lived successful lives.

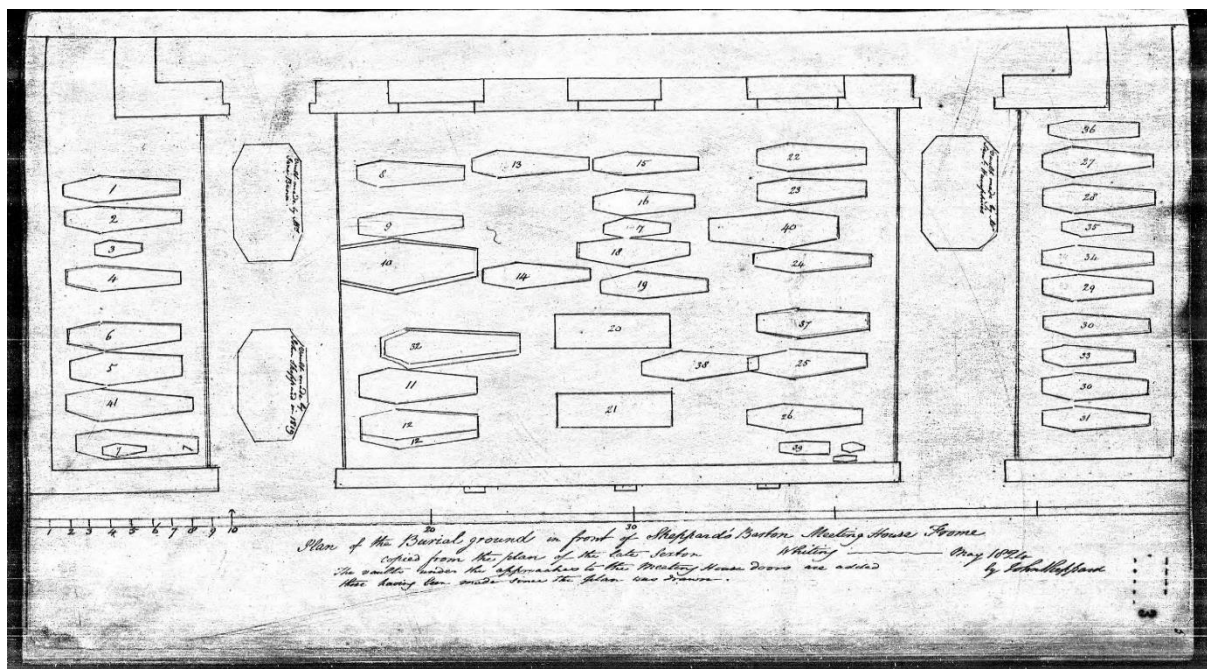


Figure 18: Plan of the Burial Ground at Badcox Baptist Chapel, Frome 1780-1824 from TNA: RG 4/1550, 'Frome, Badcox Lane Meeting House (Baptist)', 1785-1827.

<sup>691</sup> TNA: RG 4/1550, 'Frome, Badcox Lane Meeting House (Baptist)', 1785-1827.

Nonconformist communities used a variety of measures to preserve the unique character of their burial grounds and ensure the availability of burial space within. The use of ticketing and eligibility criteria was intended to dissuade outsiders who were interested in the space and security offered by the newly established burial grounds. Neither space nor security could be guaranteed in the increasingly overcrowded parish churchyards which were burdened by an expanding population and restricted by their antiquated boundaries. Until the development of cemeteries in the mid-nineteenth century, the burial grounds of nonconformists were therefore the only alternative to parish churchyard.

The eligibility criteria devised by nonconformists reflected their awareness of outsiders' interest in burial space. This is evident in Somerset Street Baptists' description of outsiders as 'persons who are not members of this church and who have a claim to burial elsewhere.'<sup>692</sup> The language used by the Baptists recalls the alternative choices which outsiders possessed in the 1770s. For example, in Bath suburb of Walcot, the burial demands of the parish were provided by a large graveyard at Walcot Gate.<sup>693</sup> Furthermore, by defining the outsiders in these terms, the Baptists further emphasized that they possessed no other adequate options for burial.

It is notable that 'outsiders' or non-members were widely identified as the least deserving of burial. For instance, members of the Lady of Huntingdon's Connexion at Bethell Chapel in Bearfield Bradford on Avon determined 'that no person who doth not attend the worship of God in this chapel is allowed to have a burying place amongst us'<sup>694</sup> Space was arguably a prime concern for the Calvinists of Bethell Chapel, which was a small congregation with an limited plot of land accompanying their chapel.

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<sup>692</sup> Birch, 'Baptist Burial Grounds in Bath', p. 25.

<sup>693</sup> This can be seen in 1818 Barratt map of Bath. J. Barratt, *The Historical and Local New Bath Guide ... Embellished with eight original engravings, and a correct plan of the city* (Bath: J Barratt & Son, 1818), p. 16.

<sup>694</sup> TNA: RG 4/3429 'Wiltshire: Bearfield in Bradford (Count. Of Huntingdon) Burials'.

In communities where space was less of a concern, outsiders were admitted upon receipt of a ticket or payment of a fine. These methods arguably provided a modest deterrent against mass interest in burial space whilst allowing for determined individuals to secure a burial plot. Obtaining a ticket required contact between representatives of the deceased and a minister, a level of engagement which could deter some outsiders.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that nonconformists' use of contemporary funerary culture was an important part of a ritual which repaired the damage caused by a death. Through a selective engagement in funerary culture, nonconformist mourners of each denomination made gestures of solidarity between congregants who shared beliefs. It has been argued that the funerals of community leaders responded to the loss of their influence by recalling their religious example and contribution to the faith community. Justification for display was found in the communities' esteem for a leader who made a strong contribution and provided a religious example. By examining three specific aspects of the common funeral it is argued that members of each denomination were influenced by a desire to commemorate their dead in manner which satisfied communal expectations of propriety and respectability. It is observed that in each denomination, the structure of the funeral reflected beliefs about the dangers of ritual. The consumption of common funerary items such as coffins, mourning wear and mourning decorations was intended to demonstrate a rejection of worldliness and an awareness of necessity. The burial space reinforced the mourners' messages of solidarity because it was a contrived space in which denominational beliefs were manifested in the space. The form and organisation of these spaces was influenced by beliefs about status and consumption; for this reason, the use of plots, the decoration of these spaces and also the siting of dead individuals became an expression of faith, to be read by mourners.



## General Mourning as an Opportunity for Social Display

### Introduction

The act of mourning for national figures was another opportunity in which people could use funerary customs to present themselves as respectable members of polite society. ‘General’ mourning shared some similarities with participation in private funerals because respectable mourners were consumers of special clothing and decorations. It was also different because the death of a national figure was usually a distant event, with the funeral and burial occurring in London. The chapter argues that acts of mourning were therefore a sort of ‘proxy funeral,’ inspired by news of events within the capital and ornamented with items which were intended to reflect the distant displays of mourning. Newspapers, the main source for this chapter, were a vital element in the performance of respectable ‘general’ mourning because they provided knowledge on distant events and a platform for local retailers.

#### i. Court and General Mourning

Mourning for national figures was a longstanding practice within the social elite, which had a considerable history. Deaths in the royal household or affiliated monarchies on the continent were customarily mourned by members of the court according to strict guidelines issued by the Lord Chamberlain.<sup>695</sup> Mourning was performed by the use of specific accessories and items of clothing which corresponded to the social seniority of the deceased. The monarch received the most significant degree of mourning and the degrees of mourning for foreigners reflected the affability of relations with their country.<sup>696</sup> The considerable number of people eligible to be recognised by the court, meant that mourning was a frequent occurrence in the Eighteenth Century.

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<sup>695</sup> P.S. Fritz. "The Trade in Death: The Royal Funerals in England, 1685-1830." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 15:3 (1982), p. 307.

<sup>696</sup> P. Cunnington, *Costume for Births, Marriages & Death* (London: A. and C. Black, 1972), p. 257.

This 'court mourning' was a public, rather than private, act because mourning wear was worn in the public sphere; in the metropolis or on visits to provincial seats. Appearing in mourning was therefore emblematic of a person's high social standing and their affiliation with court culture. Those who aspired to such status, could participate in the parallel practice of 'general mourning', which involved members of the public adopting a self-dictated mourning for a specified period of time. As a result, the custom of general mourning ensured that the commemoration of royals spread into provincial society and beyond the limited ranks of those who attended court.<sup>697</sup>

The provincial press, identified as a conduit of national culture, facilitated this wider participation by publishing the Lord Chamberlain's directives for mourning.<sup>698</sup> The directives were not published in isolation, but were a part of a detailed account of royal and aristocratic funerary practices which were recorded in the early provincial newspapers of the late-Eighteenth Century. By announcing and describing such ceremonials, the press furnished provincial awareness of their occurrence and satiated an interest in events and individuals which were of significance in national culture.

This chapter will examine the act of general mourning in the West Country as a polite activity. It argues that mourning for royal figures was an opportunity for members of polite society, including townspeople and shopkeepers, to demonstrate their taste and genteel quality by participating. The argument is advanced through four focuses: the newspapers, the shopkeepers, the suspension of daily routines and the divine service. The newspapers facilitated participation in public mourning and are examined as a source of funerary knowledge from outside the local community. The role of shopkeepers is examined, because

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<sup>697</sup> Fritz, 'Trade in Death', p. 315; Cunnington, *Costume for Births, Marriages & Death*, p. 259.

<sup>698</sup> On the press contribution to a national culture: P. Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry 1640-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 239.

West Country shops were a prime source of mourning apparel, including items from outside of the local community. Thirdly, the chapter examines the closure of shops and suspension of entertainments which marked the periods of mourning by suspending the daily routines of community. The transformation of the towns and villages through this practice created more opportunities for a person to witness the gestures of mourning. Finally, the divine service is interpreted as a 'proxy funeral' for the deceased monarch, which used the equipment of an ostentatious funeral and was influenced by events in London.

## Existing Literature

### i. General Mourning

Existing literature identifies the increasing popularity of national mourning in the late-eighteenth century as evidenced by the deaths of monarch and national heroes. In an examination of the public response to the funeral of George III, Linda Colley records widespread participation in acts of mourning, across the country and involving different levels of English society.<sup>699</sup> Colley describes the country as mourning in synchronicity, with people in different locations engaging in mourning activities at the same time. This has also been observed in the acts of mourning for Princess Charlotte, whose sudden death in 1817 prompted parallel gatherings at church as noted by John Wolffe.<sup>700</sup> Wolffe has discussed the public response to Princess Charlotte's death in a series of studies which situate the occasion in a culture of heightened interest and participation in royal mourning during the nineteenth

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<sup>699</sup> L. Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820', *Past and Present* (1984), pp. 94-129.

<sup>700</sup> J. Wolffe, *Great Deaths: Grieving, religion and nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 17. This is also discussed in: J. Wolffe, 'Royalty and Public Grief in Britain: an Historical Perspective 1817-1997' in Tony Walter (ed.) *The Mourning for Diana* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 1999), pp. 53-64.

century.<sup>701</sup> The effusive response by the public has been interpreted as a consequence of fashion; Stephen Behrendt, specifically identifies the role of tradespeople and the early fashion media in the mourning for the dead princess.<sup>702</sup> The death of Princess Charlotte and the significant mourning which followed are discussed in Esther Schor's analysis of mourning during the romantic period. Addressing the public mourning for Princess Charlotte, Schor argues that preachers intended to give their congregants 'the illusion of attendance at the obsequies' by describing the royal funeral in their sermons during the day of the funeral.<sup>703</sup> The notion that the mourners experienced the funeral at a distance is not fully developed by Schor, but it would benefit from more analysis, considering how the service itself performed this role. For this reason, the chapter will examine how the many aspects of the service made it a 'proxy funeral'.

Much has been written about widespread enthusiasm for the national mourning activities for Admiral Horatio Nelson. Brockliss, Cardwell and Moss criticise Colley's London-centric account of mourning for Nelson and indicate that a wide variety of communities participated outside of London.<sup>704</sup> Timothy Jenks discusses synchronicity between events in London and other locals in the country, indicating that people were aware of the significance of the funeral day, even if they were not in London.<sup>705</sup> Individuals who were not present at the large, public funeral in London could still participate in mournful gatherings in their own communities. A similar fervour to mourn has been identified in the aftermath of General

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<sup>701</sup> Wolffe discusses the death of Charlotte in addition to: Duke of Wellington, Prince Consort Albert, Queen Victoria. J. Wolffe, 'Responding to national grief: memorial sermons on the famous in Britain 1800-1914' *Mortality* (2003), pp. 283-296; Wolffe, 'Royalty and Public Grief,' pp. 55-57.

<sup>702</sup> S. Behrendt, *Royal Mourning and Regency Culture: Elegies and memorials of Princess Charlotte* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 1997), pp. 200-3.

<sup>703</sup> E. Schor, *Bearing the Dead: The British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 202-3.

<sup>704</sup> L. Brockliss, J. Cardwell, M. Moss, 'Nelson's Grand National Obsequies,' *English Historical Review* 121:490 (2006), pp. 163-4.

<sup>705</sup> T. Jenks, 'Contesting the Hero: The Funeral of Admiral Lord Nelson', *Journal of British Studies*, 39 (2000), pp. 422-53.

Wolfe's death at the Battle of Quebec in 1759.<sup>706</sup> Wolfe had a private funeral but his body was publicly processed giving a broad range of people an opportunity to witness his cortege. The funerals of these heroes were also marked by the publication of texts which recorded the funerary events and memorialised the deceased.

Historiography presents several explanations for why popular expressions of mourning were becoming more common in the late eighteenth century. Colley argues that the popularity of royal mourning depended on a variety of regional factors which made it possible to stage an event. These are identified as an increase in urban pride, the popularity of volunteering movements, local sponsorship and the development of regional newspapers.<sup>707</sup> Other studies have traced the increasing popularity of mourning through the commercial transactions which accompanied it. Paul S. Fritz records how the increasing participation in mourning raised the consumption of mourning wear during the long-eighteenth century. Here, the wider adoption of mourning is demonstrated through the resulting prosperity of the East Anglian manufacturers whose goods served the new market.<sup>708</sup> E. Robinson noted that the popularity of court mourning had a detrimental effect on the trade in fashionable items. This is illustrated with an example of how the purchases of Matthew Boulton's wife were interrupted by her observation of court mourning for Duke of Cumberland.<sup>709</sup> Boulton's wife presents a reasonable example of the new audience for mourning, comprised of people who were not members of gentry.

Civic pride and local philanthropy have been identified as enabling factors by studies which interpret the patriotic display as an opportunity for local elites to affirm their status. Studies

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<sup>706</sup> McNairn, A., *Behold the Hero: General Wolfe and the Arts in the Eighteenth Century* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp. 43-5.

<sup>707</sup> Colley, 'Apotheosis of George III', p. 113.

<sup>708</sup> Fritz, 'Trade in Death', pp. 314-5.

<sup>709</sup> E. Robinson, 'Eighteenth-Century Commerce and Fashion: Matthew Boulton's Marketing Techniques', *The Economic History Review*, 16 (1963), p. 47.

of the contemporary use of the term ‘patriotism’ observe the existence of diverse and conflicting contemporary notions of how and why a person was patriotic.<sup>710</sup> This chapter will consider how towns or villages were transformed into places of mourning and it is clear from historiography that there was a civic motive for such activity. John Cookson notes the local elite could exploit the popularity of a patriotic gathering to unite their community and most importantly, to confirm their status within that group.<sup>711</sup> It is cautioned that the whilst elites desired to see signs of unity at patriotic events, there is no evidence that townspeople agreed with their motives or interpretations. In this regard, Cookson agrees with Harrison’s argument that participation in civic occasions did not represent a shared understanding of their purpose.<sup>712</sup> It is apparent that the for those in authority the funding and organisation of such events was understood to be worthwhile. Colley notes that patriotic displays were a good opportunity for ‘sectional self-assertion’ by affluent members of the provincial middling sort such as tradesmen and professionals.<sup>713</sup> It is also important therefore to remember that the public mourning gatherings were part of a broad calendar of occasions with local and national themes that were intended to unite the local community such as peace festivals, military displays, royal anniversaries.

Military auxiliary volunteer units are acknowledged as an important part of provincial ceremonial for deceased royalty and heroes. It is primarily important to acknowledge that the motives for volunteering were numerous and although Colley has argued that involvement was a evidence of patriotic sentiment, others have questioned this appraisal.<sup>714</sup> Several studies have identified that the militia were emblematic of communal identity, because the

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<sup>710</sup> H. Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914’, *History Workshop* 12 (1981), pp. 10-12; J. Mori, ‘Languages of Loyalism: Patriotism, Nationhood and the State in the 1790s’, *EHR* 118: 475 (2003), p. 36.

<sup>711</sup> J.E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation, 1793-1815* (Clarendon: London, 1997), pp. 241-2.

<sup>712</sup> Harrison, *Crowds and History*, pp. 263-268; Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, p. 243.

<sup>713</sup> Colley, ‘Whose Nation?’, p. 111.

<sup>714</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p. 284; Colley, ‘Whose Nation,’ p. 115. Austin Gee notes that the varying backgrounds and allegiances in volunteer brigades made it likely that they were motivated by different causes: A. Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement, 1794-1814* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 8-9;

collaboration of different social classes and livelihoods was a demonstration of communal activity.<sup>715</sup> The militia were idealised as embodying the values of their community, acting as representatives for their town in the wider country and locally. Historiography also highlights the patriotic qualities of the militia which would be significant to their presence in national mourning gatherings. Cookson argues that militias embodied a ‘self-conscious’ patriotism because their members had chosen to work together for a national cause.<sup>716</sup> This sense of involvement in a wider effort is noted by Matthew McCormack who proposes that, whilst individuals had various motives for volunteering, their participation in royal and national occasions fostered a sense of membership in a national community.<sup>717</sup> Similarly, Stephen Conway argues that associations of military volunteers identified strongly with their local areas but also felt an attachment to their nation which was emphasized during times of crisis.<sup>718</sup>

Not all arguments focus on the factors within the local community. Amy Oberlin argues that court mourning was transformed in response to the decline in extravagant, public royal funerals.<sup>719</sup> Oberlin’s argument situates this change in the early eighteenth century and identifies the simultaneous decline of extravagant funerals and the abolition of the licensing act as the enabling factors. This is similar to N.M. Dawson’s conclusion that the decline of the licensing significantly transformed the act of mourning, both studies focus on the Queen

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<sup>715</sup> S. Conway, 'War and National Identity in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century British Isles', *English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), p. 865; J.E. Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', *The Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), pp. 867-91.

<sup>716</sup> Cookson *British Armed Nation*, p.240. Cookson discusses the notion of a defensive, nation-protecting image in: J.E. Cookson, 'Service without Politics? Army, Militia and Volunteers in Britain during the American and French Revolutionary Wars', *War in History* 10:4 (2003), p. 383.

<sup>717</sup> M. McCormack, *Embodying the Militia in Georgian England* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2015), p. 194.

<sup>718</sup> Conway, 'War and National Identity', pp. 866-7. The idea of compromising national loyalty with local pride is discussed in a regional context by: D. Moore, 'Patriotism, Politeness, and National Identity in the South West of England in the Late Eighteenth Century', *ELH*, 76 (2009), pp. 739-62.

<sup>719</sup> A.B. Oberlin, '“Share with me in my Grief and Affliction”: Royal Sorrow and Public Mourning in Early Eighteenth Century England' *Paregon* 31:2 (2014), pp. 111-13.

Mary II as evidence of their argument.<sup>720</sup> The dissolution of the Licensing Act enabled a wider range of printed works to be published and created an environment in which mournful expressions could be easily communicated. Both studies document the emergence of a culture which would outlast the early eighteenth century and had long-term consequences. Oberlin argues that the locus of mourning shifted, because it occurred within the public sphere between writers and readers who were in mourning.<sup>721</sup>

## ii. Newspapers and General Mourning

Geoffrey Cranfield and Hannah Barker have argued that provincial newspapers were complex publications which reflected the culture and politics of the communities which produced them.<sup>722</sup> The well-documented proliferation of provincial newspapers in the eighteenth century created a situation in which many major towns had competition of newspapers.<sup>723</sup> The existence of a developed press in the cities of Bath, Salisbury and Bristol has been studied by Fawcett, Ferdinand and A.P. Woolrich respectively.<sup>724</sup> Hannah Barker argues that the built environment of towns provided venues for consumption of newspapers by people from different social backgrounds. This was important to Barker's wider argument that newspapers appealed to all levels of society and were not limited to the middling sort because the different environs of the town offered many venues for news to be consumed, privately or publicly.<sup>725</sup> Historiography shows that the consumption of newspapers was not

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<sup>720</sup> N.M. Dawson, 'The Death Throes of the Licensing Act and the 'Funeral Pomp' of Queen Mary II, 1695', *The Journal of Legal History*, 26 (2005), pp. 119-42.

<sup>721</sup> Oberlin, 'Share with me in my grief,' pp. 110-1.

<sup>722</sup> G.A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 56-8; H. Barker, 'England, 1760-1815' in H. Barker and S. Burrows, *Press, Politics and Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 93.

<sup>723</sup> J. Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1987), pp.65-8; J. Black, 'The Development of the Provincial Newspaper Press in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 14:2 (2008), pp. 159-170; V.E.M Gardner, *The Business of News in England, 1760-1820* (London: Palgrave, 2011), pp. 16-18.

<sup>724</sup> T. Fawcett, *Georgian Imprints: 1727-1815* (Bath: Ruton, 2008), pp. 17-25, 61; Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, pp. 133-5; A.P. Woolrich, *Printing in Bristol* (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1986), p. 3.

<sup>725</sup> Barker, 'England, c.1760-1820', p. 104.



restricted to the major towns because the success of these texts depended on consumption in the hinterland outside of towns.<sup>726</sup> Ferdinand describes how the *Salisbury Journal* was distributed into the countryside by a network of shops, couriers and newsmen.<sup>727</sup> Kevin Grieves identifies a similar network of newsmen and porters who ensured that the *Bath Chronicle* was read in the rural communities beyond the city.<sup>728</sup> Grieves' research illustrates that the *Bath Chronicle* was distributed as widely as Marlborough in the east and Taunton in the south. This is significant for our study because it means that the newspapers can be interpreted as a source of knowledge about general mourning, in both the major towns and their smaller neighbours.

The newspaper is widely observed to have been a source for information about events beyond the provincial town. It was in the newspaper that people could inform themselves about national events and form their own ideas about what was happening. This was particularly true in the latter years of the eighteenth century when provincial newspapers were a source of information and debate in a period of national and international crises. Greives argues that the newspaper was a medium for people to learn news about national events and present their opinions through letters to the newspaper.<sup>729</sup> Linda Colley and Kathleen Wilson present provincial newspapers as a window on national affairs which fostered the provincials' sense of belonging to their nation.<sup>730</sup> Significantly for this chapter, Wilson argues that newspaper reportage of national events enabled provincials to experience and participate in national occasions.<sup>731</sup> Barker argues that the political and social movements of the late eighteenth

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<sup>726</sup> J.J. Looney, 'Advertising and Society in England, 1720-1820: A statistical analysis of Yorkshire newspaper advertisements' (Princeton University PhD Thesis, 1983), pp. 38-9.

<sup>727</sup> Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, pp. 61-74.

<sup>728</sup> K. Grieves, 'Association and Reassurance: Local responses to the French Revolution in the Bath newspapers, 1789-1802' (Bath Spa University PhD Thesis, 2017), pp. 50-5.

<sup>729</sup> Grieves, 'Association and Reassurance,' pp. 110-2. For loyalist letter publishing: pp. 203-210.

<sup>730</sup> See: K. Wilson, 'Citizenship, Empire, and Modernity in the English Provinces, c.1720-1790', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 29 (1995), p. 72.

<sup>731</sup> Wilson, 'Citizenship, Empire, and Modernity', p. 73.

century depended on propaganda and encouragement which was published in local newspapers.<sup>732</sup> In this interpretation, the newspaper is presented as a power tool for mobilising people by making a particular cause or event seem relevant and worthwhile.

The chapter examines how West Country communities responded to a royal death through the act of general mourning. Barker has argued that provincial newspapers played a significant role in encouraging patriotic feeling and promoting acts of patriotic celebration, particularly in the latter decades of the long-eighteenth century.<sup>733</sup> In the context of royal deaths, other studies have argued that the newspapers enabled people to be royal mourners. Paul S. Fritz identifies newspaper accounts of royal funerals as a cause of growing public interest in mourning during the eighteenth century.<sup>734</sup> John Wolffe argues that the speed of communication was an important factor in enabling people outside of the capital to participate in national mourning. The news of a death could be received with greater immediacy and events in the distant capital could be followed by distant people.<sup>735</sup>

The chapter will commence by examining how local factors enabled people to participate in mourning for national figures. Expanding on existing debate, the chapter will not consider why they wanted to participate, but how they were able to participate. In order to participate, people required a knowledge of distant events which had prompted general mourning and access to the apparel of mourning, in various forms. It is argued that the local newspaper provided the literate West Country inhabitant with an awareness of general mourning and informed them about the metropolitan ceremonials which accompanied a royal death. Our focus then turns to the provincial shopkeepers, whose businesses sold the apparel which was

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<sup>732</sup> Barker, 'England, c. 1760-1820', p. 95; Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society* (London: Longman, 2000) pp. 189-91.

<sup>733</sup> Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, pp. 189-91.

<sup>734</sup> Fritz, 'Trade in Death', p. 293.

<sup>735</sup> Wolffe, *Great Deaths*, p. 49.

as a public token of participation in mourning. It is argued that the shopkeepers used general mourning as an opportunity to assert their own personal status and professionalism.

### Newspapers and General Mourning

The local newspaper was the medium through which the West Country was notified about the death of a national figure and made aware of the commemorative events which would follow. The pages of local newspapers collated news from London and beyond which was brought by mail coaches and regular services. The postal coach was an early conduit for news from the metropolis and it brought news from London at times of royal illness and death. The knowledge of significant deaths was carried deeper into the West Country by regional coaches from more-developed towns. For example, in 1817, the Bath coach brought news of the death of Princess Charlotte, to Taunton, which was later confirmed by news from the London coach.<sup>736</sup>

West Country knowledge about the organisation and execution of royal funerals was improved by detailed accounts that were published in local newspapers. Readers were intrigued about the details of royal funerals and newspapers appealed directly to their desire for information. An account of the funeral of Princess Charlotte in 1817 acknowledged the melancholy nature of the event but also promised to inform readers of ‘every thing interesting that has transpired.’<sup>737</sup> A published funeral account was a significant opportunity for West Country inhabitants to read about the form and organisation of an extravagant funeral, far beyond the capabilities of local families. The detailed descriptions of participants and the equipment used in the funeral created a picture of a geographically distant and private occasion. This account was usually accompanied by a diagram which outlined the structure of

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<sup>736</sup> *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 13 November 1817.

<sup>737</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 17 November 1817.

the funeral procession. The diagram gave a detailed indication of how the partially heraldic funeral appeared, without the necessity of visiting London or Windsor to observe the procession. It is clear that the furnishings of a royal funeral were unachievable by readers of the newspaper, but the mention of specific items raised awareness of otherwise unfamiliar customs. Some items recorded within these ceremonials were features of the common funeral, albeit in larger quantities and greater quality: expensive sable hangings for church interiors, ostrich feathers worn in outfits or within the chapel, and large, ornate coffins.<sup>738</sup> This made emulation possible because opportunistic shopkeepers and their customers could gain an understanding of which items were considered to be appropriate and respectable for funerary use.

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<sup>738</sup> These items were included in the funerals of: Duke of Kent: *Bristol Mercury*, 21 February 1820; George III: *Bath Chronicle*, 21 October 1820; Princess Charlotte: *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 20 November 1817.











Small innovations emphasized the news of a royal funeral and distinguished it from the different stories that were compiled in the newspaper. The use of a black border was a simple, visual cue that a noteworthy death had occurred and this was used in editions of *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* and *Bath Chronicle* following the death of George III.<sup>739</sup> The use of black borders around the page and along column margins conferred significance to the news contained within. In this manner, the exceptional and unusual nature of events was given a visual form which could be quickly understood. A similar technique was used to

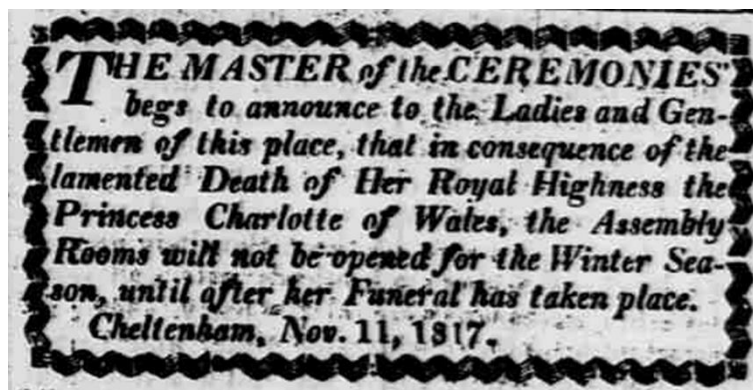


Figure 21. *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 13 November 1817.

highlight the instructions for local mourning which were published in the newspapers prior to start of court and general mourning. The instructions to put Salisbury into mourning for the death of princess Charlotte were enclosed within a thick black border that distinguished its contents from the surrounding material.<sup>740</sup> There was an opportunity for a more creative approach, as demonstrated by the zig-zagging border that was used in the *Cheltenham Chronicle* to announce the closure of local amusements until after the funeral of princess Charlotte.<sup>741</sup>

Innovative visual cues were also introduced within the advertisements for mourning and these techniques reflect the influence of fashion. In an 1817 edition of the *Bath*

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<sup>739</sup> See fig. 19 and fig. 20.

<sup>740</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 17 November 1817.

<sup>741</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 13 November 1817.

*Chronicle*, the businesses of Messrs. Coward and W.H. Lawrence both used a simple black border to distinguish their advertisements from the surrounding examples.<sup>742</sup> The two tradesmen were advertising goods for the general mourning and were competing against several other businesses whose advertisements were less striking. The use of blackletter typefaces for mourning wear has a similarly distinguishing effect for the businesses which were advertising ‘general mourning’ or a ‘mourning warehouse.’<sup>743</sup> The design of this text reflects a wider trend for the use of blackletter in the fashionable mourning items of the period, such as undertakers’ cards and funeral invitations.<sup>744</sup>

The publication of the Lord Chamberlain’s directive on state mourning was a common feature of mourning period which followed the death of a member of the royal



Figure 22. *Bath Chronicle*, 13 November 1817



Figure 23. *Bath Chronicle*, 13 November 1817.

<sup>742</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 13 Nov 1817.

<sup>743</sup> These two examples belonged to the Bristol textile merchants T. Wornell and J. Tyerman respectively: *Bristol Mirror*, 10 November 1810.

<sup>744</sup> Blackletter can be seen in the funeral tokens of



family. This was a significant contribution to local knowledge because it provided local people with the official instructions for mourning. The directive followed a common pattern and was primarily targeted to members of the court, giving instructions to the elite on how men and women should dress. In 1810, the directives for the funeral of Princess Amelia outlined the requirements for members of court.

‘The Gentlemen to wear black cloth without buttons on the sleeves or pockets, plain muslin or long lawn cravats and weepers, shamoy shoes and gloves, crape hatbands, and black swords and buckles. Undress - dark grey frocks’<sup>745</sup>

This information was important, because it gave the public an understanding of the items and materials used in the national act of mourning. Though they might not be able to afford these items or witness them in use, middling readers could gain an appreciation of what was considered to be appropriate and fashionable. This was arguably more knowledge than could be gained from attending the national ceremonial because an observer might only gain a glimpse of mourning wear in a passing procession. The published directives were particularly significant because they included additional instructions for ‘general mourning’ which were intended for the public. Prior to the funeral of George III, the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser* omitted the details for court mourning, focusing specifically on the Lord Chancellor’s instruction for general mourning.<sup>746</sup>

The instructions for the public were usually less detailed but they gave a greater significance to the act of going into mourning, because they contextualised the public mourning of individuals in a broader, national act of mourning. The 1810 directive for

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<sup>745</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 8 November 1810. Similar forms of court mourning were announced for the other royal deaths in this period: Princess Charlotte: *London Gazette*, 8 November 1817; Queen Charlotte: *London Gazette*, 21 November 1818; Duke of Kent: *London Gazette*, 25 January 1820; George III: *London Gazette*, 4 February 1820.

<sup>746</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 3 February 1820.

Princess Amelia instructed the public to ‘all persons do put themselves into decent mourning.’<sup>747</sup> The ambiguity of the instruction enabled all people to participate because it gave them the freedom to dictate the mourning items they would use. It is plausible that people may have had different perceptions of ‘decency’ based on their own values and understanding of mourning culture. These factors would be an important influence on their purchasing behaviour at the different businesses who supplied items of general mourning.

### Shopkeepers and General Mourning

A period of general mourning was an opportunity for shopkeepers to demonstrate their status as successful and professional businessmen, often competing against others in similar trades. Shopkeepers in the textile and clothing trades performed an important role in general mourning by responding to the public demand which followed a royal death. The sale of mourning wear was regularly performed by many different trades, but this demand was elevated in periods of general mourning. The exceptional nature of these periods was noted in contemporary advertisements such as in 1810, when W.H. Lawrence acknowledged ‘the great advance in all kinds of Black Goods’ during the general mourning for princess Amelia.<sup>748</sup> In the same year, the Bristolian retailer, J. Tyerman renamed his silk and lace warehouse as a ‘Family Mourning Warehouse’ promising that it was, ‘extensively assorted with every article adapted for mourning.’<sup>749</sup> By renaming his premises, Tyerman distinguished his business from other competitors who were also promising fashionable products and an extensive range of items.<sup>750</sup>

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<sup>747</sup> Bath Chronicle, 8 November 1810.

<sup>748</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 1817.

<sup>749</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 10 November 1810. The original title for Tyerman’s warehouse is advertised in: *Bristol Mirror*, 28 May 1808.

<sup>750</sup> These claims were made by T. Wornell, Haberdasher, lace-man and glover: *Bristol Mirror*, 10 November 1810 and W.M. Ringer, Hosier and glover: *Bristol Mirror*, 24 November 1810.

Shopkeepers were eager to prove their preparedness for the high demand and to provide reassurance that this would not be disadvantageous to customers. In 1817, E. Vandenhoff, a dyer in Castle Street, Salisbury, stated that in response to the death of princess Charlotte, he would ‘on account of the general mourning, be constantly dying blacks.’<sup>751</sup> There was demand for dyeing in periods of mourning because many people preferred to dye existing clothing items black, rather than purchasing entirely new clothes. Vandenhoff’s statement notified customers that his business possessed the right amount of stock to satisfy demands and it also demonstrated that he had knowledge of how prepare for such a significant event. Vandenhoff’s reassurances were accompanied a week later by a warning to his potential customers.

‘It being the opinion of many persons who have had their goods dyed by inferior dyers, who not only dye bad blacks, but injur the texture of goods, that blacks, particularly silks, will come off’<sup>752</sup>

This warning clearly plays on fear, using the threat of substandard goods that might negatively affect the mourner’s appearance and reputation. It demonstrates that Vandehoff believed there were competitors in Salisbury and attempted to deter people from choosing those alternatives. Vandenhoff suggests the idea that some competing tradesmen might exploit customers by using inferior products or techniques to increase profits during periods of high demand. In this warning, the threat of substandard products is compounded by the implication that less skilled tradesmen might seek to exploit the opportunity for profit. Of course, such notions, real or imagined, were advantageous for an established dyer who was trading on their own longstanding skill.

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<sup>751</sup> Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 7 November 1817.

<sup>752</sup> Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 17 November 1817.

Popular concern about exploitation was inevitable in situation where demand was high and supply was perceived to be limited. Retailers answered such concerns with promises of comprehensive stock and unaltered prices. The silk mercer, C. Foreman stressed this in a statement that, ‘his extensive stock of Black Goods will be sold at the usual low prices as he is determined not to advance any article.’<sup>753</sup> Foreman’s promises were made in the context of a busy trading environment in Salisbury at the time of mourning for Princess Amelia. In 1817, several Salisbury textile traders stated that the unusual period would not cause exceptional costs, noting that goods could be sold, ‘without the least advance in price’ and ‘at the same prices as before the late melancholy event.’<sup>754</sup> The traders in Bath were similarly disposed to state that there was no increase in cost, although the silk mercer, E.R. Gardiner did concede that his prices would be subject to a ‘very little advance.’<sup>755</sup> Gardiner’s concession may appear to be a dangerous choice in such a competitive market, but it is arguable that it indicated that his products were different to his competitors’ stock. This was important because in periods of mourning customers might want to distinguish themselves through items which indicated that their loyalty was greater and their sorrow was more sincere. The death of George III in 1820, arguably the most significant period of mourning considered in this chapter, was described as ‘a circumstance that has enhanced the value of Black Goods to a price hitherto unprecedented.’<sup>756</sup>

The act of going into mourning did not represent the abandonment of contemporary fashion or the suspension of consumption. Consumers continued to buy goods, and opportunistic retailers exploited the importance of social display to advertise products which were fashionable. In 1810, Stephen Wall’s advertisement regarding mourning wear for

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<sup>753</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 8 November 1810.

<sup>754</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 10 November 1817.

<sup>755</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 13 November 1817.

<sup>756</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 7 February 1820.

Princess Amelia had used the title ‘fashionable mourning.’<sup>757</sup> The language of the advertisement presented his stock as both ‘suited to the present mournful occasion’ and also influenced by fashionable trends. Fashion was of prime importance in Bath, where several tradespeople marketed goods on their fashionable quality, an inevitable consequence of the city’s status as a place of fashion. The milliner and dress maker, Mrs. Langdon offered ‘an ample variety of appropriate mourning suitably adapted for morning and evening dress,’ arguably targeting affluent and socially active customers.<sup>758</sup> This is also a reminder that wearing mourning clothes was a public act, which could make a positive or negative impression on society depending on clothing choices. Information published in newspapers provided consumers of mourning wear with a valuable insight into the trends that could be copied or sampled by those who possessed enough money. In 1817, the *Bristol Mercury* outlined two detailed mourning outfits for women during the mourning for Princess Charlotte, these were named the ‘carriage’ and ‘evening’ outfits.<sup>759</sup> The names of the outfits indicated a mobile and leisurely lifestyle that was unattainable for less affluent readers but the information was still provided in detail that could be emulated. The *Bristol Mercury*’s article, headlined ‘Oracle of Fashion’ illustrates how the fashionable mourning outfit comprised a variety of different, expensive materials and articles.<sup>760</sup> The variety of mourning items for women had drawn criticism from commentators who argued that the consumers thoughts were on fashion rather than a sense of loss. During the general mourning of 1817, the *Lady’s Magazine* suggested that the considerable consumption of mourning wear was due to the producers creation of ‘fashionable’ mourning items. It commented that women ‘are inquisitive after new fashions’ and stated of the mourning clothes that ‘it is hardly honest to

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<sup>757</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 12 November 1810.

<sup>758</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 13 November 1817.

<sup>759</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 7 February 1817.

<sup>760</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 7 February 1817.

leave them upon the makers hands when they have studied to please them'<sup>761</sup> The satirical tone conveys the sense of criticism which was expressed by many individuals during the mourning for princess Charlotte.

In matters of mourning, London was synonymous with fashion. Items and materials from the capital were prominently offered in advertisements which implied their exceptional or important status. The importance of goods from London was reflected by the number of retailers who made visits to the capital during the period of general mourning and enthusiastically announced their return with new, fashionable products. Five days after the death of Princess Charlotte, the Salisbury shopkeeper S. Stroud announced that he had, 'just returned from London with a genteel and fashionable assortment of mourning.'<sup>762</sup> The timing of the announcement indicates that Stroud had travelled as a consequence of the princess' death, specifically to acquire goods. In the same period of mourning, the assistant to Salisbury milliner, Mrs. Woollven, delayed her return from London in order to acquire mourning apparel for the death of the princess.<sup>763</sup> The shopkeepers' personal visits to the metropolis were beneficial to the customer because they theoretically eliminated the additional prices which could be incurred if a shopkeeper had to buy their stock through a middleman. This benefit was mentioned by the Bath silk mercer E.R. Gardiner when he advertised a range of new mourning materials which had been personally sourced from London during general mourning in 1817. Gardiner argued that it was 'impossible for any person in the trade' to match his prices or stock unless they too had bought their goods from the capital.<sup>764</sup> The Salisbury milliner T. Davies's visit to London during the mourning for George III in February 1820 enabled him to return to the city with 'a fashionable assortment

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<sup>761</sup> *The Lady's Magazine*, Nov 1817.

<sup>762</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 17 November 1817.

<sup>763</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 10 November 1817.

<sup>764</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 13 November 1817.

of black chips.<sup>765</sup> It can be observed that items for London were fashionable and possessed qualities of prestige that made them desirable to customers. The attractive qualities of goods from London did not prevent them from being marketed as affordable items. In 1810, J. Parish, owner of a 'cheap-linen warehouse' on Oatmeal Row in Salisbury promoted a range of mourning items from London.<sup>766</sup> There was no indication that Parish had recently purchased his items and it is probable that they were in his stock prior to the general mourning for princess Amelia.

It is important to consider what kinds of items were being sold by retailers during the periods of general mourning because this best demonstrates the similarities between mourning for national figures and personal mourning. In the socially significant act of public mourning, these items were used by shopkeepers and customers to demonstrate personal qualities such as taste, knowledge and wealth.

Crape was the most popular mourning material which was widely used for personal mourning in both clothing and decoration. The plentiful consumption of crape during periods of general mourning has been discussed in the context of Norwich, which was a national centre for production of the material. Norwich crape was prescribed for members of the court but it was also purchased by consumers outside of court, whose interest drove demand higher.<sup>767</sup> There were other local sources of crape such as the weavers of Somerset; similar to their rivals in Norwich, the weavers of Somerset benefitted from the intensive periods of mourning wear consumption. During the general mourning of 1820, a newspaper article recorded that in the locality of Taunton, 'every manufacturer, man, woman and child in full

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<sup>765</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 7 February 1820.

<sup>766</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 26 November 1810.

<sup>767</sup> The instruction for Norwich Crape in court mourning: *Bath Chronicle* 8 November 1810; *Bristol Mirror*, 15 November 1817. Problems with the demands for crape are mentioned during mourning for princess Charlotte in: *Norfolk Chronicle*, 15 November 1817.

employment...in the weaving of crape, for which the demand is now beyond precedent'<sup>768</sup> For those unable to afford crape, there was the lesser, cheaper 'crape muslin,' which was cotton-based and mimicked the appearance of crape. This product was sold in 1820, by the Salisbury silk mercer James Truman as part of a wide range of different woven materials for use in mourning, such as 'black bomazeens, poplins, sarsenets, persians, Queen's stuffs, crapes and crape muslins'<sup>769</sup> Truman's stock features many typical mourning fabrics which were retailed throughout the textile businesses of the West Country. Bombazine, produced from silk and sometimes a combination of silk and wool, had been prescribed for use in court mourning following all of the deaths discussed in this chapter. This material was also sold alongside: Poplin, a woven mixture of silk and yarn; sarsenet, a fine silk and crape, a product which was predominantly used for mourning. This variety of fabrics illustrates how well-equipped the tradespeople of the West Country to meet the demands of general mourning, with a range of goods that were equally appropriate for court mourning.

Periods of general mourning were profitable for members of the dyeing trade, as demonstrated by the earlier example of Vandenhoff, the Salisbury dyer. In 1820, Mr. Jesset, a dyer and woollen draper in Taunton cleaned and restored the goods which he dyed, reflecting the practicalities of mainlining neat mourning wear during a long period of observance.<sup>770</sup> Similar maintenance was offered by the milliner, T. Davies whose Salisbury business repaired feathers, a detail which reflects that feathers were an expensive product and not an item which was affordable in bulk.<sup>771</sup>

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<sup>768</sup> *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 9 February 1820.

<sup>769</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 7 February 1820.

<sup>770</sup> *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 3 November 1820.

<sup>771</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 7 February 1820. Feathers were an expensive funerary decoration which could be borne on the coffin or carried by a funeral worker known as a 'featherman' who had feathers mounted on board: there were several local uses of feathermen in the evidence collected for this these: SHC: DD\WY/20/27; GRO: D1799/A382; GRO: D2002/15/7; 'Masonic Funeral', *Bristol Mercury*, 20 March 1820.



Ostrich feathers had a use in contemporary mourning decoration where they decorated affluent homes and were carried in funeral processions by feathermen. During general mourning they were retailed in Bath, arguably a demonstration of the influence of ‘fashion’ which was alluded to in advertisements. Feathers were not prescribed by the Lord Chancellor but had been used within the mourning attire of royals whose activities were noted by contemporaries. In mourning for her sister Charlotte, Princess Elizabeth wore a plume of ostrich feathers in her bonnet.<sup>772</sup>

The adaptation or augmentation of normal clothing arguably provided a way for less affluent to participate in respectable mourning. Crape or cheaper black material worn as an armband was understood as a respectful sign of participation in mourning and a gesture which was also evident in private funerals during the period.<sup>773</sup> This is a good example of how respectable practices were related to an individual’s status and wealth because it would have been inappropriate for an affluent member of polite society to wear a simple armband. The more affluent members of society could purchase ornamental tokens that would augment their appearance in a similar manner, albeit with more influence from contemporary fashion. The similarities between these items and the popular mourning jewellery of the period. Charles Viner’s Bath ‘fancy black ornaments,’ an ambiguous description which served to draw in interested customers; Viner requested that people visited his shop to inspect the items.<sup>774</sup> The instruction to visit Viner’s shop suggests that the act of buying mourning wear was intended to occur as part of sociable shopping trip, rather than being a merely practical purchase. During the mourning for George III, the jewellers Abraham and Levy advertised ‘a large collection of Black Ornaments in brooches, ear-rings, head ornaments’<sup>775</sup> The jewellers

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<sup>772</sup> *Manchester Mercury*, 9 December 1817.

<sup>773</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 8 November 1810.

<sup>774</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 3 February 1820.

<sup>775</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 3 February 1820.

also advertised ‘medallions in memory of the Duke of Kent’ whose general mourning coincided with this period.<sup>776</sup>

Mourning wear was widely consumed in the periods of royal mourning and whilst it was beneficial for crape producers and retailers, it was also opposed by some parties. Complaints about the detrimental effect of court mourning had been made in early eighteenth century, when it was argued that mourning damaged the fortunes of clothing traders.<sup>777</sup> Similar concerns were expressed later in the long eighteenth century regarding the effects of public mourning. In 1818, a letter to the *Bristol Mirror* encouraged people to acknowledge the end of public mourning. It described the custom in critical terms noting that a return to normal shopping behaviour was beneficial to ‘the manufacturer and shopkeeper, but of thousands of the labouring poor who are now out of employment in consequence of that event’.<sup>778</sup> The letter was credited to a Londoner who was writing on behalf of the beleaguered textile traders. It is apparent that these lobbying voices addressed the members of public who engaged in mourning, hoping to dissuade them from engaging in fashionable but commercially problematic activity. At the cessation of public mourning for princess Charlotte it was suggested that some individuals were reluctant to leave to leave mourning. The comment had satirical tone and addressed middling members of society.

‘the respectable part of the community will no doubt lay aside their black coats – otherwise, those who mourn for relatives will be compelled to wear a profusion of crape, as distinction from those who wear mourning for convenience’<sup>779</sup>

This criticism exposed two important details about general mourning which are relevant to an analysis of the custom as an opportunity to display and demonstrate respectability. Firstly, it

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<sup>776</sup> Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette, 3 February 1820.

<sup>777</sup> ‘Of Court Mournings’ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 1 (1731), p. 161.

<sup>778</sup> ‘To the editor of the Bristol Mirror’ *Bristol Mirror* 22 December 1817.

<sup>779</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, January 1818.

is evident that attire worn during general mourning was similar to the attire worn in personal mourning. The similarity between items worn for both forms of mourning meant that a person could use their black goods for either. Secondly, it is posited that the act of wearing mourning was perceived by some people as an act of convenience or custom, rather than evidence of true sorrow. This complements the idea that public mourning was a fashionable activity, influenced by aesthetics and the desire to make an aggrandising display. Indeed, the hope that a respectable cohort could direct public behaviour is indication that contemporaries believed public mourning was a social act, based on competition and emulation.

### The Suspension of Daily Routine

The decision to put a town into mourning was commonly made by a meeting of civic authorities and their conclusions were communicated to the community by the local press. The composition of these committees typically included town dignitaries such as the mayor and justices of the peace. Clergyman and churchwardens were also common, reflecting the significance of the established church in the rituals of public mourning; these individuals' premises would feature prominently in the act of public mourning. The churchwardens of Cheltenham, Thomas Jones and Captain Matthews, made the declaration to the inhabitants of the town following the death of princess Amelia in 1810.<sup>780</sup> Their proclamation encouraged appropriate behaviour for public mourning, which included the closure of shops.

The closure of shops suspended the routines of tradespeople and the daily rituals of their customers. Shopkeepers who closed their premises accepted the loss of trade and their customers were denied the opportunity to make purchases. By accepting this inconvenience, both parties acknowledged the exceptional circumstances of the day. The closure of shops contributed to the mournful quality of a whole town because it deprived streets of the

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<sup>780</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 20 November 1817.

commercial and social activities which typically occurred. During mourning for George III, a favourable account of Bristol described, ‘the streets instead of presenting the bustling scene which they usually do on days of business, exhibiting only a few individuals’<sup>781</sup> The suspension of trading had a bold visual impact that confirmed the inhabitants’ commitment to participate in mourning. The businessmen of Bristol, presented as typically successful and active, were celebrated for their suspension of the behaviour that usually defined them.

The cessation of trade removed the opportunities for people to engage in sociable customs which did not match the sombre tone of the day, such as shopping, sports or entertainment. This practice could be understood as a way of preventing people from engaging in leisurely pursuits and encouraging them to engage in appropriate behaviour. In the Somerset town of Frome, during mourning for princess Charlotte, it was observed that ‘business was entirely suspended, and everyone devoted the melancholy day to the solemn exercise of religious duties.’<sup>782</sup> In this example, the encouragement worked and the people committed themselves to pious behaviour that was believed to befit the occasion. The sudden death of princess Charlotte created a problematic situation for authorities in Bath because members of the royal family had been visiting the city at the time of her death. The colourful and opulent displays which had affirmed the city’s loyalty to its royal guests became problematic after the death of the princess. An account from the city noted that ‘the great disappointment is that the gaieties with which the shops are filled are not applicable to the mourning which has ensued.’<sup>783</sup>

It was common for the day of the funeral to be marked by the full closure of shops, indicating that the townspeople had suspended their routines of commerce and consumption. A description of Bristol on the day of Princess Charlotte’s funeral focused on the venues of

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<sup>781</sup> ‘Obsequies of His Late Most Exalted Majesty’, *Bristol Mercury*, 21 February 1820.

<sup>782</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 24 November 1817.

<sup>783</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 17 November 1817.

consumption, observing that, ‘the shops and warehouses were closed - the blinds, doors, and shutters closed in almost every houses.’<sup>784</sup> The totality of shop closures was the source of boastful and competitive descriptions such as that of Salisbury on the day of George III’s funeral, which stated that ‘the shops were universally closed, all business suspended.’<sup>785</sup>

The act of suspending trade demonstrated the loyalty of a community, particularly on the day of the funeral itself. On the day of George III funeral, the closed shops of Westbury in Wiltshire, were interpreted as proof that ‘no place has displayed a deeper sense of reverential regard for the memory of our late lamented sovereign.’<sup>786</sup> Here, we can observe how participation in public mourning was motivated by shopkeepers’ desire to be seen as respectable mourners. The claims of Westbury were easily and clearly contestable by other communities whose tradespeople similarly closed their businesses. In rural Wiltshire, the closure of shops was noted at Chippenham and Warminster during the day of the funeral.<sup>787</sup> A similar pride was expressed in Salisbury which described the ‘public respect’ that been shown by citizens, noting that ‘our shops were closed the whole day’ for the funeral of Queen Charlotte in 1818.<sup>788</sup> The sense of expectation was apparent in the statement to the people of Cheltenham in the week preceding the funeral of princess Charlotte. The town authorities stated that they were ‘sure that we need not desire tradesmen throughout this town to close their shops.’<sup>789</sup> In this statement, the closure of shops was presented as an innately respectable and appropriate response to the occasion, which demonstrated the shared values of the townspeople. The Cheltenham authorities’ instruction included a reminder of the national grief for the dead princess.<sup>790</sup> By referencing the national community behaving in

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<sup>784</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 22 November 1817.

<sup>785</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 21 February 1820.

<sup>786</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 21 February 1820.

<sup>787</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 24 February 1820.

<sup>788</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 7 December 1818.

<sup>789</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 13 November 1817.

<sup>790</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 13 November 1817.

union, the authors indicated that disparate communities would be behaving in a similar manner and could therefore be judged on their efforts. It was implicit therefore, that the failure to participate would reflect badly on the town. The custom was paralleled by villagers, such as the people Wrington in Somerset, who were described as ‘abstaining from all business and closing their shops the whole of the day’ for the funeral of George III.<sup>791</sup>

In the days preceding the funeral, some shopkeepers ‘partially’ closed their premises in a display of mournful sentiment. An account from Salisbury described the aftermath of King George III’s death in which, ‘the windows of all our shops were partly closed.’<sup>792</sup> This partial closure enabled a shop to continue trading whilst making a mournful gesture that would reflect positively on the shopkeeper. The convenience of closing shop windows made it a source of civic competition, because it could be performed quickly and the shopkeeper’s haste could be presented as evidence of their loyalty. The perception of loyalty was apparent in the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* which recorded the ‘mournful expedience’ of the neighbouring communities of Sidmouth, Winchester and Salisbury, whose prompt response to news of the king’s death was demonstrated by the partial closure of their shops. The haste of mourning was demonstrated by ‘the prompt and habitant sentiment of sympathy’ for the deceased princess Charlotte.<sup>793</sup> The importance of a prompt start to partial mourning compelled communities to note when and how they had started such as in Bristol, where the shop windows were closed from the day that the death of George III was reported in the city.<sup>794</sup> In some communities, the closure of fixed shops was paralleled by the postponement of markets which coincided with the royal funeral. The market in Frome closed on the day of

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<sup>791</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 1820.

<sup>792</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 7 February 1820.

<sup>793</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 13 November 1817.

<sup>794</sup> ‘Obsequies of His Late Most Exalted Majesty’, *Bristol Mercury*, 21 February 1820.

princess Charlotte's funeral, an act which was identified as evidence of the whole town's loyalty.<sup>795</sup>

The suspension of fashionable entertainment performed a similar role to the closure of shops because it prevented behaviour that was not compatible with public expectations of mournful sobriety. Many different establishments suspended their programme of activities and postponed events that were scheduled to occur. This is particularly evident in the towns of Bath and Cheltenham where the popular balls and assemblies were cancelled during the periods of public mourning.<sup>796</sup> Following the death of princess Amelia, the 'dress ball' and 'fancy ball' in Bath were postponed until after the funeral.<sup>797</sup> In 1820, the The Upper Assembly Rooms and Kingston Assembly Rooms in the city, were closed in respect for the dead King George III.<sup>798</sup> The urgency with which an establishment responded to death was a positive quality, which demonstrated an awareness of national events and appreciation of events beyond the immediate, provincial surroundings. We can observe this haste in an example from the aftermath of princess Charlotte's death, when the Bath Assembly Rooms 'were instantly shut, and porters stationed to give the melancholy intelligence to the company when they arrived'<sup>799</sup> The haste of this closure was advantageous because it demonstrated that the proprietors were aware of national events, but also because it avoided the criticism that might result from staging entertainment during a sombre occasion.

The closure of theatres was another 'respectable' practice which limited the opportunities for inappropriate behaviour during mourning periods and royal funerals. During general mourning for princess Charlotte, it was observed that in Bath 'the theatre is closed, and all

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<sup>795</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 24 November 1817.

<sup>796</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 8 November 1810.

<sup>797</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 8 November 1817.

<sup>798</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 10 November 1820.

<sup>799</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 13 November 1817.

amusements are suspended in fine universal sorrow.’<sup>800</sup> Here, the closure of theatres was interpreted as evidence the sorrow felt by the people, who were presented as foregoing entertainment due to their mournful feelings for the princess. It is notable that many proprietors announced the closure of their theatre, even if the civic authorities had already requested or instructed the closure.<sup>801</sup> The consequences of closing the theatre were also felt by the performers who were denied income by the suspension of their livelihood. During general mourning for princess Amelia, it was commented that ‘many of the actors, both in town and country, will observe the general mourning with fasting: as the rule is in all theatres, no play, no pay.’<sup>802</sup> In accounts of contemporary theatres it is difficult to observe the reluctance that was suggested by the satirical comment. However, it is notable that some theatres reopened immediately after the day of the royal funeral, such as in Taunton where the theatre re-opened on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> 1820, the day after funeral of King George III.<sup>803</sup> Taunton’s theatre justified its decision with an explanation that London’s theatres were scheduled to do the same.<sup>804</sup> As with other aspects of public mourning, the events in London were a convenient, informal guide of what was respectable and appropriate.

In addition to the closure of public places of entertainment it was possible for private entertainments and gatherings to be suspended. The suspension of meetings and dinners were publicised in advance and this allowed members to confirm their loyalty. The ball for members of Mr. Farquarsson’s hunt was declared cancelled due to the ‘lamentable death of his majesty.’<sup>805</sup> In Taunton it was noted that ‘all public and private meetings and convivialities have been postponed’ an appraisal which conflated the meetings with other

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<sup>800</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 13 November 1817.

<sup>801</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 8 November 1810; *Bath Chronicle* 3 February 1820; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 14 February 1820; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 10 January 1820.

<sup>802</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 10 November 1810.

<sup>803</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 16 February 1820

<sup>804</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 16 February 1820; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 21 February 1820.

<sup>805</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 7 November 1820.



public suspensions during the period.<sup>806</sup> It was not always possible to postpone such gatherings and in such circumstances it was important for participants to acknowledge the mournful times in which they met. A good example of this can be observed in the meeting of the Bristolian ‘Anchor’ society only two days after the death of Princess Amelia. The participants acknowledged the tone of the times and recognised events with a toast, by doing so it was clear that they were not disregarding the events of the day.<sup>807</sup>

The closure of shops and places of entertainment removed the distractions of daily routine and immersed inhabitants in the act of mourning. Because such a significant part of the urban environment was affected, there was a greater chance that inhabitants would be involved than with an elite funeral, which might only pass through a town. The suspension of daily rituals also enabled the inhabitants of town to participate in the prime event of public mourning, the divine service for the deceased monarch.

#### The Divine Service: A proxy funeral

The divine service was the most important part of provincial mourning for the deceased royal. It was significant because the community was transformed into a venue for mourning by the closure of buildings in towns and the inhabitants’ acquisition of mourning wear. In this chapter, it is argued that the divine service was a form of ‘proxy funeral’ which paralleled the royal funeral in London. This argument is advanced by an examination of the different funerary items and practices which were an important part of the divine service for a deceased monarch. The consequent ‘proxy funeral’ was an opportunity for West Country inhabitants to demonstrate their awareness of respectable funerary practice and to employ the gestures of polite mourning.

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<sup>806</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 8 February 1820.

<sup>807</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 17 November 1810.

Mourning drapery was the by the far the most common aspect of church decoration during public mourning. It was a practice which mirrored contemporary funeral customs, in which the interiors of churches were adorned with drapery. The use of drapery was mentioned in the civic authorities' instructions for mourning, but the lack of specificity enabled different churches to produce a more elaborate display. The declaration of general mourning for princess Charlotte in Salisbury for example, stated that 'churches shall be hung in black on the occasion.'<sup>808</sup> On the day of the funeral, the *Salisbury Journal* noted that, 'the pulpits at our cathedral and other churches were hung with black cloth, which produced a most striking effect.'<sup>809</sup> The pulpit was commonly mentioned in accounts of drapery used in royal mourning. At St Mary Redcliff and Christ Church, two of the larger Bristolian parishes, the mourning hangings were formed in a canopy over the pulpit during mourning for George III.<sup>810</sup> This focus was understandable because the pulpit was the locus of the divine service; where the minister gave the sermon and the different readings were given. The hanging of drapery in different locations within the church enabled a church to make it's own respectable demonstration of sentiment and loyalty. Significantly, for this chapter, the use of mourning drapery was focused on creating a large and spectacular display, which would be suggestive of an affluent funeral. For example, the 'deepest mourning' performed for George III, by St. James in Bristol was defined by the extensive hangings. These were described in a detailed newspaper article that recorded the mourning cloth and demonstrated how the cloth was used to accentuate the distinctive architecture of the building.

'the galleries were covered with black cloth, and the curtains of the organ gallery were also black. The pulpit, the desk, the church-wardens seat &c. were hung with the same

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<sup>808</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 17 November 1817.

<sup>809</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, November 1817.

<sup>810</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 29 November 1820.

material, also the fine saxon arches were festooned with it. The entrance doors were festooned with black cloth'<sup>811</sup>

The example of St. James' demonstrates that extensive drapery was recognised as an appropriate and respectable display. There were many parts of the church interior which could be draped in mourning, consequently transforming the interior into a sombre environment. The quality of mourning drapery was often cited, indicating that adherence to contemporary fashions was an important factor in producing a respectable display. In addition to the ambiguous references to 'quality cloth,' churches used crape, sable, superfine cloth and black velvet for their mourning.<sup>812</sup> Outside of the cities, the use of drapery was equally ostentatious with different areas of church interiors hung in mourning for sombre effect. At Devizes, the 'pulpits, reading desks &c were hung in cloth' in the different churches during mourning for princess Charlotte.<sup>813</sup> The use of mourning cloth in large quantities was an indication of the affluence of a church or members of its community. There were potential benefits for the minister too, as demonstrated by a case outside of the region in Kent, where a vicar had defended his appropriation of mourning hangings after the death of Princess Charlotte. The case is significant because the vicar argued that it was 'the general custom of all the parishes in the kingdom to allow the rector to take a portion of the black clothing put up in churches on occasions of public and private mourning'<sup>814</sup> The court did not agree with the vicar's argument, decided that this was not the case in his local area. However, this example demonstrates the ease with which the items of public could be appropriated; the idea of appropriating the cloth was amenable to the vicar, even if his peers did not agree.

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<sup>811</sup> 'Obsequies of His Late Most Exalted Majesty', *Bristol Mercury*, 21 February 1820.

<sup>812</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 20 November 1817; *Bristol Mirror*, 29 November 1817; *Bristol Mirror*, 7 December 1817.

<sup>813</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*,

<sup>814</sup> 'Cramp and another v. Bayley, Clerk,' *Annual Register for the Year 1819*, Vol. 61 (London, 1819), pp. 209-210.

The use of drapery was also practiced within nonconformist communities in the region, where a focus on the quality of the materials sought to confirm their engagement in the events of the funeral day. During mourning for princess Charlotte the Independent chapel in Shepton Mallett was hung with ‘superfine black cloth, which had a very solemn, yet mournful effect.’<sup>815</sup> The contemporary focus on materials indicated that members of the dissenters were engaged in the same customs as those in the established church. The extensiveness of the drapery and its material quality were a testament to the sincerity of dissenters involvement in the act of royal mourning. For this reason, a member of the Methodist Chapel in Shepton Mallett notified the *Bristol Mirror* that ‘The pulpit and galleries of the chapel were hung with the finest black cloth; windows and over the pulpit, drapery of the same, furnished by respectable clothiers, members of the Methodist society.’<sup>816</sup> We can observe how the use of mourning drapery could be used to show loyalty because it demonstrated that the community cared and also that local shopkeepers were participating in the act of mourning. Anxiety about non-participation occurred elsewhere in the country, such as in Leeds where Quaker shopkeepers were accused of refusing to mourn for King George III.<sup>817</sup> Members of dissenting communities were therefore eager to communicate their willingness to participate because a lack of activity could easily be perceived as disloyalty. During mourning for Princess Charlotte, a member of the Trim Street chapel in Bath defended dissenters against claims of abstention, arguing that his meeting house had participated appropriately.<sup>818</sup>

Other types of funerary ornament were used in the decoration of churches for the divine service. The parish church in Wrington provided ‘the appropriate display of the funeral pall upon the pulpit,’ for the divine service to mourn princess Charlotte.<sup>819</sup> The use of the pall in a

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<sup>815</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 29 November 1817.

<sup>816</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 7 December 1817.

<sup>817</sup> *Leeds Intelligencer*, 24 November 1817.

<sup>818</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 29 November 1817.

<sup>819</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 29 November 1817.

prominent location acted as a reminder to the congregation of the royal death which had caused their meeting. The pall was a local asset which was recognisable as a funerary item which was of respectable quality. In divine services for George III there was a more ostentatious use of funerary decorations which were arguably unattainable for most attendees. Quasi-heraldic ornaments were used in Bristol: an achievement was hung on the wall for George III at St. James' and the arms of England were displayed in Christ-Church.<sup>820</sup> The interior of St. Mary Redcliff was decorated with an assortment of items, 'in front of the organ loft, there was a hatchment with the King's Arms; escutcheons at the altar, desk and pulpit and banners at the minister's and at the churchwardens' pews'.<sup>821</sup> These items were clearly suggestive of the insignia borne within a heraldic funeral and their inclusion in the limited description of the church's decorations indicates that they were regarded as important.

The ringing of bells was widely accepted as a mournful gesture and an important part of respectable funerary commemoration. During royal mourning, bell-ringing performed a similar role to the common funeral because the bell was rung prior to divine service, summoning mourners to the church.

The bells also performed a secondary role by audibly marking the importance of the event. The length of tolling was a mark of the deceased person's status and for royal mourning it was common for the tolling of bells to continue for several hours. Such prolonged tolling of bells was expensive and was usually reserved for the funerals of those who were affluent enough to pay their sexton the required fee.<sup>822</sup>

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<sup>820</sup> 'Obsequies', *Bristol Mercury*, 21 February 1820; *Bristol Mirror*, 19 February 1820.

<sup>821</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 19 February 1820.

<sup>822</sup> Examples of the cost of bell-ringing in regional funerals: £1 for ringing 20 hours for Elizabeth Lawford: BRO, Bristol, [ AC/JS/50/13/b] 'Receipt for gravedigging and bellringing' (1727). Also ringing of bells at St John's and Christ Church for funeral of Jane Edwards: £1-4-0: GRO, Gloucester, [D2002/14/3] 'Funeral Expenses of Jane Edwards' (1763).

The duration of bell ringing differed throughout the region and was dependent on the resources of each parish and the skills possessed by the bell-ringers. A whole day of ringing was an ambitious gesture because it would involve the time of many different individuals, who would all need to possess the appropriate skills for such a toll. In other communities the ringing of the bell was used to precede or follow the divine service. During mourning for Princess Charlotte, the parish bell in Beckington was tolled throughout the day until the divine service in the evening with ‘muffled peals throughout the day.’<sup>823</sup> The bells of Bath Abbey were rung ‘double muffled’ during the day of princess’ funeral, a gesture which was described as ‘a plan never before adopted here.’<sup>824</sup> The novel nature of this bell ringing indicated that Bath Abbey wished to recognise the Princess’ death as an exceptional occasion and believed that the unusual technique was an effective way to display this to the community. The practice of bell ringing continued throughout the period of study and was popular in cities and towns. For example, the divine service of George III was marked by bell ringing in the city of Salisbury and also in the smaller Wiltshire towns of Trowbridge and Westbury.<sup>825</sup>

Attempts to synchronise the divine service with the funeral in London illustrate how West Country commemoration was a ‘proxy’ funeral. The significant moment of the body’s entry into the church was marked by the ringing of a bell, which made inhabitants aware of the moment. In south Wiltshire, bells were rung ‘in mournful junction with the obsequies of the Princess Amelia,’ the timing of which had been communicated through newspaper reports prior to the event.<sup>826</sup>

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<sup>823</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 27 November 1817.

<sup>824</sup> The ringers performed an ‘abstract peal of grandsire triples, consisting of 1135 changes being the exact number of weeks the lamented Princess had lived’ *Bath Chronicle*, 27 November 1817.

<sup>825</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 21 February 1820.

<sup>826</sup> *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 19 November 1810.

The impression of synchronicity with events in the capital was important, because it conferred a significance and authenticity to the divine service. It was noted that some divine services for George III in Bristol were held in the evening due to the ministers ‘conceiving that time the most appropriate, as being the nearest to the hour when the remains of His Majesty were committed to the tomb’<sup>827</sup> This scheduling was mirrored by several of the Wiltshire parishes who only had one service on the funeral day and elected to meet in the evening.<sup>828</sup> During mourning for Princess Charlotte, the vicar of Wedmore substituted ‘the psalms and lessons appointed for the burial service’ for those intended for the day.<sup>829</sup> Indeed, some people were eager to assert that their services had followed the pattern of distant events. Bob Short condemned the *Bristol Mercury* for an error in recording the local churches readings for the funeral day of princess Charlotte. The newspaper had previously criticised local preachers for eschewing the prescribed readings for the day, Short claimed otherwise, defending the practice of Rev. Stephen Lowell, preacher at Bridge Street and stating ‘I was there, and heard him. Now confess your fault in a graceful manner’<sup>830</sup>

The similarity between the divine service and contemporary funerary customs was demonstrated by the full mourning wear, worn by members of the public. In his sermon to the service for Princess Charlotte, the minister of the Octagon Chapel, Bath commented on ‘the dismal change which has taken place in the appearance of the whole congregation,’ noting the mourning clothes that were being worn.<sup>831</sup> During mourning for George III, an account of Bristol noted ‘congregations in deep mourning’ and in Salisbury it observed ‘the mourning habiliments worn by all ranks of society’.<sup>832</sup> The aesthetic similarity with a contemporary

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<sup>827</sup> ‘Obsequies of His Late Most Exalted Majesty’, *Bristol Mercury*, 21 February 1820; a similar sentiment motivated the churchwardens of All Saints to hold their service in the evening: *Bristol Mirror*, 19 February 1820.

<sup>828</sup> This is noted during the day of the funeral of George III: *Bath Chronicle*, 24 February 1820.

<sup>829</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 20 November 1817.

<sup>830</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 27 November 1817.

<sup>831</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, 20 November 1817.

<sup>832</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 19 February 1820; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 7 February 1820.

funeral was observed by a correspondent to the *Bristol Mirror* who commented that the congregation ‘exhibited the mournful appearance of one large family returning from the funeral of a lamented relative.’<sup>833</sup> The style or grade of mourning wear was dependent upon on the means of the individual and it was possible for contemporary fashions to influence the appearance of those who attended the divine service. This was illustrated by the example of Jane Webb of Market Lavington, Wiltshire, who wore the same suit of mourning to the divine service for George III as she had worn for the mourning of George II. The observation that ‘the singularity of its make attracted much notice’ indicates that the mourning suit differed from the contemporary styles adopted by the majority of congregants.<sup>834</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion we can observe that general mourning was an opportunity for people to participate in social display that showed their respectability and awareness of national events. Newspapers facilitated the staging of general mourning by acting as a platform for the different announcements that instructed on the form of mourning and the suspension of entertainment. Newspaper descriptions of royal funerals gave West Country inhabitants a detailed understanding of the form of royal funerals which were occurring in a distant location or within the privacy of a closed chapel. This knowledge was complemented by instructions and commentary about mourning wear, explaining customs which were intended for a metropolitan elite but could be emulated with inferior materials. The newspapers also served as a platform for announcements by the shopkeepers whose establishments were a direct source of mourning apparel. The shopkeepers’ contribution to West Country knowledge of appropriate customs was significant because their establishments were where unfamiliar items could be learned about and purchased. A significant number of tradesmen

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<sup>833</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 20 November 1817.

<sup>834</sup> The story was reported outside of the region in: *Exeter Flying Post*, 24 February 1820.



acquired and sold goods from the capital during periods of mourning. This activity ensured that the fashions and styles of the capital could be consumed by West Country inhabitants.

The divine service for the deceased monarch was 'proxy funeral' in which the monarch was commemorated with a funerary display which was equivalent to an affluent or ostentatious funeral. To honour the deceased monarch, there was use of equipment and decorations which were beyond the financial resources of many who attended; the specific nature of these items varied between locations but we can observe that rural parishes participated as readily as their urban counterparts. Events in the capital also had an influence on the organisation of the service and it was desirable for a sense of synchronicity with the royal funeral; either through the ringing of bells, timing of the service or the use of specific readings. These elements helped the congregants to feel that their service was linked to the distant royal funeral. The divine service was an opportunity to witness ostentatious funerary culture at first hand but it was also an occasion in which people could participate as mourners.

## Conclusion

This thesis has examined funerals as an opportunity for social display in the West Country during the long eighteenth century through a thematic study of funerals and funerary professionals. It has been shown that the funerals performed in the region were highly managed opportunities for personal and intimate display that were dependent on the goods and services of funerary professionals.

The undertaking trade and the clergy were fundamental for the organisation and execution of a respectable funeral. The thesis identifies a thriving undertaking trade which was well established in the large and small towns of the region. The undertakers of the West Country were tradesmen and retailers who supplemented their undertaking work with business in allied trades such as carpentry, drapery and auctioneering. The range of goods and services supplied by the West Country undertakers are comparable to those of metropolitan undertakers, indicating that these tradesmen were aware of contemporary fashion. The importance of the trade is demonstrated by the involvement of undertakers in all of the funerals studied in the thesis, from the urban heart of Bristol to the remote towns of Wiltshire. The clergy were a similarly important presence because most funerals still occurred within the established church. For this reason, the thesis interprets the clergyman as a ‘deathworker,’ a professional who manages the response to death. This is an original approach which situates the clergyman in the social display of the eighteenth-century funeral as an enabler of many of the popular funerary practices and an essential practitioner in the ritual. The perception of the clergyman’s deathwork can be seen in the popular depiction of the clergy as members of a community of professionals who benefitted from death.

The thesis demonstrates how social circumstances influenced consumption and behaviour in three different types of funeral that occurred in the region. The ‘private’ funeral was an

exclusive occasion, in which the achievements and personality of the dead person were celebrated through an ostentatious display that used many of the products of the undertaking trade. The funeral was a private occasion because it was primarily intended for the family and friends of the deceased; the public were reduced to the role of bystanders. The funerals of the elite were similarly focused on intimacy and privacy, but these occasions are typically distinguished by a long, overland journey from London to the West Country. The thesis examines the transportation of the dead body and the funeral as two parts of a well-managed funerary display that conveyed specific messages to different audiences. Unknown bystanders were presented with a spectacular visual display and the inhabitants of the elite person's rural seat were invited to a funeral that recognised their relationship to the deceased. By contrast, the funerals of nonconformists were more restrained in their use of funerary goods and this reflects the values of the different communities. The thesis interprets the selective and careful use of funerary goods as an attempt to recall shared values within an insular community that had been challenged by death.

The act of 'general' mourning was a which an opportunity for social display involved many of the customs of personal mourning. The thesis analyses general mourning in a period of heightened loyalism to identify how different expenditures and practices enabled mourners to convey their status and taste. Consumers and retailers were able to convey their status and quality through a prompt and visible response to the mournful circumstances. The mourning period culminated with a 'proxy funeral' that offered a similitude of events in London, which were relayed by the local newspapers.

This thesis has created many opportunities for further research into both the role of funerals as sociable occasions and the work of the professionals who performed funerals. The research into the social purposes of the funeral has identified the variety of goods and services that

were consumed by mourners, each of which could be considered in greater detail. There is also an opportunity to consider how gender, which is not fully explored by thesis, had an influence on the roles and motivations of mourners. Similarly, the focus on national mourning would benefit from analysis over a longer chronological period, examining how the social use of national mourning changed over time. The approach followed by thesis could easily be used to study the social purpose of the funeral in other regions, where local circumstances might credibility influence the way in which funerals were organised and performed by those in polite society. By identifying the early undertakers, the thesis has provided a foundation for further research into the regional trade and it has also created. The thesis's discussion of deathworkers was limited to undertakers and clergy; this could be extended to include the doctors, coroners and even criminals who worked in the region. Such an approach would significantly contribute to our understanding of the professionalisation of death in the eighteenth century.

## Appendix

### West Country Undertakers, 1700-1820.

Undertaker	Town	Location	Year	Supplementary Trades
William Francis	Bristol	Bridge Street	1788	none
John Arnold	Bristol	12 Bridge Street	1788	none
Widow Francis	Bristol	Bridge Street	1788	none
Mr Haythorne	Bristol	High Street	1784	glover
Mr Collings	Bristol	46 Redcliff St	1789	glover; breeches maker;
Richard Peters	Bristol	Redcliff Hill	1782	shroud maker;
Ambrose Porch	Bristol	St. Maryport St	1783	tin; earthenware;
Benjamin Lewis	Bristol	35 Castle Street	1788	tin;
John Bowden	Bath	3 Wade's Pass	1784	haberdasher;
William Birchill	Bath	Queen Square	1784	upholder; auctioneer;
William Cross	Bath	18 Milsom St	1781	upholder; auctioneer;
G. Strawbridge	Bath	Burton Street	1784	linen draper; mercer;
John Gale	Bath	3 Wade's Pass	1784	haberdasher; Glover; hosier; hatter;
Lonsdale & Buttress	Bath	North Parade	1788	silk;
Percival & Cunditt	Bath	Milsom Street	1787	linen draper;
Prynn & Collins	Bath	26 Market Place	1787	haberdashers; linen draper;
William Selden	Bath	14 Green Street	1788	upholsterer; cabinet maker;
John Mayo	Bath	14 Broad Street	1784	linen draper; mercer;
William Pitmam	Bradford on Avon	Wooley Street	1788	auctioneer;

William Davis	Warminster		1788	linen draper;
Hulbert & Porch	Corsham		1784	linen draper; mercer; hosiery; haberdasher
William Been	Melksham		1784	ironmonger;
Thomas Wilcocks	Gloucester		1728	upholder;
Robert King	Bristol	John Street	1775	glover;
James Webb	Bristol	Broad Street	1775	glover;
James Bazely	Bristol	44 Wine Street	1775	glover; hosier; orange merchant; parchment maker;
Ed Bowen	Bristol	64 Wine Street	1775	haberdasher;
Isaac Carpenter	Bristol	14 Old Market	1775	joiner;
Giles Daubeney	Bristol	14 North Street	1775	none
William Day	Bristol	5 Bridge Street	1775	millener;
William Fear	Bristol	8 Old Market	1775	carpenter;
Alexander Hamilton	Bristol	23 Castle Ditch	1775	none
Aaron Harris	Bristol	9 Clare Street	1775	none
George Lewis	Bristol	16 Broad Street	1775	glover; breeches maker;
William Smith	Bristol	12 Broad Street	1775	glover;
John Benton	Bath	Abbey Yard	1783	hosier; Glover;
Thomas Bird	Bath	Queen Street	1783	upholder; auctioneer;
Thomas Coleborne	Bath	Bennett Street	1783	upholder; auctioneer;
James Evatt	Bath	22 Westgate Street	1772	upholder; auctioneer;
Richard Crook	Chippenham		1783	linen draper;
Michael Burrough	Salisbury	Silver Street	1775	banker; mercer; draper;

Abraham Froud	Salisbury		1783	mercier;
Joseph Gibbs	Salisbury		1783	glover;
Thomas Coward	Bath	Bond Street	1789	linen draper; mercier;
Joseph Wallis	Sodbury		1794	none;
Nicholas Phené	Gloucester		1795	none;
William Warman	Wooton		1808	none;
	Bassett			
William Elderton	Salisbury		1797	hosier;
Robert Davis	Trowbridge		1787	none;
Michael Burrough	Salisbury	Poultry Cross	1786	haberdasher; woollen draper;
Francis Bennett	Bath		1744	haberdasher; draper
Thomas Paulin	Bath		1758	
William Bartlett	Bath	St James Street	1768	upholsterer; coffin maker;
Samuel Nichols	Bath	6 Bridge Street	1799	cabinet maker, upholsterer;
				auctioneer;
Smith	Bath	Stall Street	1762	hosier; linen draper;
Thomas Creaser	Bath		1762	woollen draper; mercier; hatter;
William Wiltshire	Bath		1761	
Lionel Lee	Bath	Upper Market	1784	linen draper; mercier;
		Place		
George Chapman	Bath	Lower Cheap	1768	linen draper; mercier;
		Street		
John Sowerby	Bath	North Parade	1763	woollen draper; hatter;
John Plura	Bath	Milsom Street	1780	upholder; auctioneer;
James Barton	Bristol		1795	pub owner;
William Tayler	Chippenham		1793	mercier; draper; grocer; cheese
				merchant; hop merchant;

S Wall	Salisbury	125 Silver Street	1801	linen draper; haberdasher; hatter; glover
Jane Rily	Wilton		1802	grocer; linen draper; haberdasher;
T Kidman	Cheltenham	1 Colonnades	1809	linen draper; woollen draper;
N Colt	Cheltenham	1 Colonnades	1816	linen draper; hosier; mercer; woollen draper;
John Hopkins	near Salisbury		1784	parish clerk,
Isaac Cooke	Bath	Bennet Street	1777	upholder; auctioneer;
Robert Bullman	Bath		1783	upholder;
John White	Bristol	Dolphin Street	1808	leather dresser;
Charles Trimnell	Bath	Westgate Street	1791	upholder; auctioneer;
Edmund English	Bath	4 Margaret's Buildings, Broad Street	1789	auctioneer; upholder;
Joseph Sheppard	Bristol		1810	none;
Joseph Matthews	Henbury		1760	none;
Un-named	Devizes		1787	haberdasher; hosier; draper; mercier;
Maggs & Newton	Cheltenham		1820	none;
Mrs. Kidman	Cheltenham		1811	woollen draper; linen draper;
J. Davis	Cheltenham		1814	none;
William Stephens	Salisbury		1784	mercier;
Benjamin Tucker	Bristol	17 Newfoundland Street	1820	carpenter; joiner
Benjamin Tucker	Bristol	17 Newfoundland Street	1820	carpenter; joiner;
Jun.				



Mr. Meredith	Bath	Wade's Passage	1786	linen draper;
Mr. Bachelor	Bath		1764	none;
Shingle & Sons	Frome		1798	glover; breeches maker;
John Coward	Frome		1798	glover; breeches maker;
Thomas Whitfield	Devizes	Brittox Street	1786	mercier; linen draper; haberdasher; hosier;
C. Abbott	Bath	3 Abbey Green	1794	auctioneer;
Mr. J Orchard	Bath	6 Margaret's Buildings, Broad Street	1795	cabinet maker; chair maker; auctioneer;
William Trinder	Corsham		1788	grocer; mercier; linen-draper; hosier;
M. Mayo & Co.	Bath	Wade's Passage	1785	haberdasher;
John Stafford	Bath	23 Market Place	1795	auctioneer; upholsterer;
J. Benwell	Bath	23 Market Place	1799	linen draper;
Lawton & Marsh	Bath	Abbey Church Yard	1788	silk mercier;
William Bally	Bath	11 Milsom Street	1794	upholsterer; cabinet maker; auctioneer;
Joseph Gawen	Bath	12 Bath Street	1795	linen draper;
George Tar	Bath		1793	cabinet maker; upholsterer;
Treacher	Bath	Kings Mead Street	1767	upholsterer; cabinet maker; appraiser;
W. Winscombe	Bristol	11 Frogmore Street	1816	carpenter; joiner
George Webb	Salisbury	Market Place	1767	woollen draper; mercier

Brown	Minchinham pton		1774	milliner;
Joseph Legeyt	Corsham		1769	linen drapery; mercer; haberdasher;
Skerratt & Royal	Bath	2 Cross Hands, Bridge Street	1776	linen drapery; mercer
P Grigg	Bath	19 Stall Street	1782	draper; mercer, hatter, hosier, haberdasher
N. Merriman	Marlborough		1795	linen draper; woollen draper; mercier; haberdasher;
Abraham Holmes	Bath	Bath Street	1800	linen draper
W. Winscombe	Bristol	11 Frogmore Street	1816	
J. Holloway	Devizes	Long Street	1804	joiner, builder
Richard Davis	Bristol	9 Clare Street	1809	woollen draper, tailor, mercers, salesmen
B. Belcher	Bristol	10 Bridge Street & 51 Redcliff Hill	1812	
CJ Crofton	Banwell		1819	joiner, cabinet maker
John Hewlett	Bristol	10 Bridge Street & 51 Redcliff Hill	1812	
Richard Priest	Bristol	9 Clare Street	Pre-1809	
G. Lacy	Salisbury		1814	woollen draper, mercer
Henry Gauntlet	Salisbury	Market Place	1751	mercier

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