Death, Time and Commerce: innovation and conservatism in styles of funerary material culture in 18th-19th century London

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
Declaration

I, Sarah Ann Essex Hoile confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
Abstract

This thesis explores the development of coffin furniture, the inscribed plates and other metal objects used to decorate coffins, in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century London. It analyses this material within funerary and non-funerary contexts, and contrasts and compares its styles, production, use and contemporary significance with those of monuments and mourning jewellery. Over 1200 coffin plates were recorded for this study, dated 1740 to 1853, consisting of assemblages from the vaults of St Marylebone Church and St Bride’s Church and the lead coffin plates from Islington Green burial ground, all sites in central London. The production, trade and consumption of coffin furniture are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 investigates coffin furniture as a central component of the furnished coffin and examines its role within the performance of the funeral. Multiple aspects of the inscriptions and designs of coffin plates are analysed in Chapter 5 to establish aspects of change and continuity with this material. In Chapter 6 contemporary trends in monuments are assessed, drawing on a sample recorded in churches and a burial ground, and the production and use of this above-ground funerary material culture are considered. In Chapter 7 a dated sample of mourning jewellery is explored in order to place the funerary objects of this study within a broader contemporary context. Limited innovation is identified in coffin furniture, in contrast with monuments and mourning jewellery, and it is suggested that its conservatism relates to the role of undertakers in its selection, as well as to the particular circumstances of its use. It is argued that coffin furniture was an important aspect of funerary rituals of this period and can be interpreted as one aspect of a broader emphasis on commemoration and the use of objects to materialise and manage experiences of separation and loss.
Impact Statement

This thesis aims to contribute to archaeological and historical understanding of funerary material culture of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries through the analysis of coffin furniture. It draws on a range of comparative material to place it within a broad context of commercialisation and commemoration. Future dissemination of the findings will aim to reach researchers in the fields of post-medieval archaeology and historical material culture and funerary studies. This research could also be of broader public interest, particularly in the light of recent high-profile archaeological work on burials of this period. In both cases, engagement based on this research could have longer-term impact on narratives around the development of the funerary industry and burial in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The most direct impact of this thesis is likely to be within the study of coffin furniture in both commercial and academic contexts. This could include projects in the UK and in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, where British-made coffin furniture of this period has been recovered through archaeological excavation. Printed copies of this thesis will be sent to the sites of the primary collections studied so that future researchers will have direct access to this study which analyses and contextualises these collections. These are likely to include academic researchers from a range of disciplines and others, including church parishioners and volunteers, with an interest in aspects of these sites and collections. The research undertaken at the Museum of London has already contributed to enhanced catalogue entries for the objects studied and the additional analysis and contextualisation of this material within the thesis could contribute to future research of this collection. This thesis may have longer-term incremental impact on how the academic and heritage sector develop methodologies for interpreting eighteenth- and nineteenth-century burials and funerary material culture. This is likely to be of particular relevance over the next few years as forthcoming developments result in increased archaeological work in this area.
Notes on the text

Missing or illegible words or phrases in inscriptions are indicated with square brackets, with ellipses used where it is not possible to reconstruct the text.

Abbreviations used in citations:

BM  British Museum
CWA  City of Westminster Archives
JJ Trade Cards  John Johnson Collection
JJZ  John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Zegami
MERL  Museum of English Rural Life
MoL  Museum of London
MoLAA  Museum of London Archaeological Archive
OBP  Old Bailey Proceedings Online
ROLLCO  Records of London’s Livery Companies Online
TNA  The National Archives
V&A  Victoria and Albert Museum
YCBA  Yale Center for British Art
YORCM  York Castle Museum

Details of the objects and archival documents cited are given in the bibliography.
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Introduction

No motor hearse in the world can convey the same macabre dignity which six brown-black horses, complete with silver buckles and black plumes, can produce with a single rattle of their well-oiled hoofs. The plumes were the undertaker’s own contribution. He was an elderly man who recognized a real Victorian when he met one. Moreover, in company with most of his kind, he deplored the passing of the pomp and circumstance of death. The plumes had been resurrected, therefore, for the first time since the war had given Londoners new and simpler ideas about interment. Now they stood high in their silver sconces on top of the hearse and on the nodding heads of the black horses, looking like bunches of gigantic crêpe palm-leaves. ¹

The Victorian funeral casts a long shadow. Though in slow decline since the overwhelming losses of the First World War, if not sooner, even in the twenty-first century, people who request bright clothes and cheerful songs for their own funerals or those of their loved ones seem to do so in opposition to an underlying expectation of its heavy mourning and solemn hymns. While it is the nineteenth-century funeral of horse-drawn hearses and black plumes that looms in the imagination, the roots of the modern British funeral are firmly eighteenth-century in date, with many aspects now taken for granted originating, or becoming much more widespread, in this period, such as the funerary industry itself (Fritz 1994-5), the use of permanent markers of burial (Tarlow 1999), the expectation of an individual coffin (Houlbrooke 1999) and, later, of coffin furniture to decorate it. The wide-reaching changes of the century are suggested by the contrast between the skulls and bones on early eighteenth-century headstones and mourning rings and the mourning figures and urns of the later part of the century. In an image originally engraved by John Thurston, made at the end of the eighteenth or in the early nineteenth century, a man kneels next to a monument of an urn and plinth, praying, while another man rests his hand on a headstone with a skull and longbones (see Fig. 0.1). While the urn represents grief and mourning and is visited and prayed over, the earlier headstone is, here at least, reduced to a post to lean on, its symbols

¹ From the novel Black Plumes (Allingham 1950 [1940], 98)
marking it as being of the past. Even today, neoclassical symbols of mourning remain relatable in a way that the earlier mortality symbols do not (Beats 2019).

Fig. 0.1: ‘A man kneeling and praying at a tomb in a cemetery is joined by another gentleman’. Line engraving by Taylor after J. Thurston (1774-1822), 11.6 x 7.8 cm. Wellcome Collection. CC BY 4.0.

The eighteenth century encompassed many changes that impacted the development of funerary material culture including a general proliferation of objects and their use in manifesting and managing identity and emotional connections, changing attitudes to death and to what comprised a ‘decent’ funeral. These changes were imbricated with the increased commercialisation of death and burial which included the growth of the funerary industry, the development and proliferation of funerary material culture and the growth of a market in burial space. It was also a period of colonialism and the coffin furniture made in Britain was one of the objects used to represent British power and identity both in Britain and across
its empire. However, these changes were not, of course, exclusive to Britain and its colonies, and should be seen in a broad European context, although the social and religious context and the material culture of burial varied in different places (Tarlow 2015). Coffin furniture, the decorative metal fittings including inscribed breastplates, was a small part of these much larger currents, only briefly visible before burial and likely often not fully noticed as part of a complex, multi-sensory and emotional ritual. However, its role offers a way to examine how these factors influenced design, how the material culture of death may be both distinct and part of contemporary trends, and how commerce and fashion interact with individual choice.

This project builds on a Masters dissertation on coffin furniture in London (Hoile 2013), the results of which have subsequently been published (Hoile 2018). In that project, a pilot study for the current work, I examined the development of coffin plate styles in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and found that below-ground styles lagged behind trends in monuments above ground. I suggested that undertakers were best placed to influence the development of coffin furniture styles, as intermediaries between the manufacturers and suppliers they bought from and their bereaved clients. This was based on evidence that coffin furniture was usually selected by undertakers, who made decisions themselves on what would be appropriate, rather than consulting their customers on the details of design choices (e.g. Chadwick 1843, 50).

This thesis seeks to further explore the use, role and stylistic development of coffin furniture in this period, both in its own right and then in contrast with contemporary monuments and in relation to mourning jewellery. In order to do this it brings together a wide range of material: excavated and recovered material from coffins, objects in museum collections, trade catalogues, contemporary writings and undertaker records, and draws on published material from archaeological and historical studies of death, burial and material culture. It examines coffin furniture assemblages from a range of sites in central London in order to analyse styles and discern change and continuity over a period of around a century. In order to better understand the meaning(s) of coffin furniture to the people who made, sold and bought it, and the reasons why it developed as it did the thesis discusses the production, trade and consumption of this material, within the context of other, non-funerary goods, in order to consider how, and by whom, styles were selected and the routes by which feedback on styles may have travelled between consumers and producers. It also explores the role of coffin
furniture within the funeral and considers monuments and mourning jewellery as related funerary material culture to explore how the styles of coffin furniture fitted into broader trends of commemoration and how they were distinctive and, in most cases, distinctly conservative. The study of these three types of funerary material culture, their similarities and differences in purpose, manufacture, design and use, also facilitates an exploration of the origins and evolution of objects and practices that remain, for many, an important part of funerary practices to this day.

Coffin furniture, mourning jewellery and monuments, while all mortuary objects with some aspects of design in common, were associated with different stages of the liminal process following death. This provides the context for the differences in their consumption. The death of an individual deprives a community of both their physical presence and also, importantly, their “social being” (Hertz 1960 [1907], 77). In response to this loss, many societies conceive of death as a transition in which an individual is separated from living society and passes through an intermediary, liminal, stage before joining the world of the dead (Hertz 1960 [1907]). Rites of passage were analysed by van Gennep as conforming to a tripartite structure, which includes preliminal rites of separation, liminal transition rites and postliminal rites of incorporation (van Gennep 1960 [1909], 11). In relation to this structure, coffin furniture is related to the rite of separation: it decorated the coffin in which the corpse was displayed and, once the lid was closed, concealed and represented the dead individual for the funeral when it was buried or interred among the dead. Mourning jewellery may be seen as associated with the liminal phase of mourning, in which the bereaved remain, to an extent, separated from society, marked by mourning clothing and jewellery. Mourning jewellery also served to maintain a relationship between the living and the dead. In a tripartite account of the rite of passage of death in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London, the placing of a monument could be identified as postliminal, a rite of incorporation, taking place at least several months after a death. The monumental inscription places the individual firmly within the realm of the dead, but in relationship with the living. It also, in some cases, sought to repair the social fabric by reuniting deceased family members, including those buried elsewhere.

The project has included recording coffin plates from the crypts of St Marylebone and St Bride’s Churches, as well as the lead coffin plates from the burial ground at Islington Green. Further details of the coffin furniture assemblages and the sites they were recovered from
are detailed in Chapter 2 and the sites of the comparative monuments studied are described in Chapter 6. The largest coffin plate collection studied is that of St Marylebone crypt, a site where it is possible to directly compare the coffin plates and monuments of the same burial population, including an unusually high number of the same individuals, and some of the analysis focuses particularly on this collection.

The objects recorded for this thesis range in date from 1740 to 1853, with the majority from the early nineteenth century (see Chapter 2). This has determined the dates of the period of study. The Burial of the Dead in the Metropolis Act in 1852 meant that London burial grounds could be closed by order of the Privy Council, and further Acts in the following years extended this to the rest of Britain and Ireland (Cherryson et al. 2012, 99). Most burial places in central London were closed under this legislation and so burial grounds and vault assemblages from this area pre-date this change, with only a few later examples of coffin furniture, from vaults where later interments were permitted to allow family members to be buried together. Most of the London burial places in use in the later nineteenth century, such as the cemeteries of Kensal Green, Highgate and Brookwood, remain in use and are very unlikely to be disturbed for development at any time soon. Due to this, coffin furniture of the later nineteenth century remains largely unexplored archeologically in the UK (with a few recent exceptions, e.g. Westall and Chittock 2019), although British-made coffin furniture has been excavated in large quantities from late nineteenth-century contexts in Australia (Maclean 2015). Earlier, seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century, material is also relatively rare. Some examples are considered within this thesis, but objects of this date are not frequently found due to destruction by later, deeper burials and the vulnerability of metal in earth burials, as well as to their limited original use.

London was chosen for this project as it has by far the largest number of coffin furniture assemblages of the later post-medieval period, including some that were previously unpublished and available to study. Chapter 1 includes further details of the post-medieval burial archaeology of London which provides the context for the material studied.

In order to examine the styles and use of coffin furniture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including in relation to other funerary (and non-funerary) material culture and the commercial context of its development, the following main research question was pursued:
How and why did coffin furniture develop c.1750-1850?

The following supplementary questions have been developed to contribute to the overall research question:

How did coffin furniture develop?
  • How different, and in what ways, is the design vocabulary and tempo of change of below-ground funerary material culture from above-ground items, such as monuments and mourning jewellery?
  • To what extent, and in what ways, is coffin furniture conservative? Does lettering, for example, which is individually applied, develop at a faster or slower rate than the manufactured plates that were inscribed?
  • What relationships are there between attributes of coffin furniture (e.g. types, motifs, lettering, material)?
  • What relationships are there between the choices and attributes of coffin furniture (e.g. types, motifs, lettering, language) and the attributes of buried individuals (e.g. age, gender)?

Why did coffin furniture develop as it did?
  • What factors influenced the development of styles of coffin furniture? How is the conservatism of coffin furniture to be accounted for?
  • Is it possible to gain an understanding of the ways in which motifs and styles were understood by producers, consumers and those who viewed coffins?
  • What factors influenced the selection of coffin furniture, and who made this choice?
  • What was the purpose of inscribed coffin plates?

The detailed exploration of these questions relating to the development and purpose of funerary material culture in this transformative period will provide insights that support the consideration of a further, broader research question:

What are the origins and evolution of the modern (secular or Christian) British funeral?

Chapter 1 examines the context of this project in terms of the material available for study and comparison, approaches to the study of coffin furniture and funerary material culture of
this period and the theoretical context of the study. Chapter 2 describes and compares the coffin furniture assemblages studied and the sites from which they come. It also considers the potential and limitations of this material. Chapter 3 explores the production, trade and consumption of coffin furniture, including how it fits into broader trends. Chapter 4 focuses on coffin furniture in use. It first explores the material remains of coffin furniture in the context of the coffin as a whole, including elements that may no longer be apparent in an archaeological context or within the assemblages studied. The second part of this chapter discusses the role and impact of the coffin within the performance of funerary rituals. Chapter 5 explores change and continuity in elements of coffin plate design, such as the lettering, shape and motifs used, through analysis of the dataset. Chapter 6 compares the styles of coffin furniture with those of monuments from the same and comparable sites. The production and use of monuments are also discussed. Chapter 7 examines eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mourning jewellery, focusing on objects from the Museum of London’s collections, and the changing trends they demonstrate. Chapter 8 summarises the main conclusions of the project, its significance and the extent to which the research questions have been addressed. It also briefly reflects on aspects that would benefit from further study.

Each object studied represents an individual loss, one of countless bereavements recorded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the new and developing material culture of death, burial and commemoration. In the following chapter, the wider contexts in which these objects sit are considered, including the ways in which, taken together, funerary objects of this period have been approached and understood.
1 Context

In the midst of life we are in death ¹

The purpose of this chapter is to place the project within its broader context of objects, sites, approaches and scholarly work. The sites selected for analysis are only a few of those which have revealed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century coffin furniture over the last 35 years in London, the rest of the UK and in other countries that were formerly part of the British Empire. They also sit within a growing field of the study of post-medieval death and burial across Europe within and beyond archaeology and this is briefly discussed below. The chapter then discusses approaches to coffin furniture and the theoretical context of the project.

Material

Excavated Assemblages

What is known of coffin furniture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rests in large part on assemblages recovered from burial grounds and church vaults. A gazetteer of excavations of post-medieval burials from Britain and Ireland up to the date of publication was compiled by Annia Cherryson, Zoë Crossland and Sarah Tarlow (2012). This important resource lists 382 sites from England (including 85 from London), 59 from Ireland (including Northern Ireland), 55 from Scotland and 20 from Wales. It demonstrates the large numbers and range of sites with post-medieval human remains that have been revealed through archaeological work, with entries on single isolated burials, family groups in church vaults, small churchyards and large city burial grounds. Some of these sites are of uncoffined burials, ¹

¹ From the inscription on the monument to the Burton family at St Marylebone Church (M003). Extract from The Order for the Burial of the Dead in The Book of Common Prayer (National Assembly of the Church of England 1927 [1662], 307).
such as the isolated burials occasionally discovered in unexpected places, some of them potentially clandestine (e.g. Cherryson et al. 2012, 260). Those of the early post-medieval period are not always coffined, as their use was not universal until around the turn of the eighteenth century (Houlbrooke 1999, 193), possibly later in some places, such as Scottish islands where wood was in short supply (Miles 1989, 175). With these limited exceptions, the remains of coffins are usually found with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century burials, even of those buried by institutions, such as the five individuals whose remains were excavated at the Castle Yard in York, interpreted as those of criminals hanged near the prison in the early nineteenth century, all of whom were found with coffin wood and nails (Cherryson et al. 2012, 242). However, although mass-produced coffin furniture became widely available from the late eighteenth century, it would still have been beyond the means of the very poorest in society, and so coffins may not always have been decorated with these metal items. An investigative journalist described the “scanty tin plate” on a coffin at a pauper funeral in the 1880s (Greenwood 1883), but it is not clear when this would have become an expected part of this type of burial, and whether it was universal.

Where coffin furniture was used, a number of factors impact its survival and recording. Buried coffin furniture frequently does not survive well. Thin tinplate corrodes in all but the most favourable burial conditions and it is not uncommon to find that it has almost completely disappeared, leaving only some rusty fragments on which neither biographical information nor stylistic detail remains. Sometimes the more robust iron grips are found without the thin decorative metalwork that might have accompanied it. In church vault burials, or in brick-lined graves in churchyards, lead plates were often used. These indicate a much more expensive funeral and, separated from the earth by brick or stone, are likely to be well-preserved, although coffins crushed under heavy stacks in vaults are often damaged (Boston et al. 2009, 151). In contrast with earth burials, sometimes coffins from vault burials are not fully recorded because they are too well preserved: if soft tissue remains, as it sometimes does in a sealed lead coffin, the coffin will almost always be buried unopened, although elements of it, including the coffin furniture, may be recorded first. Many of the assemblages are very small, either because the number of burials excavated was limited, or because only small amounts of the coffin furniture has survived. Excavated coffin furniture is often reburied after recording, along with the human remains, leaving future research relying on the site archive and publications (Powers et al. 2013, 128-9).
As well as post-depositional issues, the quantity of coffin furniture available to study has also been limited by the circumstances of much of its excavation and recording, and the attitudes of those responsible for its excavation. Other than some investigations in church vaults (e.g. Litten 1991, 114), the vast majority of the sites listed in the 2012 gazetteer were reported on by commercial archaeology units from the 1990s onwards. This has frequently consisted of archaeological recording alongside clearance by an exhumation contractor (Powers et al. 2013, 127). The methods and timeframes of such contractors have not always been conducive to detailed archaeological recording. An early example of this is the report on St Nicholas’ Church, Bathampton, where a watching brief was conducted in 1992 during the clearance of part of the churchyard. The authors of an article on its findings reported that “the scope for archaeological recording was strictly limited to that information which could be retrieved while undertakers exhumed and re-interred burials”, noting the loss of opportunity that resulted from a lack of consideration of the site’s archaeology within the planning process and consequent lack of evaluation prior to the work (Cox and Stock 1995, 131). Many excavations and watching briefs have since been conducted under more favourable conditions, but some of the issues encountered in these situations have been explored in detail by archaeologists who have negotiated them (Boyle 2004; 2015; Emery 2006; 2018; Emery and Wooldridge 2011; Sayer and Symonds 2004).

Sometimes post-medieval burials are noted but are not the focus of a report which focuses on other aspects of a site, and the older the report the more common this is. Sometimes coffin furniture has been used only for dating a burial, with no additional information provided. One evaluation report expressed what is perhaps implicit in many others when it noted that there was not “particular archaeological/historical significance to these graves”, although it noted that biographical information from name plates could be recovered during a graveyard clearance (Pocock 2005, 12). As it is the only site with a large number of post-medieval burials in Essex listed in the gazetteer, including well-preserved coffin plates and burials dating into the 1870s, this seems to be a missed opportunity. In fact the subsequent report on the archaeological monitoring and recording of the grave clearance did include examination of coffin furniture and 17 coffin plates with inscriptions (one incomplete) were recorded (Pocock 2006). The report included a photograph of two plates of unusual shapes, both with painted inscriptions (Pocock 2006, 23), but it is unclear whether these are typical of the assemblage as a whole and the main focus of the work was the identification of named individuals in order to add to and clarify aspects of the documentary record of burials.
The lack of a sense of the research potential of post-medieval burials in past decades is reminiscent of the views that were held on medieval burials in the mid-twentieth century. In their report on the excavations at St Mary-le-Port, Bristol, in 1962-3, Lorna Watts and Philip Rahtz explained that then, as now, “time and resources” were the main factors in the lack of attention to the medieval and later graves (Watts and Rahtz 1985, 128). However, they also noted that “the importance of the investigation of medieval Christian cemeteries had hardly been realised” at that time. The underlying reasons for this are worth considering in relation to recent and current attitudes to post-medieval burials:

The general impression, including the ‘official’ view of central government and local museum sponsorship, was that we knew all we needed to know about Christian burial, that in any case they had no finds, and that there was an element of impropriety in disturbing or even looking scientifically at interments of a community whose religious beliefs and mortuary practice were at least nominally those of our own day. (Watts and Rahtz 1985, 128)

Projects such as the Christ Church Spitalfields crypt excavation in the 1980s, work on the New Churchyard as part of the Crossrail development and the current excavations in Birmingham and London as part of the High Speed 2 rail project have raised the profile of the archaeological investigation of post-medieval burials and the value of excavation of, and research on, later post-medieval burials is amply demonstrated by the many works cited throughout this chapter which have pioneered and developed distinctively archaeological approaches, as well as drawing on, complementing, complicating and filling gaps in historical accounts of burial practices. However, the feeling of “impropriety” reported by Watts and Rahtz may still perhaps be more keenly felt by some when excavated burials are those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a factor noted by Margaret Cox in 1997 as having inhibited the development of post-medieval funerary archaeology in the years since the Christ Church Spitalfields excavations, despite the acknowledged value of that project (Cox 1997, 8). It appears that attitudes have shifted over the last twenty years, and, in their call for a high level research framework to inform post-medieval burial excavation and analysis, Natasha Powers and colleagues noted that public consultations have in fact been supportive of research on human remains, including those of more recent historic periods (Powers et al. 2013, 135-6). As Layla Renshaw and Natasha Powers noted in their survey of the archaeology of post-medieval death and burial, “the material culture of death is now open to far greater
examination, enabling increased understanding and the establishment of new, and sometimes surprising, research questions” (Renshaw and Powers 2016, 159).

London
There are a number of well-published assemblages of post-medieval burials from London and current knowledge of coffin furniture of this period rests, in large part, on London assemblages. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, more corpses were buried in London than in any other city or town in the UK in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1700 the (living) population of London was already over half a million, a vast number compared with the 30,000 estimated to be living in Bristol, the second largest city, at that time (White 2013, 3). By 1801 over 1.1 million were living in the area now covered by Greater London, rising to an enormous 6.58 million in 1901 (White 2008, 17, 98). Such rapid growth led to crowded and unsanitary living conditions for many, and by the 1830s research by the Lancet suggested that mortality rates were 40% higher in cities than elsewhere (Morley 1971, 7). With an unprecedentedly large population dying in unprecedented numbers there was intense pressure by the start of the Victorian period on the available burial spaces. It has been suggested that in London in the early 1840s 52,000 bodies a year were buried in 203 acres of churchyards and burial grounds (Hotz 2001, 22). There are, therefore, large numbers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century burials under London. Some former graveyards have been converted to much-needed public green spaces in the city (e.g. St George’s Gardens in Bloomsbury), but many have been built over as the demand for commercial development continues to grow. London’s churches are also subject to pressure to use their vault spaces for community or commercial use. The vaults of St Pancras on Euston Road are now a gallery space, for example, although in this case the burials remain in bricked-up vaults (Crypt Gallery 2019), despite an archaeological evaluation carried out in 1993 (Cox 2001, 2). Although other cities in the UK have experienced both rapid and vast population growth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and contemporary demand for development, none have been subject to those factors so acutely as London.

Secondly, archaeological interest in post-medieval burial assemblages in London is long-standing and has benefitted from the attention of large organisations which have published and publicised a number of key sites. The first fully-recorded excavation of a post-medieval burial assemblage was the archaeological clearance of the vaults of Christ Church Spitalfields in London in 1984-6 (Reeve and Adams 1993). This was enormously important in addressing
fundamental questions about this type of investigation, including demonstrating the value of such studies, establishing methodology, creating a typology for the artefacts and in developing approaches to the distinctive health and safety challenges of excavating burials of the recent past, particularly from vaults, including moving extremely heavy lead coffins in confined spaces and the potential for lead poisoning, infection and post-traumatic-stress disorder (see also Reeve and Cox 1999). Since the mid-1980s the importance of the work of commercial archaeology units such as Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) and Oxford Archaeology has been a significant factor in the development of current understanding of post-medieval burial practices and coffin furniture development, in London in particular. The detailed, illustrated monographs produced by MOLA, for example, have built a body of work that can set each new site and its assemblage within a wider context (Brickley and Miles 1999; Connell and Miles 2010; Cowie et al. 2008; Henderson et al. 2013; Henderson et al. 2015; Miles et al. 2008; Miles and White 2008; Miles 2012).

The following table (Table 1.1) includes published assemblages from Greater London. The three small assemblages from Christ Church Greyfriars (MoLAA CHR76 and CCN80) and Broadgate (MoLAA LSS85) included in the dissertation that was the pilot study for the current project have also been included (Hoile 2013). Coffin plates from the Broadgate site, a small part of the New Churchyard, have since been incorporated into the publication of the much larger excavation of the New Churchyard, undertaken as part of the Crossrail project (Hartle 2017). The number of coffin plates gives an idea of the approximate size of the assemblage.

Table 1.1: Published post-medieval burial assemblages from London

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Dates of use</th>
<th>No. coffin plates</th>
<th>Publications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bow Baptist Church</td>
<td>1816-1853</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Henderson et al. 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea Old Church</td>
<td>1712-1842</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Cowie et al. 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Church Greyfriars</td>
<td>1764-1850</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Herbert 1979; Hoile 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Church Spitalfields</td>
<td>1729-1857</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>Cox 1996, 1998; Molleson and Cox 1993; Reeve and Adams 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Dates of use</td>
<td>No. coffin plates</td>
<td>Publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Bunhill Burial Ground</td>
<td>1833-1853</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Connell and Miles 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Bones burial ground</td>
<td>16thC -1853</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brickley and Miles 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesuit Cemetery, Roehampton</td>
<td>1867-1962</td>
<td>9 legible (47% of those present)</td>
<td>Melekian 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilday's Ground, Bethnal Green</td>
<td>1840-1855</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>Ives 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Bunhill Fields</td>
<td>1821-1853</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>Miles 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Churchyard, Broadgate</td>
<td>1569-1739</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hartle 2017; Hoile 2013; Richardson 1986, 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old St Pancras</td>
<td>1793-1854</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>Emery and Wooldridge 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddington Street burial ground</td>
<td>1772-1853</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Henderson et al. 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen's Chapel of the Savoy</td>
<td>c.1550-1854</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sibun and Ponce 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Naval Hospital Greenwich</td>
<td>1749-1857</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Boston et al. 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheen's Burial Ground</td>
<td>c.1763-1854</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Henderson et al. 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Benet Sherehog</td>
<td>1666-1849</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Miles and White 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St George's Church, Bloomsbury</td>
<td>1803-1856</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>Boston et al. 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St George's Church, Brentford</td>
<td>c.1762-1868</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Hoile 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Lawrence Jewry</td>
<td>1819-1845</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Bateman and Miles 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mark's Church, Surbiton</td>
<td>1848-1940</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>Harris et al. 2009; Ives 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary and St Michael</td>
<td>1843-1854</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>Henderson et al. 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone Church²</td>
<td>1765-1859</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>Miles et al. 2008; Miles et al. 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² The site of the medieval and eighteenth-century church and burial ground.
UK and Ireland

In order to place the sites studied in a broader context, a search has been made for sites in the UK and Ireland with significant assemblages of coffin furniture using the post-medieval burial gazetteer (Cherryson et al. 2012). References to sites with single or very low numbers of burials were not pursued, and more effort was spent following references to sites with more than 10 burials if it seemed possible or likely that coffin furniture was present. Many of the references are to grey literature reports and the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) has been an invaluable source for many of these. However, not all the reports referenced in the gazetteer are available online or in an accessible publication, including those of some sites with large assemblages. Searches were made in reports from 2012 to the present to identify any relevant sites published since the publication of the gazetteer (CBA Wales/Cymru 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2018; Database of Irish Excavation Reports 2019; Ostrich 2013; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; Ostrich and Featherby 2014). The following table (Table 1.2) lists coffin furniture assemblages from the UK, other than London. It includes sites where the report or a published summary (the annual fieldwork reports in *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, for example) indicates that eighteenth- and/or nineteenth-century coffin furniture was recorded and either the material itself or a full record is retained in an archive or included in a report. Despite these efforts, this is unlikely to be a comprehensive list, but it is hoped that this captures the larger and well-published sites and gives a good indication of the range of those with significant coffin furniture assemblages.

Table 1.2: Post-medieval burial sites from the UK, other than London, that include an assemblage of coffin furniture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Saints Cathedral, Wakefield</td>
<td>Mahoney Swales and Norton 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Burial Ground, Wear Butts, Poole, Dorset</td>
<td>McKinley 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carver Street Methodist Chapel, Sheffield</td>
<td>Mahoney-Swales <em>et al.</em> 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby Cathedral: The Cavendish Vault</td>
<td>Butler and Morris 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends’ Burial Ground, High Street, Staines</td>
<td>Crouch and Shanks 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow Cathedral, City of Glasgow</td>
<td>Driscoll 2002; Richmond 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemingford Grey, Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>Dodds <em>et al.</em> 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity Church, Coventry</td>
<td>Oakey and Andrews 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester Cathedral, Manchester</td>
<td>Ostrich 2015, 386-387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennal Churchyard, Meirionnydd</td>
<td>Barfoot 1993; Ponsford 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pershore Abbey, Worcestershire</td>
<td>Blockley 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker Burial Ground at Bathford</td>
<td>Cox and Stock 1995; Stock 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rycote Chapel, Thame, Oxfordshire</td>
<td>Boston 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield Cathedral</td>
<td>Mahoney-Swales et al. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Augustine the Less, Bristol</td>
<td>Boore 1989, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Bartholomew's Church, Penn, Wolverhampton</td>
<td>Boyle 2004; Loe and Boston 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Martin's Church, Birmingham</td>
<td>Brickley and Buteux 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Martin-at-Palace, Norwich</td>
<td>Beazley and Ayers 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary’s Church, Bitton, Gloucestershire</td>
<td>Boore 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary’s Church, Overton, Hampshire</td>
<td>Currie 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary’s Priory, Abergavenny</td>
<td>Nash 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Nicholas, Sevenoaks, Kent</td>
<td>Boyle and Keevil 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Oswald’s Priory, Gloucester</td>
<td>Heighway and Bryant 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Paul’s, Sheffield</td>
<td>Mahoney-Swales et al. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Peter’s Church, Barton-upon-Humber</td>
<td>Rodwell and Atkins 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Peter’s Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton</td>
<td>Adams and Colls 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Peter’s Church, Petersham</td>
<td>Westall and Chittock 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Peter-le-Bailey, Bonn Square, Oxford</td>
<td>Webb and Norton 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Phillip’s Cathedral Churchyard, Birmingham</td>
<td>Patrick 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Reform Chapel, Broad Street, Reading</td>
<td>Bellamy 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilehouse Street Baptist Churchyard, Hitchin</td>
<td>Cherry 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Reform Church / Salvation Army Hall, Abbey Kane, Saffron Walden, Essex</td>
<td>Pocock 2005; 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wharram Percy Church, Wharram Percy</td>
<td>Harding 1987; Mays et al. 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only three of these sites have been published as monographs focusing on post-medieval burials: the churchyard of St Martin’s, Birmingham (Brickley and Buteux 2006), the Baptist Burial Ground at Poole (McKinley 2008) and the Quaker Burial Ground in North Shields (Proctor et al. 2016). The assemblages from Wharram Percy Church (Mays et al. 2007), Glasgow Cathedral (Driscoll 2002) and St Peter’s Church, Barton-upon-Humber (Rodwell and Atkins 2011) form a significant part of larger publications, which also focus on other aspects of the sites, such as earlier burials and the fabric of the church. These detailed
publications include a wide geographic spread but there are currently some large gaps in the record. Despite the 59 sites in the gazetteer for Ireland, and a search of more recent excavations, no sites were identified with significant assemblages of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century coffin furniture. Only one site, Glasgow Cathedral (Driscoll 2002), was identified in Scotland, and only two, Pennal Churchyard (Barfoot 1993; Ponsford 1994) and St Mary’s Priory, Abergavenny (Nash 2000), in Wales, and for these it has only been possible to access summaries of the excavations. The coverage of England is currently patchy in this list, but further excavations could soon be added. At the time of writing, a large-scale excavation is currently underway at the Park Street burial ground in Birmingham (MOLA Headland 2018) and another has recently taken place at the site St Peter’s Church in Blackburn, Lancashire (Franklin 2019).

Sites beyond Britain and Ireland

In an article of 1851, a Birmingham coffin furniture manufacturer described the overseas market for his goods: “We have no foreign trade whatever for these articles, but we supply India, Australia, Canada, and the other colonies” (Morning Chronicle 10 February 1851, 6). Therefore, coffin furniture made and used in the UK must be seen in the context of its use in these countries, as well as, for the eighteenth century at least, what is now the eastern USA. Julian Litten reported that a set of high-quality eighteenth-century coffin furniture was found in a private vault in Jamaica (Litten 1991, 109), and cheaper iron handles were exported to Australia “by the hundred-weight” (Maclean 2015, 63). Coffin furniture was imported from Britain to what would become the USA from at least as early as the 1730s (Springate 2015, 53). In her book on nineteenth-century coffin furniture in the USA, Megan Springate suggests that the domestic industry did not take off until the Civil War created the social conditions for it to thrive (Springate 2015, 57). A study of coffin making and undertaking in Charleston in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries found numerous references to imported coffin furniture in account books and other documentary sources, although the trade was interrupted by boycotts in the late 1760s and by the Revolutionary War which followed (Rauschenberg 1990). Such disruption was noted in the burials at the African Burial Ground in New York, the largest and most important published assemblage of eighteenth-century coffin furniture from the USA, where the excavators suggest that burials without coffins may be dated to this period (Howson and Bianchi 2006, 251). The detailed analysis of the eighteenth- to nineteenth-century Quaker Burying Ground in Alexandria, Virginia provides a comparison with Quaker burial grounds excavated in the UK (Bromberg and
Shephard 2006) and archaeological and documentary evidence from both Philadelphia and London have been drawn on by Patricia C. O’Donnell (2015) to explore choices of coffins made by Quakers in the eighteenth century. Hilda Maclean’s recent research on nineteenth-century funerary consumption in Australia found that coffin furniture was imported from Britain from at least as early as 1803 and then throughout the nineteenth century, as she found no evidence of domestic coffin furniture manufacture during this period (Maclean 2015, 237, 167). The main focus of Maclean’s thesis was the North Brisbane Burial Ground, in use between 1842 and 1875, and she identified three other coffin furniture assemblages from excavations of nineteenth century Australian burial grounds, although one of these, the Randwick Destitute Children’s Asylum Cemetery, did not include any decorative coffin furniture (Maclean 2015, 47, 64). Excavations of nineteenth-century burials in New Zealand in recent years have also revealed coffin plates and other items of coffin furniture of the same types as those excavated in Britain (Petchey et al. 2017; 2018). The availability and use of British-made coffin furniture varied between different colonial and postcolonial contexts, as a recent chapter by Springate and Maclean (2018) on Australia and North America demonstrates.

Coffin furniture made in the UK and used across the British Empire appears to be distinct from that used elsewhere in Europe, but should be seen in the broader context of changing practices and beliefs across the continent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and beyond. The first archaeological publication to draw together papers on this topic from a range of European countries, The Archaeology of Death in Post-Medieval Europe, was published in 2015, and included chapters on post-medieval burial in Sweden, England, France, Latvia, Estonia, Germany, Denmark, Finland and the Czech Republic (Tarlow 2015). The lively and diverse sessions on death and burial at the annual Post-Medieval Archaeology Congress, the most recent of which included papers focusing on sites in Finland, Italy and Poland, attest to the strength of the field and to the potential for collaboration and comparison across a wide area (SPMA 2019). One example of the value of exploring the material culture of the grave within a European perspective is demonstrated by Sian Anthony’s (2016) work on Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen. For example, her examination of the differing use of coffin plates in the UK and in Swedish vault burials compared with their rarity in the Copenhagen cemetery gives insights into funerary practices and beliefs in all three countries (Anthony 2016, 249).

36
Trade catalogues

Non-archaeological evidence of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century coffin furniture may be found in a number of sources, including contemporary prints, accounts and newspaper reports, but the most direct evidence of the types available are the trade catalogues of coffin furniture manufacturers (see Table 1.3). The catalogues include multiple examples of coffin furniture that is rarely recovered archaeologically, such as the small escutcheons and coffin lace used on some highly decorated coffins. They also include written details of the multiple finishes available, enabling a comparison of their varying prices and an exploration of what types of surface treatments were deemed appropriate for different types of coffin furniture. As well as a comparison of different prices of the same item, varied by finish, it is also possible to compare prices of different items. Adrian Miles noted that the most commonly found breastplate at the New Bunhill Fields burial ground was also the cheapest in the trade catalogues, for example (Miles 2012, 39). Some catalogues also refer to the items that would be included within a set, which is instructive when attempting to reconstruct how a coffin would have looked overall.

Table 1.3: Coffin furniture trade catalogues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. pages</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'JB' (Tuesly &amp; Cooper)</td>
<td>V&amp;A prints and drawings</td>
<td>c.1783</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>E.997 to E.1011-1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'AT'</td>
<td>V&amp;A prints and drawings</td>
<td>c.1821-4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>E.994 to E.1022-1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'EL'</td>
<td>V&amp;A prints and drawings</td>
<td>c.1826</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>E.3096 to 3134-1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Brawn</td>
<td>V&amp;A prints and drawings</td>
<td>c.1858</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>E.1155 to 1171-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'WP'</td>
<td>Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA</td>
<td>c.1797</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>TT197.5.C62 S267 1797, v.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'JY'</td>
<td>Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA</td>
<td>c.1778</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>TT197.5.C62 S267 1797, v.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'JB'</td>
<td>Yale Center for British Art</td>
<td>c.1783</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>L 201.15 (Folio B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'LD'</td>
<td>Yale Center for British Art</td>
<td>c.1823</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>NK3665.C64 1823 + Oversize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, there are a number of issues with using the available catalogues to explore trends over time. None of them are dated accurately. Earlier catalogues are dated by a combination of the watermarks on the paper and the assumption that the year illustrated in the decorative numbers on the first page is the year of production (see Fig. 1.1). It is not certain that this is the case, and those catalogues with both decorative dates and watermarks show a discrepancy between the two. The largest difference in possible dates is for one of the catalogues in the Peabody Essex Museum collections, which includes illustrative numbers for 1788 with a watermark dated to 1797 (Peabody Essex TT197.5.C62 S267 1797). The catalogues are not all complete. The page numbers of the earliest catalogue in the Victoria and Albert Museum Collections indicate that there were at least 22 pages originally, but only 15 remain (V&A E.997 to E.1011-1902). Designs in the early catalogues are generally uneven in outline, which might suggest that they are more likely to be associated with tinplate, as lead plates are generally regular in shape. However, some designs from these catalogues are also found on lead plates, and some of the catalogues include plain brass plates. While most of the catalogues appear to come from different sources, it seems likely that both catalogues with ‘J B’ and ‘1783’ on their first pages are from the same manufacturer and one of them is bound in a volume with the name of the ironmongers ‘Tuesly & Cooper’ on the cover (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). It has been suggested that the illustrated letters on the first page are the initials of manufacturers, with the ‘E L’ catalogue of c.1826 referring to the Birmingham manufacturer Edward Lingard (H. Maclean pers. comm. 11 May 2017). In their book *English Domestic Brass*, Rupert Gentle and Rachael Feild noted that it was not by chance that pattern books were “curiously secretive” (Gentle and Feild 1975, 61). Factors, they suggest, would not have wanted to reveal the manufacturer’s details to their customers who could, as roads and transport improved, bypass them and deal directly with makers, and pages could have been added or removed over time (Gentle and Feild 1975, 61-62). These were working documents, intended to be used and adapted.
Fig. 1.1: The first page of a trade catalogue of coffin furniture, dated c.1783 by the decorative letters illustrated. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection (YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 3).

The earliest surviving trade catalogues date to the 1780s, soon after the introduction of new manufacturing techniques which made production cheaper. There are no catalogues or other design documents that cover the earlier eighteenth century. It is possible to glean some information on the overall appearance of coffins from trade cards and other illustrations, but these are not detailed enough to enable analysis of the types and motifs used, and may be highly stylised. With the exception of a loose page of neo-Gothic designs from the 1850s (V&A E.1155 to 1171-1965) there is a gap of catalogue coverage between c.1826 and the 1890s. A trade catalogue dated c.1837 referred to in the reports on the St Pancras and St Martin’s (Brickley and Buteux 2006, 160; Emery and Wooldridge 2011, 168) was held in the archive of a construction company that has gone into administration and is now not accessible for study (R. Jackson, Archivist, Staffordshire Record Office pers. comm. 29 May 2018). However, this would still only slightly reduce the current gap of around 70 years between available trade catalogues. It is surprising that there are apparently no surviving trade catalogues in museum collections from the majority of the Victorian period, a period when the industry was booming.
Although most appear to be from different manufacturers, the early catalogues, dated c.1783-1826, show remarkable similarities in designs, suggesting widespread copying. It is also suggestive of a sense within the industry, and perhaps among undertakers and their customers, that this is what coffin furniture was supposed to look like. This copying was, for new designs at least, curtailed by the introduction of copyright protection for the decorative arts by legislation from 1839 (Halls 2013). Under this legislation, manufacturers could register their designs, and details of these designs, including illustrations, are now held in The National Archives. Later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century catalogues distinguish between registered and unregistered designs. A catalogue of c.1900, for example, includes a note at the top of each page of those designs that were registered under the Act (MERL TR YES P2/B1). The registered designs go some way to filling the gap in the trade catalogues but, although they demonstrate innovations over the second half of the nineteenth century and are precisely dated, it is currently unclear, due to a lack of excavated examples, how widespread their use was in the UK.

Monuments

The study of monuments and their interpretation has been very influential in studies of coffin furniture, and some of these approaches are considered below. In terms of relevant comparative material to coffin furniture, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gravestones and monuments are, of course, plentiful in churches and burial grounds across the country, although vulnerable to damage or removal in some cases, particularly in cities. This is discussed, with reference to the burial places of St Marylebone parish, in Chapter 6. It is unusual for assemblages of both coffin furniture and monuments to survive for the same site, and rare for a coffin plate and a headstone or monument to survive from the same individual. Several of the sites listed above do not have remaining monuments, such as St Mary and St Michael’s burial ground (Henderson et al. 2013, 71) and New Bunhill Fields burial ground (Miles 2012), and some have only fragments, such as Sheen’s burial ground and Bow Baptist church (Henderson et al. 2013, 71). Although there are some publications of sites which have details of both monuments and coffin furniture, it is very rare that both are published in detail, with stylistic as well as biographical information. For example, in the report on St Martin’s, Birmingham, the details of grave memorial stones are listed in an appendix, including names, dates and relationships between those named, but these are not illustrated (Brickley and Buteux 2006, CD Appendix 2). On the other hand, the publication
for the St Pancras excavations has a selective catalogue of the 735 memorial stones and tomb fragments that were recovered during excavation, including transcriptions, illustrations and photographs (Rendall 2011). Some include an individual identified from a coffin plate. Another published site from London with a large collection of monuments is St George’s Bloomsbury. The monograph includes transcripts of 40 memorial inscriptions from the walls of the church, cross-referenced with the coffin number, where relevant, of the individuals listed (Boston et al. 2009, 68-73). The potential to directly compare coffin furniture and a headstone or monument for individuals has generally been very limited, and most likely to be possible for vault assemblages with surviving wall monuments in the church, as at St Marylebone. As the examples above show, there can be some scope to compare assemblages of above- and below-ground material culture assemblages for the same site.

**Other forms of funerary material culture**

As well as coffin furniture and monuments, a wide range of other forms of funerary material culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been retained in museums and archives, or included in archaeological or historical publications. Many other elements were involved in the preparation of the body, the coffin, funeral and in the period of mourning following a death. There is a vast array of surviving funerary objects, particularly from the nineteenth century, including stationery, jewellery, printed ephemera, mourning clothing and less likely objects, such as teapots (Curl 2000; Llewellyn 1991; Morley 1971). Objects that relate directly to the memory of the deceased include memorial cards, commemorative medals and photographs (towards the end of this period). Mourning jewellery, some of which includes the name and dates or hair of a loved one, is explored in detail in Chapter 7, including previous approaches to the topic.

**Non-funerary decorative material culture**

Although their use distinguished funerary objects from other contemporary decorative items, they were not completely distinct in style. In Jonathan Finch’s study of church monuments he examined eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century memorials in the context of changing patterns of consumption within capitalism, suggesting that “fashion intervened between the artefact and its symbolic meaning” (Finch 2000, 168). Similarly, Adam R. Heinrich (2014) proposed that the cherub heads on gravestones, usually interpreted as representing religious
changes, should rather be seen in the context of Rococo design trends. This emphasises the importance of considering funerary symbols and designs in their original context. Similarly, when considered in the light of work on the production, distribution and consumption of other types of goods in this period (e.g. Berg 2005; Weatherill 1987) the extent to which funerary objects were part of broader patterns can be suggested, as well as identifying the ways in which they were distinctive (see Chapter 2).

**Approaches to coffin furniture**

Most reporting and analysis of coffin furniture is in the form of excavation reports. The approaches taken to analysing coffin furniture assemblages in excavation reports have depended on a number of factors, including the context, content and size of the assemblage, as well as the format of the publication. One of the most significant of these is the presence or absence of complete coffin plates. Where well-preserved coffin plates do not survive, assemblages tend to consist of fragments of tinplate and the more robust iron grips, which are less varied, much harder to date and, of course, do not contain biographical details of the buried individuals. However, Märit Gaimster’s (2016) report on the coffin furniture of the Quaker burial ground of the North Shields Meeting House is an important example of how rich information can be gleaned from simple and mostly plain coffin fittings, giving insights into choices based on religious identity and, possibly, regional practices.

**Reporting and context**

In order to understand the use and meaning(s) of coffin furniture, it is important to be able to visualise it in the context in which it was used, and to consider the impact that it would have had on those who saw it. This is more straightforward for vault burials, where coffins are frequently found intact, with a clear association between coffins and human remains and with good preservation which enables identification of individuals, as well as textile types and colours and coffin furniture surface treatments. In earth burials, compression from stacked coffins means that it is often not possible to be sure of the association of coffin remains, coffin furniture and grave goods with each other and with a particular set of human remains.
In excavation reports, details of coffin furniture are often separated from other details about the coffin and from the osteological report, in specialist reports. The different types of coffin furniture are also frequently considered separately, with lid motifs, for example, in a separate section to coffin plates. Concerns about the effect on research of this type of structure for excavation reports have been raised for very different types of assemblage, in work on Roman households, for example (Allison 1997). In some cases, ethical considerations may prevent the publication of individuals’ details, particularly in the case of more recent burials (Anthony 2016, 72). For burial assemblages, the separation of specialist reports makes it harder to gain an understanding of the original appearance (and therefore the impact and meaning) of the coffin, and makes it more difficult to answer research questions where aspects of the coffin (e.g. breastplate type) are linked with physical or social aspects of the buried individual (e.g. age or occupation). Some reports have addressed this by text or tables that collate this information. The approach in the publication of the Poole Baptist burial ground assemblage was to publish a grave catalogue as an appendix, which includes information about the grave cut, human bone and coffin furniture, including the backfill (McKinley 2008, 128-142). The publication on St Marylebone’s Paddington Street north burial ground includes a section on the named burials, in which information about individuals is published together, including skeleton, coffin and coffin plate numbers, along with an osteological summary and biographical information from documentary research (Henderson et al. 2015, 27-58).

Many aspects of the coffin and funeral are rarely or never apparent archaeologically. The variations of quantity, size, material and surface treatment of coffin furniture are discussed in Chapter 3. It is also possible to consider the coffin within the context of the funeral as a whole, which was and is, as Cox (1998, 112) has pointed out, a “composite ritual”. Some aspects, such as the washing of the corpse, are intangible, and known from documentary sources, but some other aspects of funerals have been recovered archaeologically (Cherryson 2018). Burial clothes and textile furnishings (e.g. Davidson 2013; Janaway 1998), plant remains from within and around the coffin (e.g. Harris et al. 2009; Miles 2008) and grave goods of various kinds (e.g. Richardson 2013) have been recorded at a number of sites (summaries of all these aspects in Cherryson et al. 2012). The final chapter of the monograph of St Martin’s, Birmingham is a description of two funerals from 1856 (Adams 2006). These draw together archaeological and documentary research to reconstruct not only the coffins,
but the preparations, mourning clothes, processions and church services and the gatherings
and, later, monuments that followed (Adams 2006).

Symbolism

As described below, A.W.N. Pugin and his followers were clear that the motifs used on coffin
furniture had a symbolic meaning, and as they were pagan symbols they disapproved of them.
Work on the symbolism of gravestones has explored these meanings, and this has been
influential in the interpretation of coffin furniture motifs. Dethlefsen and Deetz’s (1966)
well-known work on New England gravestones examined a shift from death’s heads to
cherubs to urns and willow trees, and interpreted these symbols as representing religious and
social change. The division of symbols into those representing mortality and those
representing immortality has been carried out by most of those who have examined the
symbolism of gravestones and coffin furniture (e.g. Richmond 1999, 151). Some have gone
further than this broad division, by ascribing a specific meaning to each symbol within these
broad categories (e.g. Willsher 1985). The report on the assemblage from St George’s
Church, Bloomsbury includes a consideration of the meanings of the many floral motifs on
coffin furniture (Boston et al. 2009, 163). Sometimes a literal as well as a figurative meaning
has been noted; an anchor may suggest a sailor’s burial as well as (or instead of) hope
(Willsher 1985, 29). For some motifs different meanings have been suggested, such as acorns,
“variously interpreted as representing latent greatness, strength, or ripe old age” (Miles 2011a,
174). Additionally, Hilary Davidson, writing about the use of oak and acorn motifs on early
nineteenth-century textiles, noted that they symbolised “English- or British-ness and the
Royal Navy’s strength during the extended Napoleonic warfare” (Davidson 2015, 206). As
well as the variety of potential meanings for at least some popular motifs, it is not clear that
this visual language was necessarily fluently understood by those who saw it, and therefore
the meaning(s) of an item of coffin furniture cannot be reduced to a list of the attributes
‘represented’ by the motifs. For example, Litten (1991, 109) drew on evidence from
Chadwick’s 1843 commission to point out that undertakers did not necessarily understand
the heraldic conventions of the breastplate shapes they used, by which, for example, a
lozenge-shaped plate represents a young or unmarried woman, a claim supported by
excavated examples where plate shapes do not correlate with the age and/or gender of the
individuals they commemorate (Miles 2011a, 173). In her study of floral motifs and epitaphs
on North American gravestones, June Haddon Hobbs (2002) argued that their meanings are
not straightforward, despite a widespread belief in a Victorian language of flowers, and that although cut flowers had represented mortality and then, in the early nineteenth century, hope and immortality, by the mid-nineteenth century they represented sexualisation and feminisation of death. Finch’s (2000) and Heinrich’s (2014) work on the influence of fashion on monuments is also a caution against too literal a reading of these symbols.

**Lettering**

Lettering is an aspect of design that appears on both gravestones and coffin plates, but has not been as much studied as the motifs of either. In his book *Recording and Analysing Graveyards*, Harold Mytum (2000, 127) listed six different lettering styles generally found on British gravestones, but noted that these are generic categories, and that a specialist might be able to discern local styles. In their paper on the development of New England gravestone designs, Dethlefsen and Deetz did not explore lettering in detail, but did note that one carver continued to use upper case lettering for inscriptions for longer than his contemporaries, a sign of his stylistic conservatism (Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966, 505). Mytum (1994, 252) noted a change from calligraphic to typographic lettering styles on gravestones in British and British colonial contexts and suggested that this change took place in the later eighteenth century, along with a shift in motifs. If this could be more precisely dated, on a site or regional scale, it would provide an interesting point of comparison with coffin furniture, on which calligraphic styles continued to be used in the first half of the nineteenth century. In his recent study of New England gravestones, Heinrich, arguing that Rococo fashions were a greater influence than religious beliefs on the use of cherub motifs, sees the lettering of gravestones as a design aspect largely free from Rococo influence (Heinrich 2014, 58). He found that only a few individual carvers added subtle Rococo flourishes to their lettering in the eighteenth century, although carvers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries showed Rococo influences in the lettering on neoclassical monuments (Heinrich 2014, 59-60).

There has been even more limited work on the lettering of coffin plates. The collection of coffin plates from St Marylebone Church, studied as part of this project, is held in the University of Reading Department of Typography and Graphic Communication (see also Miles et al. 2015). These were acquired in the early 1980s by the University when the church vaults were cleared of burials, which were then reburied (Miles et al. 2015, 128). A dissertation
by Bryony Newhouse (1996) focused on the lettering of these coffin plates, and includes a lettering typology that has been used in this project (see Fig 5.4). Martin Andrews (2002, 2003) published an article and a conference paper on this collection. In these he identified a range of techniques used, including engraving, etching and stamping, and a wide range of letterforms. He also noted the difference between the lettering on the outermost plate, “the work of professional trade engravers”, and the hidden inner lead plate, which was not always professionally engraved (Andrews 2003). The monograph on the New Bunhill Fields burial ground includes an extract from a book of 1901 on engraving metals which describes the process of engraving coffin plates and includes a note on the types of lettering appropriate for use at that time (Miles 2012, 35-36). Around the same date, a book for undertakers, Coffins and Coffin-Making, included a chapter on “Coffin-Plate Writing” which illustrates a few different lettering styles, none of them calligraphic, and includes the advice, “Do not be tempted to use ornamental lettering on coffin-plates. This is quite out of place, as also are flourishes, &c.” (Plume n.d., 168). Lettering is not an aspect of coffin plates that has otherwise received much attention in excavation reports. A notable exception is the publication of the burial ground of St Pancras Old Church (Emery and Wooldridge 2011). This includes sections on the lettering of both the grave memorials (Wooldridge and Rendall 2011) and the coffin plates (Vitali 2011), including consideration of the techniques used and the letterforms chosen. Exploring the lettering used on both coffin plates and monuments has enabled the inclusion of more of both types of artefact for analysis within this project, as some types of coffin plate (especially copper alloy plates) and many monuments do not include motifs.

Biographical, historical and osteological research

The recovery of coffin plates in good, legible condition opens up more avenues for research, as they provide names and dates which can be used for biographical research and as a means of exploring the use of particular styles of coffin furniture over time, from closely dated contexts. The recovery of a named sample, where human remains are found with corresponding coffin plates, has also been invaluable in osteological studies. This was one of the key aspects of research at Christ Church Spitalfields (Molleson and Cox 1993). There have also been a range of studies over many years on the skeletal material from St Bride’s, for which coffin plates provide ages and dates of death (e.g. Scheuer 1998; van Schaik et al. 2017). A good example of the possibilities of biographical research is the monograph on the
archaeological recording of the vaults of St George’s Church, Bloomsbury, by Oxford Archaeology (Boston et al. 2009), where research on the buried population provided interesting insights into their social stratification and to the parish as a whole. The monuments within the church provided additional information on family relationships, addresses and professions, and a range of documentary sources were consulted, including parish and civil registers, wills, census records, trade and professional directories, death notices and obituaries (Boston et al. 2009, 68-74). These provided a wealth of information on those buried in the crypt. It is worth noting that the wealth and status that provided a previously undisturbed burial place, coffins with durable materials and, in some cases, indoor monuments has also ensured a documentary presence which is richer for these individuals of the professional classes, the elite of the parish, than might be expected for those buried elsewhere. Research was also carried out into individuals’ addresses. This information was not available for all named individuals, but a sample was taken by examining the abodes of sets grouped by profession: the legal profession, those in the army or navy, artisans and tradesmen, and those employed in the arts, including 83 individuals in total (Boston et al. 2009, 90). This showed a distribution of addresses that suggested that those in these occupational groups lived in “largely mutually exclusive” streets (Boston et al. 2009, 91).

Theoretical context

As noted above, most work on coffin furniture is within excavation reports. Until recently, there has been very little synthetic work on coffin furniture assemblages, with the notable exception of Diana Mahoney-Swales and colleagues’ (2011) paper on funerary material culture from Sheffield, although the work of archaeological units on multiple later post-medieval burial sites has enabled specialists to draw on a broader context of material for each publication, such as the MOLA monograph that focused on three burial ground sites in East London, enabling direct comparison between them (Henderson et al. 2013). A recent chapter by Louise Loe and Ceridwen Boston (2018) discussed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century coffin furniture from London with reference to two assemblages recorded by Oxford Archaeology, those of St George’s, Bloomsbury and St Luke’s, Islington. A chapter by Mytum in the same volume explores coffin furniture designs in relation to monument designs and, while it focuses mainly on the large and well-published assemblage from Christ Church Spitalfields, incorporates material from a number of sites (Mytum 2018).
The theoretical context for the understanding of coffin furniture owes a great deal to the study of gravestones and monuments, and to historical studies of death and burial in this period. The religious and moral meanings, the status of individuals and communities and the conservatism of coffin furniture have been explored in publications on excavated funerary assemblages and are outlined here, and further factors in the development of funerary material culture in this period are also considered. As Anna Smart Martin (1993, 143) argued:

> When we begin to examine the cultural relationship between things and people and ask why individuals, groups or societies act in particular ways, it is necessary to cross broad areas of scholarship and use multiple forms of evidence, methods and ideas.

### Religious and moral meaning(s)

Coffin furniture assemblages have been explored with reference to the religious context from which they have been excavated. Jez Reeve and Max Adams noted that the meanings of coffin furniture were debated in the nineteenth century and that the Spitalfields assemblage could “play a part in creating a context for the historical study of religious and moral reform in the 18th and 19th centuries” (Reeve and Adams 1993, 78). However, the extent to which religious affiliation influences choice of funerary material culture has not always been clear. Several Quaker (Bashford and Sibun 2007; Crouch and Shanks 1984; Proctor et al. 2016; Stock 1998) and Baptist burial grounds (Henderson et al. 2013; McKinley 2008) and a small number of Roman Catholic burials (Emery and Wooldridge 2011; Henderson et al. 2013) have been excavated. These are all Christian denominations. A recent audit of excavations of post-medieval burial grounds in Greater London by Allen Archaeology (2015, 9) noted that no excavated Jewish burial assemblages from London have been examined, though the first Jewish burial ground was established in London in the mid-seventeenth century (Cherryson et al. 2012, 88).

The evidence for a distinctive Nonconformist material culture of burial has been explored. Gwynne Stock (1998), for example, pointed out the difference between the theory of Quaker simplicity and practice at Bathford, where walled graves and lead coffins were recovered. Elsewhere, restraint in burial is apparent in Quaker assemblages. At the Quaker burial ground in North Shields, only two grips were customarily used, in contrast with the use of six or
even eight usually found on coffins of this period (Gaimster 2016). However, in other places and for other Nonconformist denominations, the relationship between religious identity and choice of funerary material culture is less apparent. As Mahoney-Swales and colleagues (2011, 227) note in their synthetic study of four Sheffield burial assemblages (two Anglican and two Nonconformist), “it is difficult to ascertain whether the choices [of coffin furniture] observed represent religious, social, economic or cultural differences”. Additionally, evidence from an undertaker to Edwin Chadwick’s (1843) inquiry into interment in towns indicated that burial in Dissenters’ burial grounds was favoured by those seeking cheaper burials and at more convenient times than those in parish churchyards, and so it cannot be assumed that individuals buried in Nonconformist burial grounds were necessarily Nonconformists. Poor documentation for many Nonconformist burials is a further complicating factor in disentangling this issue (Henderson et al. 2013, 4).

Only one Roman Catholic lay burial ground has been excavated and published, the burial ground of St Mary and St Michael’s in what is now Tower Hamlets, London (Henderson et al. 2013). A watching brief was carried out at the Jesuit cemetery at Manresa House, Roehampton (Melikian 2004), a rare examination of burials of a post-medieval religious order. The burials at Old St Pancras churchyard also included a number of Catholic burials (Emery and Wooldridge 2011, 123). Adrian Miles, who wrote the coffin furniture reports for both St Mary and St Michael’s and St Pancras, suggested that some breastplate types which included a crossed arms symbol could possibly be associated with Roman Catholic burials (Henderson et al. 2013 76-77). More obviously, at St Mary and St Michael’s, 21 devotional items, such as rosaries, were found with 14 burials (Henderson et al. 2013, 91), and crucifix lid motifs were found at St Pancras (Miles 2011a).

A key debate that affected coffin furniture in the nineteenth century was the Gothic Revival. James Stevens Curl (2000, 86) described the development of Gothic architecture in the 1830s in the context of a transition from a Regency to a Victorian outlook, religious revival and the Oxford Movement within Anglicanism: “very soon Gothic not only became a national style, but a Christian one too, redolent with moral superiority and meaning.” Coffin furniture was a target for the ire of Pugin and other adherents of Gothic. He was vitriolic in his condemnation of the, by then, traditional Rococo and neoclassical styles that were still dominant:
Nothing can be more hideous than the raised metal work, called *coffin furniture*, that is so generally used at the present time; heathen emblems, posturing angels, trumpets, death’s heads and cross bones, are mixed together in a glorious confusion and many of them partake of a ludicrous character.

(Pugin 1844, 72)

In his book on metal manufacturing in Birmingham, W.C. Aitkin, an admirer of Pugin, was similarly derisive about the “heterogeneous hash” of coffin furniture design and recommended, as Pugin did, simple designs with “Christian and appropriate symbolism” (Aitken 1866, 195). There are some neo-Gothic coffin furniture designs, dated c.1858, by a Birmingham manufacturer (V&A E.1155 to 1171-1965), but as most coffin furniture assemblages pre-date the 1850s, there is not much evidence of the impact of the Gothic Revival in excavated examples, and it is unclear how much of an impact it had on design.

**Status**

One way in which coffin furniture assemblages have been understood is as relating to the status of the buried community as a whole, and of individuals within it (Cherryson *et al.* 2012, 57; Richmond 1999, 152). The quantity and materials of coffin furniture recovered and the location of burial are certainly an indication of differing costs, and comparisons between sites have shown disparities. For example, while most coffins at Chelsea Old Church were found to have decorative upholstery studs, with lead plates and a range of grips also recovered from this site (Miles 2008), fewer than a quarter of the coffins at the Cross Bones burial ground, the ‘poor ground’ of the parish, had any surviving decoration (Brickley and Miles 1999, 26). As described above, the size, materials and surface treatments of coffin furniture would have affected the cost, and this was only a small part of the overall cost of the coffin and the funeral and other arrangements relating to death, such as mourning clothes. The costs of burial in vaults were much higher than for burial in a churchyard, and those buried within church vaults were the individuals of highest status within a parish. However, approaches to gravestones and monuments suggest that coffin furniture assemblages may represent strategies for social differentiation that do not straightforwardly reflect status. Mike Parker Pearson’s (1982) influential study of burial practices rejected the view that mortuary rituals passively reflected social roles, but argued that they were part of an active negotiation of power and influence. Finch (2000) also interpreted church monuments as used in strategies of competing elite groups.
Conservatism

Coffin furniture has often been identified as conservative in design, although this has not been explored in detail until some recent publications. Sometimes this has been suggested as being an integral feature of the funerary industry, without further explanation as to why this might be. For example, in their 1975 book *English Domestic Brass*, Gentle and Feild noted that coffin furniture hardly changed between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries: “But undertakers are conservative people and death, after all, is very permanent.” (Gentle and Feild 1975, 105). Charlotte Harding noted, in the report on coffin furniture from Wharram Percy, that “the conservative nature of anything connected with death is reflected in the longevity of the designs used on coffin fittings and memorial stones” (Harding 1987, 5), adding that coffin furniture designs of the 1980s were still based on Victorian styles, though made of plastic, rather than metal (Harding 1987, 6). The conservatism of coffin furniture has also been noted more recently (Miles 2011a, 176; Mytum 2015, 175; 2017, 168) and studies drawing on assemblages from multiple sites have enabled very long periods of use for some designs to be identified (Loe and Boston 2018). Most writers have identified the conservatism of coffin furniture without offering an explanation, other than the supposed inherent conservatism of the undertaking trade. The pilot study for this project and the resulting publication explored the time-lag between the use of funerary motifs and their use on coffin furniture and suggested that undertakers were best placed to have influenced this, as interim consumers, selecting products for their clients (Hoile 2013; 2018). Recently, Harold Mytum (2018) has explored coffin furniture and monuments and identified the differing relationships between the undertakers and masons and bereaved consumers and the differing contexts in which these purchases took place, as the explanation for the lack of development of coffin furniture styles compared with those of monuments. Chapter 3 discusses the development of the funerary industry in order to explore this further.

Interpretations of changing funerary rituals and material culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

This project focuses on the forms that funerary material culture took in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and how and why these developed. These focused research questions may be seen as sitting under broader questions about changing funerary rituals and commemorative practices over this long time period, which inform the research context of
this material. These broader questions have been approached from archaeological and historical perspectives, some of which have already been mentioned. The nineteenth century in particular has been seen as a distinctive era for death practices in Britain, the USA and countries with political and cultural connections to the UK (e.g. Australia), and there has been a long historical interest in Victorian funerals and associated material culture. As described above, work on above-ground funerary material culture suggests the importance of critically engaging with the attribution of status, and considering the social context of burial assemblages. There are other approaches that are suggested by work on gravestones and monuments and by historical approaches to funerary material culture and developments in the funerary industry in this period.

Individualism has been seen by some as a defining influence on death practices from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries and this has had an impact on the interpretation of funerary material culture. Clare Gittings (1984) saw individualism as a driving force behind the middle-class adoption of funerary practices from the seventeenth century, previously the preserve of the wealthy; a process that encouraged, and was facilitated by, the growth of professional undertaking and a related decline in community ritual, and typified by a shift from spending on food for the funeral feast to the purchase of material goods. Sarah Tarlow’s (1998; 1999) work draws on the concept of ‘affective individualism’, following the work of Stone (1977) to explain the ‘gravestone boom’ of the later eighteenth century, and rejects social emulation as a factor in this. This is in contrast with, for example, the work of Aubrey Cannon (1989), who used the shift from elaborate Victorian funerals to restraint in the twentieth century as a case study of competitive funerary display, driven by status concerns and emulation, followed by elite restraint. Ralph Houlbrooke titled his exploration of death in England in the period 1660 to 1760 as *The Age of Decency*, describing this concept as “one of the keynotes of the century” (Houlbrooke 1999, 174):

> The word then embraced more than it does today: appropriateness, fitness, seemliness, order, comeliness, good taste and the avoidance of vulgarity or excess.

Drawing on this in her exploration of death in English towns in the long eighteenth century (c.1689-1840), Natasha Mihailovic (2011) argued that concepts of decency and decorum best explain the forms and proliferation of new types of funerary material culture in this longer period. Teerapa Pirohakul (2015) also identified a strongly held concept of decency as closely linked to increased middle-class expenditure on coffins and gravestones.
These changes are also associated with materialism. As Mytum has pointed out, in this period “both the undertakers and the bereaved looked to material goods to manage loss, grief, and transition” (Mytum 2017, 161). The material culture of grief and commemoration was often distinct in appearance and use, but fits into a wider development of the use of objects to materialise and manage emotions, and this is perhaps best demonstrated by the mourning jewellery of the period, which is clearly related to contemporary sentimental jewellery (see Chapter 7). Bereavement and loss were not the only emotions which people managed through objects. For example, Sally Holloway’s thesis (2013) and book (2019) on love in the eighteenth century have examined the role of gifts and tokens, finding that “material objects determined how people related to one another by providing a key means of conceptualizing and processing their emotions” (Holloway 2019, 69).

Sarah Tarlow’s (1999) groundbreaking study Bereavement and Commemoration: An Archaeology of Mortality placed emotional connections between the living and the dead at the heart of her analysis of the development of experiences of grief and the funerary material culture that commemorated not only individuals, but relationships. The study of both emotions and material culture, both separately and in combination, have become more prominent in recent years and some studies have explored the relationship between the two. Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey’s (2001) book Death, Memory & Material Culture explored interlinked objects and practices through anthropological and historical perspectives. Recently, Zahra Newby and Ruth E. Toulson (2019) have edited a volume on The Materiality of Mourning, incorporating chapters from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including archaeology, anthropology, history and sociology, in order to approach common questions around death, emotion and objects.

The eighteenth century has been identified as a period of new practices of consumption (Brewer and Porter 1993), and increased expenditure on funerary material culture has been seen as part of this development, and particularly associated with the growth of the middle classes (Earle 1989, 79; Fritz 1994-5). Some previous work has briefly suggested the importance of undertakers in the process of consumption of funerary material (Litten 1991, 30; Mytum 2006, 105), but this has only recently been more fully explored for the British context (Mytum 2018). In Australia, Hilda Maclean (2015) studied the consumption of coffin furniture by individuals and institutions in her thesis on the late nineteenth-century Brisbane
burial ground. Drawing on marketing, as well as historical, literature, she proposed a funerary consumption model, in which she adapted previous archaeological models of consumption for funerary material, to include institutional customers and reflect the importance of undertakers as professional service providers (Maclean 2015). The factors that influenced choices of monuments in cemeteries have been explored by Susan Buckham (1999; 2000; 2003) and Matilda Duncker (2016).

This summary of approaches indicates a rich and varied range of interpretations of changing funerary rituals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some of which are apparently contradictory. There is no consensus on the meanings of the changes in death that took place in this period. The widespread adoption and use of embellished and labelled coffins, and the development of this specialist material culture, may be seen as an arena for competitive display or as an expression of concern for the body of a loved one; it may be interpreted as an outcome of heightened individualism and the breakdown of community rituals or as that of increased commercialism of death. Clearly these are not all mutually exclusive. People in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain expressed and contested the meanings of funerary rituals and material culture, leaving a rich source of contemporary views (e.g. Aitken 1866; Chadwick 1843; Mission 1719; Pugin 1844), although access to both the new funerary material culture and to debates about its meaning would have varied by gender, wealth and status, among other factors. These debates and divergent views argue for a nuanced view of changing death rituals that take into account this diversity of experience.
2 Materials

It was a solemn consideration what enormous hosts of dead belong to one old great city, and how, if they were raised while the living slept, there would not be the space of a pin's point in all the streets and ways for the living to come out into. Not only that, but the vast armies of dead would overflow the hills and valleys beyond the city, and would stretch away all round it, God knows how far.’

The sites selected for this study are all in central London (see Fig. 2.1). The material includes that of three sites which have been recorded for this study: the plates of St Marylebone and St Bride’s, and the lead plates from Islington Green burial ground. The coffin furniture from Christ Church Greyfriars that was recorded and catalogued for the pilot study for this project is also included here (Hoile 2013). The coffin plates of Christ Church Spitalfields and St Pancras, which were also analysed for the pilot project (Hoile 2013; 2018) have been incorporated into this study to provide a larger and more diverse dataset for some of the analysis.

These sites include both church vaults and burial grounds, although the majority of the material is from vaults. Some of these assemblages are from archaeological excavation while others were recovered during a watching brief by archaeologists. The largest collection within this project, from St Marylebone Church, was recovered during an exhumation clearance without archaeological recording. Each item of coffin furniture, person and monument was given a separate number during recording. The coffin plates are numbered from 1. The people, including those with a monument but no coffin plate, are numbered from 7000, and the monuments are numbered from M001. The sites of the monuments studied are described in Chapter 6.

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1 From *Night Walks* by Charles Dickens (2010 [1852], 9).
Fig. 2.1: Map of central London showing the sites of the coffin furniture assemblages included in this study: St Marylebone (St M), St Bride's (St B), Christ Church Greyfriars (CCG), Islington Green (IGN), Christ Church Spitalfields (CCS) and St Pancras (St P).
Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2019).
The coffin furniture assemblages recorded consist almost entirely of coffin plates. Coffin plates have been the most likely items of coffin furniture to be retained and so to be available for further study, as is particularly apparent from the St Marylebone and St Bride’s assemblages. They are also the most accurately dated items, in terms of their use, when the date of death is visible. Coffin plates were the largest and most elaborately decorated items used on a coffin with many stylistic aspects, including lettering and motifs, and were of primary contemporary importance. A breastplate and at least some handles were the first items to be added to a coffin whenever possible, however many lid motifs, escutcheons and grip plates might also be added. The cheapest ready-made coffin (costing 17s) in a trade price list published by Joseph Turner, a furnishing undertaker, in 1838 included a row of decorative nails, four handles and “a plate of inscription” (Turner 1838, 3). By the 1830s, inscribed breastplates were so much an expected part of a furnished coffin that undertakers did not necessarily list them separately in their bills, including them as a matter of course (see Chapter 4). It is difficult to trace the start of this expectation or when it came to apply universally. For the coffins of the very poorest individuals, breastplates were not a standard addition even in the early nineteenth century. The basic coffin provided by one undertaker supplying the London Poor Law Union did not include any decoration, but many friends or relatives of those buried under this contract paid 6 shillings to add a breastplate with a painted inscription, use of the best pall and for the presence of a mute, a black-clad undertaker’s assistant who carried a staff draped in black fabric (Litten 1991, 165). By this time, coffin plates were a desirable indicator of a decent funeral, even if they were not always attainable. For those interred in church vaults, the most expensive and exclusive place of burial in a parish, large plates, made of durable materials and with the inscription engraved into the metal, would have been usual, rather than the flimsy, painted plates that were perhaps the best available to some of their neighbours.

Sites

St Marylebone

St Marylebone is a Church of England parish church on Marylebone Road in London (the New Road at the time of the church’s construction). The current church was completed and consecrated in 1817, replacing the nearby eighteenth-century church, which later fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1949. The vaults underneath were used for burials from the
start. These were closed in 1853 and cleared in 1983 in order to create a doctor’s surgery and healing centre (Hamel-Cooke and Cope 1983). In his book on London crypts, Malcolm Johnson (2013) described the clearance of the vaults in the early 1980s in some detail. The clearance was carried out by builders and funeral directors, rather than by archaeologists (it took place before the pivotal excavation of the Christ Church Spitalfields vaults in 1984-1986 (Reeve and Adams 1993)), although Julian Litten, a specialist in vault burials, kept notes on his visits during the process and retained some coffin furniture which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum collections (Johnson 2013, 33). Over 850 coffins were removed and the human remains reinterred at Brookwood Cemetery (Johnson 2013, 32). A photograph, taken in the crypt, of the rector at the time, the Reverend Christopher Hamel Cooke, shows collapsing stacks of highly-decorated coffins, typical of the most expensive early nineteenth-century coffins (The Standard, 7 February 1983 in Johnson 2013, 30-31).

Large grip plates and grips and large numbers of dome-headed pins, arranged to form decorative panels and edging on the outermost layers of what were probably all triple-shelled coffins, can be seen in the photograph. At the time of the clearance, the coffin plates were offered to the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at the University of Reading, where they remain, in the Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections. The history of this collection is important in its interpretation, particularly in comparison with other assemblages which have been recovered and recorded by archaeologists, such as that of the crypt of St George’s Church, Bloomsbury (Boston et al. 2009). No spatial data were retained, for example, so it is unclear which individuals were interred together, although vault numbers were recorded in the burial register (St Marylebone Church 2011). Most significantly for this study, the collection is not a complete sample. Only coffin plates have been retained in this collection, for their typographic value, and the grip plates, lid motifs and other items were discarded, along with the funerary textiles, clothing and other objects, with the exception of a single grip plate (and the items collected by Julian Litten). Additionally, although one of the plates is completely illegible and a few are damaged or incomplete, these are a tiny minority of this large collection, and it must be assumed that fragmentary plates were not retained, being unsuitable for typographic study. This is supported by the fact that for some individuals recorded on monuments as interred ‘in a vault in this church’, such as Lettice Patten (d.1817, 71005, M010), no coffin plates have been found. Just under 700 individuals are represented by one or more plates in the collection which, when compared with the estimate of over 850 coffins removed from the crypt, and taking into account the 22 coffins removed for reburial elsewhere before the clearance, suggests that the plates of
approximately 130 people have not survived or been retained, and it is possible that these are more likely to have been made of tinplate or, possibly, lead, rather than more durable copper alloy, which is particularly well-represented in this collection. This may also be a significant factor in the under-representation of children’s burials in St Marylebone crypt (see Fig. 2.2), as small plates are likely to have been more vulnerable to damage and decay. The collection is notable for its large size and (for those objects that have been retained) good preservation. The number of brass plates, 439, with 87 having coats of arms, is highly unusual, even for vault burials (see Table 5.12). By comparison, at St George’s Church, Bloomsbury 125 (36.3%) of the 344 outer breastplates were brass and four had coats of arms (Boston et al. 2009, 165). Another very unusual aspect of this collection is the opportunity to directly compare the coffin plates and monuments of individuals, which is possible for 79 people at St Marylebone (see Chapter 6). Two other burial grounds of this parish have been investigated by MOLA: the crypt and graveyard of the eighteenth-century church (Miles et al. 2008) and the Paddington Street North burial ground (Henderson et al. 2015). The vault assemblage has previously been explored from a typographical perspective in an unpublished dissertation (Newhouse 1996), an article and a conference paper (Andrews 2002; 2003). It has also been recorded and published in summary by MOLA (Miles et al. 2015).

There are 695 individuals commemorated on the coffin plates from St Marylebone crypt: 390 female, 300 male and 5 individuals whose gender cannot be identified. For all the assemblages, the gender of individuals has been inferred from the first names, titles and relationships described in the coffin plate inscriptions. For many people, more than one coffin plate survives. There are 291 people with two plates and 98 with three; one of the notable features of this collection is the number of end plates. Their ages range from the stillborn daughter of Oswald and Maria Mosley (d.1837, 70472) to Mary Pugh (d.1838, 70531), who died in her 99th year, with a mean age of 54. They died between 1801 (Matthew Bazett, 70033) and 1853, the latest burial being that of Gertrude Rose Glynn (70285) in September of that year.

As the church was completed in 1817, the seven interments represented by coffin plates dated between 1801 and 1816 must have been moved to the new vaults after this date. The church’s burial records indicate that the remains of 10 people were moved into the crypt, having previously been interred elsewhere (St Marylebone Church 2011). Although without
a surviving coffin plate, the monument to Benjamin Oakley (d.1815, 71011, M026) records the movement of his remains:

TO THE MEMORY OF
BENJAMIN OAKLEY, JUNIOR
(SON OF BENJAMIN OAKLEY OF TAVISTOCK PLACE)
WHO DIED 21ST OF NOVEMBER 1815, AGED 17 YEARS.
HE WAS INTERRED IN THE CHURCH OF TOOTING GRAVENEY,
IN THE COUNTY OF SURREY.
REMOVED THENCE BY VIRTUE OF A FACULTY FROM THE BISHOP OF
WINCHESTER
AND DEPOSITED IN THE FAMILY VAULT BENEATH THIS MONUMENT
ON THE 15TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 1817.

The same monument commemorates Fanny Oakley (71012), presumably his sister, Benjamin Oakley (70489), his father, and Hannah Marcy Ann Oakley (71013), his mother, and indicates the importance to this family of reuniting the physical remains of their loved ones. Similarly, the vault plate of the Bazett/Harper family (plate 517) includes three people who died before 1817, Matthew Bazett (d.1801, 70033), Eliza Harper (d.1801, no coffin plate recorded) and Eleanor Bazett (d.1816, 70036), as well as three other family members, Anne Harper (d.1820, 70323), Eleanor Harper (d.1821, 70321) and Maria Harper (d.1821, 70322). Coffin plates were also recorded for seven other people with the last name Bazett or Harper, who may also be supposed to have been interred in the family vault. Twenty-two burials were removed by a faculty from the crypt, some after a short time and others many years later, and these too suggest that keeping family members together was the motivation for what must have been an expensive and emotionally challenging process. The coffins of both John Forbes (d.1841) and Sir Charles Forbes (d.1849) are recorded as removed by faculty to Strathdon, Aberdeenshire in 1852, for example (St Marylebone Church 2011).

As a very rough estimate of the number of families represented, there are 435 different surnames on the legible coffin plates. However, it is clear from the church monuments, death notices and obituaries that many more family relationships existed between the individuals buried in the crypt. For example, Mary Pugh (d.1838, 70531, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 1838) died at Devonshire Place House, “the residence of H. Moreton Dyer”, who was himself buried in the same vault in 1841, his address recorded on his coffin plate (70204, plate 1111).

Monument M029 records that Ellen Mary Fletcher (70247) was the daughter of John Shore (70611, M031) and that Robert Anderson (70009) was his son-in-law, and Alexander Crombie’s (70162, M018) obituary (*The Gentleman’s Magazine* 1842) indicates that his daughter
was Jane Eliot (70212), who died in Paris but was returned to St Marylebone for burial alongside her father. Other, non-familial, connections are also mentioned in some of the obituaries, and are undoubtedly only a fraction of many more that are not visible in the documentary record. Joseph Hawker’s (70329) obituary notes that “His remains were, agreeably to his wishes, deposited in a vault of the church of St Marylebone, near those of his old and intimate friend James Northcote, esq. the Royal Academician, of whose will he was the executor” (The Gentleman’s Magazine 1846).

The people buried within the vaults of St Marylebone were wealthy, well-connected and many held positions of high status as landowners, military officers, renowned artists and colonial administrators. The lives and deaths of many of them are, therefore, recorded by a range of sources including newspaper obituaries, wills and portraits. A search of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership database (2017) found that at least seven of the people commemorated on monuments at St Marylebone were slave-owners, and the detail of the database makes it clear that these people benefited both from the ownership of estates run by the labour of enslaved people and, for those who died after 1833, from the government compensation awarded to them after abolition. These database entries give insights into the social standing, connections and wealth of these individuals, and provide a reminder that funerary material culture sits within a context of colonialism in London, as well as elsewhere, paid for by wealth gained from trade with the West Indies and East India Company. The status of many individuals is indicated by the words chosen for their coffin plates, which include titles, positions and prestigious addresses (see Chapter 4). The titles recorded on the plates, for example, show a much wider variation than those of the other sites studied. Whereas at St Bride’s, only two people whose coffin plates have been recovered were members of the peerage, Sir Thomas (70908) and Lady Ester Hope (70946), a baronet and his wife, the titles of 60 people at St Marylebone indicate they were peers or their close relatives, including Baron Matthew Rokeby (70554) and the Honorable Sophia Upton (70634). Titles indicating the status of army or naval officers were included on the plates of 48 men, such as Isaac Prescott, Admiral of the Red (70527) and Lt. Samuel John Richards “of the Hon’ble East India Company’s Engineers Bombay” (70540), one of many people interred at St Marylebone Church with East India Company connections.
Fig. 2.2: Mortality curve of individuals identified from coffin plates from St Marylebone and St George’s Church, Bloomsbury crypts. Data for St George’s Church, Bloomsbury from Boston et al. 2009, 96.
The age profile of the buried population was compared with that of St George’s Church, Bloomsbury (see Fig. 2.2), a crypt population of similar size and social status. The profiles are very similar, but with a notable difference in the percentage of infant interments identified, which is lower at St Marylebone: 5.47% aged 0-1 years, compared with 9.2% at St George’s Bloomsbury (Boston et al. 2009, 96). The level of infant mortality in the St George’s Bloomsbury population was itself very low compared to other burial assemblages of the same period, and to data from the London Bills of Mortality, and, having considered alternative explanations, was attributed by the report authors to the high quality of life enjoyed by the middle- and upper-class population (Boston et al. 2009, 97). In this context, the number of infant burials at St Marylebone seems improbably small, and a likely explanation is that the tiny coffin plates did not survive well and were not retained when the burials were removed from the crypt.

The collection consists of 1195 items (see Table 2.1). There are 943 outer and inner breastplates, only three of which are undated. Some of the objects of uncertain material may be zinc. The three objects identified as ‘coffin’ are sections of lead coffin which have inscriptions directly applied, rather than on an attached plate and are all from the small coffins of infants. The materials have been identified by macroscopic examination and the terms ‘copper alloy’ and ‘brass’ have been used interchangeably. For all the assemblages studied, coffin plates have been designated as outer or inner plates in comparison with other plates of the same individual where possible. Where one person had two plates, one of them copper alloy and one lead, it is assumed that the more expensive and elaborate copper-alloy plate is the outer plate. Similarly, where one person had one decorated and one plain plate, it has been assumed that the decorated plate is from the outer coffin. However, where there is only one lead plate for an individual, it has been assigned to one category or the other depending on whether or not it is decorated. This is supported by the comparative evidence. Of the 486 inner and outer lead plates (including those identified as ‘possible’), 85 are decorated, 12 have decorative edging or a stamped border and 389 are plain. The number of tinplate plates is very low, and this is likely to relate to the status of the buried population, as these were the cheapest available plates. However, as noted above, this may also relate to the lower likelihood of these thin plates surviving in legible condition.
Table 2.1: Coffin furniture from St Marylebone Church crypt, by type and material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Copper alloy</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Tinplate</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer plate</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible outer plate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner plate</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible inner plate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End plate</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vault plate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grip plate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

St Bride’s

St Bride’s Church is a busy City church on Fleet Street which has been rebuilt twice after devastating fires. One of the many parish churches in the City of London that were destroyed by the Great Fire of London in 1666, it was rebuilt by Wren between 1671 and 1678, for the most part on its medieval foundations (Bradley and Pevsner 1998, 78). The seventeenth-century church was burnt to a shell in a bombing raid on 29 December 1940 and the church was rebuilt in the 1950s. The rector invited the Roman and Mediaeval London Excavation Council to excavate within the church, directed by W.F. Grimes, in order to gain an understanding of the history of the church and for publicity to assist fundraising for the rebuilding (Milne 1997, 4). The excavations directed by Grimes between 1952 and 1954 were later published in a monograph by Gustav Milne in 1997, which also included the results of further recording in 1992 and 1993 by a team from the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, and finds reports by specialists from the Museum of London Archaeology Service (Milne 1997, 6).

In common with most medieval and post-medieval parish churches, a large number of burials were made within the church, in vaults or directly underneath the church floor. Samuel Pepys described making arrangements for his brother Tom to be buried by his mother’s pew at St Bride’s in 1664, commenting that the grave-maker “would for my father’s sake do my brother that is dead all the civility he can; which was to disturb other corps that are not quite
rotten to make room for him” (Pepys 1971 [1664], 90). In the excavations in the 1950s, 5000 burials were found beneath the church floors and in its several vaults (Milne 1997, 10). The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century burials which were found in lead coffins were retained along with the identifying coffin plates, although human remains which retained soft tissue were reburied (Bowman 1997, 93). The skeletal remains of 244 named individuals are now a research collection stored in the church’s ossuary in the crypt (Johnson 2013, 66). Other items of coffin furniture, such as lid motifs, were not retained, except for five grip plates of two different types, which are stored apart from the plates and it is not known which, if any, of the named individuals’ coffins they come from. In the early 1990s the skeletal material was conserved and reboxed, separating it from the coffin plates (Scheuer and Black 1995). At the same time the coffin plates with associated human remains were transcribed and rubbings were taken of them, the main purpose of which was to obtain biographical information about the buried individuals to enhance the research value of the osteological collection. An additional 37 coffin plates of 35 individuals, which are not associated with the osteological collection, were kept but not recorded at that time, and are included in this current project.

The collection consists of 290 items (see Table 2.2). Additionally, a coffin plate dated 1652 which is outside the scope of this project, was recorded as a rare example of a seventeenth-century breastplate but is not included in the analysis of styles in Chapter 5 (see Fig. 5.1; this object is not included in Table 2.2). The outer, inner and end plates, mostly made of lead, are dated between 1740 and 1852, with a median date of 1824. The object recorded as ‘coffin’ is a very large section of a thick lead coffin lid with an inscription, dated 1749, surrounded by a Rococo border (plate 1373).

Table 2.2: Coffin furniture recorded at St Bride’s Church, by type and material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Copper alloy</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Tinplate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer plate</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner plate</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End plate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grip plate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The people recorded on the coffin plate inscriptions were aged between 9 days and 91 years at the time of their death, with a median age of 56. There are 29 people for whom more than one plate survives in this collection. One coffin plate, dated 1826, commemorates two people: Sarah Edkins, who died aged 25, and her infant son Edward, who died on the same day in 1826, aged 9 days (70728 and 70727, plate 1277, see Fig. 2.3). Another plain lead plate records “The Remains of Mr Holden's Family Collected the 19th June 1766” (plate 1375). Jane Holden, the widow of Samuel Holden, a director of the Bank of England, died just under a week earlier, on 13 June (plate 1397, 70936), and it seems that the interment of her coffin, likely alongside that of her husband Samuel (d.1740, plates 1256 and 1262, 70718, see Fig. 5.9) and daughter Priscilla (d.1757, plate 1322, 70820) presented an opportunity to protect the remains of other family members in a new coffin. Another of their daughters, unnamed in the press report, died in Roehampton in 1738 and her coffin was transported to St Bride’s for interment in the family vault (Daily Gazetteer 23 September 1738).

Only a small proportion of the coffin plates from St Bride’s include additional information, in contrast with those of St Marylebone. A few include placenames and an even smaller number include any occupational detail. Two clergymen are recorded on the coffin plates,
Rev. Thomas Clare M.A. (d. 1829, plates 1314 and 1326, 70816) and Rev. James Edward Jackson (d. 1841, plate 1404, 70943). Matthew Wyatt (d.1831) is described as being “of the Inner Temple” on his brass coffin plate (plate 1400, 70939), and Warner Phipps as “Secretary to the Albion Fire & Life Insurance Company” on both of his lead breastplates (plates 1486 and 1487, 70853). In notable contrast with St Marylebone, only one plate includes a military title, that of Christianna Zuhlike (d.1819, plate 1520, 70807), wife of Lieutenant Colonel Zuhlike.

**Christ Church Greyfriars**

Like St Bride’s, Christ Church Greyfriars (also known as Christ Church Newgate) was a late seventeenth-century church, designed by Wren, and both buildings were all but destroyed in the London blitz on the same night, 29 December 1940 (Gilpin 2008, 64). The church’s tower and ruined nave have been adapted but not rebuilt in the decades since, with the latter now a memorial garden (Moshenska 2010, 11). Proposals in 2006-8 to rebuild the walls and fully enclose the garden have not been carried out (Gilpin 2008). Building and re-building of the City around the church have led to archaeological excavations and watching briefs within the church and during two of these interventions coffin furniture was recovered which is now in the collection of the Museum of London Archaeological Archive (MoLAA). An excavation in 1976 revealed damaged lead coffins, some with coffin plates (MoLAA CHR76; Herbert 1979). In 1980, further coffin furniture was recovered from a brick vault inside the church during a watching brief (MoLAA CCN80). During an earlier excavation, in 1973, lead coffins were exposed but reburied, with no coffin furniture retained (MoLAA GF73).

The coffin furniture is from burials within the church, and the fact that six of the 18 people identified from coffin plates have the same surname, Seawell (three of them called Samuel), suggests that these came from a private family vault. None of the other 12 people share a surname. Those interred in these vaults died between 1764 and 1850, with a median date of 1798. They were aged between 10 days and 96 years, with a median age of 63. Only three people were aged under 40, including two infants, which seems to suggest unusually good fortune among the families represented here, attributable in part to the wealth that also secured them such a desirable burial place. It may also be that smaller or tinplate coffin plates did not survive (all those recovered are lead or copper alloy) or possibly that only some senior family members were accorded a vault burial. Unlike some of the plates from St Marylebone,
those of Christ Church Greyfriars do not include additional details of places, status or occupation, other than the title of the Rev. Samuel Burder DD (71255, plate 1707). These assemblages were recorded as part of the pilot study for this project and a fully-illustrated catalogue was produced (Hoile 2013). They consist of 25 breastplates, 20 of which are lead and five of which are copper alloy. Eight of the lead plates are decorated, two have stamped borders and ten are plain (see Fig. 2.4).

![Fig. 2.4: Coffin plates of Robert Mael Seawell (d.1764, 71256) from Christ Church Greyfriars (MoLAA CCN80). A plain, lead inner plate (plate 1711, left) and a decorated lead outer plate (plate 1708, right) (not to scale) © Museum of London](image)

**Islington Green**

The 46 lead coffin plates from Islington Green burial ground were recorded and studied for this project. These are part of the very large assemblage from this site, which mainly consists of tinplate objects. Islington Green is the only site within this study that was not under Church of England control, one of several Nonconformist burial grounds in London in the early nineteenth century, some of which have been excavated in recent years.

The Nonconformist private burial ground at Islington Green was established in 1817 and was known as ‘New Bunhill Fields’ or ‘Little Bunhill Fields’, in reference to the oldest Nonconformist burial ground in Britain, Bunhill Fields, which is between Bunhill Row and City Road in Islington (Miles 2012, 7). Islington had long been home to a large community of nonconforming Protestants by this period (Connell and Miles 2010, 24). The latest dated coffin plate from the site is dated 1853 (Miles 2011a, 167), and by the time Isabella Holmes
published her book on London burial grounds in 1896 she found that part of it was used by the General Post Office to store carts and other areas were used as builders’ yards (Holmes 1896, 198). The site was cleared by a commercial exhumation company in 1996, with an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MOLAS, now MOLA; MoLAA IGN96). The coffin plates and some other items of coffin furniture were recovered and remain in the care of MOLA. This was the first large, well-preserved assemblage of coffin furniture from a nineteenth-century burial ground, providing a contrast with earlier assemblages from vaults, such as that of Christ Church Spitalfields. Although this assemblage has not been published, it has directly informed subsequent work by MOLA on coffin furniture of this period, particularly on comparable tinplate items, such as the publications on the New Bunhill Fields burial ground in Southwark (Miles 2012), the City Bunhill burial ground (Connell and Miles 2010) and three burial grounds in Tower Hamlets (Henderson et al. 2013). The Islington Green assemblage was also outlined in the monograph on the excavation of St Pancras burial ground (Miles 2011a, 166-167). The whole assemblage consists of 1468 coffin plates, of which the vast majority, 1405, are of tin-dipped iron, with 54 types identified (Miles 2011a, 166-167). As well as the 46 lead plates included in this study, there are also 17 of brass (Miles 2011a, 167). As only the lead plates are included here, these are not representative of the coffins of the burial population as a whole, as clearly most people would have had a coffin plate of tin-dipped iron. It should also be noted that the individuals identified from the lead coffin plates are likely to also have had a second plate of a different material.

The lead plates record the details of 42 people: 22 female, 19 male and one person where it has not been possible to identify their gender. The ages of 40 people were legible and they were aged between 10 months and 86 years at the time of their deaths, with a median age of 51. Only one plate has any additional details, aside from title and name, date of death and age, that of Susanna Curtis (71106), “Wife of the Revd Thomas Curtis” (plate 1606). Their dates of death were between 1799 and 1846, with a median date of 1832. Details of 21 of these people have been located in burial registers (LMA B/NBF/001 and 002). These include the addresses from which the coffins were brought for burial and indicate the dates of burial, which, in combination with the dates of death recorded on the coffin plates, give the number of days between death and burial; the average was 7.4 days (see Table 2.3). Most of the addresses, which may not necessarily have been the individuals’ residences in life, were from Islington or neighbouring areas. Elizabeth Emma Good, for example, was from nearby
Theberton Street (LMA B/NBF/001, burial 4 May 1835) and Charlotte Hart was brought for burial from Lower Street, now part of Essex Road, which runs northeast from Islington Green (LMA B/NBF/002, burial 13 September 1846; Greenwood and Greenwood 1828). A few addresses were further afield in London, such as that of Elizabeth Robinson, who came from Upper John Street, Fitzroy Square, now part of Whitfield Street, near Tottenham Court Road (LMA B/NBF/002, burial 9 March 1841; Greenwood and Greenwood 1828).

Table 2.3: Dates of death and burial of individuals identified in the Islington Green burial registers, in order of date of death (LMA B/NBF/001 and 002). The dates of death are from the coffin plates and the dates of burial from the burial registers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of death</th>
<th>Date of burial</th>
<th>No. days between death and burial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susanna Curtis</td>
<td>13 June 1831</td>
<td>23 June 1831</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Nash</td>
<td>21 November 1831</td>
<td>29 November 1831</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Robinson</td>
<td>3 April 1832</td>
<td>9 April 1832</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha Marriott</td>
<td>26 September 1832</td>
<td>3 October 1832</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann Robinson</td>
<td>29 June 1833</td>
<td>5 July 1833</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Bremridge</td>
<td>30 January 1834</td>
<td>8 February 1834</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Frances Rogers</td>
<td>5 April 1834</td>
<td>11 April 1834</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Davis</td>
<td>3 September 1834</td>
<td>12 September 1834</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Emma Good</td>
<td>23 April 1835</td>
<td>4 May 1835</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Milnes</td>
<td>19 July 1835</td>
<td>29 July 1835</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Thornton</td>
<td>26 October 1836</td>
<td>30 October 1836</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Nash</td>
<td>23 January 1837</td>
<td>1 February 1837</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Marriott</td>
<td>26 August 1837</td>
<td>1 September 1837</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Thomas Oliver</td>
<td>3 March 1838</td>
<td>10 March 1838</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wild</td>
<td>7 April 1838</td>
<td>15 April 1838</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Rogers</td>
<td>7 February 1839</td>
<td>14 February 1839</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letitia Bruce</td>
<td>23 December 1839</td>
<td>30 December 1839</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Robinson</td>
<td>2 March 1841</td>
<td>9 March 1841</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Maynard</td>
<td>29 April 1841</td>
<td>6 May 1841</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Latimer</td>
<td>14 May 1844</td>
<td>19 May 1844</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Hart</td>
<td>6 September 1846</td>
<td>13 September 1846</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For some periods, the burial register gives only a broad indication of the location of the grave. The four entries studied after 1841 only indicate “Upper Ground” as the place of burial, but those between 1831 and 1839 include alphanumeric grid references, indicating a high degree of control over the location of graves. Cauch’s (1840, 56) book of London burial fees indicates that the “Privilege of retaining a Family Grave, and placing Head and Foot Stones” cost £6 6s in the upper ground and £3 3s in the middle ground, and either £30 or £15 for a vault, depending on its size, with each interment costing £3 19s for those aged over 10 and £2 7s 6d for the burials of younger children. Three of the people identified from both coffin plates and the burial register were recorded as buried in a family vault: Elizabeth Nash (d.1831, 71110), William Nash (d.1837, 71133) and Charlotte Hart (d.1846, 71137). The careful recording of grave location meant that in July 1833, Mary Ann Robinson was buried in the same grave where Daniel Robinson’s coffin had been laid to rest in April 1832 (LMA B/NBF/001 burials 9 April 1832 and 5 July 1833).

Fig. 2.5: Decorated ‘shield and flowers’ design lead coffin plate of Mary Ann Robinson (d.1833, 71120, plate 1620) from Islington Green burial ground, courtesy of MOLA.
Most of the lead coffin plates are decorated (39), with 33 of these of the ‘shield and flowers’ type (see Fig. 2.5). Six are plain, and one has a stamped border. Four people had two lead plates: an outer decorated plate and an inner plain (or stamped border) plate.

**Christ Church Spitalfields**

Coffin plate designs from Christ Church Spitalfields were analysed as part of the pilot study for this project (Hoile 2013; 2018) and the plates were incorporated into the dataset for aspects of the current study. The archaeological excavations at Christ Church Spitalfields in 1984-1986 and the resulting publications were pivotal in the study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century burial practices, and foundational in the study of coffin furniture of the period. While previous work on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century burials resulted from watching briefs, surveys of smaller vaults or as a minor part of a larger (usually medieval) project, the Spitalfields excavation was focused on the large assemblage of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century coffins and the human remains. The results were published in two monographs, one on the archaeology (Reeve and Adams 1993) and another on the anthropology (Molleson and Cox 1993). Further publications by Margaret Cox summarising the findings or reflecting on the excavation were published in the following years (Cox 1995; 1996; 1997; 1998).

Large quantities of coffin furniture were retained and are now at the Museum of London Archaeological Archive (MoLAA CAS84). The typologies developed for this assemblage remain the basis for coffin furniture classification, though are now supplemented with additional types from other sites (e.g. Boston *et al.* 2009) and the parallel St Pancras typology (Miles 2011b). Illustrations of the designs were included in the archaeology monograph on a microfiche and are now available as part of the dataset available from the Archaeological Data Service (Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields 2003). The vaults of the church, consecrated in 1729, were used for interments from the start until their closure in 1857 (Molleson and Cox 1993, 9). The people identified on the coffin plates from the vaults at Christ Church Spitalfields have been comprehensively studied and characterised, with reference to Daniel Defoe’s description of social status, as being mainly of “the middling sort, who live well” and “the working trades, who labour hard but feel no want” (Defoe 1709 in Molleson and Cox 1993, 97). By far the largest socio-economic group in the eighteenth century were master craftsmen, mostly weavers, and their families, but in the nineteenth
century more than two-thirds of those interred at Christ Church Spitalfields were classed as artisans, such as shopkeepers and journeymen (Molleson and Cox 1993, 98).

Data were extracted from the burial database available from the ADS (Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields 2003). Coffin plates which had been assigned a design type number and could be dated to a decade were included, giving 329 plates in total. The 326 plates with complete dates are between 1729 and 1852, with a median date of 1811. The plates themselves were not examined, and the materials of the coffin plates are not identified within the dataset but many are identified in a document in the site archive (MoLAA CAS84), which gives the materials of 244 of the 329 plates (74.2%) (see Fig. 2.6). Of these plates, the majority were identified as being made of lead (173, 70.9%), 11 of which have further details of surface treatments such as “enamelled”, with the rest made of iron (53, 21.7%), tin (16, 6.6%) and copper (2, 0.8%). It is notable that both copper plates are from the earliest decades of the crypt’s use, dated 1732 and 1743, and those identified as tin have a mean date of 1821, a decade later than the mean of the dataset as a whole. This is likely to relate to the socio-economic shift within the parish identified above, as the less affluent parishioners in the nineteenth century purchased coffins with fittings made of cheaper materials than their wealthier eighteenth-century predecessors.

![Materials of coffin plates at Christ Church Spitalfields](image)

Fig. 2.6: Materials of selected coffin plates from Christ Church Spitalfields (n=244). Data from the site archive (MoLAA CAS84).

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2 Please note that those who carried out the original collection of the data bear no responsibility for the further analysis and interpretation in this paper.
St Pancras

The designs of the coffin plate types from St Pancras were analysed for the pilot study for this project (Hoile 2013; 2018), and the coffin plates have been incorporated into this study. The lid motifs and other items of coffin furniture have also been referred to, as important examples of these objects.

St Pancras Old Church was rebuilt during an extensive restoration of the medieval building in 1847, and is of purportedly ancient foundation (Philpotts 2011, 26). Bordered by fields until the early nineteenth century, it is now behind St Pancras station, a position that has been key to the history of its burial grounds over the last 150 years. The original churchyard was extended in 1727 and then a ‘New Burying Ground’ was added in 1792 to accommodate the burials of a rapidly-growing population (Philpotts 2011, 33). Despite this, the available space was completely inadequate in meeting the demand for burial within the parish, in which an effect of poverty, overcrowding and epidemic disease was a high rate of mortality. By 1815 it was already being described as “discreditable to the parish to which it belongs, and disgusting to the eyes of all who view it” (New Monthly Magazine, May 1815 in Philpotts 2011, 76) and depictions of the church in the early nineteenth century show it surrounded by...
headstones (see Fig. 2.7). The parish used trench burials for its poorest inhabitants, large graves left open as more coffins were added, probably to deal with the high number of deaths during cholera epidemics from 1828 onwards (Philpotts 2011, 77). By the 1840s, St Pancras burial ground was a focus for burial reformers, cited as an example of the worst unhygienic and immoral practices in London’s overused burial places. The burial ground was closed in 1854, but was disturbed for development as early as 1866, when the Midland Railway Company began work on a tunnel across it (Philpotts 2011, 39, 192), witnessed by Thomas Hardy, who later wrote a poem about the uncovered human remains, mixed together and separated from their memorial stones. Like other central London burial grounds, the St Pancras burial ground was laid out as public gardens, opening in 1877 (Philpotts 2011, 196).

As with Christ Church Spitalfields, the people buried at St Pancras have been the subject of extensive investigation, which enabled researchers to write short biographies of individuals identified from coffin plates and to characterise groups within the buried population (Emery and Wooldridge 2011). The burial population of the Third Ground was diverse, and included people from the nearby workhouse, gentlemen and their families, labourers and tradespeople from both within the parish and nearby parishes (Philpotts 2011, 117-122). St Pancras burial ground was also a popular place of burial for Roman Catholics, and a significant proportion of those named on the excavated breastplates were French, including exiled aristocrats (Emery 2018, 66-67). This diversity has been seen as resulting from the church’s position on the northern edge of London, before it was overtaken by urban growth, which likely influenced the parish policy of “accepting for burial the bodies of those of diverse marginal sections of society” (Philpotts 2011, 112). Here too, the importance to families of burying members close to each other was apparent, though in the latter period of use of the burial ground, pressures of space meant that this traditional practice was not maintained (Philpotts 2011, 122).

The coffin furniture assemblage was recovered during archaeological excavation in 2002-2003 during works to build the High Speed 1 (HS1) rail link, and published within the resulting monograph (Emery and Wooldridge 2011; Miles 2011a; 2011b). The excavation was in the Third Ground, part of the 1792 extension, and the section of the burial ground

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3 This includes the memorable phrase “human jam”, used in May 2019 as the title of a show by Camden People’s Theatre about another exhumation (and archaeological) project taking place at the former St James burial ground near Euston as part of the High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) works (Gillinson 2019).
which was furthest from the church and the cheapest place for burial (see Table 2.4). Almost all of the coffin furniture from St Pancras is made of tinplate, except for two lead plates and the grips, which are all iron, and is unusually well-preserved, making this an important assemblage, the publication of which added significantly to knowledge and understanding of coffin furniture of the period, which had previously relied heavily on vault assemblages (Miles 2011a; 2011b). The types of coffin plates and other items differed so much from those of the Christ Church Spitalfields typology that Adrian Miles developed a separate typology for St Pancras, with 31 plate types, which overlaps with and cross-references to the Christ Church Spitalfields typology, as well as referencing the trade catalogues (Miles 2011b). The coffin plates that include full dates (109) are dated between 1793 and 1839, with a mean date of 1806.

**Comparison between sites**

Interment within the church was always the most expensive burial choice within a parish, and parishes varied considerably in their charges for burial. Table 2.4 lists the costs of burial in 1840 for an adult parishioner in the specific locations from which the assemblages were recovered, except for Islington Green, where this is unclear (Cauch 1840). This shows clearly the difference in cost between burial grounds and church vaults, and also between different parishes. Of those studied, St Marylebone Church’s vaults were by far the most expensive. However, the costs of burial are not straightforwardly comparable between parishes. At St Bride’s, the costs listed include “Desk Service and Bell” (Cauch 1840, 33), but at Christ Church Spitalfields a church service cost an extra 9s, and the bell 5s (Cauch 1840, 54). At Islington Green, the maximum cost refers to the cost of an adult burial in a family grave or vault, the purchase of which was an additional cost of up to £30 for a large vault. These prices do, however, give a broad indication of the differences of burial costs between burial grounds and vaults and of differences between parishes. The cost depended on the location of burial, the age of the person buried and their status as a parishioner or non-parishioner, with much higher fees charged for the latter. At St Bride’s, non-parishioner fees for burial in one of the church’s several vaults ranged from £3 15s 4d to £7 6s 0d, considerably more than the costs to parishioners (Cauch 1840, 33; compare with Table 2.4). One of the more complicated cost structures of the sites studied is of St Pancras Old Church, which also included ‘lodgers’ as a third category, distinguished between people aged under eight, eight to 14 and those over 14, and had four burial spaces and the church vaults available (Cauch
Comparisons between nineteenth-century prices and those of the present day are complex and different calculation methods produce very different results. However, as a very broad guide to the costs involved in purchasing burial space, and the variation between sites, calculations using the index of GDP per capita to find the income value of these costs (that is, “the multiple of average income that would be needed to buy a commodity”), indicate that these costs range, in modern terms, from £742.50 for the cheapest site to £20,340 for the most expensive (MeasuringWorth 2019).

Table 2.4: Cost of adult parishioner burial at the sites studied (from Cauch 1840).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Minimum cost</th>
<th>Maximum cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone Church vaults</td>
<td>£14 2s 6d</td>
<td>£17 2s 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Bride’s Church vaults</td>
<td>£2 15s 0d</td>
<td>£4 9s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Church Spitalfields vaults</td>
<td>£1 12s 6d</td>
<td>£1 12s 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Bunhill Fields burial ground, Islington Green</td>
<td>£0 12s 0d</td>
<td>£3 19s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Pancras third ground</td>
<td>£0 12s 6d</td>
<td>£0 12s 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Church Greyfriars vaults</td>
<td>£4 5s 4d</td>
<td>£8 2s 4d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

In all, 1260 inner and outer coffin breastplates (three of which were undated) were recorded for this project, from two church crypts, St Marylebone and St Bride’s, and the lead plates from the Islington Green burial ground assemblage (see Table 2.5), along with additional end plates, vault plates, sections of lead coffins with inscriptions and some undated grip plates. In addition, the small Christ Church Greyfriars assemblage (22 plates) and data from the Christ Church Spitalfields (329 plates) and St Pancras (109 plates) were included for some analysis, giving a total of 1717 dated coffin plates (see Fig. 2.8).
Table 2.5: Summary of the coffin plates recorded for this project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Number of coffin plates</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
<th>Date range</th>
<th>Median date of death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone Church</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>1801-1853</td>
<td>1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Bride’s</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>1740-1852</td>
<td>1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islington Green</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1799-1846</td>
<td>1832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1260</strong></td>
<td><strong>989</strong></td>
<td><strong>1740-1853</strong></td>
<td><strong>1830</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2.8: Coffin plates studied for this project, by decade, from St Marylebone (St M), St Bride’s (St B), Christ Church Greyfriars (CCG), Islington Green (IGN), Christ Church Spitalfields (CCS) and St Pancras (St P) (n=1717).

**Limitations**

The main assemblages within this project have been selected in order to study those that have not previously been published, other than in summary or as contributions to publications on other sites. The plates of Christ Church Spitalfields and St Pancras have been added to increase the dataset in terms of the number of plates studied and also, particularly
in the case of the St Pancras material, to diversify the dataset, by including objects from different social contexts and of different materials. However, the project remains mainly focused on material from church vaults and this is its key limitation. The dataset mainly consists of the coffin plates of wealthier individuals, whose survivors could afford to pay the high costs of burial in these prestigious locations. It also means that the plates studied include many more brass and lead objects than would be found in a burial ground assemblage of the same date. On the other hand, it could be argued that families who could afford to pay for vault burials were also best placed to employ undertakers with access to the most desirable coffin furniture, free of the strictures of cost and availability on the one hand, and, for most, those of the rules and conventions of aristocratic funerals on the other. Any changes in coffin furniture in this period should be visible in this material.

The coffin plates of infants and children are under-represented within the dataset. While it is possible that this could indicate that different places of burial were chosen, in the case of vaults in particular, it is more likely to be related to the fragility of the smallest coffin plates and therefore their increased vulnerability to damage and decay. The plates of stillborn children at St Marylebone Church and Christ Church Spitalfields underline the paramount importance of family groupings. The customary way of managing the burial of stillborn infants for poorer families was for a gravedigger to discreetly add the small remains to the grave or coffin of another, unrelated, individual for a small fee, a practice that was longstanding by this period and came to public attention only when disputes and scandals occurred later in the nineteenth century (Jackson 2014, 132). The evidence of the coffin plates, vault plates and monuments suggests that keeping families together after death was of primary importance and it is clear that wealthy parishioners were able to pay for this. It seems unlikely that any infant children of the many families whose members were interred at St Marylebone would not also have been buried here.

The material is mostly early nineteenth-century in date, with only 245 (14.3%) of the 1717 dated coffin plates dating to before 1800. This reflects the period of use of the burial places studied and also the likelihood of earlier coffins being damaged by later interments, even in church vaults, and of the disintegration of tinplate objects in unfavourable conditions.

A key limitation is the difficulty of reconstructing the original appearance of coffins in order to understand coffin furniture in context. As only coffin plates (with a tiny number of
undated grip plates) were retained in the St Marylebone and St Bride’s assemblages, little can be discerned about the coffins as a whole at these sites from the material available, save for the scraps of fabric attached to some outer plates (see Fig 4.3). In order to gain a better understanding of the likely original appearance of the coffins, of other elements of funerals, and of the costs involved, the records of W. Garstin and Co., Marylebone furnishing undertakers, established in 1834, were consulted at the City of Westminster Archives (CWA 948/3-5). The cost books and day books from January 1840, the earliest available, to April 1854 were studied. As furnishing undertakers, they supplied others in the trade with some, most or possibly all of the goods and services required for a funeral. In September 1840, for example, Garstin’s conducted four funerals on their own account, and also supplied 21 fellow undertakers for the funerals of 28 people for costs of between 2s 6d and £44 7d (CWA 948/3, 115-129). Garstin’s conducted the funerals of two people named on coffin plates at St Marylebone, Charles Lindsay Nicholson (d.1847, 70479; CWA 948/4, 455) and Charles Frederick Evenden (d.1853, 70225; CWA 948/5, 669), and supplied elements of the funerals of 14 more (CWA 948/3-5). Chapter 4 uses these records and other sources to explore the elements of the coffin and the funeral as a whole.
3 Production, Trade and Consumption

There is a style in the house of the dead, as well as that of the living, which requires to be humoured by the enterprising manufacturer who desires to make a fortune or a reputation by his business \(^1\).

The aim of this chapter is to explore the production, trade and consumption of coffin furniture between around 1700 and 1850, in order to better understand its use and the factors which influenced choices of producers and consumers. This includes an account of the production of coffin furniture in London and Birmingham, the two main manufacturing centres for this material during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Changes in both manufacture and consumption practices will be explored, in order to place this funerary material culture in a broader context. The specifically funerary aspects of coffin furniture will be examined through an account of the development of undertaking and other aspects of the funerary industry in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, of which the proliferation of coffin furniture was a part. It is hoped that taking this broad view, as well as focusing in on coffin furniture as a specific aspect of metal goods production, trade networks and the funerary industry, will facilitate assessment of how similar, and how different, coffin furniture was to contemporary material culture, and of the reasons for this. Funerary material culture has most often been studied as part of changing practices and values of death, and the aim here is also to explore it within the living networks in which it moved, along with other material goods in this era of manufacturing innovation and increasing consumerism, while acknowledging its particular ritual use. Exploration of these networks will assist in understanding the relationships through which designs were influenced.

\(^1\) From a report on coffin furniture manufacture in Birmingham (Morning Chronicle, 10 February 1851).
Production

Production, trade and consumption of material goods are clearly entangled: there is little point in manufacturers producing goods that they are unable to sell, either because there is no consumer demand, or because it is impossible to transport them to market. A group of customers both willing and able to purchase consumer goods and networks within which to trade them are crucial to their production, and to the development of new materials, methods and designs. As Lorna Weatherill (1987, 71) pointed out, in relation to the eighteenth-century pottery industry, “without appropriate household demand, there would have been no production; without production… there would have been no way of translating changing social behaviour into changing material culture.” In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries coffin furniture production took place mainly in London and Birmingham, as one of many metal items and alongside a broad range of products, although specialist makers can be identified throughout this period.

Coffin furniture production and trade in London

Manufacturing was a large and important sector of the eighteenth-century metropolitan economy, with large quantities of a wide range of goods made, traded and used within the city (White 2013, 212), and the capital remained a significant centre for metal-working into at least the mid-nineteenth century (Goodway 1982, 191-192), despite the growth of other industrial cities, such as Birmingham and Sheffield. A number of documentary sources point to production of, as well as trade in, coffin furniture in London in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The best-known source of coffin furniture in eighteenth-century London has been ‘Tusley & Cooper’, of Southwark, whose name appears on the cover of a trade catalogue of c.1783 in the Victoria and Albert Museum collections (V&A E.997 to E.1011-1902). However, they were not manufacturers, but a “Coffin Furniture & Ironmongery Warehouse”, indicating something of the rather fluid boundaries within which coffin furniture was produced and distributed. It is clear that coffin furniture can be explored both as specialist funerary material, which increasingly involved the growing undertaking industry, and as one of many types of metal goods which were produced and traded within London and beyond.
Documentary evidence for coffin furniture production in London is sparse for most of the eighteenth century, before an increase in advertising and notices, and perhaps also of production, in its final three decades. There is material evidence for coffin plate use in the earlier eighteenth century (see Chapter 1), although far fewer plates survive from this period than from the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This is likely to be due to a number of factors, such as lower proportions of use of what were, in earlier decades, more expensive items, lower overall numbers of burials, poor preservation, and the destruction of burials by later, deeper burial shafts in increasingly crowded burial grounds. Similarly, it is difficult to know whether the lack of documentary records of coffin plate makers is due to low levels of production or to the production of coffin plates by makers whose primary business was something else, perhaps manufacturing other types of metal goods, or to factors related to the nature of the records themselves.

There are occasional references to coffin plate makers, sometimes referred to as ‘chasers’, in newspapers, particularly in advertisements and notices, as well as, more rarely, in wills and apprenticeship documents. It is not always clear whether those named in these documentary sources were business-owners or their employees, but they do provide clear evidence for coffin plate manufacture in London at this time. Mr Smith was making coffin plates at the Old Bailey before his death in 1725 (Daily Journal, 6 July 1725), and William Toone was described as a coffin plate chaser of Saint Luke, Middlesex, in his will, proved in 1739 (TNA PROB 11/696/19). Thomas Dawson had premises in Giltspur Street in 1747 (London Evening Post, 3-5 November 1747), Edward Parker was based in Tooley Street, Southwark in 1751, when he advertised for his absconded apprentice (General Advertiser, 7 August 1751), and William Benson had, before being imprisoned in the Fleet for debt in 1755, been a coffin plate chaser in the parish of St Sepulchre (London Gazette, 26-30 August 1755). John Knight had been a coffin plate chaser in the parish of St Martin in the Fields sometime before 1764, when he was noted as deceased at the time of his son’s apprenticeship in that year (ROLLCO John Knight apprenticeship 1764). In October 1755, Edward Hopkins moved his coffin plate chasing business from Giltspur Street to nearby Snow Hill, “where I shall make it my Constant Endeavour to deserve your Favours, to which End I shall always keep a large Assortment of the best and newest fashion’d Coffin-Plates, Handles, &c. at the very lowest Prices” (London Evening Post, 7 October 1755). The streets around St Sepulchre Church in the City recur repeatedly in addresses of coffin furniture manufacturers across the whole period, from the early eighteenth to mid-
nineteenth centuries, where they worked alongside other metal-workers, such as blacksmiths and pewterers (Earle 1994, 15).

The production and trade of coffin furniture gained a significant boost in 1769 when John Pickering, a London manufacturer, was granted a patent for a new method of stamping metal plates for coffin furniture and other similar metalwork (Timmins 2013 [1866], 292). Despite this innovation and the protection of his patent, his business, Pickering, Black and Co., soon went bankrupt, and in 1770 their lease on a property in Swan Street and their tools, “Stamps, Presses, Dies, and all the other Smith and Jewellers Tools, consisting of Anvils, Hammers, Vices, Bellows, Files, &c.” were sold at auction (Public Advertiser, 4 May 1770). The patents were also sold (Public Advertiser, 24 May 1770), and were bought by a group of four manufacturers, who produced coffin furniture in St John’s Street, Clerkenwell, and sold it at their businesses in the City and in Southwark, “at which places and no where else merchants, undertakers, and others, may be supplied with any quantity of the Patent Coffin Furniture on the shortest notice, either in silver, plated metal, brass, copper, or tin” (Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser, 20 October 1770). Their advertisement prompted an indignant response from a rival, indicating that they were not the only manufacturers at this time:

The new-invented ORNAMENTS for Coffins, Coaches, Sedan-chairs, &c. notwithstanding the pompous advertisements and PUFFS of the Purchasers of the Patent for Coffin Furniture, granted to John Pickering and his Assigns, the former of whom has lately become bankrupt, in which it is signified “that such furniture, &c. can only be had at the places therein specified, and no where else,” they still and will continue to be made and sold by WILLIAM BENSON and COMPANY, at their Manufactory, the King’s-Arms, No. 71, on Snow-hill; and at their shop near the Hay-market, in Piccadilly; where merchants, ironmongers, undertakers, and others, may be supplied on the shortest notice, with any quantity of coffin furniture, &c. executed in silver, plated metal, brass, copper, pewter, [lead?], or tin.

N.B. All sorts of stamping performed at the cheapest rates, by applying as above.

(Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser, 24 October 1770)

Both adverts indicate that a wide range of metals were used in coffin furniture manufacture.

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2 The four manufacturers were Mr Nowell (45 Snow Hill), Mr Hawkins (9 Hart Roe Street, without Newgate), Mr Oliver (74 Snow Hill), and Mr Meane (215 in the Borough of Southwark).
Other manufacturers can be identified from advertisements for sales prompted by retirement or bankruptcy, such as William Badger, “Coffin plate-chaser and ironmonger”, whose “large stamping engine for the new-invented coffin furniture” was offered at auction in 1778 (*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 29 January 1778), although only one coffin plate maker, John Thornton, is listed in the 1794 trade directory (Kent’s Directory 1794). William Badger’s dual description as chaser and ironmonger suggests that the boundary between producers and suppliers was perhaps more flexible than has previously been supposed.

Further names can be identified in the early nineteenth century. Margaret Smith’s trade card tells us that she made and sold coffin plates at Old Bailey, near Newgate, at around the turn of the century (JJ Trade Cards 28 (105) Margt. Smith (139), c.1800). Samuel Emly’s trade card (BM D.2.4081, c.1801; see Fig. 3.1) indicates that he was “successor to the late Mr J Meane, having purchased all his working implements”, probably the Mr Meane who advertised coffin furniture in 1770, along with three associates. Emly is the only coffin furniture manufacturer listed in the London Post Office Directory of 1808 (Critchett 1808, 95), although others may have been producing it as part of a wider range of goods. Ebeneezer Comfort was manufacturing coffin furniture in Hosier Lane in 1823, when one of his employees stole a tin ingot from him (OBP t18231203-7).

![Fig. 3.1: Trade card of Samuel Emly, coffin furniture manufacturer, c.1800, BM D.2.4081. © Trustees of the British Museum](image)
By the 1841 directory, five are listed, including one, Richard B. Dawes and Company, who had premises in both London and Birmingham (Kelly’s Directories 1841). There are three listed in 1852, along with one listing for “coffin furn. & undertk”, who may have been a supplier, rather than a manufacturer (Kelly and Co. 1851).

From 1839, new legislation giving copyright protection to the decorative arts meant that manufacturers could register designs (Halls 2013). Between 1841 and 1860, only one proprietor of the 14 who registered designs was from London, Thomas Vigers of Pimlico (TNA BT 43/9/104291), with most based in Birmingham. Thomas Vigers was, in fact, an undertaker, not a manufacturer (Kelly and Co. 1851, 1040), something which suggests that, by the early Victorian period, relationships between those who produced coffin furniture and those who sold it had become rather more complex. Perhaps Vigers wanted to ensure the exclusive use of new designs for his own undertaking business, something only now possible with the protection guaranteed by the new legislation. The granting of a lease of premises in Snow Hill, London, by Joseph Turner, an undertaker, to three Birmingham coffin furniture manufacturers in 1857 is also suggestive of entangled relationships (Birmingham: Archives, Heritage and Photography Service MS 3375/462099).

Coffin furniture was made in London throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, though as a smaller proportion of national output as manufacturing of these specialist goods shifted to Birmingham. Although London-made coffin furniture became much less common as the nineteenth century progressed, the role of the capital in the internal and export trades, as well as providing the largest domestic market for coffin furniture, continued.

**Coffin furniture production: Birmingham and Bristol**

Coffin furniture was produced in Birmingham from the mid-eighteenth century, as part of its growing industry in metal goods, and the business became strongly identified with the city in the nineteenth century. As Aitken (1866, 193) pointed out in a book on the development of brassmaking in Birmingham, the city produced metal goods for every part of the life cycle:

Birmingham, which does so much for us in life does not desert us in death. It hangs the bells round the coral on which we cut our milk teeth,
it furnishes us with the mystic circle of the wedding-ring, and when we have “shuffled off this mortal coil” it will decorate our last cradle of elm or mahogany.

Birmingham metal manufacturing was “a highly sophisticated manufacturing economy” from the mid-eighteenth century (Berg 2005, 171). Coffin furniture was only one of numerous consumer goods made in a variety of metals in the city’s factories (Berg 2005). An 1835 Birmingham trade directory lists seven coffin furniture makers (Wrightson and Webb 1835) but by the time of publication of the 1858 directory, 24 were listed, and by this time some specified that they made registered coffin furniture (Dix and Co. 1858). The dominance of Birmingham manufacturers by the mid-nineteenth century is clear from the registered designs of the 1840s and 1850s. Not only were the majority of makers who registered coffin furniture designs from Birmingham, they registered 77 of the 82 designs of this period (94%).

In the 1870s, coffin furniture was described by a Birmingham correspondent as “one of the most expansive of our local manufactures” (The Ironmonger, 1 April 1878, 185), and the small factory of Newman Brothers, now open as a heritage attraction (http://www.coffinworks.org), remains as tangible evidence of this once-thriving trade in the city.

Bristol was also home to at least two coffin furniture manufacturers. Two trade cards for John Johnson, “tin and coffin plate manufacturer and oil dealer”, are known (BM D.2.4661; BM D.2.3844). Neither is dated, but both are from the Banks collection, so must pre-date its acquisition by the British Museum in 1818. The design on Thomas Capenhurst’s trade card for his business in Bristol is a typical early nineteenth-century coffin plate, with a shield topped by winged cherub heads and a radiant crown, with his details on the central shield (JJZaad0189). This is also undated, but must pre-date August 1851, when his will was proved (TNA PROB 11/2137/213). John Leedham Capenhurst of Bristol registered coffin furniture designs in 1852, suggesting the continuation of a family business in the city (TNA BT 44/1/85578). An exhaustive search has not been made for manufacturers elsewhere, although the searches that have been made suggest that there were very few. A fire insurance policy of 1777 indicates that Jno Jravis [sic] was manufacturing coffin furniture in Manchester, but it is not clear whether more people were producing this material here or in any other growing industrial centres (LL FIR fire_1775_1780_174_17482). Two of the 14 proprietors named on registered designs between 1841 and 1860, Thomas Vigers and John Leedham
Capenhurst, have already been mentioned. Of the others, only one was not from Birmingham, but based instead in nearby Oldbury in Worcestershire.

**Identification of makers and suppliers on material objects**

Unlike headstones and monuments, or indeed other objects such as pottery wares, coffin furniture is very rarely marked with a maker’s or supplier’s name, which would enable further probing of these trade networks. Rare exceptions are some of the brass plates from St Marylebone Church, which are marked with names of businesses of the Pontifex family of brassfounders in Shoe Lane and Lisle Street (see Fig. 3.2), who also supplied brass plates to engravers for printmaking; some plates of William Blake engravings were on brass plates marked by Pontifex (Sung 2016). None of the Pontifex trade cards in the British Museum collections mention coffin plates, typically describing their businesses as that of “Coppersmith” (e.g. BM Banks, 85.127), and two Pontifex businesses in Shoe Lane are listed in the 1808 trade directory as coppersmiths, though for W & R Pontifex, the entry adds “Founders, & Copper-plate-mak.” (Critchett 1808, 227). Intriguingly, Mrs Cabe, giving evidence at her daughter’s trial at the Old Bailey in 1826, reported that her husband was a coffin plate maker, “he works for Mr. Pontifex, in Lime-street”, which could be a mis-transcription of Lisle Street (OBP t18260622-81).

![Stamp of Pontifex & Stiles, 23 Lisle Street, Soho, London, brassfounders, on the reverse of the coffin plate of Mary Bannerman, (d.1838, plate 988), from St Marylebone Church.](image)

Fig. 3.2: Stamp of Pontifex & Stiles, 23 Lisle Street, Soho, London, brassfounders, on the reverse of the coffin plate of Mary Bannerman, (d.1838, plate 988), from St Marylebone Church. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.

This serves as a reminder that undertakers (and other suppliers) sometimes bought plates from makers who would not have primarily considered themselves to be coffin furniture
makers, and some manufacturers who produced a range of metal goods, including coffin furniture, may not be identifiable. Additionally, it is unclear whether coffin plate makers produced the metal plates themselves, or bought these in to chase or stamp. A brass plate of 1838 from Elizabeth Poole’s coffin at Broad St Chapel, Reading, is marked ‘G. LINGARD 67 SNOWHILL.’ \(^3\) (Reading Museums, URC94, 1995.102.9). George Lingard is listed as a coffin furniture manufacturer in Birmingham directories of 1835 and 1858, and designs were registered under this name (e.g. TNA BT 43/5/56165). A small lead end plate (Elizabeth Boulton, d.1847, plate 146) from St Marylebone Church vaults is marked ‘Wm Tagg’, who is listed as a furnishing undertaker in the 1841 trade directory (Kelly’s Directories 1841, 570). Some unused items of coffin furniture in museum collections are marked with reference numbers but it has not been possible to relate these to particular makers (e.g. MERL 61/28/1-2)

**Trade**

If we are to consider how coffin furniture was selected, and the networks through which design choices were influenced, then it will be helpful to explore how it moved from the manufacturer to the coffin. The trade was complex, and the nature and relative importance of the links within it developed and changed over the period in question.

**Manufacturers and merchants**

As the partnership of John Pickering’s successors suggests, those who made coffin furniture may have sold it wholesale, or even retail, themselves, either from the manufacturing premises or elsewhere. Samuel Emly’s trade card lists two addresses, 71 Snow Hill, a popular location for coffin furniture-makers, in the City, and 17 Tichborne Street, Piccadilly, possibly retail premises, in the growing shopping district of the West End (BM D.2.4081, c.1801; see Fig. 3.1).

Birmingham hardware manufacturers also variously employed commercial travellers to sell their goods to retail businesses, sold to wholesale firms of merchants or through commission agents, known as factors, who also employed travelling salesmen (Jones 1984). Yolanda

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\(^3\) There is a Snow Hill in both London and Birmingham.
Courtney’s (2000) work on pub tokens indicated a link between artefact distribution and routes of salesmen within regional markets. The factors might have worked with a wide variety of commodities; the auction of the stock in trade of a Birmingham firm of factors and ironmongers in 1789 included a range of metal and other goods, including buttons, buckles, door knockers, cutlery, spectacles and combs, along with coffin furniture (St James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post, 21-23 July 1789). An 1889 article describing how the relationship between coffin furniture manufacturers and ironmongers had developed to a point of tension at that time reported that, in earlier decades, hardware factors, middlemen between makers and retail ironmongers, had been the only point of supply: “there are, no doubt, grey-headed men still living who remember that such was the case when they first ‘went apprentice’” (The Ironmonger, 23 March 1889). This suggests that hardware factors exclusively controlled supplies from an unknown point until around the 1830s. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources on the ironmongery retail industry indicate that ordering from commercial travellers from manufacturing firms was the main way for ironmongers to obtain coffin furniture, which they then sold on to local businesses such as small undertakers and joiners (The Ironmonger, 23 March 1889; The Ironmonger 1905, 52).

Ironmongers

As noted above, the catalogue of Tuesly and Cooper, proprietors of a “Coffin Furniture & Ironmongery Warehouse”, is a well-known source for the study of coffin furniture, being the only eighteenth-century trade catalogue of this material in a British collection (V&A E.997 to E.1011-1902). It is usually referenced as ‘Tuesby and Cooper’, but this is not correct. This business is listed in trade directories and legal documents with the name William Henry Tuesly. ‘Tuesby’ is used in the Victoria and Albert Museum’s online catalogue, and has gained even more authority through use in numerous publications (although not in one book of 1975 in which the label ‘Tuesly & Cooper’ is referenced (Gentle and Feild 1975, 201)). The reason for this error appears to be the ambiguity of the fine roundhand lettering in which the name is written. Tuesly, Burden and Cooper are listed in a 1794 trade directory, at 205 Borough in Southwark as wholesale ironmongers (Kent’s Directory 1794). As Tuesly and Cooper, still wholesale ironmongers, they next appear in an 1808 trade directory, by now at 221 Borough (Critchett 1808, 290). The partnership between William Henry Tuesly and Joseph Cooper was dissolved on 31 May 1814 (The London Gazette, 4 June 1814), and William Henry Tuesly was declared bankrupt in 1817, when he was described as an “iron merchant”
It is just possible that Tuesly and Cooper were also manufacturing coffin furniture, but it is likely that they were buying it from producers in London and perhaps elsewhere, and selling it to undertakers, coffin-makers and others in what an advertisement of 1770 called “the funeral branch” (Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser, 17 January 1770). Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century coffin furniture trade catalogues are dated from the decorative numbers illustrated on the first page, along with watermark information. Along with the numbers “1783”, the Tuesly and Cooper catalogue includes the letters “J B” on the first page. If, as has been suggested, these letters refer to manufacturers, the identity of J B is unclear, as these initials do not match those of any known coffin furniture makers of this period, though Litten speculated that they may belong to another ironmonger, John Butts (Litten 1998, 14). They may just as easily refer to Burden, but in any case, these unattributed initials may be seen as a further indication that the catalogue includes goods produced by another manufacturer, rather than Tuesly and Cooper themselves.

It is clear that Tuesly and Cooper were typical, as ironmongers who sold coffin furniture, in the late eighteenth century and beyond. Coffin furniture appears in lists of ironmongers’ stock offered in late eighteenth-century bankruptcy auctions in Dover, Birmingham and Bedford (St James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post, 14 July 1781; 21–23 July 1789; General Evening Post, 25 May 1790). A splendid advertisement of 1842 by Harris, Nicklin and Company, “wholesale and retail general furnishing ironmongers, braziers, tin and coppersmiths, &c.” in Wolverhampton, includes coffin furniture in its long list of articles for sale, which also included frying pans, tea urns, slipper baths, hair pins, fishing rods, brooms and scythes (Pigot and Co. 1842, 997). Controversies around the creation of a monopoly by an association of coffin furniture makers in the 1880s, explored in detail by Church and Smith (1966) centred on the discounts available from manufacturers and the practice of direct sales to undertakers and others who were not “the legitimate ironmonger” (The Ironmonger, 23 March 1889). It is clear from articles in, and letters to, The Ironmonger, a weekly trade paper, that ironmongers considered themselves “the recognised distributors” of coffin furniture (The Ironmonger, 23 March 1889), with a statement issued by the then recently-formed limited company Ingall, Parsons, Clive & Co., supporting this, noting that they “have every desire to transact business with ironmongers only, but at the same time, say they cannot overlook the fact that many undertakers, &c., are in a large way of business and keep extensive stocks” (The Ironmonger, 23 March 1889). The author of a guide for undertakers in the early twentieth century referred to buying single sets of coffin furniture at retail
ironmongers (Plume n.d., 25), and a similar guide for ironmongers took it for granted that coffin plates would be stocked, suggesting that an assistant could be trained to paint inscriptions, to avoid the delay of sending them to a signwriter and to enhance the business (The Ironmonger 1905). These indicate that ironmongers continued to be an important, and often the only, local source for coffin furniture, alongside other metal and sundry goods, particularly outside large cities.

**Undertakers and funeral furnishers**

The role of undertakers in this period sits between the manufacturers, hardware factors and ironmongers they bought goods from on one side, and the bereaved consumers they sold to on the other. The composition and structure of the undertaking industry, and the changes that took place over this long period, will be considered in detail below. However, it should be noted here that the size and set-up of undertakers could vary enormously, from individuals who organised funerals alongside their main business, as an upholsterer or broker, for example (see Fig. 3.3), buying or hiring in goods as they were required, to large furnishing undertakers who might keep a large stock from which they could also supply others. The growing population and elevated urban mortality rates in London supported a large number of undertakers, and the trade as a whole also grew enormously from the start of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth.

A sale of an undertakers’ stock in trade in 1796 consisted of “Coffins and Shrouds, State Candlesticks and Sconces, Palls, Cloaks, Scarves and Hoods, black and grey Cloth and Serge, a large Quantity of Brass and Iron Nails and Coffin Furniture” (*Daily Advertiser*, 15 December 1796). Notably, the advert is addressed to “Ironmongers, Undertakers, &c.”, suggesting that coffin furniture could move back and forth between funerary and non-funerary assemblages. On a larger scale, some years later, Joseph Turner was a coffin maker and furnishing undertaker, and his trade price list of 1838 includes complete coffins at a range of price points, available wholesale to others in the funerary trade (Turner 1838). Warehouses supplying funerary materials were also an important source for undertakers and others. One of these opened in London in 1775 (Mihailovic 2011, 86), though it is not clear whether these were truly distinct from funeral furnishers.
As the discussions around the role of ironmongers as coffin furniture suppliers suggest, by around the middle of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, undertakers, particularly larger firms which were able to make large orders, also bought supplies directly from manufacturers, and even small companies were sometimes able to do so (The Ironmonger, 23 March 1889; 30 March 1889). As noted above, some direct links between makers and undertaking firms are documented in lease agreements and design registrations in the 1850s.

**Exports**

As well as the flourishing domestic market, coffin furniture was also produced for export. In advertising John Pickering’s patent in 1770, the sellers noted that this also included “his Majesty’s Colonies in America” (Public Advertiser, 4 May 1770). An advert in the India Gazette in 1790 includes coffin furniture in a list of imported “Europe Goods” for sale, alongside such diverse items as cheese, pistols, linen and fashionable buttons (India Gazette, 16 August
1790). This period saw the products of British industrialisation traded globally (Berg 2005, 7) and the recovery of British-made coffin furniture from burials and vaults in the USA and Jamaica provides material evidence of the export trade in these funerary items (Litten 1991, 109; Springate 2015, 53-55). Exported consumer goods were important to the creation of British imperial identity (Berg 2005, 8). Exploration of the importance of British-made coffin furniture to the identity of colonial administrators, members of the armed forces and other British people who died overseas is beyond the scope of this thesis, though it is interesting to note that, for example, when the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron returned to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the 1870s, she and her husband took coffins with them (Woolf 1973 [1926]).

**Supply chain**

The trade in coffin furniture seems to have followed an overall pattern of supply from manufacturers to hardware wholesalers, to retail ironmongers, to undertakers (see Fig. 3.4). However, these networks undoubtedly changed over the long period in question, with, for example, direct supply from makers to retail ironmongers from around the 1830s and the suggestion of closer relationships between makers and undertakers in the mid-nineteenth century. It is not entirely clear how large-scale funeral furnishers, such as Joseph Turner’s business, and warehouses fit into this network. Were they able to obtain goods directly from manufacturers, or were they obliged to purchase them from hardware factors, or even from retail ironmongers? Additionally, these roles were not always clearly delineated.

The layered nature of the supply chain of this one type of funerary object must be considered alongside the layered nature of the undertaking industry itself, where individuals or businesses could sub-contract supplying and arranging funerals to other undertakers, sometimes in multiple layers. In addition, coffin furniture was only one aspect of a fully-furnished funeral, or even of a complete coffin, as not only the wood and nails, but a range of textiles, such as the shroud, coffin lining and pall, would also have to be sourced. There could have been many links between the producer and the consumer through which both the material objects themselves, and feedback on choices and designs, passed. However, the complexity of the coffin furniture trade network was not unique. Weatherill’s (1987) work on the pottery trade before 1780 gives a detailed account of the networks of dealers on both large and small scales who were involved in the internal trade in pottery (as well as imported
goods) which, briefly stated, included wholesalers, shops and factory warehouses in London and elsewhere. The supply networks of coffin furniture and ceramics were not dissimilar in their complexity, though there were significant differences, not least the size of the trade; however widespread coffin furniture was becoming in the last decades of the eighteenth century, its production and use were on nowhere near the scale of that of ceramics. The internal trade networks of pottery were, Weatherill identified, important as the means by which feedback on customer choice and demand could be passed to producers (Weatherill 1987, 63). If, as suggested, similar networks were in operation for the distribution of coffin furniture, then any information passed from undertakers through funeral furnishers, ironmongers, factors and travelling salesmen does not seem to have suggested, on the whole, that stylistic innovations were required.

Fig. 3.4: The network of coffin furniture distribution in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (following Weatherill 1987, diagram 1, 57).
Consumption

The final link in this network in which coffin furniture was produced and traded, was the transaction between undertakers and their clients in which coffin furniture was selected for use. The development of the funerary industry is intrinsically linked with the burgeoning funerary material culture of the eighteenth century, as the growing industry of undertaking promoted it, and consumers turned to professionals in order to obtain and use it appropriately. The main difficulties of understanding coffin furniture within the framework of consumerism relate to its particular use in adorning and labelling coffins for burial. Whereas its production, distribution and trade are straightforwardly comparable with contemporary, non-funerary, goods, its use differs significantly. Unless in exceptional circumstances, coffin furniture is bought for someone else, so rather than being a personal expression of identity it relies on the perceptions of others. Unlike pottery, dress or the metal ‘toys’ also produced in Birmingham and London, its visibility was brief, emotionally charged and controlled (see Chapter 4). Nevertheless, the consumption of coffin furniture may be seen as part of a general phenomenon of increased spending on material objects, particularly by the ‘middling sort’ in the eighteenth century (Langford 1989, 61-68), and within the context of the commercialisation of a number of aspects of death and burial, which were at the same time popular and a source of some anxiety.

The commercialisation of death and burial

This period saw disputes between a number of different interest groups over who could legitimately benefit from the profits of death. The clashes between the College of Arms and early undertakers in the late seventeenth century, the Church and cemetery companies in the early nineteenth, and ironmongers and coffin furniture manufacturers and undertakers from the mid-nineteenth century all involve established beneficiaries of the funerary trade arguing against incursions into their ‘legitimate’ market. The eighteenth century saw the introduction, or escalation, of commercialisation of other aspects of death and burial, which provide a context for the contemporary debates and modern understanding of the proliferation of funerary material culture.

Burial location in London was determined to a large extent by wealth. From the sixteenth century onwards many parishes differentiated by wealth, rather than attributes such as long
residence within the parish, to provide access to preferred locations, such as within the church itself: “burial space, like so many other features of the early modern city, had in effect become a commodity that could be bought and sold” (Harding 1998, 63). This became even more pronounced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the pressure on urban burial grounds increased, which provided an additional incentive for those who could afford it to pay for burial in undisturbed vaults, and which, for those unable to pay at all, led to their corpses being traded into parishes with available burial space (Boulton 2014). Furthermore, until the Anatomy Act of 1832, not only the place of burial, but the corpses interred in the graves were vulnerable to commoditisation through ‘body-snatching’ and sale to anatomists (Richardson 1987; Tarlow 2011). In the wake of this legislation, anxiety about anatomisation continued, but was shouldered by those in workhouses who feared this would be their fate if their families, if any, were unable to claim their corpse for burial (Richardson 1987; Tarlow 2011). Anxieties about burial in crowded and often increasingly unpleasant churchyards overlapped with those about bodysnatching towards the end of the eighteenth century; both the jumbled burial grounds, where new grave cuts frequently disturbed previous burials, sometimes of the only recently dead, and the removal of bodies for anatomisation threatened ideals of peaceful repose, bodily integrity and of the subjectivity of the individual as a lost loved one, rather than a commodity to be traded or an object destroyed to re-sell space. The establishment of commercial cemeteries has also been perceived as an aspect of the commercialisation of death although, as Julie Rugg (1998) argued, this trend emerged from a desire for independent burial grounds by Nonconformists and for secure burial in a climate of anxiety about body-snatching, as well as relating to the broader context of a high demand for investment opportunities at particular times from the mid-1820s. They were then a key element of the debates around sanitary reforms of the early Victorian period, where the commercial interests of the Church in retaining burial fees and the dubious practices of unregulated private burial grounds both played a role (Jackson 2014).

The role of undertakers

The history of the undertaking trade in this period has not been extensively studied. Julian Litten’s work, including *The English Way of Death* (1991) and his chapters, ‘The English Funeral 1700-1850’ (1998) and ‘The Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England 1714-1760’ (1997), has provided the best-known and most influential account. Clare Gittings (1984) and Ralph Houlbrooke (1998) also examined the role of undertakers in changing funerary

Although earlier suppliers had provided funerary furnishings to the College of Arms, who were responsible for organising aristocratic funerals, the first independent suppliers to call themselves undertakers operated from the 1670s in London (Litten 1991, 17). The growth of the trade was opposed by the College of Arms, who objected to the threat to their control over elite funerals and to the adoption of elite practices by the middle class, as well as by some surgeons who objected to undertakers carrying out embalming, though this remained very much a minority practice (Fritz 1994-5, 245-6). Despite these origins in elite funerals, the growth of the industry in the eighteenth century rested on its appeal to customers of the ‘middling sort’.

The structure of the industry was complex. Litten (1991) described a trade with three branches: coffin-making, undertaking and funerary furnishing, noting that these roles could overlap, with some coffin-makers also working as undertakers, for example. In this model, some undertakers would carry out a purely organisational service role for their clients, subcontracting the acquisition of goods and staff to other undertakers, with large furnishing premises supplying large numbers of small businesses. Charles Dickens (2010 [1852], 99) described this as an absurdity in which those calling themselves funeral furnishers “formed a long file of middlemen between the chief mourner and the real tradesman, and who hired out the trappings from one to another – passing them on like water-buckets at a fire.” This was an important reason for the high costs of funerals; each additional level required a price increase to ensure profitability, a process described less vividly, though in more detail, by testimony to Edwin Chadwick’s (1843) inquiry into interment in towns. Mihailovic’s detailed account adds yet more complexity to this picture of undertaking, a trade she describes as “characterised by flexibility and diversity” (Mihailovic 2011, 88). She found that involvement in the funerary trade could often be opportunistic, with practitioners from a variety of trades offering undertaking alongside other services, or perhaps temporarily (Mihailovic 2011, 89).
The London Post Office Directory of 1842 listing for undertakers includes 213 undertakers, as well as another 405 individuals and businesses listed who advertised undertaking alongside another main occupation: 223 carpenters, 55 cabinet makers, 45 builders, 28 upholsterers, 26 appraisers, 17 auctioneers, six agents – estate and house, three fancy cabinet makers and two packing case makers (Kelly’s Directories 1841). There were, then, by this stage, a large number of people offering undertaking services, typically alongside other goods and services.

![Satirical print ‘An Undertaker’s Visit’, 1807. After Richard Newton, published by Thomas Tegg, 27.6 x 35.8 cm, BM 2001,0520.42. © The Trustees of the British Museum](image)

Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the undertaking trade provoked a level of hostility, even as (or perhaps because) their numbers grew enormously. The satirical prints that depicted undertakers as predatory in their attempts to make money from death reveal fears that this commercial relationship could lead to a lack of decency in burial (see Fig. 3.5). Undertakers were also implicated in the anxieties, noted above, connected with burial grounds and with body-snatching, under a general suspicion of those who profited from death. As their services, and the more elaborate funerals they offered, became available to working-class clients, undertakers were also criticised for inflating costs and for offering
funerals that were inappropriately excessive for humbler customers, criticism also aimed at these clients themselves (Morley 1971, 23-25).

The role of undertakers is crucial to understanding the choice and use of coffin furniture, as it has been suggested that, certainly by the nineteenth century, undertakers, rather than their clients, selected coffin furniture (Litten 1991, 30; Mytum 2015, 277; 2017, 168). As early as the first decades of the eighteenth century, London undertakers offered ready-made coffins along with items for rent, such as the pall and hatbands, and for sale, such as shrouds and gloves, thereby shaping how a coffin and a funeral should look (Fritz 1994-5, 248). Evidence from the funeral registers of an Ipswich undertaker indicates that he, rather than his customers, made most of the decisions about funeral arrangements (Fritz 1994-5, 248), and evidence presented to Chadwick’s enquiry in 1843 stated that clients would request a ‘respectable’ funeral, rather than giving more specific instructions (Chadwick 1843, 50). In discussing the demand for new designs of coffin furniture in an article of 1851, a manufacturer placed decision-making with undertakers, stating that bereaved consumers:

> either are, or affect to be, too much afflicted to look after such matters themselves. They give their order in general terms, and the undertaker, like any other tradesman anxious for the reputation of his craft, exerts all his ingenuity to do the thing as well, or better than any other person in his business.

(*The Morning Chronicle*, 10 February 1851)

However, it has been argued that undertakers had less control in small town and rural locations, particularly in the eighteenth century, where undertaking was a role more likely to be fulfilled on an infrequent basis by drapers or carpenters, and where traditional practices were more persistent (Fritz 1994-5, 250).

**Consumers of ‘the middling sort’**

The criticisms of undertakers, outlined above, frequently rested on a view that they were responsible for promoting funerary spending on material goods, such as elaborate coffins, at the expense of more traditional aspects, such as feasting, a trend usually described in negative tones (e.g. Gittings 1984). This trend, and the growth in undertaking with which it was entwined, has been placed by some in a broader context of commercialisation, with the rise of undertakers seen as part of this overall economic and cultural shift in the eighteenth
century (Earle 1989, 79). Key to this sometimes explicitly disapproving view is an understanding of the use of this new funerary material culture as primarily about status. In this assessment, consumers are seen to have had little or no agency in funerary spending, as undertakers controlled expectations of funerary expenditure to maximise their own profits, and to have been primarily motivated by status concerns, sometimes driven by emulation. However, more recent work on material culture, both funerary and otherwise, suggests alternative or more nuanced views.

The growth in funerary material culture in the eighteenth century may be seen alongside a general proliferation of things, their purchase and use in the eighteenth century, a period which has been claimed to be one of ‘consumer revolution’ (McKendrick et al. 1982). The timing, nature and extent of this change in consumer behaviour has been a key topic of debate in historical studies of eighteenth-century Britain (and beyond), focusing particularly on those of the ‘middling sort’ (Brewer and Porter 1993; McKendrick et al. 1982; Styles and Vickery 2006). Debates around the ‘consumer revolution’ and consumerism have also been influential within historical archaeology (Majewski and Schiffer 2009), perhaps more so in US approaches than in later post-medieval studies in the UK (Wilson 2008). Little documentary information appears to survive about choosing coffin furniture and other funerary goods and services from the perspective of the customers. In Pat Jalland’s (1996) book on death in the Victorian family, which drew on diaries and letters of the middle- and upper-classes, she noted that undertakers usually receive scant attention in these sources. Despite this lack of documentation of the detail of coffin furniture choice, there is ample evidence of a widely-shared demand for the use of decorated coffin furniture throughout this period from excavations (see Chapter 1). As Mytum (2017, 161) has argued, investment in material aspects of the funeral may be seen as one aspect of an overall spread of materialism and the use of objects to manage emotions. Despite the negativity expressed towards undertakers in satirical prints and journalism, the success of the industry, demonstrated by its growth, suggests that there must have been many who were relieved, then as now, to hand over the funeral arrangements, with all the complexities of multiple suppliers, not to mention the emotional challenges, to a professional (see Fig. 3.6). Although consoling for some, making funeral arrangements could exacerbate grief (Houlbrooke 1998, 292).
The delegated purchase of coffin furniture, apparently customarily left in the hands of undertakers, is in contrast to the purchase of other goods in this period, with shoppers making skilled and informed choices in obtaining goods of all kinds, such as wallpaper (Vickery 2006) and ceramics (Smith 2012). This is particularly noteworthy, as the provision of a suitable funeral was of great importance to the family reputation (Earle 1989, 311; Houlbrooke 1998, 292), a “secular last judgement” (Richardson 1987, 272). However, the underlying values of ‘decency’, a term frequently used in relation to funerals (see Fig. 3.6), and ‘decorum’, also expressed in the purchase of other material goods are, Mihailovic (2011)
argues, key to understanding funerary expenditure in the long eighteenth century (defined in this case as c.1689-1840). Both terms refer to widely-held standards of behaviour, with a desire to respect the dead and treat them appropriately (‘decency’) combining with the understanding that “different forms of conduct were appropriate to different stations in life, according to social rank, age, sex, and occupation” (‘decorum’, Styles and Vickery 2006, 16). She points out that emulation of aristocratic practices and material culture and the display of social status are no longer considered to be an accurate picture of the motivation behind changing practices of the ‘middling sort’ (Mihailovic 2011, 183). This view is expressed in, for example, Sarah Tarlow’s (1998; 1999) work on the late eighteenth-century ‘gravestone boom’, which identified this as a distinctively middle-class phenomenon, linked to the material expression of emotional attachment. The desire for a ‘decent’ or ‘respectable’ funeral, without having to be involved in choosing the details, also contrasts with the much higher level of engagement with the choice of funerary monument (Buckham 1999; Mytum 2018; see Chapter 6).

**Working-class and institutional consumers**

Discussions of the development of undertaking, and of changing consumption practices in the eighteenth century, have focused mainly on the middle classes, with discussion about whether such practices represented emulation of the upper classes, or were distinctively middle class. The purchase of coffin furniture by poorer individuals does not necessarily fit into a narrative of a ‘consumer revolution’, but changes in production and cost made the purchase of cheap coffin furniture available to many working-class families by the early nineteenth century, and even to some of the very poorest, buried by the parish. Previous studies of undertaking and of funerary consumption have tended to focus on the middle- and upper-classes, for which a wider and more accessible range of documentary sources exist, such as household accounts, wills and diaries. In addition, material evidence of the funerary material culture of the burials of poorer people is scarcer, as they were more likely to have been buried in deep, multiple graves with cheaper, less durable coffin plates which are less likely to survive in a legible, datable state.

Concerns about working-class burial practices, including keeping the corpse in the (often small and crowded) home before the funeral, sometimes for an extended period, while money was found to pay for it, were an important part of arguments for burial reform in the
early nineteenth century (Hotz 2001), and this delay is indicative of a desire to purchase an appropriately ‘decent’ funeral. The pauper funeral became, in this period, a byword for social failure (Laqueur 1983), although the work of Elizabeth Hurren and Steve King (2005, 325) suggests that this overall term includes funerals of “many subtle grades” and that correspondence from, and on behalf of, poor people suggests that they were seen as a customary right. Some of the funerals in these sources included coffins with coffin furniture, although it is not clear how common this was (Hurren and King 2005, 328). An early nineteenth-century undertaker who was contracted by the City of London Poor Law Union to provide pauper funerals provided a basic service that included a plain coffin, bearers and a rented pall, but those who could afford to pay 2s 6d were able to add an inscribed coffin plate, which was the most frequently purchased ‘extra’ (Laqueur 1983, 114). Coffin plates were desirable, if not always attainable. Burial clubs and other co-operative organisations also provided funeral provision for members, demonstrating a collective response to the desire for respectable burial (Rugg 1999, 224), although these have also sometimes been seen as potentially exploitative (Morley 1971, 25). These funerals would include all the features of a ‘respectable’ funeral, including appropriate coffin furniture (Rugg 1999, 224).

Conclusions

The networks of production, trade and consumption of coffin furniture in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were complex, but not uniquely so, and are usefully comparable with those of other consumer goods such as pottery and other metal objects. However, the way in which consumers bought coffin furniture was different to their interactions with other goods, despite the importance attached to the funeral. The context of increased availability and use of consumer goods, and commercialisation of aspects of death and burial such as burial location, provides a framework within which the consumption of funerary material culture may be understood, along with widely-shared beliefs and values at this time. Some of these are broad, such as notions of decorum, and some are specific to appropriate treatment of the dead. The networks, beliefs and consumer behaviour explored here, of both funerary and non-funerary material, will inform the interpretation of how styles were influenced and the use of coffin furniture within the period between death and burial, considered in the following chapter.
On 14th September 1841, Judith Nicholson died, aged 80, in a house on Queen Anne Street in London, her death notice recording that she was “deservedly regretted” (*The Morning Post*, 16 September 1841). Like many of her well-to-do neighbours and fellow parishioners at St Marylebone Church, Judith Nicholson’s social position and wealth were connected with military campaigning and commercial expansion of the British Empire. Her late husband, Lieutenant General Robert Nicholson, had spent nearly 40 years in India in the service of the East India Company, and had died in 1821, aged 75, his coffin interred beneath the new church at St Marylebone (*Gentleman’s Magazine*, July 1821, 88). And so, in the days following her death, plans were made for a suitable funeral for Judith Nicholson’s coffin to join his. Her executors employed the undertaking firm of Robinson and Robson, whose premises were just around the corner from her house, at 68 Welbeck Street, one of many firms of upholsterers who also conducted funerals (*Kelly’s Directories* 1841, 847). As so often in this trade, Robinson and Robson subcontracted much of the work of supplying goods and services, employing a neighbouring undertaker, William Garstin, based at 4 Welbeck Street (*Kelly’s Directories* 1841, 845). Garstin’s were used to furnishing high quality funerals, including those of the aristocracy, and their order books include the details of the elaborate coffins in which Judith Nicholson’s body was placed, and give an indication of her funeral procession (CWA 948/3, 294). Typically for burial in a church vault at this time, the order includes three coffins. The first, the “Inside Coffin”, was “lined” and “ruffled” and included a “mattress”. Secondly, a lead coffin and plate were sent to Queen Anne Street, carried by four men, with another man accompanying the plumber whose skill with lead was required to seal this middle layer. Finally, Garstin’s prepared the outer case, which would be seen by

1 From the trade card of John Bucknall (BM Heal, 5.4).
2 This reconstruction is inspired by those in *St Martin’s Uncovered: Investigations in the churchyard of St. Martin’s-in-the-Bull Ring, Birmingham, 2001* (Adams 2006) and is largely based on the undertaker’s cost books (CWA 948/3, 294).
Judith Nicholson’s friends, family and neighbours in the house, before the funeral, and
during the procession to the church. This was covered in black velvet, attached with large
brass nails. Smaller brass nails made panels around the eight brass handles, the large lid motifs
and the brass breastplate. The plate itself had required two proofs (at a cost of 1s each) before
it had been agreed, the visibility and importance of the outermost plate, as well as its great
expense (30s), meaning that the undertakers and their clients were keen to ensure it was
correct. For the funeral, Garstin’s supplied the feathers, cloaks, hatbands and gloves expected
for an early Victorian funeral of someone of Judith Nicholson’s status. They charged £28 1s
9d in total and it is certain that Robinson and Robson charged their clients more than this,
probably also adding additional items and services which they supplied themselves. This bill
does not include the burial fees at the church, which at St Marylebone in 1840, the previous
year, were £17 2s 6d for interment in a “catacomb” (Cauch 1840, 26). Judith Nicholson’s
coffin was typical of those interred beneath St Marylebone Church, with its three layers and
brass plate (at least 62% of individuals identified from coffin plates had outer brass plates).
However, although the brass plate from her husband’s coffin survives, decorated with the
family arms (see Fig. 4.4), only the lead plate (cost 2s 6d) remains of the elaborate and
expensive coffin that Garstin’s supplied for Judith Nicholson’s funeral (see Fig. 4.1).

To better understand the development of coffin furniture, it is necessary to examine its use
in some detail. In this chapter the material remains of coffin furniture, from St Marylebone
Church vaults, St Bride’s and elsewhere, will be explored in their original context. As the
example above shows, the coffin plates, which are often the only surviving element, were
only part of what could be highly decorated coffins, particularly in expensive intramural
burials. Though a triple-layered coffin covered in velvet with brass fittings represents the
upper end of what undertakers could offer, most people would have been buried in coffins
with plates and handles in this period, many of them with fabric coverings and some
additional ornaments.
Coffin furniture, though very occasionally repurposed, was made for the specific purpose of decorating coffins for enclosing a corpse for burial and, although often now reported on and stored (if at all) separately, this is a result of recent archaeological and curatorial practices. Its original use was only within the context of the coffin and its visibility was limited by both audience and time. Coffin plates, usually larger and more robust than other items of coffin furniture, have tended to survive burial or vault interment more often than lid motifs and handles and, as they include biographical information which adds value to osteological collections and can provide insights into communities through documentary research, are more likely to have been retained in collections. It can also be difficult to identify other items of coffin furniture with a particular coffin from stacked earth burials in urban graveyards or crowded vaults. The large collection from St Marylebone vaults consists only of coffin plates,
aside from a single grip plate, and, again other than a handful of grip plates, so does the collection in St Bride’s crypt. Coffin plates are also straightforwardly dateable, in their use if not their production or design, and so are the primary resource for assessing changes in coffin furniture design over time. However, in considering them in isolation, their importance as funerary material culture is diminished.

In trade catalogues, coffin plates were advertised in sets, along with other items such as handles. Though they could also have been purchased by the dozen, plates themselves would not usually have been seen in isolation by undertakers and particularly not by consumers or those who saw the coffin. Moving on from the point of consumption explored previously, this chapter will pursue an emic perspective on coffin furniture by considering it as one of the components of the coffin, and by examining the use and visibility of coffins from the point of delivery to the home of the deceased to interment in a grave or vault. It is hoped that by doing this it will be possible to gain a better understanding of how contemporaries would have understood the coffins they paid for, sold and saw and, therefore, the factors that contributed to its development.

**Coffins**

**The case**

In 1820 an ecclesiastical magistrate stated, “That bodies should be carried in a state of naked exposure to the grave, would be a real offence to the living, as well as an apparent indignity to the dead” (Haggard 1822, 344). Although he noted that coffins were not necessarily essential to a dignified funeral, by the time Sir William Scott made this judgement coffins were used for the burial of the dead in almost all cases, but the quality, materials and decoration of these coffins varied enormously between, at the extremes, those bought under contract by local Poor Law Unions and those supplied by undertakers to the aristocracy (see Fig. 4.2).
Materials: Wood

The vast majority of coffins in the eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth centuries had at least one layer of wood. Where species have been identified from excavated examples, the use of a range of types of wood has been established. For the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century burials at St Martin’s Church in Birmingham, Rowena Gale identified the wood used for coffins and found that most were elm, with some oak and very small numbers made from other species, such as hazel (Gale 2006, 162). The cheapest coffins, including those made under contract for pauper burials, were likely to be made of ‘deal’, a softwood such as pine (Henderson et al. 2013, 73). As cheap deal coffins were buried in earth, rather than vaults, the wood rarely survives well enough to facilitate archaeological analysis. Even at St Pancras, a burial ground which has yielded remarkably well-preserved coffin furniture, only 10 samples of wood were obtained, half of which were deal, and half elm (Miles 2011a, 176). Their desirable qualities of sturdiness and water-resistance meant that hardwood coffins were more expensive, as were those with thicker shells. One of the most expensive coffins on Turner’s (1838, 4) price list specifies an oak case of 1 ½ inches. At Christ Church Spitalfields the most frequent thickness of coffin wood was 25mm (about 1 inch), though they ranged from 20mm (around ¾ inch) to an extremely robust 70mm (2.8 inches) (Reeve and Adams 1993, 80). In 1847 Garstin’s supplied an “Inch & ½ stout english oak case” for the funeral of Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, along with an “Extra stout” lead coffin within (CWA
In contrast, by the early nineteenth century coffins made for pauper burials were flimsy, as well as being made of the cheapest materials (Laqueur 1983, 121). Mr Wild, an undertaker, giving evidence to Edwin Chadwick’s *Special Inquiry into the Practice of Interment in Towns*, stated that such coffins were supposed to be an inch thick “but they never are….. they often break when taken to the grave” (Chadwick 1843, 109). The use of specified wood in undertakers’ bills was a mark of quality and could also carry additional connotations. Oak, for example, was suggestive of the nation, empire and monarchy and may have been seen by some as indicative of continuity and tradition (Harris *et al.* 2003), as well as being valued for its superior physical properties. Elm is a cross-grained wood, and its mechanical properties had long made it a traditional choice for coffin boards (Richens 1983, 99), though it was generally not as desirable as oak (Gale 2006, 163). Many entries in Garstin’s order books specify that an elm coffin was supplied, such as that supplied to another undertaker for the funeral of Elizabeth Walters in October 1848, a “5ft 9 x 17 elm shell Lined and ruffled” at a cost of £1 5s (Garstin 1848/4, 728). Mahogany, an imported luxury, is also mentioned in newspaper reports of aristocratic funerals, such as that of the Earl of Mornington in 1845 (*The Times*, 4 March 1845, 5).

**Materials: Metal**

Lead was by far the most frequently used metal for coffin shells, usually for the inner or middle layer of a double- or triple-shelled coffin, though its high cost restricted use. By the early nineteenth century, in reaction to a growing concern about the unpleasantness and potential hazard of decaying bodies beneath churches, some parishes and cemeteries required the use of lead coffins for interment in vaults (e.g. an order of the Vestry of Christ Church Spitalfields in 1813 (Reeve and Adams 1993, 78)), but this was not universal. By 1840, the parish of St Mary Woolnorth, for example, charged parishioners an extra £2 for burial in lead in either the vaults or the burial ground (Cauch 1840, 11). Rather than incentivising the use of lead coffins, these charges prioritised both short-term profit and the reuse of burial space when a wooden coffin decayed. The use of lead shells was not without danger. Specifically designed to be impermeable, lead coffins could explode due to a build-up of gases, according to an undertaker’s evidence to Chadwick’s committee (Chadwick 1843, 15).

Other metals were occasionally used to make coffins. One iron coffin was recovered at Christ Church Spitalfields (Reeve and Adams 1993, 82) and an iron coffin is displayed in the crypt
of St Bride’s, which was used for the burial of Anna Campbell in 1819 (Saunders 2012). The ironmaster John Wilkinson (d.1808) created an iron coffin for himself, as well as an iron obelisk for his monument (Harris 2004). The trade card of Edward Lillie Bridgman and Company, a London furnishing undertakers, advertises “Patent Wrought Iron and other Coffins” as well as “Vaults, Tombs & Tablets, of Cast Iron”, the banner “Safety for the Dead” suggesting the importance of protecting the bodies of loved ones from the depredations of bodysnatchers in the period before the Anatomy Act of 1832 (BM Heal,124.8). The card makes reference to a case heard in the (ecclesiastical) Consistory Court in 1820 and 1821 by Sir William Scott in which a bereaved husband insisted on his right to bury his wife’s body in an iron coffin, supplied by Bridgman, which the churchwardens of St Andrew Holborn had prevented, arguing that the use of more durable coffins would put unsustainable stress on the parish’s limited burial space, the question finally being settled with the agreement of an additional fee of ten pounds (Haggard 1822). Despite the enthusiasm of the enterprising undertaker and the fears of the churchwardens, burial in iron seems to have remained exceptional, and perhaps eccentric, although common enough (or perhaps even more of a concern) by 1840 that St Peter-Le-Poor specified that £50 would be added to the parish burial fees for burial in iron (Cauch 1840, 15). Zinc was also used very occasionally towards the end of this period. Two of the 712 coffins recovered at St Luke’s Church were made of zinc, one single- and one triple-shelled, and three were iron (Boyle et al. 2005, 98).

Fabric covering and decorative nails

Textile coffin covers were widely used in Britain from the late seventeenth century until at least the mid-nineteenth century (Crowfoot 1987). As with all aspects of the coffin, the use and quality of textile coverings varied by cost, although other factors, such as the age of the deceased, may have influenced the colour chosen, for example. Garstin’s order books include infant coffins with white covers, and those of children covered in grey, with black reserved for adolescents and adults (CWA 948/3-5). These were all colours associated with mourning clothing, with white considered a colour of deep mourning, often worn by young women and children (Morley 1971, 72). At St George’s Church, Bloomsbury, coffins interred in the

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3 As well as giving insights into the problems of urban burial space at this time, the court papers also consider the comparative periods of preservation of wood and iron in various burial conditions at some length, drawing on many archaeological examples (Haggard 1822).
vaults were upholstered in a range of colours including dark green, yellow and dark blue, as well as turquoise on infant coffins, although black was the most common colour (Boston et al. 2009, 163). Crimson appears to have been a popular choice for aristocratic coffins, such as that of the Earl of Mornington in 1845 (*The Times*, 4 March 1845). Amanda Vickery, while noting that it is difficult to assess peoples’ awareness of colour symbolism in the eighteenth century, described the traditional symbolism of red as associated with “nobility, dignity and state” (Vickery 2006, 209). Crimson was (and remains) the colour of peers’ formal robes, and its use may have been customarily restricted to the coffins of the nobility. Purple also had aristocratic associations; the substantial oak coffin Garstin’s supplied Mr Tayler with for the funeral of Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury in 1847 was covered in “rich Royal purple velvet ‘silk’” (CWA 948/4, 447).

Fig. 4.3: Fragment of textile, probably velvet, attached to the copper alloy outer coffin plate of Helen Saunders (70566, d.1835, plate 348) from the vaults of St Marylebone Church. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.

Fragments of textile coverings remain on many of the plates from the vaults of St Marylebone (see Fig. 4.3). Although these have not been examined in detail to record the weave, macroscopic examination of some of the more substantial pieces suggests a soft, napped fabric, which was originally dark in colour. Given the elite status of many of those interred here, it is likely that black velvet was used. Wool was more usually used for textile coverings, with black napped baize used for coffin covers in London and elsewhere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Walton Rogers 2011, 701). The fabric was attached with dome-headed nails, arranged in panels, which added additional decoration. At Christ Church Spitalfields 58 different patterns of pins were identified (Reeve and Adams 1993, 86). Judith
Nicholson’s coffin included both large and small brass nails, the smaller used for creating the panels (CWA 948/3, 294). Penelope Walton Rogers, writing about the coffin covers of St Peter’s, Barton-upon-Humber, suggested that the quality of the fabric would not necessarily have been immediately apparent to non-specialist observers (Walton Rogers 2011, 701). While this seems plausible for the fine gradations between different types of wool baize, there is plenty of evidence for consumers’ expertise and discernment in assessing and purchasing goods (Smith 2012) and the difference between a low and high quality baize, let alone baize and velvet, would perhaps have been apparent to at least some of those who saw a coffin at close range. Even for those not consciously assessing the quality of fabric, a closely-woven fabric would have contributed to the overall impression of the coffin to observers. The use of dark wool or velvet would have provided a matt, though possibly lustrous, surface on which the coffin furniture would have appeared in contrast, whether in colour, brightness or both. The use of other colours, such as white, crimson or turquoise, would have presented a striking contrast with coffin furniture, whether it was painted black or left shiny. The low numbers of excavated coffins dating to later than the burial reforms of the 1850s make it difficult to be accurate about the end of this practice, although it has been suggested that it declined, at least for the wealthy, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, as French polishing became popular (Litten 1991, 90). However, the examples noted here from the 1840s and 1850s suggest that polishing did not replace fabric covers wholesale in this period.

“Smoothing” and polishing

Cheaper coffins would not have had textile coverings. Garstin’s cheaper coffins are described in the order books as “smoothd”, presumably indicating smooth, uncovered wood. The example of Elizabeth Colson’s funeral in 1851 is typical, with her “Neatly finished” elm coffin with modest coffin furniture costing £1 10s (CWA 948/5, 379). French polishing was first practised by British cabinet-makers in the 1820s (Barnaby 2013, 169), and Litten has suggested it was used for coffins from the second quarter of the century (Litten 1991, 90). The frequent professional overlap between cabinet-making and undertaking must have facilitated the extension of this new technique to coffins, and the fact that it was a luxury finish made it acceptable to those for whom a merely ‘smoothd’ coffin would have been insufficiently genteel.
Coffin Furniture

NB, A Sett of Coffin Furniture contains a Breast Plate Flower Pot & Angel, 3 P' of Handles & Pins to fix them
(YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 3)

Coffin furniture consisted of a number of different items, described here in their likely order of contemporary importance. The terms used are those of trade catalogues and undertakers’ records of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries and in the archaeological and historical literature.

Types

Coffin plates
The largest item of coffin furniture was a depositum plate or breastplate, inscribed with the name, age and date of death of the individual and sometimes additional details such as occupation. Women’s plates sometimes included the name of their husband or father, and children’s plates often included the names of their parents. Double- or triple-shelled coffins usually had an inner plate on the lead shell as well as a plate on the outermost shell. Of the 695 individuals identified from coffin plates from St Marylebone Church vaults, there were 291 people with two plates and 98 with three. The inner plates were usually plainer, with some having incised or decorative stamped borders (see Fig. 4.1).

In Garstin’s order books, expensive lead and brass plates are listed separately, the latter requiring specialist engraving. For orders for single-shelled coffins, the breastplate was included in the overall cost of the whole coffin and was often not referred to at all, although the handles and lid motifs sometimes were. In cases where Garstin’s were supplying another undertaker it is possible that this is because a plate was not included, but it is clear from the funerals they conducted themselves that it was their standard practice to use the word “usual” to indicate what was included as a matter of course. Although this could indicate that these coffins were buried without depositum plates, this would go against substantial documentary and archaeological evidence that plates were both important to people and widely available at relatively low cost. It is highly probable that breastplates were not mentioned separately as
they were, by the 1840s, an expected and integral part of a coffin. The description of the coffin for Elizabeth Colson’s funeral in 1851 included some details of coffin furniture, “3 Prs oval handles Drops A & f &c”, that is, three pairs of oval handles, escutcheons, angel and flowerpot lid motifs etc. (CWA 948/5, 379). It must be the case that a modest plate was included under “&c”. There are occasional references to design in Garstin’s books. In 1843 they sold an “Acorn Plate 1/6” to Mr Wilson (CWA 948/3, 480), possibly CCS type 3 or similar (Reeve and Adams 1993, microfiche). A rare itemised charge for a coffin plate supplied to G Robinson in 1848 for the funeral of Louisa Ann Brooks noted an “Improved Metal plate japand” (CWA 948/4, 650). It is not clear what “improved” means here, though it could indicate one of the new registered designs.

The published analysis of the Christ Church Spitalfields assemblage identified 114 types of coffin plates of all metals (Reeve and Adams 1993, 86), and further publications of vault and

![Image](image.png)

Fig. 4.4: Copper alloy coffin plate, inscribed with a coat of arms, from the coffin of Lieutenant General Robert Nicholson (70480, d.1821, plate 676) from St Marylebone Church vaults. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.
burial ground excavations have identified new types (e.g. Boston et al. 2009; Miles 2011a). Decorated lead and tinplate coffin plates included a range of designs, as the typologies from the Christ Church Spitalfields and St Pancras material demonstrate (Miles 2011b; Reeve and Adams 1993). The most common broad type of decorated lead plates are those that consist of a central shield with flowers on either side (see Chapter 5; see Fig. 4.6). Some designs are found in both lead and tinplate examples. The designs used on coffin plates depended, to a large extent, on the material from which they were made. Most of the impact and decorative interest of copper alloy plates comes from the lettering which, in some cases, is extremely elaborate, with several styles used on a single plate. At St Marylebone, 86 of the 439 copper alloy breastplates recovered from the vaults included a coat of arms (see Fig. 4.4) but otherwise plates in this material were undecorated. Tinplate breastplates could have irregular shapes, due to their method of manufacture (see Fig. 4.5), whereas copper alloy and lead plates were regular shapes, usually rectangular or trapezoid with occasional exceptions. Shapes of coffin plates were derived from heraldic conventions, with lozenge shapes used for young girls and unmarried women, for example (Litten 1991, 109). At St Marylebone, 35 coffin plates from the church vaults were lozenge-shaped and, of these, 30 are identifiable as either girls or unmarried women from their coffin plates by either their age, the title ‘Miss’, by being identified with reference to their parents or, most obviously, by the inclusion of the word ‘spinster’ (Mary Mitchell d.1837, plate 501). Two of the remaining plates are those of Sophia Upton (d.1853, plates 1015 and 1107), whose unmarried status is apparent from her death notice (Gentleman’s Magazine, April 1853, 452) and one is that of Maria Bazett (d.1847, plate 825), whose status is not known. However, Anna Harper (d.1827, plate 503), was a widow (Gentleman’s Magazine, April 1820, 379) and Ann Loullier’s title has been transcribed as ‘Mrs’ (d.1833, plate 1047). It is apparent that, in this assemblage at least, these shapes were not used inappropriately, as all those with lozenge-shaped plates were girls or women, but as the heraldic origins of the use of such shapes were forgotten their use on coffins was not necessarily an accurate guide to the status or gender of the individual within (Litten 1991, 109).

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4 The typology of the predominantly tinplate assemblage from St Pancras burial ground is separate from that of the Christ Church Spitalfields assemblage, but some designs are common to both typologies (Miles 2011b).
Fig. 4.5: Tinplate coffin plate of Thomas Grover (d.1798) from St Pancras burial ground (MoLAA YKW01). © Museum of London

Fig. 4.6: Decorated lead coffin plate of Mary Upcroft (70632, d.1829, plate 457) from the vaults of St Marylebone Church. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.
Small inscribed plates were also sometimes added to the side or end of coffins in vaults, facilitating the identification of family members to ensure that coffins were correctly placed. From the vaults of St Marylebone Church, 240 lead end plates were recovered in a variety of shapes, suggesting the opportunistic use of ‘offcuts’, rather than specialist manufacture. The irregular shapes also suggest a primarily functional use as a label, despite the decorative stamped edging that was sometimes used.

**Handles/grips and grip plates**

Handles or grips were a standard feature of coffins of this period, usually attached in front of decorative plates (see Fig. 4.8). Although in the archaeological literature coffin handles are usually referred to as ‘grips’, with reference to a term used in contemporary documents, the term ‘handles’ was also used in trade catalogues of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as the report on the coffin furniture from Christ Church Spitalfields noted (Reeve and Adams 1993, 83). However, the terms were not used interchangeably; the catalogues appear to distinguish between the two terms, with ‘handles’ being the usual type used, included in the ‘set’ cost of a plate. The term ‘grip’ appears to have been reserved for larger, more highly decorated handles which could be added to a set for an additional cost (e.g. YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 15; see Fig. 4.7). In a catalogue of c.1826, three pairs of “handles” were included in a set, and this seems to refer to both the handle itself and a decorative plate (e.g. V&A E.3096-1910). References to different catalogue numbers indicate that to accompany different breastplates, grip plates and handles of different sizes and/or designs were offered as appropriate. Whereas few variations on handles and grips appear in the catalogues and in excavated assemblages, there were many types of grip plate. At Christ Church Spitalfields only 12 types of handle were identified, alongside 35 grip plate types (Reeve and Adams 1993, 86), and at St Pancras 5 handle types and 22 grip plate types were found (Miles 2011b). It seems that the design of the handle itself was a secondary consideration to the often highly decorated plate which it accompanied.
For the cheaper coffins listed in Garstin’s order books, handles are not often mentioned as, like plates, they were an essential element not usually worthy of additional comment. Judith Nicholson’s coffin, though, included “8 brass knocker handles & roses” (CWA 948/3, 294). The coffin of Leonora Elizabeth Rushworth (d.1841) included “4 Prs Tomb handles” (CWA 948/3, 221) and Meliora Dacre’s (d.1843) included “8 Brass Egyptian handles & loops roses” (CWA 948/3, 546) (both were interred in the St Marylebone Church vaults). It seems likely that “Tomb” and “Egyptian” here refer to the grip plates which were much more varied than the handles themselves.

It is clear from the trade catalogues that three pairs of grips with plates comprised a standard set, although four pairs could be included at additional cost. Furnishing undertakers could also buy these by the dozen, and so could have used fewer or more as required. It is sometimes claimed that adult coffins of this period usually had eight handles, but it seems unlikely that this was usually the case, or surely the standard ‘set’ would have included four pairs, rather than three? It is more likely that although this was the case for the more expensive coffins acquired for wealthier individuals interred in vaults, such as the examples above, and for working people able to access a respectable funeral through membership of a burial society (Laqueur 1983, 114), six handles would be usual for many adult coffins. Turner’s cheapest adult coffins included only four handles, along with a breastplate and one row of nails (cost 17s), with six and then eight available as costs increased (Turner 1838, 3-4).
Lid motifs

Lid motifs were large decorative plates which were attached to the outer coffin lid, often with one above the breastplate and another of a different design below. As with breastplates these could be made in a range of metals, but seem usually to have been stamped from tinplate. Partly because of this, they survive less frequently to be recorded archaeologically, and, as they are uninscribed and can become disassociated from the coffin through collapses of stacked burials in vaults and burial grounds, they are rarely considered alongside breastplates as an integral part of the coffin, and in some cases have been discarded. The assemblage of plates from St Marylebone crypt, for example, does not include any lid motifs, as they do not include lettering for which the plates in the collection were retained, though most, if not all, of the coffins there must originally have included them. Lid motifs, though, were large items which would have made a significant contribution to the appearance of the coffin lid. The ‘angel and flowerpot’ and ‘glory and urn’ combinations of lid motifs have been recognised for some time (Litten 1991, 107). The ‘glory and urn’ combination was always more expensive than the ‘angel and flowerpot’ in the trade catalogues (Hoile 2018) and was also used on the more expensive ready-made coffins in Turner’s catalogue (Turner 1838). In Garstin’s cost books this hierarchy is clear, with angel and flowerpot motifs consistently used for the cheapest coffins (as in the example above), an association that could well explain why these designs continued to be used for ‘parish work’ in the early twentieth century (Dottridge Brothers n.d.). These cost books also suggest an additional level in this hierarchy as some of the most expensive coffins (including Judith Nicholson’s) include a ‘monument and serpent’ or even a ‘pyramid and serpent’. These motifs are not found in the extant trade catalogues, but lid motifs featuring both monuments and serpents are known from excavations. The motif of the ouroboros, a serpent eating its own tail, said to be representative of eternity, is part of a lid motif type from Christ Church Spitalfields (CCS 4), in which it encircles an inverted torch. Other Spitalfields lid motif types, 13, 18 and 19, could perhaps be described as monuments rather than urns, with type 13 in particular a potential ‘pyramid’, as it is a trapezoidal shape marked ‘RESURGAM’ (‘I shall rise again’), with a classical tomb and two weeping figures. A close variation on this ‘RESURGAM’ type was recorded on a coffin of 1839 interred within the church at Wharram Percy, North Yorkshire, above the breastplate, with an ouroboros and inverted torch below (Harding 1987, burial 5).

Photographs of both CCS 4 and CCS 13 are included in the monograph of the archaeological recording of the vault burials at St George’s Church, Bloomsbury (Boston et al. 2009, 162-163).

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XX, Fig. 168). It seems likely that this pairing is the ‘monument and serpent’ combination, used for the most expensive coffins. Whether or not this combination also has a chronological significance is hard to discern; it does not appear in the known trade catalogues of c.1783-1826, but these are incomplete and it is possible that, while they include multiple ‘angel and flowerpot’ motifs, there may only have been one version of the much more exclusive ‘monument and serpent’, and this has been lost. Given the dates of the few dated examples, it is possible that this style also has chronological significance as an innovation of the 1830s (Boston et al. 2009, 157-158).

**Escutcheons**

Escutcheons were small decorative plates used, sometimes in large numbers, to decorate the coffin. They were also known as ‘drops’, and a heading in a trade catalogue of c.1826 refers to illustrations of these items as ‘ornaments’ (V&A E.3129-1910). References in Garstin’s order books to ‘corners’ also appear to refer to these items, which could be used to enhance the panelling created by the use of dome-headed pins. As with lid motifs, they could be made in a variety of metals, but were often tinplate. Tiny and vulnerable to decay, escutcheons are an unusual archaeological survival but, where used, could have made a significant contribution to the overall appearance of a coffin, as they were sometimes used in large numbers.

**Lace and pins**

As well as the large and small dome-headed pins used to decorate coffins and to attach the fabric covering, coffin ‘lace’ could be used to create panels and enhance edges. The trade catalogue of c.1826 includes 33 different coffin lace designs (V&A E.3096-3133.1910). As with the escutcheons, this thin material is not often recovered from excavated burials but may have made a significant difference to the original appearance of a coffin. A set of coffin furniture ordered with four pairs of handles from the c.1783 catalogue also included 20 yards of lace (YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 3).

**Variables**

Although breastplates were the largest and most important item of coffin furniture, they were only part of the metal coffin fittings which could range from a few handles to dozens of items of decorative metal. As well as being used in different quantities, the appearance of
coffin furniture could vary by size, by material and by surface treatments which affected both colour and shininess.

**Quantity**

Turner’s price list for ‘ready made’ coffins to supply to undertakers gives an indication of how quantities, as well as the quality, of coffin furniture could increase with expenditure. His cheapest coffin, costing 17s, included “one row round of black or white nails, a plate of inscription, four handles” (Turner 1838, 3). A coffin costing £2 2s was furnished with “four pair cherub handles, with wrought gripes, double flowered plate, angel and flower [lid motifs], six dozen of angel drops [escutcheons]” (Turner 1838, 3). One of the most expensive of the coffins listed, costing £5 10s, was not only made of substantial oak, one and a half inches thick, but included, in addition to three rows of nails, “six ornamental diamonds, with best nails, lead or brass plate, glory and urn, four pair of cherub handles, and four dozen of rays, or stars” (Turner 1838, 4). This was a substantial number of items which must have made a striking visual impact against the “superfine cloth” covering (Turner 1838, 4). The large outer coffin Garstin’s supplied to Mr Large for Mary Elizabeth Rushworth’s (d.1841) funeral included “3 doz corners” to complement the rows of large and small nails and other coffin furniture (CWA 948/3, 233). As described above, the number of handles could also vary by cost, with the cheapest coffins only having four, although eight were desirable.

**Size**

Size is an aspect of coffin furniture which is not often remarked upon in archaeological reports, though it is implicit in scale photographs and illustrations. Stylistically identical grip plates, with winged cherub heads, are offered in the c.1783 catalogue in four sizes, the price of a dozen pairs of the largest version more than double that of the smallest (YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 50, see Fig. 4.8). The same catalogue lists 12 sizes of rectangular brass plates, plain or with a chased border. The plates range from 4 by 3 ½ inches to 16 by 12 inches, with the cost of an individual plain plate rising from 1s 6d for the smallest to 10s for the largest (YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 48). The addition of a wider border could also increase the size (and cost) of a coffin plate. The c.1783 catalogue includes a design with two reference numbers, one for a plate with a border, and a cheaper version without (YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 33). Around 55 years later, Turner’s trade list of 1838 also includes items in a range of sizes, such as the escutcheons described as “Rays”, available in small, middling and large sizes at a cost of 4s 6d, 12s and 18s per gross respectively (Turner 1838, 10).
Fig. 4.8: Grip plates in a coffin furniture trade catalogue of c.1783. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection (YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 50, detail). Although all are the same design, the cost increased with the size of the plates. From left to right the cost per dozen of “white” (i.e. unpainted) grip plates was 3s 2d, 4s, 5s 6d and 7s 6d.

Material and surface treatments

Coffin plates were made of a number of different metals, predominantly tinplate, lead and brass, although other metals such as zinc and, more rarely, ormolou are occasionally found. As noted above, the designs available varied by material to a large extent, although some designs are found in both tinplate and lead versions. Undertakers’ records, newspaper reports of funerals and advertisements all reveal a much greater emphasis on the material from which a coffin plate was made, rather than its design, which is very rarely mentioned. Other items could also be made of a range of metals although, as previously described, tinplate was ideal for stamping light, cheap decorative items. Handles in this period were commonly made of iron or brass (Cherryson et al. 2012, 66).

The use of a range of surface treatments to alter or enhance the appearance of coffin furniture is clear from excavated material, unused items in museum collections, trade catalogues and contemporary descriptions of manufacturing processes. Trade catalogues of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries include a list of different finishes for many of the plates, with different prices for each. For example, in the c.1783 catalogue, design number 56 is priced at 11s per dozen for ‘white’ versions, that is, with no coating, and 13s per dozen for the same design with black shields. A third option is “G’Ld or Blk” at 17s per dozen which, with reference to other catalogues, refers to a ‘gilt lacquered or black’ surface treatment (YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 12).
Nineteenth-century accounts of coffin furniture manufacture distinguish between matt and shiny black finishes (see Fig. 4.9). In his 1866 description of the Birmingham coffin furniture trade, Aitken described “bright” black and “dead black” finishes, both of which were known as “japanning”:

The bright varnishing black at one time formed the only usual mode of finish but a dead black picked out with bright is now a favourite style…….. The blacking used is Pontypool varnish for the bright portions the dead being a vegetable black ground with turpentine and a “drier”.

(Aitken 1866, 196-197)

‘Japanning’ is a process used by Europeans from the sixteenth century to decorate objects to have the appearance of Asian lacquer (Webb 2000, 99), though it seems probable that coffin plates, only briefly visible, would have been less carefully decorated than tea-trays and other household items. A newspaper report of 1851 includes the words of an anonymous “eminent manufacturer” who also described two types of black surface treatments, and reported that the work of applying it was carried out by young women: “Their work is chiefly the lackering and blackening of portions of the pattern, which are mostly of a dull and of a bright black intermingled.” (The Morning Chronicle, 10 February 1851, 6). Both of these mid-nineteenth-century sources suggest national or regional variations in taste in relation to surface treatments of coffin furniture, agreeing that English customers preferred plain black: “It is only the melancholy Anglo Saxon who chooses the sadness of unmitigated black” (Aitken 1866, 194). The lack of excavated assemblages from Scotland, Wales and the west of England, as well as poor preservation of paint or varnish on buried coffin furniture, make these Victorian stereotypes difficult to verify, but may indicate varying regional demand. In the book Coffins and Coffin Making, published in the early twentieth century, the writer, using the pseudonym Sable Plume (n.d.), distinguished between the coatings of registered and unregistered coffin furniture, the latter of which was, by this time, very old-fashioned and used for ‘parish work’ and cheaper funerals, a distinction also apparent in contemporary coffin furniture catalogues (e.g. Dottridge Brothers n.d.). Plume suggested that unregistered designs should be “japanned bright all over”, while registered plates should have a “dead-black appearance” (Plume n.d., 18, 26). This suggests that, by the early twentieth century, the glossy appearance produced in the earlier nineteenth century had become less favoured, a change also suggested by Aitken’s 1866 account. The Victorian taste for dull black may relate to the conventions of mourning clothing for this period, as shininess was thought
inappropriate for the deep mourning of close relations immediately after bereavement, a custom that fell particularly heavily on women, who etiquette demanded be dressed and veiled in crape, an unreflective black crimped fabric (Morley 1971, 68). The use of dull surfaces for coffin furniture may also be connected with a custom, recorded by folklorists in the late nineteenth century, of removing or covering mirrors in a room where a corpse lay, or even covering shiny doorknobs with crape, to avoid distraction of the departing spirit (Frisby 2015, 111). In this context, a preference for non-shiny surfaces on other objects associated with death may have been seen as appropriate, without necessarily being explicitly related to particular beliefs. The middle decades of the nineteenth century also saw the introduction of polished coffins, for which contrasting dull black plates may have been preferred to avoid an inappropriate overall impression of shininess. In the Victorian home, shininess could have connotations of domestic capability and care but, as Alice Barnaby (2013) described, could also have more complex and less positive meanings. Too much shine might suggest the glare of cheap goods or, worse, of cheap objects veneered to conceal their inferior status beneath a gleaming surface (Barnaby 2013, 173). Cheaper, tin-plated coffin furniture would not have needed to retain its shine for long and, like the ready-made burial clothing that appeared as everyday clothes but were made with less attention to detail and with cheaper materials (Davidson 2013), was part of the brief but impactful display of the funeral. The shininess of coffin furniture may have been an aspect that irritated commentators advocating stylistic reform, such as W.C. Aitken, who noted that “even on a pauper’s coffin” the undertaker would add “a groat’s-worth of pathetic sham-finery” (Aitken 1866, 193). For critics of the display that the working poor were able to make with tinplate coffin furniture, shininess would only have added to their sense that this was a pointless and vulgar emulation of the appropriately solid brass coffin plates of the wealthy.
As well as the most usual matt or shiny black ‘japanning’ used for highlighting or covering coffin furniture, other colours could be used. Coffin plates for children could be covered in matt off-white paint with highlighting in water-gilding or mauve paint (Litten 1998, 14) and some examples of unused coffin furniture include colour, such as the “light purple dots” on some coffin lace in the York Castle Museum collections (YORCM AA7446; see also Fig. 4.10). Light purple tones, such as lilac and mauve, were also used for mourning clothing, by widows in ‘half mourning’, after an initial period of wearing only black, and for mourning clothes for young children (Morley 1971, 68, 72). Aitken (1866, 196) referred to the use of “Dutch metal of white or golden hue” in the 1860s, a yellow brass used for gilding (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2016). The coffin plates from the unusually well-preserved tinplate assemblage of St Pancras burial ground show a range of surface treatments of different colours including yellow and black (Doub 2011, 2). Samples of the coatings were found to be shellac (Doub 2011, 4), a resin used in the process of japanning (Webb 2000, 100). Many of the lead plates in the St Marylebone Church vault assemblage have a black coating and the brass plates also have what appears to be a degraded varnish coating, now apparent as stripes across the plates. It is unclear whether this would originally have protected the surface and perhaps enhanced the shininess of the plate, or would have dulled it. Perhaps
those choosing brass plates felt that the usual wool or velvet covering on the coffin mitigated the gleam of a brass plate, which in any case confirmed the quality of the material.

Painted inscriptions would also have added contrast and colour to coffin furniture. Aitken suggested that this was less common in London, where punching or engraving the inscription was usual (Aitken 1866, 194), and many excavated coffin plates are of this type. Occasionally plates are known to have had painted inscriptions, sometimes apparent when blank plates are recovered, the inscription having been lost (Henderson et al. 2013, 75). A plate with a painted slogan, used as a lid motif, was found at the New Bunhill Fields burial ground in Southwark (Miles 2012, 39) but these are rare and, as both cheap tinplate coffin furniture and painted inscriptions are vulnerable to decay in all but ideal burial conditions, it is difficult to know how widespread this practice was. An early twentieth-century guide for ironmongers suggests that painting inscriptions on coffin plates was usual and that yellow paint or gilt were suitable for black plates, with black paint used for uncoated tin plates and blue paint on white children’s plates (The Ironmonger 1905, 194).
Overall appearance of coffins

Coffins and coffin furniture could vary considerably in a number of ways including colour, texture, size and quantity. These combinations could produce very different effects, of abundance or dearth, of contrasting or muted colour and of sheen or dullness. Some impressions would be conveyed by features of coffin furniture design, such as the conventional restriction of lozenge-shaped coffin plates to girls and unmarried women, or the selection of lid motif combinations, which were clearly related to the cost of the coffin. In order to explore how these furnished coffins were viewed and understood their role within funerary rituals will now be examined.

The role of the coffin

The performative nature of funerals has made them a focus for dramaturgical analysis, which has noted their ‘offstage’ preparations, designated roles and controlled display, shaping particular expectations of behaviour, following the work of sociologists, most notably Erving Goffman (1971 [1959]), who made particular reference to contemporary American funerals in his own work. More recent sociological work has explored this further (Howarth 1996; Turner and Edgley 1990 [1976]). Archaeologists have also explored performance (DeMarrais 2014), notably in relation to funerary rituals (e.g. Boyd 2014; Giles 2015; Price 2014). While not explicitly focused on performance but exploring processes within funerary rituals, Susanna Harris (2014) examined the significance of wrapping dead bodies with multiple layers in Bronze Age burials in southern Scandinavia. This perspective is in contrast, as she points out, with the usual archaeological processes of unwrapping, and one which enables her to explore how the layers of different materials, including textiles, wood and turf were used by relatives “to transform the corpse and reorder their world” (Harris 2014, 131). In particular, the mnemonic role of funerary performance has also been a focus for recent studies. Howard Williams (2006) has analysed early medieval burials in Britain as ritual performance with a mnemonic function. The preparation and beautification of the corpse in nineteenth-century Britain has been examined by Sarah Tarlow (2002), who explored the role of this bodily preparation in creating memories and mediating relationships between the living and the dead. While the following exploration does not comprise a dramaturgical analysis of funerals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in London, the view of the funeral as a ritual performance will be used to consider the audience of the coffin and the
The concept of performance also raises a controversy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and beyond which directly relates to the perception of funerary material culture and the role of undertakers. As the wording of John Bucknall’s trade card indicates, undertakers as well as church ministers ‘performed’ funerals (BM Heal,5.4). The elaborate rituals and new funerary material culture of this period were seen by critics at the time, and since, as a suffocating social convention which demonstrated ostentation on the part of the bereaved and, potentially, financial exploitation by undertakers, which inhibited, rather than represented, a sincere expression of grief. This insincerity of performance was satirised by Charles Dickens in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in which a mourner is chastised for weeping by the undertaker, Mr Mould, who also claims that spending on the funeral “binds the broken heart, and sheds balm upon the wounded spirit”, while profiting handsomely from his own theatrical presentation (Dickens 1997 [1844], 314), part of what has been criticised as the “bonanza of commercial exploitation” of the Victorian death industry (Cannadine 1981 in Litten 1991, 171).

Once delivered to the house, the coffin was visible in two ‘scenes’: in viewing of the coffined body at home, and at the funeral, including the journey to the church or burial ground.

**Viewing**

Throughout this period it was usual for the corpse to be retained in the home between death and burial (Hotz 2001, 23; Jalland 1996, 213-214). This was the stage at which coffins were most likely to be seen close up, touched and commented upon in a domestic and less formal setting, before the structured ritual of the funeral itself. The presentation of the coffined corpse to friends, family and neighbours was a customary first stage of the funeral and the culmination of preparations ‘offstage’. This not only related to the building of the coffin(s), but also to the preparation of the body itself, which included washing, binding the jaw and limbs and dressing the body (Cox 1998). In her work on eighteenth-century burials in Sweden, Jenny Nyberg (2010) explored burial preparations in relation to the senses, with the smell of putrefaction, for example, mitigated through the use of herbs, as well as cleaning and dressing the body. Much of this work would have been invisible to observers. The sealing
of the coffin with pitch, for example, and the use of bran or a mattress to contain any leakage would have been likely to be hidden by the lining used in most coffins, as well as by the body itself. A range of items found in excavated coffins of this period attest to the care taken in presenting the corpse, including jaw cloths, dentures, hair combs and ribboned textiles (Cherryson 2018). The use of both specialist burial clothes and everyday clothes is apparent from excavated burials, including the selection of clothes with sentimental value (Janaway 1998). As an additional category, for cheaper funerals, items could be used which resembled everyday clothing but which were made rapidly, with long stitches unsuited to the harder use of the living but adequate for the display of the dead before burial (Davidson 2013). The beautification of the dead body and a desire to make it appear as though the dead were sleeping peacefully were fundamental to funeral preparations at this time (Tarlow 2002), an attitude that persists in Britain to the present (Parker Pearson 1999, 47). Whether dressed in nightwear-like shrouds and caps or in clothing worn in life (or closely resembling it), the supine body with closed eyes was framed by the furnished coffin which presented a suitably serene image of death, while concealing the work undertaken to prevent or mitigate bodily decay (see Fig. 4.11).

Fig. 4.11: Posthumous portrait by Leonard Charles Wyon, c.1851, which may depict the artist's mother, Catherine Wyon, 37.2 x 27.2 cm (BM 2012,7076.54). © Trustees of the British Museum
The furnished coffin also served as material proof of care and decency. This has sometimes been seen in terms of competitive status display. Henri Misson, writing of the funeral customs of the ‘middling’, said that the coffin could be “sometimes very magnificent” and that when friends and relations visited before the funeral “the rich Equipage of the Dead does Honour to the Living” (Misson 1719, 90). However, it could rather be viewed as an example of a contemporary concern with ‘decency’ and ‘decorum’, which Mihailovic (2011) described as key to understanding middle-class funerary expenditure at this time. Though sometimes seen as a straightforward custom of ‘paying respect’ to the dead, there could have been many motivations, both overt and unspoken, behind visiting the home of the dead to view the body in the coffin. Misson’s comments suggest that viewing the coffin was a key aspect of the experience of viewing the body. Visiting also gave an opportunity for friends and neighbours to judge the interior of the home and the behaviour of the bereaved. As Helen Frisby points out “the moral economy of death and bereavement in nineteenth-century England might simultaneously be both caring and calculating”, with funerals a potential occasion for social competition (Frisby 2015, 115, 122). It could also have been an opportunity for morbid curiosity and, in some cases, may have had the potential for drama. Belief in the ‘evidence of the bleeding corpse’, in which the body of a victim of murder would bleed at the touch of its killer, was current in the eighteenth century (Tarlow 2011, 164-165), particularly in cases of suspicious death without witnesses (Rose 2017). Modern clinical studies highlight reasons given for viewing the bodies of loved ones, such as to ensure the body is appropriately cared for, or to say goodbye (e.g. Chapple and Ziebland 2010). The modern context is very different, not least because viewing remains an uncommon aspect of funerary rituals in the UK in the twenty-first century, and recent studies have tended to focus on instances of traumatic death. However, such motivations might be expected to also apply within the period in question. For example, following the execution of her husband, Edward Marcus Despard, for high treason in 1803, Catherine Despard was supposed to have visited his lodgings “to take a last view of the body before the coffin was screwed down” before his funeral, which she did not attend (The Morning Chronicle, 2 March 1803; Chase 2004). Frisby’s work on folkloric aspects of funerals of the Victorian period and early twentieth century notes that touching the body was an expected part of the visit, a practice for which a number of reasons are suggested, including the avoidance of haunting and the curing of disease (Frisby 2015, 115). The belief in the curative power of corpses through touch, particularly those who had been executed, was held by many in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
The importance of touching highlights the closeness of the engagement with the corpse by visitors, and, while this would have placed them in close proximity to the coffin, their impressions of it may well have been outweighed in emotional and sensory impact by the closeness of the dead body.

It is unclear at what stage a coffin with a lead layer would be sealed before the funeral. Contemporary images of aristocratic lying-in-state show closed coffins (e.g. Litten 1991, 167, Fig. 82), though these may have had the lid placed on them for this more public display without being permanently sealed. Coffins that had been transported long distances would almost certainly have been closed when viewed before the funeral. Such arrangements were enormously expensive, but for those who could afford it, the importance of reuniting family members in death could outweigh the great expense. At St Marylebone, for example, Jane Eliot’s coffin plate of 1846 records that she died in Paris (70212, plate 506) and her remains were returned to London for burial alongside her father, Alexander Crombie (70162, d.1840; The Gentleman’s Magazine October 1842). The undertaker’s bill for the funeral of Catherine Hamilton, who died in Naples and whose body was embalmed and sent by sea for burial in Pembrokeshire, includes a charge for plumbers to repair the holes in her lead coffin made at the customs house (BM Heal,124.33; Morson 2004). However effective the embalming, it seems that this re-sealing meant that for those viewing Catherine Hamilton’s coffin and attending her funeral seven months after her death, she would have been represented by the “Outside Elme Case Coverd with fine Black Cloth with 4 pair Handles 2 Rows of Nails & Drops & a Large Lead plate of Inscription Gilt”, supplied by the undertaker, James Garth, at a cost of £6 6s (BM Heal,124.33). A handbill from 1817 suggests something of the charisma of the coffin and its identification with the individual within, as it advertises a facsimile of the lying in state of Princess Charlotte at which “the Thousands who were disappointed in obtaining Admission at Windsor” could view exact copies of the coffin and bier for an admission fee of 1 shilling (V&A S.1209-1982).

While viewing and touching the body was an encounter with a number of possible meanings for the participants, the corpse lying within a coffin was the focus of this domestic ritual ‘scene’ to an invited audience and had a mnemonic function as the last visual memory of a lost loved one, friend or neighbour at rest (Tarlow 2002, 93). The furnished coffin was an important part of the appropriate presentation of the dead, concealing the ‘offstage’ work and demonstrating decency. Although the furnishings of the coffin could have been closely
examined by visitors, it is difficult to discern how much impact these details would have had individually, and perhaps it is more likely that an overall impression may have remained as a memory.

**Procession**

After the coffin was closed, the lid fixed with screws or nails, the coffin’s importance may be said to have increased, as it now represented the individual whose corpse it contained. From this point of separation between the living and the dead, the furnished coffin was a visual and material proxy for the body as it was carried from the home to the grave. This layer (or layers) transformed the body, concealing its shape and decay in a covering that was both personal (in the inscribed breastplate, at least) and standardised. The public nature of the procession was an opportunity to present a final impression of decency and appropriateness.

The audience for the funeral procession was potentially vast. The frequent processions moving on foot or by carriage through London’s streets would have been seen by chance by a number of people travelling or working nearby, as well as intentionally by friends and neighbours, despite the convention of bowing the head to avoid looking directly at the procession (Wood 2015, 11). Funerals of the famous could draw crowds of spectators. At the end of the period in question, Wellington’s state funeral in 1852 represented the acme of the Victorian public funeral, with the procession seen by around 1.5 million people (Morley 1971, 85). Such large crowds could raise official fears of public disorder. Both police officers and soldiers were said to have been on hand for the executed Colonel Despard’s funeral at St Paul’s in 1803, at which, according to a newspaper report, “the avenues were as full as they possibly could be” with onlookers, though the funeral passed peacefully (*The Morning Chronicle*, 2 March 1803). The route of the funeral procession of the popular queen, Caroline of Brunswick, was planned to avoid the centre of London and potentially unruly supporters, but crowds forced the route through the streets, with two men killed in the confrontation when soldiers fired into the crowd (*The Manchester Guardian*, 18 August 1821). Public processions on a grand scale could also be a feature of funerals of “quite ordinary men”, with large numbers of participants and spectators reported at trade union funerals in the early nineteenth century, for example (Laqueur 1983, 118). Mr J. Browning, giving evidence to Chadwick’s inquiry in 1843, described the large funeral processions for members of societies.
in Manchester and Liverpool in earlier years in which their fellow members would march in large numbers “and there was a great deal of drinking” (Chadwick 1843, 108). Browning reported that the number of participants had become much smaller in recent years, with only a few members attending a funeral of one of their fellows, though he thought that the traditional processions continued outside the cities (Chadwick 1843, 108). Clearly, spectators of and participants in the funeral procession were not usually so numerous, but would have included at least the relatives and friends of the deceased. Not all family members would have necessarily been included in this stage of the funerary ritual. In the early nineteenth century upper- and middle-class women, perhaps particularly in London, along with some other towns and cities, were not expected to attend funerals (Mihailovic 2011, 121). A poignant letter from Cassandra Austen about the funeral of her sister Jane in 1817 describes how she “watched the little mournful procession the length of the Street & when it turned from my sight & I had lost her for ever – even then I was not overpowered, nor so much agitated as I am now in writing of it” (Austen 1817).

![Fig. 4.12: Illustration of a funeral procession, showing the coffin covered by a pall. From a wood engraving by Thomas Bewick, 1818 (this print probably 1823), 4.2 x 7.8 cm (BM 2006,U.1862) © Trustees of the British Museum.](image)

The cost of a velvet pall (5s) in the order for Judith Nicolson’s funeral points to the fact that coffins were usually covered on their journey to burial. Like all aspects of the funeral, these could vary in quality and cost, and sometimes in colour and decoration. Palls of this period were usually black with a white hem, and those with white lining were sometimes reversed.
for funerals of single women (Litten 1991, 127). Even the very cheapest pauper funerals included rental of a pall, made of rough fabric (Laqueur 1983, 114). The pall supplied by Garstin's for the funeral of Christovao Pedro Viscount Moncorvo in 1851 was a “Catholic Pall ornamented and decorated 10/6” (CWA 948/5, 360). The pall added an additional layer to the enclosure of the body, at least the third layer, in addition to the shroud and coffin. It also facilitated the honoured position of pallbearer, which placed associates in close proximity to the corpse without the physical exertion of shouldering the coffin itself. When the Master of Cauis College, Cambridge died in 1852 his coffin was carried by six anonymous college servants, but the pallbearers were senior fellows, each named in the newspaper report of the funeral (The Standard, 1 November 1852). Contemporary illustrations show palls covering most or all of a coffin (see Fig. 4.12), meaning that the designs, quantities, colour and finish of coffin furniture would not usually have been visible to those observing the funeral procession or attending the service, and that the decency of the funeral could only have been judged by other means, the number of attendants, for example, or the quality of the pall and the funeral carriage. However, the size and weight of the coffin, even when covered, may have been apparent. Those which included a lead shell were incredibly heavy, requiring eight bearers (Chadwick 1843, 49), which suggests they would have been moved slowly, adding additional gravitas to the gestures. On the other hand, coffins at the public funerals of figures such as Nelson (d.1805), Fox (d.1806) and Wellington (d.1852) were uncovered on grand funeral cars (e.g. Nelson: BM 1881,1008.108, see Fig. 4.13; Fox: BM 2010,7081.2063; Wellington: BM 1871,0812.5392). As with descriptions in newspaper articles, these illustrations suggest a public interest in the details of the elaborate coffins of famous individuals. On the front page of The Times, a plan of Nelson’s coffin illustrated a detailed description of the coffin furniture with each item symbolic of his life and achievements; a crocodile ornament, for example, represented his victory at the Battle of the Nile (The Times, 10 January 1806).
In the early eighteenth century, Misson described the coffins of the ‘middling’ being carried in walking funeral processions from the house to the church (Misson 1719, 92). By the middle of the nineteenth century a ‘walking funeral’ was a sign of poverty, as hearses and mourning carriages were by now an expectation for a respectable funeral. For Judith Nicholson’s funeral at St Marylebone in 1841 Garstin’s supplied “Feathers and Velvets” for a hearse with four horses to carry the coffin from Queen Anne Street to the church, and for two mourning coaches (CWA 948/3, 294). The orders for other funerals of individuals interred in St Marylebone vaults also include references to hearses. The coffins of both Leonora Elizabeth Rushworth (d.1841) and her (presumed) relative Mary Elizabeth Rushworth (d.1841) were transported in a hearse and pair. For the funeral of Mary Tutt (d.1851), aged 9, a single-horse hearse carried her coffin from Marylebone High Street for burial at St John’s Wood (CWA 948/5, 313). Garstin’s books also record the transport of coffins by railway, such as the funeral of Elizabeth Hurry in 1848 which included a charge of £5 9s 6d for the railway fare to Yarmouth, with a further £3 1s “Back”, presumably for the bearers to return to London (CWA 948/4, 653). As the example of Catherine Hamilton’s coffin suggests, repatriation by sea was also an occasional possibility (BM Heal,124.33). This elite eighteenth-century
example also shows that, for the few who could afford it, transport over long distances to reunite family members in death was established well before the transport innovations of the nineteenth century. Vanessa Harding (1998) has demonstrated that for many Londoners in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, decisions on where they would be buried were made with reference to several factors including cost, religion and marginality, both within the family and the community. Burial space in London was already under pressure from the growth of population and high death rates in the eighteenth century, leading to a large-scale “traffic in corpses” between parishes, suggesting that transport of coffins within the city was not confined to the rich (Boulton 2014). Some discussion at Chadwick’s inquiry focused on the cost of bearers at walking funerals and the possibility of redirecting most of this to the hire of a hearse for transporting the coffin to a cemetery for burial (Chadwick 1843, 108). The inventive undertaker Edward Bridgman obtained a patent in 1818 for a combined hearse and coach in order to relieve the public of the inconveniences of walking funerals and “at such a moderate expense, as would enable the lower classes to use this conveyance” (Haggard 1822, appendix, 177). Thwarted by the Commissioners of Hackney Coaches, who declined to licence the vehicle, under pressure from owners of mourning coaches, he appealed to Sir William Scott, who presided over the case involving his iron coffins, for assistance, noting that he had made a contract with the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields “to carry their dead for interment to Camden Town” (Haggard 1822, appendix, 177). Eventually Mr Shillibeer successfully brought a combined hearse-carriage into use in 1842 (Morley 1971, 28). In the nineteenth century the need for funerary transport increased as burial places were established outside the centre of the city as parish burial grounds became full. In St Marylebone, for example, the churchyard at the old church and burial grounds at nearby Paddington Street were insufficient for the parish’s needs by 1814 when a new burial ground opened at St John’s Wood, with new churches in the parish also accepting burials in the 1820s, along with the vault space in the new St Marylebone Church after 1817 (Henderson et al. 2015, 8). From the 1830s new cemeteries were established around London, with the first burial taking place at Kensal Green cemetery in 1833 (Curl 2000, 56).
The hearses in which coffins were transported to parish churchyards or, later in this period, to suburban cemeteries, enclosed the coffin, shielding it from public view. The illustrations of funeral processions depicted on numerous undertakers’ trade cards of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries all depict a closed hearse with plumes of feathers on top (e.g. BM Banks,124.17, see Fig. 4.14). However, although helpful in depicting traditional hearses, it cannot be assumed that trade cards and funeral invitations necessarily depicted current trends. A funeral ticket design by William Hogarth dated to c.1721-1736 (BM 1858,0417.590) was still in use in 1809 (V&A E.310-1985). In part, this demonstrates the long duration of funeral customs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The black feathered plumes, long black hatbands and ‘mute’ (funeral attendant) were as much a feature of funerals of the 1800s as the 1720s, and more widely available as the industry which supplied them had grown along with the demand of customers. However, this illustration may also suggest the appeal of tradition to undertakers and their clients which supported the continuity of these customs, even as innovations such as railway transport developed. Nevertheless, it seems safe to assume that the hearses and processions depicted on trade cards and funeral invitations are, at least, reasonably accurate portrayals of those used at some earlier point. Glass-sided
hearses were not introduced until the 1870s (Litten 1991, 136). In the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, then, the coffin would have been concealed from view when transported for burial, under a pall or within a hearse, or both.

Conclusions

The role of the coffin in funerary rituals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century included both concealment and display. The open furnished coffin framed the prepared corpse for viewing by family, friends and neighbours and its rigid sides and internal textiles helped to conceal the “fleshy realities of death” and maintain an image of peaceful sleep (Tarlow 2002, 89). The closed coffin was a proxy for the dead individual, further concealing the body, sometimes within multiple layers. Some aspects of the coffin may have been ‘read’ by observers: crimson velvet represented not only wealth, but nobility; the number of handles related to cost. Shiny tinplate coffin furniture may have shown to some viewers the care taken by survivors to commemorate a loved one appropriately, but demonstrated to more critical eyes the gaudiness of inferior materials. Those with a “commodifying gaze” (Wood 2015, 18) could perhaps have appraised a coffin quite exactly. However, the public audience for the coffin was limited, as the additional layers of pall and enclosed hearse shielded the coffin from public view during the procession before it was uncovered for the final scene at the point of burial. Coffin furniture, whether brass, lead or tinplate, black or ‘bright’, dull or shiny, numerous or meagre, would have had limited but highly impactful visibility in use. In combination with the coffin case itself it could have demonstrated decency in the care of the dead, and have had a mnemonic role in the final presentation of the departed individual.
5 The Development of Coffin Furniture, c.1750-1850

While I waited for a chair, Mrs Smith came down, and told me that there were devices and inscriptions upon the lid. Lord bless me! Is a coffin a proper subject to display fancy upon? ¹

The purpose of this chapter is to explore in detail the development of coffin furniture between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Coffin furniture of this period has frequently been described as being stylistically conservative, appearing to change relatively little over this century. This has sometimes been expressed in terms of the perceived art historical period of the decoration. For example, Julian Litten visited the St Marylebone vaults during the clearance and described much of its coffin furniture as “of the usual sub-seventeenth-century baroque type”, making it stylistically outdated by around 150 years (Johnson 2013, 33). It has also been suggested that this material is inherently conservative in design (Gentle and Field 1975, 105; Harding 1987, 6; Miles 2011a, 176). Comparisons between below- and above-ground styles of funerary material will be explored further in the following chapter.

Although later coffin plate design may, as Litten suggested, have owed something to styles of the previous century, coffin plates of the late seventeenth century do not include the flourishes of the nineteenth-century examples he examined. Few seventeenth-century coffin plates have been recovered from burials or, more often, vaults, but these have tended to be plain in appearance, such as the shield-shaped plate of Edward Woodford (d.1652) at St Bride’s (see Fig. 5.1). A similar, copper alloy, plate, dated 1660, was found at St Benet

¹ From a letter from Mr Belford to Robert Lovelace, Esq. in the novel Clarissa (Richardson 1985 [1747-8], 1305).
Sherehog, as well as a plain, rectangular, copper alloy plate attached to a lead coffin, dated 1685 (Miles and White 2008, 63). In this period it was more common to add studs in the form of initials and dates to coffin lids (Litten 1991, 99). At the New Churchyard, 11 coffins were marked in this way, all dated to the phase of burials between c.1670 and 1739, with the seven legible dates between 1674 and 1721 (Hartle 2017, 55).

The designs of coffin furniture made of different materials followed largely separate, though overlapping, paths. Partly this relates to materiality. The physical properties of thin tin-coated iron plates, suitable for stamping and engraving, are different to those of a brass plate, the surface of which is suitable for fine etching. It has also been demonstrated that the material used for coffin furniture varied by cost. The coffins of the wealthy parishioners interred beneath the new St Marylebone Church were only slightly more likely to have had a tinplate breastplate than their less affluent neighbours, buried in the parish’s burial grounds, were to have an expensive brass plate. Therefore, in this chapter the sample will be considered, where possible, as a whole, but will be also split as appropriate to explore the material separately with the aim of separating out the chronological changes from variations relating to cost, gender, location and other factors.

Fig. 5.1: Coffin plate of Edward Woodford (d.1652, plate 1374) from St Bride’s Church, courtesy of St Bride’s Church © Museum of London.
The exploration and presentation of the dataset includes the use of correspondence analysis, which has been carried out using R (open source statistical software), using the ca package (Nenadić and Greenacre 2007), following instructions for its use with archaeological data (Baxter and Cool 2016). For legibility on the plots produced through correspondence analysis, decades have been labelled by phase number (see Table 5.1). The latest date of coffin furniture from any of the sites studied is 1853. R was also used in testing significance using ‘chisq.test()’ from base R.

Table 5.1: Numbers used to identify decades in analysing and illustrating the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1750-1759</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760-1769</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770-1779</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780-1789</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790-1799</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1809</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810-1819</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820-1829</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830-1839</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-1849</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1853</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inscriptions

One of the very few features that coffin plates of all materials have in common is the inclusion of an inscription. Analysis of the inscription includes the content, the words and language(s) used, the typography and method of application of the lettering.

Inscriptions: content

For the most part, coffin plate inscriptions are formulaic and follow a predictable pattern. The inscription on Ann Jackson’s (70360, plate 583) coffin plate is typical:
Mrs Ann Jackson
Died 19 Sep't
1833
In her 29th Yr.

Most of the coffin plate inscriptions studied here are of this type. The rare seventeenth-century coffin plate from St Bride’s (catalogued for this project, but not included in analysis; plate 1374, see Fig. 5.1) is also similar in format, as are other early examples elsewhere (e.g. Cherryson et al. 2012, Fig. 3.8, 58).

[CA]PTAINE EDWARD WOOD
FORD FORTH SONNE OF
ROBERT WOODFORD ESQ
BORNE THE 2[8?]TH OF NOV[E]M
BER 16[00?] DIED THE 25TH
OF IVNE A[?] D[MP] 1652

The example coffin plates in an early twentieth-century book on undertaking follow the same format (Plume n.d., 165):

MARY ANN
MURRAY,
Died
May 1, 1881,
Aged
11 YEARS

The early twentieth-century example coffin plate inscriptions in the Dottridge Brothers catalogue (c.1925, 8) are still of a similar type:

EVELYN MAUD
KNIGHT
DIED 20TH JUNE
1922
AGED 67 YEARS

However, the collection from St Marylebone vaults in particular contains many plates with variations on these standard inscriptions, including details of placenames, the use of Latin, alternatives to the word ‘died’ and the rare use of emotional language. Examples include:
Anne
Relict of
WILLIAM CAMPBELL,
Comissioner of the
NAVY, ESQRE
Died 3rd Jan’ 1829.
In her 83rd Year. (70101, plate 725).

William Cowdell,
Gent
of Cranford Street,
in this Parish,
Died 23rd Dec’s
1829
In the 85th Year
of his Age (70153, plate 588)

Henrietta Maria
Charlotte Howard
Relict of the Late
EdP Alexr Howard
ESQR
OF YORK PLACE.
& THORPNALL HALL HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
who Died at her House
IN YORK PLACE
on the
27th September
1847
Aged 69. (70350, plate 434)

BENJAMIN BURTON ESQR
Third Son of
Sir Charles Burton Bar’t
of Polloetton Hall,
IN THE COUNTY OF CARLOW,
Ireland
and Grand Son of John
SECOND LORD DESART
Died 3rd Jan’ 1834
AGED 43 YEARS (70095, plate 627)

Places of life and death

The placenames recorded on coffin plates may be broken into four categories. Firstly, places of birth, recorded only on two plates at St Marylebone where this was distant from the place
of burial, those of Simon Woronzow 2 “born at Moscow, died in London”, a Russian diplomat (d.1832, 70683, plate 908), and Adolphina Nieuwenhuys, “born at Amsterdam” (d.1826, 70482, plate 842). Less distantly, Ester Hope, buried at St Bride’s, was “Born at Onibury Salop” (d.1802, 70946, 1407). Secondly, places associated with roles and professions are mentioned on some plates. For example, on coffin plates from St Marylebone, David Clark was described as “late of Calcutta” (70129, d.1838, plate 354) and Henry Bedford was recorded as being “of the Inner Temple” (70045, d.1828, plate 1026). Not all of these associations necessarily indicate residence, particularly church posts which could be held remotely. Thirdly, places of residence and family estates were included in a few cases, such as the coffin plates of John Entwisle, “of Fox Holes in the County of Lancaster” (70222, d.1837, plate 498), and of Wilhemina Augusta Lyne “of Devonshire Place” (70417, d.1820, plate 395). The plate of Mary Jolliffe records that she was the widow of John Jolliffe “late of Petersfield in Hampshire”, who had been the town’s MP (70846, d.1784, plates 1452 and 1456). John Jolliffe’s coffin had previously been interred at St Bride’s (d.1771, 70845, plate 1457), and Mary Jolliffe was the daughter of Samuel and Jane Holden (see Chapter 2), so she was also buried close to her parents and sister. Finally, places of death could be recorded in some circumstances. Three of the coffin plates from St Marylebone stated a place of death that was overseas (plate 506, 70212, Jane Eliot, d.1846 in Paris; plate 421, 70504, Algernon Percy, d.1830 in Le Mans; plate 1000, 70585, James Carmichael Smyth, d.1838 at Demerara). Other than these, no obituaries or death notices found for people interred in St Maylebone vaults indicated repatriation for burial, suggesting that this was a rare enough circumstance to be recorded both in public announcements and, more unusually, in coffin plate inscriptions. As well as people who died overseas, a few plates recorded a local place of death at an elite location, such as Portland Place (plate 467, 70143), and, as noted above, Simon Woronzow’s plate included his place of death, in London, far from his birthplace in Moscow.

The use of placenames is mainly associated with brass plates. At St Marylebone, 50 people had coffin plates that included placenames and 42 of these were on brass plates. In the case of some of the eight people who had only lead plates which included a placename, an original outer brass plate may not have been retained within the collection.

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2 This is the spelling used on the coffin plate and in contemporary documents (and in Woronzow Road in St John’s Wood, London, which is named after him). In modern sources the ambassador’s name is given as Seymon Vorontzow.
Euphemisms for death

An even more rare variation from the standard formula is the use of alternatives in English to the word ‘died’ (the use of Latin will be explored below). Table 5.2 details the few plates from St Marylebone vaults which included alternative words or phrases to the usual ‘died’. ‘Departed this life’ was used on six plates of five people. The non-euphemistic, but perhaps slightly less blunt, ‘deceased’ on five plates of three people, two of them a married couple, was an even rarer variation, and the phrase ‘in memory of’ was used on two coffin plates of Sophia Morse, which is more usually associated with gravestones and monuments. These variations do not appear to be chronologically significant within this fairly narrowly dated assemblage. No examples of English alternatives to ‘died’ were found in the St Bride’s, Islington Green or Christ Church Greyfriars assemblages.

Table 5.2: Alternatives to ‘died’ on coffin plates from St Marylebone Church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Person number</th>
<th>Plate number(s)</th>
<th>Date of death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In memory of</td>
<td>Sophia Morse</td>
<td>70471</td>
<td>469, 853</td>
<td>1810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departed this life</td>
<td>Elizabeth Baillie</td>
<td>70017</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>1819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departed this life</td>
<td>Elizabeth Jefferys</td>
<td>70367</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>1819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departed this life</td>
<td>Frances Margaret Finch</td>
<td>70243</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>1822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>John Hornby Little</td>
<td>70408</td>
<td>729, 799</td>
<td>1829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Elizabeth Christie</td>
<td>70127</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Louisa Little</td>
<td>70406</td>
<td>545, 749</td>
<td>1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Catherine Fraser</td>
<td>70260</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>1835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departed this life</td>
<td>Arabella Susanna Moreton Dyer</td>
<td>70200</td>
<td>488, 871</td>
<td>1853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It could be argued that there is little point in concealing death with euphemism on a coffin plate when it is in such close proximity to the corpse within, in contrast with monuments. However, as explored in the previous chapter, the purpose of the furnished coffin was concealment of the corpse and the presentation of decency in the care of the dead, and in that light it is perhaps surprising that there was not greater use of euphemistic or memorialising language on coffin plates during this period. None of the coffin plates examined include direct reference to the corpse, a feature of gravestones in the earlier part
of this period although, again, the more direct connection with the body itself renders this
redundant. ‘Died’ is a helpfully short word, easier to fit on a coffin plate than any euphemistic
or other alternative, but the occasional inclusion of additional information, even on
decorated lead plates, which had a smaller area for inscription than plain brass or lead plates,
makes it clear that this was a choice by undertakers and/or their clients, rather than a practical
constraint.

Emotional language

There are many examples, particularly from the collection of plates from St Marylebone
crypt, of coffin plates which include additional information, often with titles, positions or
placenames, but only two have been identified with emotional language. Such language is
vanishingly rare on coffin plates, even those, such as the large brass plates, which have plenty
of space and include many additional words. Two exceptions from the St Marylebone crypt
assemblage, unparalleled elsewhere, are the coffin plates of two children of the same family,
Francis Henry Fuller (70267, d.1833, plate 21), “[be]loved & cherished Infant”, who died
aged six months, and Stephen Meyrick Fuller (70272, d.1843, plate 1177), “much loved
Child”, who was two years and six months old when he died. Their mother, Margaretta Jane
Fuller (70269, d.1852, plate 507) was also interred in the crypt, presumably in the same vault.
Within the time period of this project, the language of coffin plates does not show a shift to
include emotional language, which has been seen in monuments and gravestones in the
nineteenth century (Tarlow 1999). It is unclear when, or if, this changed in later nineteenth-
or twentieth-century Britain. In the twenty-first century, the few examples of coffin plates
illustrated online are both small and briefly inscribed (e.g. Trident Engraving 2018), though
a trend in recent years to more personalised funerals would suggest that individually written
coffin plates are likely to become more common. Significantly, some currently available are
intended as “individual farewell messages” rather than as identification (Tributes 2018).

Language

One variation of the standard inscription is the use of Latin words. Most commonly, the
word ‘died’ is replaced by ‘obit’ or ‘obit’, or ‘aged’ is replaced with ‘ætat’ or ‘etat’, sometimes
both. The only coffin plate from St Marylebone with additional words in Latin is that of
Algernon Percy, Earl of Beverley (70504, plate 421), on which even his place of death, Le Mans in France, is translated:

Algernon Percy
COMES BEVERLEY,
Natiis 21 Die January
1750,
Obiit Cenomano,
DIE 21 OCTOBRES, 1830

The number of plates which included Latin was low (see Table 5.3). At St Marylebone, 33 people had, between them, 40 plates that included at least one Latin word, with only four people at St Bride’s having one plate each including any Latin. These included one of the earliest plates, that of Samuel Holden, on which the year was inscribed in Latin numerals (70718, d.1740, plate 1256, see Fig. 5.9). The assemblages from Islington Green and Christ Church Greyfriars did not include Latin in their inscriptions.

Table 5.3: Use of Latin on coffin plates at St Marylebone Church and St Bride’s Church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Number of people named on coffin plates</th>
<th>Number of people with Latin on coffin plate(s)</th>
<th>Percentage of people with Latin on coffin plates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Bride’s</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>947</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All but one of the 37 people whose coffin plate inscriptions included Latin were adults, with a median age of 67, compared with a median age of 59 for people from both St Marylebone and St Bride’s whose age is known (n=890). These 44 plates included those made of copper alloy (20 plates) and lead, both plain and decorated (24 plates). There is no significant association between the use of Latin on coffin plates and gender within the St Marylebone assemblage (see Table 5.4).
Table 5.4: Gender and the use of Latin on coffin plates at St Marylebone Church (n=690). The association of gender and the use of Latin is not significant at p < .05 (p-value = 0.1887).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Latin present on coffin plate(s)</th>
<th>Latin absent on coffin plate(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There may be something else that the people whose plates included Latin, or perhaps their close relatives, had in common, such as a university education, an interest in classical literature or an identification with Anglo-Catholicism, but it has not been possible to identify this. It may even have been a preference of some particular local undertakers, who perhaps thought Latin was appropriate for their elite customers in Marylebone, in contrast with those supplying the coffin plates for those buried at Islington Green, for example. At St Marylebone, plates including Latin were dated between 1819 and 1851, almost the full span of the use of the vaults for burial, with a mean date of 1833 (the overall mean is 1831), which suggests that there is no chronological significance to its use. However, at St Bride’s three of the four plates with Latin dated to the eighteenth century (1740, 1747 and 1767; the fourth was dated 1830), compared with an overall range of 1740 to 1852 and a mean of 1819. Only one plate studied included any words in a language other than English or Latin: the coffin plate of Simon Woronzow which had inscriptions in both English and Russian (70683, d.1832, plate 908).

**Inscriptions: summary**

It is clear that, for the most part, the content of coffin plate inscriptions in this period was highly formulaic across all materials, sites and for people of all social backgrounds. However, the variations seen within those studied here, particularly in the St Marylebone collection, demonstrate that sometimes additional or alternative words were considered appropriate and included. The content of inscriptions does not demonstrate any chronological development between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, and possibly beyond, and the contrast between the static conventions of inscriptions on coffin plates and the changes in gravestone and monument inscriptions will be explored in the following chapter.
Although the inscriptions do not reveal chronological development, they do highlight some other factors that influenced the wording on coffin plates, such as the unusual circumstance of repatriation for burial, for example. Some variations are less clearly explicable, such as the use of Latin, which may be associated with adulthood, but may also have other associations. What is not included in coffin plate inscriptions is also revealing. The almost complete lack of emotional language stands in contrast to the words and phrases used on contemporary monuments. The sometimes relatively lengthy additions to the standard formula discussed above indicates that this absence was a choice, albeit one that was probably unconscious on the part of those who inscribed the plates and those who paid for them. The undertaker’s records consulted for this project do not detail the costs of engraving separately from the plate itself so it is unclear whether longer inscriptions incurred an additional charge but, at least in the case of the expensive coffins prepared for vault interments, such small charges could easily have been absorbed into the overall cost.

**Inscriptions: style**

*Fig. 5.2: Lead end plate of Sarah Franco (70256, d.1835, plate 248) from St Marylebone Church, which includes a long s in roundhand lettering. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.*
One aspect of the coffin plate inscription that does show chronological change is the use of the long s, ſ. Long s was used in both printing and handwriting in the eighteenth century but its use declined sharply at the start of the nineteenth century in printed books and newspapers, particularly in London, although its use in handwriting continued for many decades (Fens-de Zeeuw and Straaijer 2012). On coffin plates at St Marylebone and St Bride’s, long s was mainly (80% n=98) used in roundhand lettering, which uses the form and conventions of contemporary handwriting, in which the long s continued to be used well into the nineteenth century (see Fig. 5.2). However, it was also used in other lettering types in small numbers, especially the Old English and German gothic types used on brass plates for the title (e.g. Miss), up to at least the end of the period of study (13% n=13; see Fig. 5.3).

Long s was mainly used in words with a double s, most commonly ‘Miss’, as well as in words such as ‘Countess’, ‘Russia’ and the name ‘Russell’. Only five exceptions were noted where long s was used alone in a medial position in words such as ‘Chichester’ (70201, d.1841, plate 70).\(^3\) Clearly, not every short inscription provided an opportunity to use long s, and the ‘absent’ count in Table 5.5 counts instances of double s, as these words comprise the vast majority of uses of long s, to check the proportion of possible uses where long s was used.

Table 5.5: Presence (all) and absence (from double s words) of long s on coffin plates dated 1750-1849 from St Marylebone crypt and St Bride’s crypt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Absent</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% including long s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1750-1759</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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\(^3\) The others were ‘Joseph Fawthrop Esq’, 70949, d.1754, plate 1418; ‘THOS AVERY Esqr’, 70844, d.1835, plate 1458; ‘Died 31st January’, 70845, d.1771, plate 1457; ‘of Matûn Hall’, 70056, d.1826, plate 704.
This suggests a decline in the use of long s on coffin plates from around the 1820s, although it continued to be used throughout this period. However, in a period when its use in printing in London had ceased, the continued use of long s in print-style lettering on expensive brass plates might be indicative of the deliberate choice of an antiquated style, although the numbers here are very small.

![Fig. 5.3: Detail of the brass coffin plate of Emma Dolling (70188, d.1838, plate 474) from St Marylebone Church, with a long s in Old English lettering. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.](image)

**Typography**

Lettering styles on coffin plates have not been much explored in archaeological publications, but the plates from the vaults of St Marylebone have been studied from a typographical perspective in an unpublished dissertation by Bryony Newhouse (1996) and an article and conference paper by Martin Andrews (2002; 2003), both from the University of Reading, in whose Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections these plates are preserved. Newhouse (1996) established a typology for lettering styles, with reference to contemporary styles, which has been used here to identify lettering types (see Fig. 5.4).
Type 1: Roman print hand (plate 495, William Percy, d.1819, 70503)

Type 2: Italic print hand (plate 694, Ann Bannerman, d.1833, 70025)

Type 3: Round hand (plate 889, Hannah Ranking, d.1838, 70535)

Type 4: Gothic. Type 4.1: Old English (plate 494, Gertrude Rose Glynn, d.1853, 70285)
Type 4: Gothic. Type 4.2: German text (plate 1154, Mercy Ogilvie, d.1831, 70490)

Type 5: Clarendon (plate 1005, Charles Frederick Evenden, d.1853, 70225)

Type 6: Slab serif (plate 132, Mary Alleyne Hall, d.1816, 70312)

Type 7: Sans serif (plate 745, Letitia Workman Macnachten, “widow of Sir Francis Workman Macnachten Baronet, and daughter of the late Sir William Dunkin”, d.1852, 70429)

Type 8: Tuscan (plate 486, Elizabeth Hawker, d.1850, 70330)

Fig. 5.4: Lettering typology developed by Bryony Newhouse (1996) in her dissertation on the typography of the St Marylebone coffin plates, illustrated with details from plates in this collection. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.
Lead and tinplate coffin plates were mostly engraved with roundhand lettering, also known as copperplate, which is a fluid style resembling the handwriting of the time (see Figs 5.2 and 5.5). In the hands of skilled engravers, the lettering could be dynamically applied, with deeper and wider cuts with the engraving tool adding emphasis to parts of the letters, creating a similar effect to that produced in copperplate handwriting with increased pressure of the pen nib. However, many plates have clearly been engraved by less skilled people, particularly inner lead plates, which may not have been seen by the deceased person’s family and friends, and may have provided an opportunity for newer members of the trade to practice their skills (Andrews 2002, 41). Throughout this period, roundhand remained the main lettering style used on lead and tinplate plates. All of the 46 lead plates from Islington Green (1799-1846) only include roundhand lettering. However, from the third decade of the nineteenth century some funeral furnishers started to use stamped lettering for some lead plates, particularly inner and end plates. Although these show that care was taken in the layout, in centring words on the plate, for example, it must have been easier for someone with limited skills or experience to create a reasonable effect with stamps than with roundhand engraving. This had an effect on lettering styles, as stamped lettering was slab serif (see Fig. 5.6).
Fig. 5.6: Lead end plate of Louisa Des Voeux (70184, plate 261) from St Marylebone Church, with stamped lettering. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.
Table 5.6: Lettering types on brass coffin plates of people with monuments at St Marylebone Church (n=60).

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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>1253</td>
<td>1814</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>1365</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>1366</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1364</td>
<td>1825</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>1435</td>
<td>1826</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1398</td>
<td>1833</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1459</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>1404</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1441</td>
<td>1843</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1338</td>
<td>1846</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1301</td>
<td>1847</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1401</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1532</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lettering styles used on brass plates were always an important aspect of these expensive items, the elaborate and often varied lettering providing the main decorative interest of the plates. The lettering on brass plates shows chronological development, as specialist engravers added new decorative styles to their repertoire (see Tables 5.6 and 5.7). The ‘German’ variant on gothic script, more dynamic than the ‘Old English’ version, is only seen from the 1820s. Tuscan lettering was used on 13 brass plates at St Marylebone, dated between 1823 and 1850. From the 1830s, slab serif, sans serif and Tuscan lettering were sometimes used in combination with other, more established styles to present a striking plate (see Fig. 5.7). As Andrews (2002), pointed out, the use of different fonts for different lines of text is a feature of contemporary title pages and posters, and can also be seen on trade cards of the period (e.g. Figs 3.2 and 3.4). It is perhaps unexpected that this was also considered appropriate for a coffin plate, particularly the use of what seems, to modern eyes, the rather jaunty Tuscan font (see Fig. 5.7). Although Tuscan was also used architecturally in the nineteenth century, its use appears to have been mainly commercial, on hotel and pub fascias, rather than on public buildings or street signs, for example, for which classical forms were preferred (Gray 1960).
Table 5.8: Counts of lettering types on 60 brass coffin plates of people with monuments at St Marylebone Church, by decade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Italic</th>
<th>Roundhand</th>
<th>Old English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Clarendon</th>
<th>Slab serif</th>
<th>Sans serif</th>
<th>Tuscan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810-1819</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820-1829</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830-1839</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-1849</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1859</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5.7: Copper alloy outer coffin plate (370) of John Shore (d.1834, 70611) from St Marylebone Church. The four lettering types used here are Old English ("The Right Hon\textsuperscript{ble} and ‘Aged 82 Years’), German (‘Died 11\textsuperscript{th} Feb’), a decorated sans serif (‘LORD TEIGNMOUTH’) and Tuscan (‘JOHN’ and ‘1834’), along with calligraphic decorative flourishes. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.
Analysis of the counts of lettering types on this sample, using correspondence analysis, shows the decades on a curved line in a ‘horseshoe’ shape, characteristic of chronological ordering (Baxter and Cool 2010) (see Table 5.8 and Fig. 5.8).

![Biplot of decades (phases 7-10, 1810-1849) and lettering types of 60 brass plates of people with monuments at St Marylebone Church, without slab serif, of which there is only one instance (see Table 5.8).](image)

Although, from a typographic point of view, the engraved brass plates were not innovative, in that, as Andrews (2002) notes, engravers “were following fashions rather than leading them”, they do show the use of a diverse range of forms and calligraphic flourishes to produce a decorative effect, which drew on developments in lettering in other media in the early nineteenth century, which is apparent when considering these plates as a whole. Although even early plates could use several lettering types, the introduction of new lettering styles seems to have led to a slight increase in the average number of different fonts used on brass plates, as engravers had a wider range to draw on (see Table 5.9).
Table 5.9: Mean number of lettering types used per plate on brass plates from St Bride’s Church (n=21) and on brass plates of individuals with monuments from St Marylebone Church (n=60).
* The pre-1809 coffin plates are all from St Bride’s and are dated 1740 (plate 1256), 1764 (1399), 1766 (1397) and 1784 (1456).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Mean number of lettering types used per plate</th>
<th>Number of plates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1809*</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810-1819</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820-1829</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839-1839</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-1849</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1853</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the brass plates studied, only four date from the eighteenth century, all from St Bride’s. However, even the earliest, that of Samuel Holden (70718), who died in 1740 (plate 1256), includes four different lettering types (see Fig. 5.9). This early example could easily have been used a century later without occasioning comment, with only the date amended. So while brass plates showed innovation in the incorporation of new lettering styles, they could also be remarkably conservative.

Fig. 5.9: Brass coffin plate of Samuel Holden (70718, d.1740, plate 1256) from St Bride’s Church, which includes a coat of arms and four lettering styles, courtesy of St Bride’s Church © Museum of London.
Method of application

Methods of applying lettering to coffin plates were consistent throughout this period and mainly comprised etching (mostly on brass plates) and engraving (mostly on lead and tinplate) (Vitali 2011, 178). One exception is the use of stamped lettering on lead plates, particularly inner and end plates on multiple-shelled coffins (see Fig. 5.6) which was used occasionally from around the third decade of the nineteenth century. While only one plate from St Bride’s had stamped lettering (plate 1297, 70900, d.1828), and none were found from the smaller assemblages of Christ Church Greyfriars and Islington Green, significant numbers of lead plates with stamped lettering were recorded within the St Marylebone crypt collection. At St Marylebone, 58 outer, inner and end coffin plates had stamped lettering (of 1183 in total, 4.9%), dating to between 1816 and 1847. The mean date of these (1829) is similar to that of the whole collection (1831), suggesting that, although stamping seems to have been introduced in the early decades of the nineteenth century, it is not chronologically significant within this collection which (with a small number of exceptions) starts in 1817. Five of the plates with stamped lettering from St Marylebone are those of people with the surname Hall. At least four were members of the same family: Margaret Salter Hall (née Alleyne) (70305, d.1823; Gentleman’s Magazine, June 1823, 572), her husband David Hall (70307, d.1844) and their children Mary Alleyne Hall (70312, d.1816) and Margaret Alleyne Hall (70310, d.1818). Elizabeth Hall (70311, d.1834) may have been another of their children. As the example of the Rushworth family demonstrates (see Chapter 3), despite the large number of funeral furnishers available, families suffering multiple bereavements might have preferred to return to a known and trusted undertaker. This raises the possibility that the stamped lettering was an innovation of a small number of undertakers, perhaps only a few of those who were responsible for funerals at St Marylebone and, if so, including Garstin’s, who furnished David Hall’s funeral in 1844 (CWA 948-3, 742). One of the few previously published examples is also from St Marylebone parish: a lead plate of 1836 from the Paddington Street north burial ground (Henderson et al. 2015, 68). It is difficult to ascertain how widespread the use of stamped lettering was, or to be more precise about the date of its introduction, as the method of applying lettering is not often referred to in excavation reports. One notable exception is the monograph on St Pancras burial ground which discusses inscription methods in valuable detail (Vitali 2011). At this site, only one of the coffin plates (dated 1822) was stamped, the others being engraved with varying levels of skill (Vitali 2011). Methods of applying inscriptions were not mentioned in reports on coffin
plates from Christ Church Spitalfields or (with the exception below) St George’s Church, Bloomsbury, both of which included large numbers of lead plates.

A rare form of lettering application is the use of cut out lead letters, of which one example was recorded at St Marylebone (plate 1193, 70487, d.1842). At other sites lead letters have been found applied directly to coffins, such as one at St George’s Bloomsbury dated 1825 (Boston et al. 2009, 151). The nature of recovery of the St Marylebone collection means that only the smallest examples of engraved lead coffin lids were retained during the clearance of the crypt (e.g. plate 1195), and it is quite possible that this technique was also used directly on coffins interred in the vaults. The rarity of this technique means that it is not possible to know whether it is chronologically significant.

**Design**

**Shape**

The shape of the coffin plates was recorded from six sites: St Marylebone, St Bride’s, Christ Church Greyfriars, Islington Green, Christ Church Spitalfields and St Pancras. For the first four of these sites, the shapes were determined by direct observation. For Christ Church Spitalfields, the illustrated typology was used to determine shape and then applied to the published data which identified the type of each plate (Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields 2003, Burial Catalogue; Reeve and Adams 1993, appendix D); similarly for St Pancras the typology developed for this assemblage was used with the published data (Emery and Wooldridge 2011, CD Table 11; Miles 2011b), along with direct observation of a sample of the assemblage, including at least one plate of each type (Hoile 2013, Appendix 6). Although lozenge- and shield-shaped plates are readily identified, some trapezoid plates are not sharply angled and so are not distinguishable at a glance from rectangles, and damage after burial can also confuse this issue. For this categorisation, a plate was recorded as a trapezium if there was a difference in length between the upper and lower edges. Some plates, particularly those stamped from tinplate, have irregular outlines and are not included within this classification, which is why the number of plates from the St Pancras assemblage included in this analysis is so low, as all but one of the coffin plates from this site are tinplate. There are also
occasional idiosyncratic plates, particularly in the St Marylebone collection, such as the pedimented shield-shaped plate of Benjamin Lawrence (70395, d.1838, plate 1192) and a number of trapezoidal plates with additions, such as the brass plate of Ellinor Hodgson (70344, d.1846, plate 440; see Fig. 5.10), the shape of which resembles contemporary neoclassical monuments (see Fig. 5.11). In total, the shapes of 1562 coffin plates were recorded (see Table 5.10).

Fig. 5.10: Brass coffin plate of Ellinor Hodgson “late of Wanstead, Essex” from St Marylebone Church (70344, d.1846, plate 440). Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.
Fig. 5.11: Monument of Robert John Grews Lawrence at St Marylebone Church (71053, d.1838, monument M082), courtesy of St Marylebone Parish Church.

Table 5.10: Shapes of regular-shaped outer and inner coffin plates from St Marylebone (926 plates), St Bride’s (262), Christ Church Greyfriars (20), Islington Green (39), Christ Church Spitalfields (295) and St Pancras (20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Rectangle</th>
<th>Trapezium</th>
<th>Lozenge</th>
<th>Shield</th>
<th>Square</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1750-1759</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760-1769</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770-1779</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780-1789</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790-1799</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1809</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810-1819</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820-1829</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830-1839</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-1849</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1853</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>661</strong></td>
<td><strong>816</strong></td>
<td><strong>72</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>1562</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exploration of this data through correspondence analysis revealed a distinctive chronological development in the use of different shapes of coffin plates, along with increased diversity in the nineteenth century (see Fig. 5.12). Within these assemblages, square plates were not used before the 1820s, and only in very low numbers from then on. Shield-shaped plates are not apparent until the 1830s, although the use of shield plates in earlier decades is known from examples elsewhere, including the mid-seventeenth century plate recorded at St Bride’s but not included in analysis (plate 1374, d.1652, see Fig. 5.1).

Fig. 5.12: Biplot of phases 1-11 (1750-1853) and coffin plate shapes, excluding shield-shaped and square plates (see Table 10).

From the last quarter of the eighteenth century, coffin furniture became more widely available, and it may be that the development of new shapes relates to this proliferation as a limited form of innovation by makers, albeit in very small numbers. The shift from rectangular to trapezoid coffin plates is clear. Coffins which tapered from the shoulder to the foot, on which the sides of a trapezoid plate would be parallel to the sides of the coffin,
were already well-established by the eighteenth century. There is no obvious practical benefit to a trapezoid coffin plate over a rectangular one, and it is suggested that the widespread adoption of this shape, in preference to rectangles, represents a stylistic development, albeit a subtle one.

Heraldry

One notable form of decoration of the 439 brass plates at St Marylebone is the use of coats of arms, which appear on 87 plates (see Figs 5.13 and 5.14). Of these, 86 can be dated and were used between 1817 and 1853, the full span of the use of the crypt (see Table 5.12). One commemorated a herald of the College of Arms, Joseph Hawker (70329) who was Clarenceux King of Arms between 1839 and his death in 1846 (Woodcock and Robinson 1988, 193). This is an exceptional collection. In the St George’s Church, Bloomsbury assemblage, an early nineteenth-century, upper middle-class, London crypt assemblage, only four plates included a coat of arms, of 125 brass plates from a collection of 403 outer plates (Boston et al. 2009, 165). At St Bride’s, four coffin plates include coats of arms, and are among the earlier objects in this collection, dating between 1740 and 1784.

Fig. 5.13: Copper alloy coffin plate (674) of James Hunter Blair from St Marylebone Church(70061, d.1822), with a large coat of arms. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.
As Kate Smith (2018, 126) notes in her study of armorial porcelain wares in the eighteenth century, coats of arms could incorporate representations of women’s lineage, but have predominantly masculine associations. However, the use of a coat of arms is not more strongly associated with the coffin plates of men (see Table 5.11; however, compare with their use on monuments, see Chapter 6).

Table 5.11: Presence and absence of coats of arms on brass coffin plates of women and men at St Marylebone Church. The association of a brass plate with a coat of arms and gender is not significant at p < .05 (p-value = 0.06189). (There are 439 brass coffin plates in total. It was not possible to ascertain the gender of three individuals commemorated on brass plates.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brass coffin plates of women</th>
<th>Brass coffin plates of men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coat of arms present</td>
<td>43 (16.9%)</td>
<td>44 (24.2%)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coat of arms absent</td>
<td>211 (83.1%)</td>
<td>138 (75.8%)</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>254</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td><strong>436</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of coffin plates that were individually engraved with a coat of arms is a variation clearly associated with cost and with the high social status of armigerous individuals. The number of grants of arms increased in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the use of heraldic decoration increased in the early nineteenth century as it fitted into Gothic Revival decorative schemes and demonstrated the patriotic pride of the elite in an era marked by revolution and war (Woodcock and Robinson 1988, 182). As well as its use in architecture, heraldic decoration was also used on coaches (Woodcock and Robinson 1988, 184), livery buttons (Peacock 1979), bookplates (Castle 1893), guns (Millmore 2015, 130) and dinner services (Smith 2018), among other items. Within the collection of plates studied, it is not possible to tell whether the use of coats of arms on coffin plates increased in this period of aristocratic confidence in the early nineteenth century, in comparison with earlier periods. Indeed, the fact that the only armorial coffin plates at St Bride’s were eighteenth-century in date suggests the reverse, although it is possible that this indicates a change in the burial population. As well as being one aspect of the widespread use of heraldry for decorative and social effect by the upper classes in this period, the longstanding association of coats of arms and funerals made them an obvious choice for engraved coffin plates. Until the eighteenth century the College of Arms had been responsible for arranging the funerals of the aristocracy (Gittings 1984), and the display of arms was closely associated with the funerary
monuments of those entitled to bear them (Woodcock and Robinson 1988, 179-180). In the early modern period arms were used on elite coffins (Tarlow 2011, 122) and even after the decline of the role of the College of Arms, the display of armorial hatchments continued to be an important aspect of the funeral arrangements of the elite (Litten 1991, 189).

The proportion of coffin plates which included coats of arms declined slightly over the few decades of the use of St Marylebone vaults (see Table 5.12 and Fig. 5.14). It is unclear whether this suggests that the families of armigerous individuals were choosing coffin plates without this high-status decoration in the last decades of interment at the church, or whether such individuals were buried elsewhere. The overall number of interments did fall before the closure of the crypt in 1853 as alternative burial places became available, such as fashionable Kensal Green cemetery which opened in 1833, just three miles from St Marylebone Church. Those who could afford to commission bespoke brass coffin plates engraved with a coat of arms would have been best placed to afford the costs of transport for burial elsewhere as tastes turned from central London burials, perhaps to the parish church of the family estate or to the exclusive vaults of Highgate cemetery (opened 1839) or Kensal Green.

Table 5.12: Dated brass plates with coats of arms at St Marylebone Church, 1810-1853.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Plates with a coat of arms</th>
<th>All brass plates</th>
<th>Percentage of brass plates with a coat of arms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810-1819</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820-1829</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830-1839</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-1849</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1853</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
170

Fig. 5.14: Brass plates with coats of arms as a proportion of all brass plates at St Marylebone Church, 1810-1853 (see Table 5.12).

Lead ‘shield and flowers’ type decorated plates

Decorated lead coffin plates within this period were commonly of the broad type consisting of a central shield flanked by flowers and/or leaves above the inscription (see Fig. 5.15). At St Marylebone, 71 (83.5%) of the 85 decorated lead plates are of this broad type. The 70 which are dated were used between 1817 and 1850, from the first year of interments in the vault to within a couple of years of its closure. Of the decorated lead plates that are not of this type, six are lozenge-shaped (all plates of women, in line with the traditional heraldic meaning of this shape), a shape which does not lend itself to the inclusion of a shield, although the floral and foliate motifs are similar in style, which is also true of some of the non-shield trapezoid and rectangular plates. This overall type was in use over a long period of time; at Christ Church Spitalfields, 22 of the 114 coffin plate types were of this form, dating between 1765 and 1852, and there were 86 plates of these 22 types, from the 288 plates in this assemblage (29.9%) (Reeve and Adams 1993). The central shield shows a shift in style in the 1820s from Rococo to symmetrical neoclassical shield types. This development was identified in the lead plates from the eighteenth-century St Marylebone Church by
Adrian Miles (Miles et al. 2008, 60) and confirmed in the types identified at Christ Church Spitalfields and plates from Christ Church Greyfriars (Hoile 2013; see Fig 5.16). From those assemblages it was clear that those with a Rococo-style shield dated to before 1825.

Fig. 5.15a: Decorated ‘shield and flowers’ lead coffin plate with Rococo shield (plate 1302, dated 1801), courtesy of St Bride’s Church © Museum of London.

Fig. 5.15b: Decorated ‘shield and flowers’ lead coffin plate with classical shield (plate 1368, dated 1825), courtesy of St Bride’s Church © Museum of London.

Fig. 5.15c: Decorated ‘shield and flowers’ lead coffin plate with ‘pinched’ classical shield (plate 1507, dated 1842), courtesy of St Bride’s Church © Museum of London.
Of the 39 decorated lead plates from Islington Green, 33 were of ‘shield and flowers’ design. The earliest plate, dated 1799, is damaged but looks to have a Rococo shield (1631). One plate has a central oval, (1610, dated 1829), one has what looks to be a stylised flower, rather than a shield (1616, dated 1835) and only one has a complete (though indistinct) Rococo shield (1623, dated 1821). The earliest plate with a regular shield shape is dated 1816 (1609).

The wider date range of the St Bride’s assemblage offers the opportunity to trace this development over a longer period. There are 19 plates with Rococo shields in this collection, dated between 1782 and 1822. In one case the shield is reversed so that it leans towards the left (1416, dated 1786), but on all the other plates of this type they lean towards the right, as is customary. The 43 plates of this broad type with symmetrical, classical-style shields are dated between 1806 and 1852. The earliest two of this type are dated 1806 (1422) and 1809 (1476), with all the rest dated after 1821. These two plates are of unusually early dates for this type.

The shape of the later, symmetrical shields continued to develop, to one with sides that curve inwards slightly and flare out towards the top (see Fig. 5.15c). This change is not as distinct
as that from Rococo to classical shields, but is a subtle development on some plates from the 1830s. All eight of the symmetrical shields on plates of the 1840s and 1850s at St Bride’s have this ‘pinched’ shape, and on some it is very pronounced (see Fig. 5.17). This may be helpful in dating illegible coffin plates, but its effect on contemporary viewers, in the context of a coffin plate or even the coffin as a whole, would be unlikely to be noticeable.

![Fig. 5.17: Decorated ‘shield and flowers’ type lead coffin plate of Martha Varley (d.1848) from St Bride’s Church, with a ‘pinched’ shield (plate 1389), courtesy of St Bride’s Church © Museum of London.](image)

**Motifs**

The previous work on which this project builds focused mainly on motifs on coffin plates and their periods of use in comparison with those on monuments. The motifs used on below-ground funerary material culture showed a notably different, later, period of use than those above ground (see Fig. 5.18). This was based on analysis of the individual motifs on the plates.
of Christ Church Spitalfields, St Pancras and Christ Church Greyfriars and general trends above ground, identified by, for example, Burgess (1963). The trends in monuments were also explored with reference to the relatively small number of monuments in Christ Church Spitalfields (Friends at Christ Church Spitalfields 2019) and at St Pancras (Rendall 2011). Motifs were coded with a system based on that devised by Mytum (2000) for recording gravestones.

Mytum’s (2018) recent study comparing coffin furniture and monuments also drew on London assemblages for the below-ground material, particularly that of Christ Church Spitalfields, and upon large research projects on gravestones in Pembrokeshire and Yorkshire, as well as considering the evidence of memorials from other areas. He found that the same motifs were first used on coffin fittings later than on monuments, and continued to be used below ground long after they had fallen out of use above (Mytum 2018, 89). Additionally, some popular styles remained in use, unchanged, over a period of over 50 years, among them the Christ Church Spitalfields breastplate type 6 discussed below (Mytum 2018, 89). Mytum also noted that patterns of dome-headed pins used on coffins remained in use over long periods, in contrast with popular forms of monuments: another sign of conservatism in coffin styles (Mytum 2018, 89). This study also found that motifs accumulate

Fig 5.18: Comparison of motifs used on above- and below-ground funerary material culture. Above ground: the development of headstone motifs (after Burgess 1963). Below ground: the date range of selected motifs on coffin breastplates from Christ Church Spitalfields, St Pancras and Christ Church Greyfriars: mortality, resurrection, urns, and crosses. The earliest excavated breastplate in the studied assemblages is dated 1708 (indicated by the shaded area) and those with at least one of these motifs date between 1757 and 1849 (previously in Hoile 2018).
on coffin furniture designs, with urns, for example, added in to the existing stylistic vocabulary drawn on by manufacturers, in contrast with monuments which tend to demonstrate the replacement of one style with another (Mytum 2018, 89).

Methods of identifying and analysing motifs were difficult to apply to the assemblages from St Marylebone, St Bride’s and Islington Green, as these are mostly lead and brass and many do not have any kind of motifs. Most of the decorated lead plates are of the ‘shield and flowers’ type discussed above. One exception is a decorated plate type found at both St Marylebone and St Bride’s (though not among the lead plates from Islington Green). This is a design replete with a range of motifs, that demonstrates a very long period of use. It was identified in the Christ Church Spitalfields assemblage as breastplate type 6 (Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields 2003) and is also part of the St Pancras typology as type 29 (Miles 2011b, 9; see Fig. 6.14). There are four examples of this type from St Marylebone vaults, dating to between 1819 and 1844, almost the full period of use, and the five from St Bride’s are dated between 1806 and 1816. The design includes a flaming urn, angels with trumpets and a small skull and crossed longbones and has been found at multiple sites in London and beyond. It was clearly in use over an extended period; the combined dates of its use from Christ Church Spitalfields, St Pancras and New Bunhill Fields are 1783 to 1847 (Miles 2011b, 9). This plate type was found only with adult males at St Pancras, where the inscriptions were legible (Miles 2011b, 10), but this is not the case at St Marylebone vaults and St Bride’s, where six of the nine from both sites were for adult women. This plate design appears in the ‘E. L.’ trade catalogue of c.1826 in two sizes. The smaller of these, number 035, measured 14 by 10 inches and the cheapest version, ‘white’, that is, unpainted, cost 11s per dozen or 4s in a set with three pairs of number 7 handles (V&A E.3112-1910). The cost is comparable with different plate designs of the same or very similar size; plate number 53, for example, is the same price per dozen and slightly cheaper in a set with different handles (V&A E.3099-1910). The popularity of this plate type cannot be attributed either to its low cost or to a high cost which would suggest the positive selection of a more exclusive design. At St Pancras, Adrian Miles noted that some plates had sharper details than others, suggesting the work of several manufacturers (Miles 2011b, 9).

Other than this popular and long-used type and the ‘shield and flowers’ plates, the number of plates from St Marylebone or St Bride’s which include motifs is extremely low and it is difficult to find any to directly compare with motifs on monuments. The coffin furniture
trade catalogues show some more variations, but these are not matched by objects that were actually used within the assemblages studied. This is probably mainly to do with the nature of the assemblages, which are predominantly brass and lead plates and mostly from church vaults, compared with the catalogues which include many designs that have only been identified in tinplate. While some of the regular-shaped designs, like the rectangular Christ Church Spitalfields breastplate type 6, have been found in a range of materials, those with an irregular outline appear to have been intended for tinplate only (see Fig. 5.19).

Fig. 5.19: Coffin plate design, number 487, from a trade catalogue of c.1783, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection (YCBA L 201.15 Folio B, 43).
The assemblages of St Marylebone, St Bride’s and Islington Green consist solely of coffin plates (with a few undated grip plates) but some motifs, notably crucifixes and weeping figures with monuments, are known from lid motif types in trade catalogues, unused items in museum collections and excavated examples. These are discussed in relation to motifs on monuments in the following chapter.

Trends in coffin furniture, c.1750-1850

Overall, little about coffin plate design changed between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, and the changes that are apparent under close scrutiny would likely not have been particularly obvious to all but the most careful contemporary observers. This conclusion reinforces previous findings on the conservatism of coffin furniture in this period. Within the material included in this study, the use of Latin in coffin plate inscriptions was not chronologically significant. Similarly, the use of heraldry on brass plates did not appear to change over time, although the slight decline in its use towards the end of the period might suggest that the wealthiest families were choosing alternative burial places in the final decades before the closure of central London’s church crypts. The content of inscriptions did not change over time and no emotional language was apparent on the coffin plates studied, except for the two described here, notable as possibly the only examples known from this period. The scope for analysing motifs has been limited, but the use of the popular breastplate type CCS 6 over an extended period, within a very long period of use established from other sites, demonstrates how a range of motifs could be used on designs that were produced and used over many decades.

However, despite this overall stasis, a few small changes have been identified in the material. The use of the long s seems to have declined from the 1820s, even in lettering styles that were not based on handwriting styles, which is later than its usual use in print. The typography of brass plates developed as new lettering styles were introduced in the early nineteenth century, including the sans serif of stamped lettering, a method that was introduced in this period but is not chronologically significant within this dataset. The shapes of coffin plates became more diverse over time and the material shows a shift from rectangular to trapezoidal plates. The shift from Rococo to symmetrical classical shields on the lead ‘shield and flowers’ plates is confirmed in the material from St Marylebone, St Bride’s and Islington Green, and a further, more subtle, development has been identified: the use of
a ‘pinched’ shield from the 1830s. Additionally, some motifs that were popular on monuments and mourning jewellery, such as the mourning figure with an urn, do not appear on the coffin plates studied nor within the trade catalogues of the era. However, this motif was used on lid motifs from around the 1830s, and seems to be, at least at first, associated with the most expensive coffins (see Chapter 3).

The changes in coffin plate design and inscriptions were very limited and, once established, styles remained in use for extended periods, largely unchanged. This is in contrast with the development of monuments in this period and the relationships between below- and above-ground funerary material culture will be explored in the following chapter.
6 Monuments: Comparing styles above and below ground

A memorial of his value and her loss ¹

Coffin furniture of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries clearly shares some characteristics with monuments of the period; both were inscribed with names and dates, and some share motifs or include coats of arms. However, coffin furniture and monuments clearly differ in important respects. For example, while both coffin plates and monument inscriptions identify the dead, the contexts of their use are very different in terms of visibility, audience and timescale. Their costs, materials and processes of production were also very different. Some of these differences have been identified by Harold Mytum as key to understanding the stylistic differences between coffin furniture and monuments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Mytum 2004; 2018). In a recent chapter he explored the dynamics of stylistic change of funerary material culture in depth, arguing that the differences in the styles of coffin furniture and monuments and their rates of change could be explained by the power relationships between producers and consumers and the emotional states of the latter during the transaction due to the timing of these purchases, as well as the differing social roles of a furnished coffin and a funerary monument (Mytum 2018). He identified undertakers as those who “seem to be the conservative brake on fashion change”, while the clients of masons were, in contrast, able to exert greater influence within their individual purchases, each of which contributed to an overall higher rate of stylistic change in monuments (Mytum 2018, 90).

This chapter will examine monuments from the same and comparable sites to those of the coffin furniture examined in the previous chapter in order to identify similarities and differences in styles. It will also explore the production and use of monuments. This chapter

¹ From the inscription of a monument at St Marylebone Church, by Ann Sewell to her husband, John Sewell (d.1833, M012).
mainly focuses on monuments within churches, as the best comparison with coffin furniture from crypts which forms the bulk of the material studied. In the case of St Marylebone Church in particular, it is possible to compare a large quantity of coffin plates and monuments from the same site and, in some cases, of the same people.

**Material**

**Issues**

There are several difficulties in comparing above- and below-ground styles of funerary material culture. Firstly, many of those buried with coffin furniture, probably a majority, were not commemorated with a monument, and, even if they were, many monuments do not survive, particularly in central London. A study by the University of Leicester Graveyards Group analysed the proportion of those recorded in burial records in six Leicestershire parishes with surviving monuments, and found that between 1750 and 1849, this was only 6.29% (University of Leicester Graveyards Group 2012, 185, Table 10). This study identified interesting variations in the data relating to gender (overall, more men than women were commemorated) and time period, but the most significant factor affecting the probability of commemoration was whether the burial was in a rural or urban parish, with an average of 15.75% surviving commemoration of the buried population in rural parishes between 1750 and 1849, compared with 5.52% in urban parishes in the same period (University of Leicester Graveyards Group 2012, 185, Table 10). While the paper did not aim to identify the reasons for this, it noted that “the processes of attrition are highest where there is greatest pressure on space” (University of Leicester Graveyards Group 2012, 188), which would suggest that the proportion of those commemorated on remaining monuments in London burial grounds is at least as low as those in Leicester. At the Anglican graveyard in Nevern, north Pembrokeshire, Mytum found a higher proportion of commemoration in the early nineteenth century, with more than a quarter of burials having a stone memorial in 1820, rising to half after 1860 (Mytum 2002a, 207). However, it is clear that even under the most favourable conditions for monument use and retention, a majority of people buried before the mid-nineteenth century would not have been commemorated with a monument and the cost was prohibitive to many. A certain level of wealth was necessary, but not sufficient, for memorialisation. Whereas 695 names of individuals interred in the St Marylebone vaults are
known (from a likely original total of 850 or so), 130 people are named on the monuments of the same era.

A serious practical difficulty is the condition of the material and the difficulties of deciphering, dating and interpreting it. This is a particular problem for headstones and other outdoor monuments, which are subject to environmental, as well as human, damage. Since the closure of central London’s burial grounds in the 1850s, pollution, weathering and the growth of vegetation have damaged or obscured many headstones, rendering them illegible. They are also less likely to be considered of intrinsic aesthetic value than church monuments of the same period, and therefore have been more vulnerable to neglect or removal. As early as the late nineteenth century many of London’s old burial grounds were converted to public parks, providing much-needed urban oases, or were disturbed for building works. This usually included the destruction, removal or at least relocation of headstones. For example, most, if not all, of the many monuments of the Third Ground at St Pancras burial ground were moved, buried or destroyed during railway construction in the 1860s and gravestones in other areas were moved and stacked during the conversion of the site to a public park in

Fig. 6.1: Stacked headstones at the burial ground of St Pancras Old Church (photograph taken July 2013).
1877 and changes to its layout in 1890-91 (Emery and Wooldridge 2011, 43, 196-199; see Fig. 6.1). Clearances of urban churchyards have also been carried out for practical or aesthetic reasons (Mytum et al. 1994). Selective preservation of notable monuments also affects the kinds of analysis that are possible, as Sarah Tarlow has pointed out: “Individual monuments may be delightful curiosities, but are far less useful in the identification of historical process” (Tarlow 2005, 167).

As well as changes as a result of damage, monuments may also have changed in position or appearance from their original state. For example, gravestones may originally have been painted, with black, white (with lime) and polychrome monuments described in early nineteenth-century sources (Burgess 1963, 275; Morley 1971, 57). Even indoors, protected from weathering, restoration may have had as much of an effect on some monuments as neglect has on others. The very detailed descriptions of the monuments at St Peter’s, Barton-upon-Humber, reveal eventful biographies (Rodwell 2011). Some were moved during renovations of the 1850s or to accommodate the installation of an organ chamber in the 1890s, a few have lost parts of their original decoration and all have been cleaned, with unsympathetic Victorian treatments potentially having removed original surface decoration. The impact of later nineteenth-century tastes on earlier monuments is apparent here, as the monument to Elizabeth Willan (d.1779) probably had its original gilding removed “to make the monument more sombre and appropriate to death” (Rodwell 2011, 1180).

Dating monuments is not necessarily straightforward. The monuments in this study include many with multiple commemorations over several years, and monuments of famous individuals have sometimes been restored or replaced decades after their deaths. There are two wall tablets in St Marylebone commemorating members of the Cavendish-Bentinck family who died between 1794 and 1848, but which date from 1885 when they were placed in the eighteenth-century parish church, before being moved to their current location in 1948-9 (M077 and M078; Temple and Thom 2017, 70). These monuments were recorded and numbered before their date was established but are not included in the analysis below. Mytum’s (2002b) detailed study of dating headstones identified a number of complicating factors and highlighted the importance of identifying the primary text (the first inscription), which may not be of the same date as the death of the first person listed, which he terms the primary commemoration. Some monuments may be earlier than the primary commemoration due to the use of old stock retained by masons before use, the marking of
burial plots or the reuse of stones (Mytum 2002b, 3-4). Four of the monuments at St John’s
Wood burial ground include a declaration of ownership (M140, M153, M164 and M165, see
Fig. 6.2), three of which are the family graves of people who may not themselves be buried
there, as their names are not listed (although in the case of M140, the family grave of A. G.
Raistrick, the final part of the inscription is illegible). One is “THE FAMILY GRAVE OF
WILLIAM ARTAUD OF SAINT MARYLEBONE”, underneath which the only burial
listed is that of John Ashton Artaud, who died in 1839, aged 6 (M164). Some monuments
may be later in date than the primary commemoration for reasons such as the creation of
‘back-dated’ monuments, in order to include family members who had died in previous years
on a new monument or the replacement of damaged or decayed stones (Mytum 2002b, 4-7).

Fig. 6.2: Headstone at St John’s Wood burial ground inscribed “MR HENRY GUY’S FAMILY
GRAVE” (M165).

The burial places of St Marylebone parish in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries
demonstrate different approaches to the later management of pre-mid-nineteenth century
burial grounds and illustrate some of the issues encountered in studying monuments. The
oldest place of burial in the parish was the churchyard of the medieval church and its
replacement, built in 1741, which stood on Marylebone High Street until demolition in 1949.
Some of the churchyard was covered by a school playground in 1930, and a small garden of
rest was created in 1951 over part of the site of the old church and graveyard (Miles et al.
2008, 7). Part of the school playground was investigated archaeologically by MOLA in 1992
and excavated between 2004 and 2006 and some fragments of inscribed stones were found,
along with headstone bases, broken off beneath ground level (Miles et al. 2008, 7-8). A tiny section of the churchyard survives as the memorial garden of rest on Marylebone High Street, which includes ledger slabs and a number of headstones, some of which are broken. The largest monument is an obelisk in memory of Charles Wesley (d.1834) and family, erected by the Methodist Conference in 1858, which was moved in 1931, 1952 and in the early 2000s before being placed back in its 1952 position in 2012 (Temple and Thom 2017, 70-71). The Paddington Street South burial ground is a large site; by 1833 Thomas Smith calculated that more than 80,000 burials had taken place in the 100 years since its consecration and published a selective list of its memorials as these were “so numerous” (Smith 1833, 127). Even then, he noted with dismay that the inscription on the headstone of George Canning (father of the British Prime Minister of the same name) was already almost illegible after only 56 years. Only one monument now remains, the mausoleum built to hold the remains of Susanna Fitzpatrick, who died in 1760, and also used for those of her daughter Anne, Baroness de Robeck, in 1829 (Temple and Thom 2017, 108). Retained due to its huge size and architectural interest, it now sits in splendid isolation among the flower beds, a very different setting to its original context. Pressure on existing parish burial space led to the opening of the smaller Paddington Street North burial ground in 1772, part of which was excavated by MOLA in 2012-13 (Henderson et al. 2015). By 1833 it was said to include “a large number of tombs, some of which are of the most splendid description” (Smith 1833, 131). Both Paddington Street grounds were cleared for use as public gardens in 1886 (Henderson et al. 2015, 13). A survey of monuments made at that time found 884 remaining in the north burial ground, including altar tombs (81) and ledger stones (98) as well as headstones (705), with most of the monuments (695, 78.6%) remaining legible (Henderson et al. 2015, 13). A contemporary newspaper report suggested that the legible gravestones would be placed by the walls or on the ground (Henderson et al. 2015, 13), but few now remain. The church at St John’s Wood was originally opened as a chapel of ease for the parish in 1814, with the burial ground established at the same time. The church itself includes a number of monuments. The adjoining burial ground is now also a public park but, unlike the Paddington Street sites, it retains a large number of headstones and other monuments, many of which appear to be in their original positions (see Fig. 6.3). A couple of gravestones of notable individuals at this site have been restored, those of the painter John Sell Cotman (d.1842) and Samuel Godley (d.1832), who fought at the Battle of Waterloo. A headstone to the prophet Joanna Southcott (d.1814) records that it was placed there in 1965 (by the outer wall, rather than at the site of her grave), replacing the original monument of 1828.
The monuments within the ‘new’ St Marylebone Church and St John’s Wood Church remain, protected from weather, vandalism or removal. At St Marylebone, some of the monuments from the eighteenth-century church, “the most significant” (Temple and Thom 2017, 62), were saved from destruction and moved to the foyer and staircases of the current church in 1948-9. The larger, more robust monuments of the parish’s wealthier inhabitants are also more likely to have survived in its burial grounds, and those of famous individuals have been conserved or replaced.

Sites

St Marylebone Church

Happily (and not coincidentally), the site which has afforded the largest number of monuments is also the site with the largest collection of coffin plates, St Marylebone Church. The coffin plates from the crypt are dated between 1801 and 1853 (with the seven earliest interments moved to the new church after it opened in 1817). Eighty-three monuments commemorate at least one individual who died between these dates, with the pre-1817 monuments also relocated from the nearby eighteenth-century church it replaced. Only two monuments are dated (M076 dated 1839, for Henrietta Peach, d.1838, and M025 dated 1835,
for Louisa Little, d.1834). For the others it is assumed that they were erected within a couple of years of the death of the principal individual commemorated and the date of death has been used in the analyses below. These 83 monuments commemorate 130 people, who died between 1793 and 1860 (median 1830; see Fig. 6.9) and of these there are 79 for whom at least one coffin plate has been identified. Thirty-eight of the monuments are signed by sculptors. The majority of the monuments are on the walls of the nave and the lower of the two galleries above, including on the sides of the window recesses (see Fig. 6.4). There are two monuments on the wall of the upper gallery, and several on the walls of the entrance lobby and the east and west staircases to the galleries, including the monuments which are earliest in date and which were moved from the older church. Two rooms have been created at the back of the nave in recent years, and so several of the monuments are now within the meeting room or the kitchen. Another three are now enclosed within the lift-mechanism cupboard and were therefore not recorded.

Fig. 6.4: Monuments at St Marylebone Church. Courtesy of St Marylebone Parish Church.

St Bride’s Church

The almost complete destruction of the church in 1940 means that only a very few monuments survive at St Bride’s, now displayed in the crypt exhibition space, and only three visible monuments date to the period covered by the coffin plates 1740 to 1852. It is unclear whether these are complete, as, while the central inscribed tablets remain, each would likely
have been mounted on a further ground and may be missing original decorative supports or pediments (see Fig. 6.5). None of the few names that are legible on these monuments are also found on coffin plates from this site.

Information about the earlier monuments were published in the Survey of London monograph for St Bride’s which was published in 1944, based on pre-war material (Godfrey 1944). This includes transcriptions of the wall monuments, ledger slabs and graveyard monuments of the church, with an indication of the lettering type used and a few additional details, such as whether a coat of arms was included. The author, William H. Godfrey, noted that he had three transcripts of the monuments to draw upon and that the information recorded is accurate, “but none of these gives those exact particulars of lettering which we are in the habit of recording in these volumes” (Godfrey 1944, xiv). The monograph lists 43 wall monuments dated between 1700 and 1850, with a further 27 ledger slabs. A small number of entries include information about decoration with more briefly describing the materials used. For example, the monument to Carey Stafford (d.1778) is listed as an
“Inscribed wall tablet of stone, with the lettering contained within a carved cartouche, surmounted by a shield of arms” (Godfrey 1944, 69).

**St Stephen Walbrook**

As only a tiny number of monuments from St Bride’s were available to study, the monuments with dates of death between 1740 and 1852 from St Stephen Walbrook were recorded as an example of a City church. The dates of death of the 34 people commemorated on these 14 monuments are between 1732 and 1847, with a median date of 1798. Clearly, these parishes, though geographically close, are likely to have had demographic, social and cultural differences that would have affected the choice, placement and forms of monuments. However, these monuments are included here to extend the chronological span of the monuments studied.

**St John’s Wood burial ground**

The monuments from St John’s Wood burial ground were recorded in order to provide a small sample of outdoor monuments. As this is within the same parish as St Marylebone, this also facilitates comparison between church and burial ground monuments. Monuments have been cleared from part of the burial ground, the whole of which is now a public park. Most of the inscriptions on the remaining monuments were not legible, in whole or part, due to erosion of the surface, damage or plant growth. Only those which could be dated to within a decade were recorded, which yielded 40 recorded monuments from a total of 467 counted monuments (8.6%). Several more were within a wildlife area containing many trees and plants and so were hidden if not visible from the paths. The monument to Joanna Southcott (d.1814) is a replacement, made in 1965, for the original headstone, erected in 1828. Though it is of nineteenth-century style, and likely replicates the original inscription (itself, interestingly, made 14 years after Southcott’s death), this monument has not been included in the analysis below as it is not clear that the lettering, in particular, is an exact copy of the original. The restored monuments to John Sell Cotman (d.1842, M146), and Samuel Godley (d.1832, M169) have been included. The dates of death of those recorded on the monuments are between 1821 and 1866, with a median date of 1840. The 1866 burial is that of Patrick Hadow, in a vault with a gabled cross monument above it (M154) in which his wife, Douglas (d.1845), and daughter, Louise Henrietta (d.1836), had previously been interred. Due to the
form of the monument, with inscriptions around the sides, rather than arranged vertically, it is unclear which is the primary commemoration and it may date to 1866, which would place it outside the scope of this project. Where a family vault existed, burials could be permitted in burial grounds which were otherwise closed, and the previous burial was in 1853, the year in which St John’s Wood burial ground was closed. Most are headstones, but the recorded monuments also include three footstones (M135, M142 and M144), one obelisk (M145) and three tombs (M153, a chest tomb, and M154 and M156 which are both low monuments with a gabled cross). A further seven are flat slabs, at least some of which may originally have been upright (M132, M136, M148, M149, M150, M151, M152).

Summary

In all, 140 monuments were recorded, 100 of which were from three churches, with 40 from St John’s Wood burial ground (see Table 6.1 and Fig. 6.6).

Table 6.1: Summary of the recorded monuments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Number of monuments</th>
<th>Number of people commemorated</th>
<th>Date range (all dates of death)</th>
<th>Median date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone Church</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1793 – 1860</td>
<td>1830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Bride’s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1790 – 1833</td>
<td>1819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Stephen Walbrook</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1732 – 1847</td>
<td>1798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John’s Wood</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1821 – 1866</td>
<td>1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
<td><strong>237</strong></td>
<td><strong>1732 – 1866</strong></td>
<td><strong>1831</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison of above- and below-ground funerary material culture

The most direct comparisons possible are between the coffin plates and monuments of St Marylebone. These are not only from the same site but, in some cases, relate to the same people (see Fig. 6.7). Of the 130 people commemorated on the 83 monuments studied at St Marylebone, there are 79 (60.8%) for whom at least one coffin plate has been identified. Therefore, 11.4% of the 695 people identified from coffin plates are commemorated on monuments.
Fig. 6.7: Coffin plate (340) and monument (M050) of George Augustus Thursby (d.1836, 70618). Coffin plate, Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading. Photograph of monument courtesy of St Marylebone Parish Church.

Fig. 6.8: Chart of years of death of individuals with coffin plates, St Marylebone Church. n=692 (There are coffin plates for 695 individuals, but two have illegible dates and one is of uncertain date.)
The date profile of both coffin plates and monuments at St Marylebone is similar, with both peaking in the early 1830s (see Figs 6.8 and 6.9). As interments in the crypt declined, so did the use of monuments, suggesting that monumental commemoration moved to the place of burial and that, whatever other factors were important in siting monuments (and notwithstanding a small number of monuments to those buried elsewhere), proximity to the body remained of primary importance. Although there are more coffin plates for women than men, the reverse is true of the individuals commemorated on monuments (see Table 6.2). The proportion of coffin plates and monuments of those aged under 18 to those aged 18 and over is comparable (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.2: St Marylebone coffin plates and monument inscriptions, by gender of commemorated individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Not known</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coffin plates</strong></td>
<td>300 (43.2%)</td>
<td>390 (56.1%)</td>
<td>5 (0.7%)</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monuments</strong></td>
<td>72 (55.4%)</td>
<td>58 (44.6%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 6.9: Chart of years of death for individuals commemorated on monuments at St Marylebone Church which include at least one person with a date of death between 1801 and 1853. n=129 (No date of death is given for Alexander Campbell, 71056.)
Table 6.3: St Marylebone coffin plates and monument inscriptions, by age of commemorated individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Under 18 (11.4%)</th>
<th>18 or above (81.2%)</th>
<th>Not known (7.5%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffin plates</td>
<td>79 (11.4%)</td>
<td>564 (81.2%)</td>
<td>52 (7.5%)</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monuments</td>
<td>14 (10.8%)</td>
<td>115 (88.5%)</td>
<td>1 (0.8%)</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Inscriptions: content**

Clearly, a key difference between inscriptions on coffin plates and on monuments is that the latter frequently commemorated more than one person, which was almost never the case for coffin plates (an extremely rare exception being the lead plate from St Bride’s for Sarah Edkins and her son Edward (d.1826, plate 1277, see Fig. 2.3)). At St Marylebone, 32 monuments (38.6%) are for more than one person. This is the case for two of the three recorded monuments of St Brides and nine of the monuments of St Stephen Walbrook (64.3%). For the headstones of St John’s Wood burial ground it is difficult to be sure how many people were originally commemorated on one headstone but there are 15 (of 37, excluding three footstones, 40.5%) which retain at least some details of more than one person (in the case of M134 the original presence of an additional name can be inferred from the remaining inscription). Although bound by convention to an extent, the inscriptions on headstones and especially church monuments could vary considerably in length and content, in comparison with the formulaic coffin plate inscriptions. Those on church monuments could be very long and include excerpts from the Bible or literary sources. By contrast, even coffin plates with additional details rarely ran to as many as seven lines of text, with five being standard.

**Places of life and death**

The use of placenames on monuments is largely similar to coffin plates, where four categories were identified: place of birth, places associated with roles and professions, places of residence and family estates and place of death (see Chapter 5). Clearly, much more detail is possible on what are sometimes very long monumental inscriptions, and some include placenames of all four types, such as the monument to Henrietta Peach (d.1838, 70498, M076), the main inscription of which reads:
In addition, several monuments record the place of burial, whether close to the monument itself or elsewhere. Phrases such as “IN A VAULT NEAR THIS PLACE” (M032), “NEAR TO THIS SPOT” (M042) or simply “UNDERNEATH” (M037) emphasise the proximity of the interment to the monument. Some monuments in St Marylebone Church note burial elsewhere, such as that of William Humfrey (d.1839, 71010, M022), “INTERRED IN ST MARYLEBONE BURIAL GROUND”. The Burton family monument at St Marylebone (M003) indicates a shift in the burial space of the family that pre-dates the closing of the church vaults. Robert Burton (71001, M003), who died in 1842, is recorded as having been buried at Kensal Green, which opened in 1833, rather in the vault with his parents and brother, whose coffin plates were recovered in the vault clearance. By contrast, shortly after the opening of the church, the remains of Benjamin Oakley (71011), who died in 1815, aged 17, were removed from his original resting place in the church of Tooting Graveney in Surrey to be placed in the family vault, apparently at or around the time of the funeral in 1817 of his sister, Fanny (71012), recorded on the same monument (M026). While the presence of coffin plates that pre-date the completion of St Marylebone church indicates that his was not the only coffin to be moved, this must have been unusual, and more commonly monuments provided an opportunity to commemorate family members together, even when their physical remains were separated.

Euphemisms for death

The longer inscriptions on headstones and monuments include many more variations for ‘died’ than those of coffin plates, although in small numbers (see Table 6.4).
Table 6.4: Words or phrases used before the date of death on monuments at St Marylebone (131), St Bride’s (9), St Stephen Walbrook (28) and St John’s Wood (55), 223 in total.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of death</th>
<th>Died</th>
<th>Departed this life</th>
<th>Was lost</th>
<th>Expired</th>
<th>Obiit</th>
<th>Taken from the world</th>
<th>It pleased providence</th>
<th>Fell</th>
<th>Lost his life</th>
<th>Predeceased</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1740-1744</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1745-1749</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*It pleased providence to terminate his useful and honorable life* (M012).
Most of the 223 monument inscriptions for individuals which include a word or phrase before the date of death have ‘died’ (163, 73.1%) or ‘departed this life’ (41, 18.4%). Ten (4.5%) of the monuments include the Latin ‘obit’ (discussed below) and nine (4.0%) have other words or phrases (see Table 6.5).

Table 6.5: Alternatives to ‘died’ and ‘departed this life’ on monument inscriptions at St Marylebone, St Bride's and St Stephen Walbrook (no variations were found at St John’s Wood).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Person number</th>
<th>Monument number</th>
<th>Date of death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predeceased</td>
<td>Hannah Blades ³</td>
<td>71208</td>
<td>M202</td>
<td>1790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was lost</td>
<td>Charles Elphinstone</td>
<td>71037</td>
<td>M073</td>
<td>1807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fell</td>
<td>Richard Fitzgerald</td>
<td>71000</td>
<td>M001</td>
<td>1815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expired</td>
<td>Alexander George Mackay</td>
<td>70424</td>
<td>M057</td>
<td>1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expired</td>
<td>Margaret Scott</td>
<td>71018</td>
<td>M033</td>
<td>1829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken from the world</td>
<td>John Hornby Little</td>
<td>70408</td>
<td>M025</td>
<td>1829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It pleased providence to</td>
<td>John Sewell</td>
<td>70571</td>
<td>M012</td>
<td>1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terminate his useful and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honorable life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fell gloriously</td>
<td>George Alfred Croly</td>
<td>71168</td>
<td>M217</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost his life</td>
<td>Alexander Campbell</td>
<td>71056</td>
<td>M085</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four of these are inscriptions to people who were serving in the armed forces at the time of their deaths: Captain Charles Elphinstone, R.N., who was lost at sea, Lt. Col. Richard Fitzgerald, who died “in the field of Waterloo”, Lt. George Alfred Croly, who died in battle in India, and Major Alexander Campbell, who “lost his life while serving on the Spanish Main”. In three cases the people commemorated were buried overseas and for Charles Elphinstone’s family there was no body to bury. The unusual nature of these deaths, combined with the high social status of military officers, affected the language used. Unsurprisingly for a dataset of this date range, no instances of metaphors of sleep were

³ As the phrase ‘predeceased’ suggests, the primary inscription on this monument is to Hannah Blades’ husband, John, and so the monument most likely dates to shortly after his death in 1828.
found, such as ‘fell asleep’ in place of ‘died’. In Sarah Tarlow’s study of Orkney monuments this euphemism was used from the 1860s onwards (Tarlow 1999, 64, Table 3.3). The only references to sleep on the monuments studied occur in inscriptions of children. One monument, at St John’s Wood burial ground, includes the phrase “she is not dead but sleeping” as part of the inscription to Louisa Henrietta Hadow, who died, aged 17, in 1836 (M154). The Shore family monument at St Marylebone (M031) includes inscriptions to children who were buried elsewhere and a verse from the Bible, “Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (I. Thes. 1.14).

**Emotional language**

The use of emotional language was common on monuments, in contrast with coffin plates, on which only two instances were identified. Of the inscriptions relating to the sole or primary person commemorated on the 137 monuments studied, 49 (35.8%) included emotional language (see Fig. 6.10). This varied from single words, such as “dearly-loved” (Louisa Harcourt Stuart Percy, 70505, M002; see Fig. 6.16), to longer phrases such as “beloved and lamented by his numerous friends” (Edward Pelham Brenton, 70079, M055), to whole paragraphs:

```
BELOVED RESPECTED AND DEEPLY LAMENTED
BY HIS FAMILY, FRIENDS AND ALL WHO KNEW HIM,
THIS TABLET IS ERECTED TO HIS MEMORY
BY HIS AFFECTIONATE RELATIVES AS A TRIBUTE TO HIS WORTH
AND A MEMORIAL OF THEIR INDIVIDUAL REGARD AND ESTEEM.
```

(Alexander George Mackay, 70424, M057)

The monuments which include emotional language at St Stephen Walbrook are all of eighteenth-century date, but overall the inclusion of emotional language does not appear to have chronological significance within the timeframe of the monuments studied.
The monument inscriptions illustrate how those commissioning or producing engraved coffin plates could have incorporated emotional language into plate inscriptions. For example, Janet Laurence Bebb (70044) is commemorated in an economical manner beneath her husband’s much longer monumental inscription (M035):

ALSO OF JANET LAURENCE BEBB, WIDOW OF THE ABOVE
WHO DIED THE 7TH OF APRIL 1850,
IN THE 85TH YEAR OF HER AGE.
DEEPLY LAMENTED

Her brass outer coffin plate (1008) simply reads:

JANET LAURENCE BEBB
Widow of
John Bebb Esquire.
DIED 7TH APRIL,
1850,
Aged 84 Years.

The large coffin plates used at St Marylebone could easily have accommodated the addition of ‘deeply lamente’d’, or ‘beloved’ before “widow of”. That this language is completely absent
Language

As with the coffin plates, the use of Latin on monuments is notable (see Table 6.6). At St Stephen Walbrook, five of the six seventeenth-century monuments (not included in this study) are entirely in Latin, but this practice is very rare in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century monuments studied, with only one, that of Mary Mackenzie (d.1821, 70427, M048), at St Marylebone, with a complete inscription in Latin. As with coffin plates, the most common use of Latin words on monuments is the use of ‘obit’ for ‘died’ or ‘ætat’ for ‘aged’, or their abbreviations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Number of people named on monuments</th>
<th>Number of people with Latin on monument</th>
<th>Percentage of people with Latin on monument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Bride’s</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Stephen Walbrook</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John’s Wood</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>236</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of people whose monument inscriptions including Latin was larger than those with Latin on coffin plates, but the numbers are small. At St Marylebone, 7.7% of the personal inscriptions on monuments included Latin, compared with 4.7% of coffin plates (see Table 5.3). The high proportion of inscriptions including Latin at St Bride’s are from the six people of the same family commemorated on one monument (M200). The proportion of monuments including Latin is much higher on church monuments than on those of St John’s Wood burial ground, and highlights the exclusivity of these monuments to educated elites (Tarlow 1999, 99).
The use of other languages on monuments is minimal, as it is on coffin plates. The monument at St Marylebone to Joseph Fernandez Madrid (d.1830, 71020, M036; see Fig. 6.12), a Colombian diplomat, is mostly in English, but includes some of his own poetry in Spanish. No coffin plate was recorded for him. The French phrase “Esperance en Dieu” (Hope in God) is inscribed at the top of the monument to Louisa Stuart Harcourt, Countess of Beverley (d.1848, 70505, M002; see Fig. 6.16), also at St Marylebone.

Elements of inscriptions which were not used on coffin plates

The longer inscriptions possible on monuments afforded the opportunity to include quotations from, most commonly, the Bible or the Book of Common Prayer but occasionally from other sources. Robert Morse’s monument (d.1818, 70470, M051), for example, includes a quotation from Tacitus’ *Agricola*, inviting comparison between General Morse and his famous Roman counterpart. These quotations have little in common with either the phrases incorporated into pressed coffin plates, or the mottoes added to mourning jewellery of the period. In the case of coffin plates, these are usually religious in content, but not Biblical. Examples from designs in trade catalogues include phrases such as ‘Gloria Deo’ (Glory to God) and ‘Eternity’. On mourning jewellery, they are usually non-religious, referring to bonds of memory between the living and the dead (see Chapter 7).

Inscriptions: style

The long ‘s’ (ſ)

The long ‘s’ was only rarely found on monuments, mainly due to the choice of typography. At St Marylebone, only three of the monuments studied included a long ‘s’. These were three of the earliest, commemorating people who died in 1811 (M083), 1814 (M081) and 1817 (M030), the first two of which pre-date the opening of the church. There are no uses of long ‘s’ on the remaining monuments of St Brides. A long ‘s’ was used on eight of the 14 monuments at St Stephen Walbrook, dated between 1768 and 1809, though only two monuments are later in date than this (M217 and M224), and the inscriptions of both are all in upper case. At St John’s Wood, the long ‘s’ was used on only one monument, dated 1824 (M166).
Typography

The lettering on monuments contrasts strongly with that of coffin plates. At St Marylebone, the monuments are almost all in Roman print (see e.g. Figs 6.12 and 6.13; see Fig. 5.4 for the lettering typology developed by Newhouse (1996)). One monumental inscription (M085, 1831) is entirely in sans serif lettering, with another (M002, 1848; see Fig. 6.16) mainly sans serif, except for the motto at the top, which is in Old English lettering. Two other monuments (M083, 1811 and M081, 1814), both pre-dating the current church, also include lower-case Roman and italic print. One of the latest monuments studied (M080, 1853) has the most diverse lettering. While most of the long inscription is in upper case Roman print, with a scriptural extract in italic, the words “Sacred” and “Jesu Mercy!” are in Old English Gothic and the name and title of John Reginald Pindar, 3rd Earl of Beauchamp, are in sans serif. This is very unusual within this collection of monuments. All the other monuments are inscribed only with Roman print in capitals, often with names in a larger size for emphasis.

At St Bride’s, only one of the three remaining monuments includes any lettering other than Roman print, which is the word “SACRED” in Old English lettering at the top of Robert Waithman’s monument of 1833 (M201). This convention is also apparent on some of the monuments of St John’s Wood (e.g. M140 and M161). As well as those with Old English lettering for ‘SACRED’ or ‘IN MEMORY OF’, the other monuments with variations in lettering at St John’s Wood are the headstone of the Berrall and Powell family (M166, 1824) which includes lower case lettering, the Farquar family monument which has sans serif lettering (M156, 1834) and the Hadow monument, on which all the lettering is Gothic Old English (M154; dated 1845, though possibly 1866).

The limited range of lettering styles, and especially the dominance of Roman print lettering on monuments, may be partly a product of the materials used, with marble a more challenging medium than brass or lead for applying legible inscriptions, particularly as church monument inscriptions must be read from a distance. A comparison of headstones of the same period from different parts of the UK clearly show a relationship between materials and styles, with slate headstones in particular lending themselves to calligraphic flourishes (Bartram 1978, 4). However, for church monuments, the stone used was not restricted to what was available locally. Had makers or clients required flowing, calligraphic inscriptions, for reasons of taste, fashion or convention, then surely suitable material could have been
procured. The flowing and embellished lettering of the 1983 monument to commemorate the removal of the crypt burials to Brookwood cemetery demonstrates that the austerity and uniformity of the early nineteenth-century lettering was as much a stylistic choice as the monochrome stone (see Fig. 6.11).

The range of typographic styles available in the early nineteenth century, used in printing and on signs, for example, are much better represented on brass coffin plates than on the monuments of St Marylebone, even though several relate to the same individuals. The monuments of St John’s Wood show slightly more variety, and in general, nineteenth-century gravestones have also been identified as exhibiting a wide range of lettering types (Burgess 1963, 214). At St Pancras, for example, the grave monuments dated after 1810 included a wider variety of lettering types than earlier examples (Wooldridge and Rendall 2011, 159). The inscriptions on the later monuments at St Pancras also demonstrated, in the precision with which they were applied, for example, the use of templates or machinery (Wooldridge and Rendall 2011, 159), rather as stamped lettering was used on lead coffin plates in the same period (see Chapter 5). The invention of new printed lettering types in this period has been linked to increased commercialisation and the role of printed advertising (Bartram 1975, 8). Perhaps this suggests why these were not used on monuments, as the lettering types used for handbills, book frontispieces and shop signs were not necessarily suitable for church monuments, such as those at St Marylebone. For these, perhaps an appropriate comparison
is with inscriptions on public buildings and monuments of the period, which are invariably in upper case Roman print, such as the inscription above the door of St Marylebone Church itself. Such inscriptions are formal and linked to the power of church, state or social elites and therefore are, in a sense, consciously non-fashionable, suggesting stability and timelessness.

Design

Heraldry and gender

The use of coats of arms on monuments, and the association between heraldry and gender, is a key difference between above- and below-ground funerary material culture. The link between funerary monuments and heraldry was longstanding (see Chapter 5). At St Marylebone, 39 of the 83 monuments studied (47.0%) include coats of arms (see Table 6.7).

Table 6.7: Monuments with coats of arms at St Marylebone Church, 1807-1853 (n=83).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Monuments with a coat of arms</th>
<th>All other monuments</th>
<th>Percentage of monuments with a coat of arms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800-1809</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810-1819</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820-1829</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830-1839</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-1849</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1853</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>47.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several of these commemorate two or more people, so in order to make a better comparison with coffin plates, monuments of single individuals were examined (see Table 6.8).
Table 6.8: Presence and absence of coats of arms on monuments of single individuals at St Marylebone, by gender. The association of a monument with a coat of arms and gender is significant at $p < .05$ (p-value = 0.0055).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monuments of women</th>
<th>Monuments of men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coat of arms present</td>
<td>2 (11.1%)</td>
<td>16 (88.9%)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coat of arms absent</td>
<td>17 (53.1%)</td>
<td>15 (46.9%)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presence of coats of arms on individual monuments is significantly associated with gender, whereas this is not the case for brass coffin plates. Women were less likely than men to be commemorated by an individual monument, and where they were commemorated by an individual monument these were less likely to include a coat of arms. In contrast with the use of brass coffin plates with coats of arms, no decline is apparent in the use of heraldic devices on monuments at St Marylebone (see Table 6.7; compare with Table 5.12).

**Motifs**

At St Marylebone, the motifs used on monuments are limited in number, with some being very plain. The uncompromising slab of Joseph Fernandez Madrid’s monument (M036 d.1830, see Fig. 6.12) is one of the most austere, though not untypical. The only colour on any of these early nineteenth-century monuments is on some of the coats of arms. The stone or marble used for the tablet is plain and monochrome, typically light in colour on a dark ground. The shapes of the monuments are varied. Many have architectural features, such as pediments and pilasters (see e.g. Fig. 6.13). Though some are very large, none are on the truly grand scale of contemporary monuments to national heroes in Westminster Abbey or in some estate churches where the local aristocracy could claim a large space for a floor-to-ceiling construction.
At St Marylebone, there are a few motifs that only appear on a very small number of monuments. The almost identical monuments to Emma Bampfylde (d.1825, M005) and Elizabeth Bayfield (d.1832, M006) both include birds and ribboned wreaths, although the birds face in opposite directions. Neither monument is signed, and there is no obvious relationship between the two people commemorated, although the positions of the monuments, opposite each other in a window niche, as well as the designs, suggest a connection. The monument to Lettice Patten (d.1817, M010) includes a similar bird, along with other motifs (see Fig. 6.13). The only coffin plate at St Marylebone that includes a bird is that of Mary Ann Turner (d.1818, plate 586), in which a bird replaces the shield in what is otherwise a typical ‘shield and flowers’ lead plate design, very similar to CCS type 22 (Reeve and Adams 1993, Appendix D). Although the three monuments and one coffin plate with birds at St Marylebone are all of women, at Christ Church Spitalfields the only plate of type 22 with a bird was on a man’s coffin (Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields 2003).
One monument has a sheaf of corn with a sickle on either side at the top (M013). This is a motif that was not used on coffin furniture, although scythes were, rarely, incorporated into designs, such as the one held by Father Time in a lid motif in a catalogue of c.1826 (V&A E.3127-1910). A sheaf of corn made of hair was a motif used occasionally on mourning jewellery of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (e.g. MoL C26). The sickles may be classed as a symbol of mortality, though as they appear on the monument to James Sibbald who died, aged 76, “after an illness of ten years, borne with that patience and resignation which religion alone can inspire”, it may rather be seen as the timely harvest of a faithful soul (M013). The monument to Lettice Patten (d.1817, M010) also includes inverted torches and palm branches, with the latter also used on Robert Powney’s monument of the same year (M034) and the Shore monument (M031, 1834). Inverted torches only very rarely appear on coffin furniture designs, except as part of a lid motif, encircled by an ouroboros, the ‘serpent’ of the ‘monument and serpent’ combination (CCS lid motif type 4; see Chapter 5 for further discussion of this type). The only dated examples of this lid motif are from the 1830s. Palm branches are ubiquitous on coffin furniture designs in the trade catalogues, usually as a small element within a busy design and held by angels. At St Marylebone there are five coffin plates of CCS type 6, which includes angels with palm branches, dated between 1822 and 1835 (see...
This type is also in the St Pancras typology, as type 29, and Adrian Miles identified the combined dates of this type as 1783 to 1847 (Miles 2011b, 9). Palm branches, symbols of resurrection, were included in coffin furniture designs throughout the period of study but do not appear to have been popular on monuments.

Fig. 6.14: Coffin plate of Ann Humfrey (d.1830, 70357, plate 792) of CCS coffin plate type 6. Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design Collections, University of Reading.

**Urns**

The most frequently used motif on the monuments of St Marylebone is a funerary urn, used on 15 monuments (18.1%), dated between 1817 and 1838 (see Table 6.9). The mean date of
these monuments is 1824. Most of the urns are wide, some are draped and in two cases the monuments have two urns, representing two people (M004 and M025; see Fig. 6.15).

Fig. 6.15: Monument to William Gordon Haven (d.1809) and Charles Mackinen Haven (d.1824) at St Marylebone Church (M004). The two urns represent the two brothers. Courtesy of St Marylebone Parish Church.
Table 6.9: Monuments with urns at St Marylebone Church. Dates are the date of death of the sole or primary person commemorated, except for M025 which is dated by the inscription.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monument</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M004</td>
<td>1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M007</td>
<td>1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M024</td>
<td>1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M025</td>
<td>1835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M026</td>
<td>1817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M034</td>
<td>1817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M037</td>
<td>1817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M040</td>
<td>1819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M043</td>
<td>1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M044</td>
<td>1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M045</td>
<td>1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M055</td>
<td>1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M058</td>
<td>1828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M068</td>
<td>1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M082</td>
<td>1838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The double urn monuments suggest that the urn represents the individual. However, while insisting on the presence of the dead, the use of the neoclassical funerary urn also distances viewers from the realities of burial in the early nineteenth century. It would surely have been inconceivable for sculptors and statuaries to include an image of a coffin on a monument, however elaborately decorated, though this was the actual container of the dead body which, after being closed for the funeral, represented it. Cremation was not legal in Britain until 1902 (Jalland 1999, 249), and would have been repugnant to many, and yet the cinerary urns, perhaps precisely because they were not used in reality, were a widely-used symbol of the dead. This symbol physically locates the dead and centres them within the monument, but in an idealised setting. They were also used in an ostensibly non-funerary context, with original classical objects and those made by makers such as Wedgwood displayed in elite houses, demonstrating taste and education, though even here, Kate A. Beats (2019) argues, their funerary associations were intrinsic to their significance as neoclassical memento mori. Urns were used on mourning jewellery from the 1770s, on their own as well as in combination with mourning figures (see Chapter 7). Urns were occasionally used on coffin
furniture, but the number of designs in trade catalogues and on objects recovered in archaeological excavations show that this motif was much less popular on furnished coffins than on monuments (see Chapter 5).

Mourning figures

Mourning figures with monuments are the most characteristic design on mourning jewellery from the 1770s to 1810s and other funerary objects such as commemorative medals for public figures (see Chapter 7) and were also popular in this period for church monuments. The figures were usually women, expressing grief through their bodily attitudes, ideally sentimental and focused on the experience of mourning (Beats 2019). The association of women with heightened sensibility in this period was not only reflected in these figures but was shaped by their widespread use (Fennetaux 2016). There are seven examples at St Marylebone of mourners and monuments and one (M016) of a weeping figure without an accompanying monument, dated between 1811 and 1853, almost the full date span of monuments in the church (mean of 1831; see Table 6.10). Small weeping cherubs appear on the Russell monument (M024). All the mourners are female and wear draped classical clothing rather than contemporary dress, suggesting these are generic figures, although the hairstyle of the woman depicted on John Pindar’s monument (d.1853, M080) is distinctly Victorian.

Table 6.10: Monuments with weeping figures at St Marylebone Church. Dates are the date of death of the sole or primary person commemorated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monument</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M016</td>
<td>1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M020</td>
<td>1811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M042</td>
<td>1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M046</td>
<td>1814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M054</td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M065</td>
<td>1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M080</td>
<td>1853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M084</td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are no mourning figures with monuments on the coffin plates of St Marylebone with which to compare these, nor on those of St Bride’s or in the coffin plate types of Christ
Church Spitalfields and St Pancras. Only one weeping figure appears in the coffin plate designs of the four trade catalogues studied, in two identical designs (of different size, one with a decorative border) in the catalogue of c.1826, but the figure is not with an urn or other monument (V&A E.3133-1910, designs 654 and 655).

Sadly, the lid motifs of the coffins from St Marylebone crypt were not retained during the clearance, but the undertaker records of funerals at St Marylebone show that some coffins of the 1830s and 40s included ‘monument and serpent’ lid motifs, including that of Leonora Rushworth (70560) in 1841 (CWA 948/3, 221). It is possible that this motif was introduced in the 1830s (see Chapter 3). There are two lid motif types from Christ Church Spitalfields with a weeping figure and urn, one with a tree, but the examples from this site were both on an undated coffin (CCS lid motifs 18 and 19, Reeve and Adams 1993, Appendix D). Both were marked ‘Richards No 1180 April 1842’, indicating that these are registered designs of S. Richards of Oldbury, Worcestershire (TNA BT 42/6/1180). Even by the time of the Christ Church Spitalfields publication, these lid motif types had been noted at multiple sites and were clearly a popular design from the 1840s onwards (Reeve and Adams 1993, 83, 86; MERL 61/26/1-8). All these ‘monument’ lid motifs are much later in date than the start of the period of popularity of mourning figures on monuments and on mourning jewellery in the 1770s.

Crosses
Five of the St Marylebone monuments include crosses (see Table 6.11), with a date range of 1827 to 1853 (mean of 1839).

Table 6.11: Monuments with crosses at St Marylebone Church. Dates are the date of death of the sole or primary person commemorated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monument</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M002</td>
<td>1848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M003</td>
<td>1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M031</td>
<td>1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M079</td>
<td>1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M080</td>
<td>1853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In two cases, the cross appears to be stuck on top of otherwise conventionally neoclassical monuments (M002 and M080; see Fig. 6.16). In two more it is incorporated into a design with other elements (M003 and M031). The only monument in which the cross is placed as an integral part of the design, and as the only motif, is in a monument to Walter and Marianne Bathurst (M079, 1827; see Fig. 6.17), a monument which combines elements of the form of neoclassical monuments, and their use of white on black marble, with a pointed neo-Gothic arch.

Fig. 6.16: Monument to Louisa Stuart Harcourt (d.1848) at St Marylebone Church (M002).
Courtesy of St Marylebone Parish Church.
On the Shore family monument (M031), the cross appears with a book (presumably a Bible) and a palm branch, a symbol of resurrection frequently used on coffin furniture. The only coffin plate design that includes a cross uses it in a similar way, at an angle in combination with two other objects. In the c.1826 catalogue, designs 654 and 655 (differing only in size) include a cross with a skull and crown (V&A E.3113.1910). Notably, no skulls, obvious symbols of mortality, appear on any of the St Marylebone monuments.

As with the weeping figures, it is possible that some lid motifs on the coffins at St Marylebone included crosses or crucifixes. At St Pancras, crucifixes accounted for four of the 12 lid motif types identified at this site, from 18 of the 36 contexts in which lid motifs were found (Miles 2011b). However, the St Pancras lid motifs are likely to differ from those originally on coffins in St Marylebone crypt not only due to the difference in cost and materials between coffin furniture used for coffins buried in churchyards and coffins interred in church vaults, but also to the religion of those buried at each site, as St Pancras was a preferred burial site for Roman Catholics (Philpotts 2011, 72). None of the Christ Church Spitalfields lid motifs were crosses or crucifixes. However, at St George’s Bloomsbury, two new lid motifs including crosses were identified: the lid motif BBM1 consists of an open book with crossed trumpets behind and a cross with a wreath above, found on two coffins, dated 1836 and 1840, and lid motif BBM5 is a crucifix, found on one coffin, dated 1814 (Boston et al. 2009, 169).
English anti-Catholicism limited the use of such imagery on monuments and coffin furniture in the eighteenth century, the development of neo-Gothic tastes, associated with the Oxford Movement within the Church of England, made the cross an acceptable or even desirable motif to more people from the early nineteenth century (Wooldridge and Rendall 2011, 162). In 1844, Pugin, the pioneer of Gothic Revival, having railed against the horrors of contemporary coffin furniture, noted “how very desirable would be a return to the simple cross of Catholic antiquity traced on the lid, with the initials or arms of the deceased in the centre” (Pugin 1844, 77). It remains unclear how much impact this trend had in the 1840s and 1850s.

The numbers of monuments at St Marylebone Church with even these three most common motifs is small (see Table 6.12). The date ranges show that urns were most popular on monuments in the first decade of the use of the church and that crosses were more popular towards the end of the period of study.

Table 6.12: Date ranges of selected motifs on monuments at St Marylebone Church. Dates are the date of death of the sole or primary person commemorated. The overall date range of the 83 monuments at St Marylebone is 1807-1853 with a mean date of 1829.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motif</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Date range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urn</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1817-1828</td>
<td>1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mourning figures with monuments</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1811-1853</td>
<td>1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosses</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1827-1853</td>
<td>1839</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Portraits and other personal designs**

Some of the most elaborate monuments include a depiction of the person themselves. At St Marylebone, two monuments (M019 and M021) include portraits, both heads in profile by renowned sculptors which are similar to those on commemorative medals of public figures of the same period (see Fig. 6.19).

Some monument designs were clearly matched to the role of the person commemorated. The monument at St Stephen Walbrook to George Griffin Stonestreet, Managing Director of the Phoenix and Pelican Companies, for example, includes a small fire engine, a ship and parcels, a pelican and a phoenix (M214), and the lost monument to Isaac Romilly F.R.S.
(d.1759), who had an “Extensive and Valuable Collection of Natural Curiosities”, and his wife Mary (d.1759) was decorated with carved shells (Godfrey 1944, 73). At St Marylebone, the monument to Vice Admiral Sir John Tremayne Rodd (71029, d.1838, M060) includes a carved ship, apparently sinking, inscribed with its name, “WARRIOR”, and a date beneath, 9th August 1815 (see Fig. 6.18). This refers to an incident when the Warrior, under Rodd’s command, was caught in a hurricane off Newfoundland, lost its masts, filled with 10 and a half feet of water and almost foundered (The Times 7 September 1815, 3). Clearly, this experience had a strong personal significance for Rodd and his family, although it is not mentioned in his obituary (The Gentleman’s Magazine February 1839, 210), and also represents the hazards of life at sea, in common with other maritime monuments (Stewart 2007).

However, as well as depicting a particular ship at a significant moment, it also echoes the images of shipwrecks seen on contemporary mourning jewellery, where a ‘Hope and anchor’ image with a ship or shipwreck in the background was a popular image (see Chapter 7).

Fig. 6.18: Monument to John Tremayne Rodd (d.1838) at St Marylebone Church (M060). Courtesy of St Marylebone Parish Church.
A small number of monuments include designs that relate to a military role. At St Marylebone, two monuments include Ancient Greek helmets, those of Lt Col. Richard Fitzgerald, who died at the Battle of Waterloo (71000, d.1815, M001), and Lt Gen. John Gordon (71014, d.1832, M027) of the East India Company's service. Additionally, the monument to Lt Gen. Urban Vigors (M021), also of the East India Company, includes military standards and a cannon and cannonballs. These are comparable with the symbolism on contemporary funerary medals for military figures (see Fig. 6.19). The recently restored headstone to Pte Samuel Godley (M169, d.1832) at St John’s Wood burial ground, originally established by non-commissioned officers of his regiment, includes a design of a breastplate and helmet with weapons crossed behind, flanked by laurel leaves. At St Stephen Walbrook, the neo-Gothic monument to Lt. George Alfred Croly (M217, d.1845) includes depictions of two medals.

Fig. 6.19: Medal (obverse) commemorating Nelson, 52 mm dia. (MoL N2475). © Museum of London
The relationships between producers and purchasers of monuments and how these may have affected design choices go to the heart of a key question raised in this project: why did coffin furniture design differ so much from that of monuments? Unlike the complex network through which coffin furniture moved between maker and client, relationships between the producers and consumers of monuments were usually more direct, though not without their own complications.

In the case of the church monuments studied, it is possible to identify many of the makers, especially at St Marylebone. Thirty-eight of the monuments are signed (see Table 6.13). The makers of a further 16 monuments were identified by Ingrid Roscoe, Emma Hardy and M. G. Sullivan (2009) in *A Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain 1660-1851*, which built on the pioneering work of Rupert Gunnis (1968), including those identified from other sources, such as catalogues of sculptors’ work (see Table 6.14). In all, 54 (63.5%) of the monuments recorded at St Marylebone can be attributed to a named maker.

Table 6.13: Sculptors’ signatures on monuments at St Marylebone Church. Dates refer to the date of inscription, if known, or of the death of the primary person commemorated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of sculptor</th>
<th>Monument(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARTAUD, WIMPOL STREET.</td>
<td>M071 (Staunton 1823)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. BACON</td>
<td>M043 (Fraser 1818)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. BROTHERS, SCULP.</td>
<td>M082 (Lawrence 1838)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. BROWN 58 G T RUSSEL ST BLOOMSBURY.</td>
<td>M063 (Cleasby 1844)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. BROWNE LONDON 1839</td>
<td>M076 (Peach 1839)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. COOKE, NEW ROAD</td>
<td>M024 (Russell 1820)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DENMAN 83 QUADRANT REGENT ST</td>
<td>M055 (Brenton 1839)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAFFIN SC, LONDON</td>
<td>M002 (Percy 1848)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. GAFFIN, REGENT ST</td>
<td>M068 (Rivett-Carnac 1837)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. GAFFIN REGENT STREET</td>
<td>M079 (Bathurst 1827)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature of sculptor</td>
<td>Monument(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOPPER LONDON</td>
<td>M025 (Little 1835)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. HOPPER</td>
<td>M067 (Weguelin 1828)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M066 (Shank 1835)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. HOPPER LONDON</td>
<td>M060 (Rodd 1838)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNAPP, Foley St⁴</td>
<td>M045 (Hall 1820)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M069 (Lyon 1827)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S MANNING F'T ⁴</td>
<td>M004 (Haven 1824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. MARSH NEW ROAD</td>
<td>M073 (Elphinstone 1807)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATENT WORKS, WESTMINSTER</td>
<td>M049 (Carruthers 1835)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. PHYSICK SCULP PARK TERRACE REGENTS PARK</td>
<td>M018 (Crombie 1840)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M070 (Fullerton 1831)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M084 (Goodwin 1836)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M059 (Morris 1840)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M054 (Bishop 1836)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M052 (Beresford 1837)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M047 (Oakes 1840)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. W. RADBURN</td>
<td>M058 (Sutherland 1828)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. ROSSI R.A.</td>
<td>M053 (Swinney 1826)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. ROUW SCULPT PORTLAND RD.</td>
<td>M020 (Vardill 1811)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. SHARP S.C. CONNAUGHT TERR [?] EDGWARE ROAD</td>
<td>M080 (Pindar 1853)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.R. SMITH. 37 GLOSTER PLACE.</td>
<td>M066 (Shank 1835)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. SMITH, SCULPTOR 37 GLOUCESTER PLACE NEW ROAD</td>
<td>M017 (Moreton-Dyer 1830)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M085 (Campbell 1831)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERNOUTH, S.C. PIMLICO</td>
<td>M061 (Dallas 1824)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴ According to Rupert Gunnis (1968, 52), this monument was produced by the partnership of Samuel Manning I and John Bacon the Younger.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of sculptor</th>
<th>Monument(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOOKEY</td>
<td>M064 (Carruthers 1845)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICH(^{\text{P}}) WESTMACOTT, R.A. FECIT.</td>
<td>M019 (Cosway 1821)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICHARD WESTMACOTT R.A. 14 SOUTH AUDLEY STREET</td>
<td>M072 (Kirkland / Vesey 1824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILLSON, SCULPTOR, BATH PLACE, NEW ROAD.</td>
<td>M003 (Burton 1834)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.14: Additional makers of monuments at St Marylebone Church identified by Roscoe and colleagues (2009), building on the work of Gunnis (1968). The dates of monuments are the dates of death of the principal person commemorated in most cases, where the installation date is not known.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of sculptor</th>
<th>Monument(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Colecom of Merstham</td>
<td>M051 (Morse 1818)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humphrey Hopper</td>
<td>M029 (Fletcher 1835)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Knapp, of London</td>
<td>M021 (Vigors 1815)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Lupton</td>
<td>M010 (Patten 1817)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward William Physick</td>
<td>M027 (Gordon 1832)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Pistell</td>
<td>M037 (Balfour 1817)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Randall of London</td>
<td>M042 (Howard 1827)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Rouw II</td>
<td>M012 (Sewell 1833)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert William Sievier</td>
<td>M039 (Fairlie 1830)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Harriott Smith</td>
<td>M075 (FitzGerald 1822)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M065 (Moreton-Dyer 1841)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M032 (Pindar 1846)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Raymond Smith</td>
<td>M033 (Scott 1829)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Westmacott</td>
<td>M072 (Kirkland 1824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Whitehead of London</td>
<td>M044 (St Leger 1818)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Whitelaw of London</td>
<td>M034 (Powney 1817)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the placenames contained in the signatures are in London, and the only sculptor obviously not London-based was Samuel Colecom, from Merstham in Surrey. The parishioners of St Marylebone were particularly well-placed for the commissioning of monuments, as the church was in an area known for its community of artists including, for example, Richard Cosway (d.1821, 70148), who was himself commemorated by a monument by Richard Westmacott (M019). Both were members of the Royal Academy. Some had the wealth or connections to secure the services of a famous sculptor such as Westmacott, “a grandee of the British art establishment” (Roscoe et al. 2009, 1358), but, for those without, the church was also near the “New Road statuaries” (Gunnis 1968, 306). Twentieth-century art historians such as Gunnis have not always looked kindly on these establishments. In describing the memorial tablets of William Pistell, such as the monument to Arthur Balfour (d.1817, M037), he noted that many of them, “like those of his fellow-workers in the same street, are dull and obvious” (Gunnis 1968, 306).

Fewer names of the makers of church monuments are available from the other sites studied. Only one of the extant, visible St Bride’s monuments is signed, that of the Blades family (M202) which was created by Peter Rouw II (Roscoe et al. 2009, 1071). The monuments recorded in the Survey of London monograph include a further two that were signed. One was a marble wall tablet to the Caddell family, likely dating to shortly after the death of David Caddell in 1817, by “C. Raymond Smith, 37 Gloster Pl, New Road” (Godfrey 1944, 104; see also Tables 6.13 and 6.14 for his work at St Marylebone). The second was a monument to John Wildsmith Bradley (d.1821) by John Bacon the Younger (Godfrey 1944, 80). Additionally, the list of monuments by the Malcott family include one from St Bride’s, that of Robert (d.1794) and Mary Wells (d.1805) and their son William Charles Wells (d.1817) (Roscoe et al. 2009 792; Godfrey 1944, 70-71). At St Stephen Walbrook, five of the 14 monuments have identifiable makers. Three have signatures: the Townley family monument (M218), signed “J. MALCOTT AND SON”; the monument to Edward Pryce (d.1807) and his wife and brother (M221), also signed by J. Malcott and Son; and the elaborate monument to George Griffin Stonestreet (d.1802) by the prolific John Bacon the Younger (M214). Two more have been identified by Roscoe and colleagues, the monument of John Descamps (d.1776) and family, by Sanders Oliver (M212) and that of Mary Wilson (d.1772) and her husband, by John Francis Moore (M213) (Roscoe et al. 2009, 848, 926)
Like coffin fittings, monuments for churches and burial grounds were sent across the British Empire, though in smaller quantities. Several of the sculptors identified above produced monuments which are now in churches in Jamaica, Barbados, Canada or India. There are monuments by John Bacon the Younger in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, for example (Roscoe et al. 2009, 44-54). In the late eighteenth century, visitors to the new burial ground in Calcutta (now Kolkata), the capital of British India, compared it to London churchyards, and its numerous neoclassical monuments turned the high British mortality rate in India into a visual marker of power (Travers 2007).

While some church monuments of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were imposing and bespoke, many were repetitive in design, sometimes even formulaic, even when signed by distinguished sculptors. As early as the mid-eighteenth century, as renowned a sculptor as Roubiliac was producing “‘off-the-peg’ monuments in which standard motifs are repeated with small variations” (Bindman and Baker 1995, 173). Many of the monuments made by John Bacon the Younger for India and the West Indies were standard designs (Roscoe et al. 2009, 45) and in his later years he made a fortune in partnership with his former pupil Samuel Manning by lending his name, though probably not his skill, to a large number of monuments which were, in the view of Gunnis at least, “dull and second-rate”: “To Bacon and Manning, therefore, must go much of the blame for the mass-produced memorials which, by the middle of the last century, had become so lamentable and frequent a blot on the wall of aisle and chancel” (Gunnis 1968, 32). ‘Off the peg’ monuments were also produced by Coade’s Artificial Stone Manufactory by the late eighteenth century, some designed by John Bacon the Elder (Roscoe et al. 2009, 35). In their 1784 catalogue of architectural and decorative items made from coadestone (a moulded artificial stone), several “sepulchral ornaments” are listed including “A Monument, consisting of a Sarcophagus, Figures, &c. to be placed against a Wall”, for £31 10s for the 9ft version and £10 10s for one at 5ft (Coade’s Artificial Stone Manufactory 1784, 22).

Although headstones and other monuments in burial grounds could also be signed, no signatures were identified on those recorded at St John’s Wood for this study, although at this site one signature, of “M\(^8\) WILLING[L?..]”, could be seen on a broken and partially buried gravestone that was not recorded. It is possible that none of the monuments were signed originally, but it is more likely that any original signatures are now obscured or missing. Susan Buckham’s study of York Cemetery found that the proportion of signed monuments
varied between 9% and 20% between 1837 and 1901 (Buckham 2000, 241). Matilda Duncker identified similar rates of signing at cemeteries at Kensal Green, Bath Abbey, Southampton and Birmingham Key Hill, and a much higher proportion of signed stones at the Glasgow Necropolis, from their establishment in the 1830s and 1840s to 1870 (Duncker 2016, 392). As a snapshot of the industry towards the end of the period in question, the 1841 London Post Office Directory lists 103 stone and marble masons, of which two are marked as staturaries, and 53 sculptors (Kelly’s Directories 1841). The list of masons includes two who created monuments at St Marylebone, William Pistell (M027), of 10 Quickset Row, New Road, and his neighbour Thomas Marsh (M073), of 20 Quickset Row, so clearly it was not only the ‘statuaries’ who made and sold funerary monuments.

Headstones could also be supplied through undertakers, rather than purchased directly. The records of the Marylebone undertakers W. Garstin and Sons indicate that this was another of the services they sometimes offered; for example, on 10th May 1845 they supplied head and footstones for a grave in Kensal Green, at a cost of £4 18s (CWA 948/4, 123). In Cauch’s funeral guide of 1840 J. Calver, a “STATUARY, MASON, AND PAVOIR” in Bethnal Green, advertised “MONUMENTS, TOMBS, AND GRAVE STONES”, offering to supply undertakers “On the Lowest Terms” (Cauch 1840, 86). (Calver also made chimney pieces, supplying these to builders, and so is another example of businesses and individuals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who were heavily involved in the funerary industry, but not exclusively dealing in death.) As the business model of undertakers was to collate and provide the many goods and services required for a funeral, it is not surprising that they would aim to supply gravestones as part of this, but it is unclear how common this practice was. While this slightly complicates the view that the relationship between producer and consumer was straightforward, on the whole, the relationships between makers and consumers of monuments were much more direct than the tangled path between the makers of coffin furniture and those who purchased it (see Fig. 6.20). This would have given producers of monuments much more direct feedback on their designs. One choice was, of course, not to have a monument at all, and while this was a default option for many, and not a true choice at all, many of those who could afford a monument for their loved ones did not buy one. It is possible that the funerals of those interred in church vaults without monuments may have been more elaborate and expensive to compensate for a lack of a lasting above-ground memorial (Mytum 2018, 83).
As well as the directness of the relationship between producers of monuments and their clients, the timing of their transactions was also very different to those involved in furnishing coffins. The urgency of burial gave coffins a short timescale of use. At the Queen’s Chapel of the Savoy, London, the average time between death and burial was 6.6 days in the period between 1790 and 1860 (Sibun and Ponce 2018, 64) and for the Islington Green burials studied it was 7.4 days (see Table 2.3). Where newspaper accounts of funerals of those interred at St Marylebone have been found, these describe a similar gap between death and burial: Joseph Fernandez Madrid died on 28th June and his funeral took place on 3rd July in 1830 (The Times 5 July 1830), and James Northcote’s funeral on 20th July 1831 was exactly a week after his death (The Morning Post 23 July 1831). On the other hand, the timing of both the commissioning and creation of monuments could vary considerably.

Large, bespoke monuments by busy sculptors and perhaps requiring specialist materials could take years to complete, even though they may have been commissioned shortly after a death, as in the case of the monument to Maria Howard (d.1789) which was erected in a private chapel in Holy Trinity Church in Wetheral in 1803, 14 years after she died (Thom 2018). For the less elaborate monuments of St Marylebone, St Bride’s and St Stephen Walbrook, a much shorter timescale is most likely. The two dated monuments at St Marylebone were each erected in the year following the death of the person they commemorate (M025, M076). At the Glasgow Necropolis, Matilda Duncker (2016) examined the dates of death, commissioning of a monument and its completion in the job book of William Mossman, a mason. Four monuments in Duncker’s project’s sample could
be identified in the Mossman records, with the gaps between death and the commissioning of a monument being six weeks, three and a half months, seven months and nearly two years (Duncker 2016, 427). These monuments then took between six weeks and almost a year to be completed after the order was made, depending on the complexity of the design (Duncker 2016, 428). For Duncker, this highlighted the fact that commemoration is not consistently related to bereavement and so monuments cannot be interpreted as an outcome of the initial stage of grief (Duncker 2016, 428). As Mytum (2004, 2018) has also pointed out, monuments were not usually chosen by people who were dealing with emotional and social turmoil in the immediate aftermath of a bereavement, but could be reflected upon and selected at a later date.

The extent of the impact of the relationships between makers and their customers on monument design is difficult to discern in many cases, even when objects have associated detailed records (Duncker 2016, 429). For large bespoke monuments the involvement of the client in design may be expected to have been greater than for pre-cut headstones. Joseph Nollekens’ funerary monuments include one with the client identified in the signature as the designer, that of Elizabeth Boscawen (d.1793) at St Michael Penkevil in Cornwall, commissioned by her husband, Viscount Falmouth (Thom 2018). Danielle Thom (2018) suggests that the design process is likely to have been very similar to the sculptor’s usual way of working with clients, in which a design was agreed from elements of different drawings, but that Falmouth’s signature indicates his control over the monument. Nollekens’ early biographer, John Thomas Smith (1895 [1829], 362), described him making multiple designs “for every description of monument of the simple kind, such as a female weeping or entwining festoons of flowers over an urn, or a child with an inverted torch” and we may imagine that these set the parameters for agreeing commissioned designs through negotiation. That is, while the clients may have had their own ideas and priorities, the monument designs were comprised of expected design elements.

A crucial difference between furnished coffins and monuments was that the latter remained visible, indeed this was a fundamental part of their role. They could, therefore, continue to influence the choices of those who saw them. Susan Buckham (2000, 244) and, more recently, Matilda Duncker (2016, 403), have suggested that this could be an explicit part of the role of monuments, that cemeteries could be used by masons as ‘showrooms’, in which they could direct potential clients to see signed examples of their work. The high rates of signed
monuments in churches might suggest that sculptors and statuaries employed similar methods. Even if the attention of potential clients was not directed to particular monuments by their makers in this way, those visible in churches, burial grounds or, from the 1830s, the new cemeteries, clearly showed a repertoire of designs and provided a context in which new monuments would appear.

Use

Several of the inscriptions on monuments at St Marylebone include a statement about their intended purpose: to record the virtues of the deceased and the grief and regard of their relatives and friends:

DAME ANN SEWELL
HIS RELICT.
CAUSED THIS TABLET TO BE ERECTED
AS A MEMORIAL OF
HIS VALUE AND HER LOSS.

(Monument to James Sewell, M012, 1833)

THE UNITED REGARD OF SOME ATTACHED FRIENDS
HAS ERECTED THIS MONUMENT TO HIS MEMORY,
AN HUMBLE TRIBUTE OF THEIR GRATITUDE, A FEEBLE RECORD OF HIS WORTH.

(Monument to Urban Vigors, M021, 1815)

Monuments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were selected by the heirs of the people they commemorated, a change from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when monuments were often commissioned and built before death, giving the commemorated person themselves a high degree of control over their posthumous representation (Llewellyn 2000, 55-58). Some of the monuments studied include the name of the person who erected the monument, sometimes with a phrase suggesting that this was motivated by affection, rather than obligation. The monument to Arthur Balfour (M037, d.1817) records that “THIS TABLET TO HIS MEMORY IS PLACED BY HIS AFFLICTED BROTHER”, for example.

As Jonathan Finch (2003, 444) pointed out, the largely undecorated walls of post-Reformation churches provided a clear backdrop on which monuments were highly visible.
The newly-built, large neoclassical St Marylebone Church presented its wealthiest parishioners with an opportunity for placing new monuments on a large scale on its consecration in 1817. Church monuments offered families the opportunity to materialise the status of their lost loved ones and themselves. The monuments use heraldry, inscriptions, sculpture (including the cachet of named sculptors) to make clear the connections of those commemorated. Most clearly these are family connections, but also include links to other individuals or to institutions. For example, Caroline Watson’s monument (M081) records that she was “Engraver to HER MAJESTY” and Robert Fullerton’s (M070) that he “PASSED MANY YEARS OF HIS LIFE IN THE SERVICE OF THE HONBLE EAST INDIA COMPANY, WITH THE UTMOOST HONOR AND INTEGRITY”. As with coffin plates, the inscriptions of women and children often include mention of their husbands or parents, sometimes both. On Jane Staunton’s monument (M071), her mother’s father is also named, placing her very precisely within the networks of these three families:

```
RELICT OF
SIR GEORGE LEONARD STAUNTON BAR
OF CARGIN,
IN THE COUNTY OF GALWAY, IRELAND,
AND ELDEST DAUGHTER OF THE LATE
BENJAMIN COLLINS ESQ
OF MILFORD, NEAR SALISBURY,
BY HIS SECOND WIFE, MARY,
DAUGHTER OF JOHN COOPER ESQ
OF THAT CITY
```

As this inscription suggests, and as the use of coats of arms on monuments at St Marylebone demonstrate, these objects of public memory were highly gendered. Overall, 58 women and 73 men were commemorated on the monuments of St Marylebone, with women often included on monuments to their husbands or other relatives. Of the 50 monuments to single individuals, only 19 (38.0%) commemorate a woman or girl. For most of the monuments with multiple inscriptions, it is clear that the primary commemoration is to a man, even, as in the case of the monuments including Mary Cleasby (M063) and Harriet Fullerton (M070), when the women recorded predeceased their husbands. The memorial inscriptions transcribed by Oxford Archaeology at St George’s Church, Bloomsbury as part of the recording of the crypt assemblage, were examined as a comparison with St Marylebone, as this site is similar in many respects, with a burial population mainly comprised the upper middle classes (Boston et al. 2009). At St George’s, the numbers of women and men with inscriptions on monuments was more even (see Table 6.15), but women were much less
likely to be commemorated on monuments to only one person, appearing more often alongside male relatives (see Table 6.16). This is similar to the commemoration of women in published obituaries in this period, which were at a much lower rate to those of men and most often in reference to their male relatives (Williamson 2018). Of these monuments to single individuals, only one at St Marylebone was to a child, Emma Bampfylde, who died aged 14 (M005). None of the people commemorated on monuments to single individuals at St George’s Bloomsbury were under 18.

Table 6.15: Monument inscriptions by gender and age at St Marylebone Church and St George’s Church, Bloomsbury. Data for St George’s Church, Bloomsbury from Boston et al. 2009, tables 4.1 and 4.2, 68-72. Monument 19 from that site has been excluded as the date of death is 1906.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Female aged 18 or over</th>
<th>Male aged 18 or over</th>
<th>Female aged under 18</th>
<th>Male aged under 18</th>
<th>Female age not known</th>
<th>Male age not known</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St George’s Bloomsbury</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.16: Monuments to single individuals, by gender, at St Marylebone Church and St George’s Church, Bloomsbury. Data for St George’s Church, Bloomsbury from Boston et al. 2009, tables 4.1 and 4.2, 68-72. Monument 19 from that site has been excluded as the date of death is 1906.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St George’s Bloomsbury</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that this represents a lower investment in expensive mural monuments for women than for men at St Marylebone. This would be in contrast with the interpretation of expenditure on coffins at the same site. If the use of brass plates is taken as a broad proxy for the cost of a coffin then no distinction by gender is apparent, as very similar proportions of men and women had brass outer coffin plates, 79.0% and 80.6% respectively (see Chapter 5). The use of monuments for family members, non-essential and chosen months or even longer after the funeral, was much more selective than the use of well-furnished coffins.
Clearly, wealth and status were the primary factors in determining those few who were commemorated on church monuments, but gender was also significant, not only in who was commemorated, but also how. The disparity between the use of coats of arms for women and men on coffins and monuments speaks of the difference between the uses of decorated coffins and monuments in relation to family memory and public memory, in a similar way to how large-scale portraits and portrait miniatures relate to gender and memory (Reider 2009; see Chapter 7).

As the low proportion of monuments to single individuals suggests, the main way in which monuments were used to materialise family connections was through the addition of inscriptions to multiple people. In some cases this has resulted in a long list of names and dates, such as those of nine members of the Deschamps family on a monument at St Stephen Walbrook who died between 1732 and 1847 (M212; see Fig. 6.22). Despite the fact that these are a record of deaths, they speak of continuity: of location, of prosperity and of the family itself. Monuments also provided an opportunity to reunite families in death, not only across time, but also space. The Shore family monument at St Marylebone (M031) is primarily for John, Lord Teignmouth and Charlotte, his wife, who both died in 1834 and were interred in a private vault in the church, but also records four of their children who predeceased them, three daughters who died in infancy in 1793 and were buried at Ottery St Mary (Devon) and their son Henry (d.1828), buried in the south of France, where a monument marked his grave. The placing and design of monuments could also reinforce familial connections. The monument to George Weguelin, who died in 1858 and was buried at Highgate Cemetery (the St Marylebone crypt having closed by this time), is identical to the earlier monument to his brother, Thomas Matthias Weguelin (d.1828, 70658, M067) and placed next to it, both signed by the sculptor Humphrey Hopper. Similarly, the monuments to Margaret Scott (d.1829, 71018, M033) and her daughter Charlotte Pindar (d.1846, 70042, M032) and husband face each other either side of a window niche and are of identical design, except for the decorative supports underneath the main monument and the coat of arms on Charlotte Pindar’s monument. The record of the monuments of St Bride’s includes ledger slabs which, in this older, crowded church, marked the specific place of burial, including that of the author Samuel Richardson (d.1761), his wives Martha (d.1730-31) and Elizabeth (d.1773), two sons and a nephew (Godfrey 1944, 88). The inscription begins “Here Lyeth interred the body of”, and repeatedly makes clear the presence of the bodies beneath the slab, emphasising the family’s claim to burial in this particular place. The spatial placement of monuments may also
have had a social use that is no longer immediately clear. Finch’s (1991) study of church monuments suggests that they were not only important in asserting rights to burial space but also to the hierarchically arranged pews, and were therefore active in creating elite identities. The association of pews and burials may also be indicative of an emotional connection between the living and the remains of the dead, with the bereaved deriving comfort from kneeling in church directly above the burials of those they mourned (Tarlow 1999, 125). At some churches, this could have been very direct. At St Bride’s, Samuel Pepys arranged for his brother to be buried under the church floor in his mother’s pew in 1664 (Pepys 1971 [1664], 90). Although considerations of space both in vaults and on church walls may have meant that the coffin of a loved one was not directly beneath the monument, a monument remained a tangible connection with the dead once the coffin was no longer visible, in the vault beneath.

In churchyards, as well as on the floors of packed urban churches, monuments marked the space for burial of a particular family. At St John’s Wood, four of the headstones are inscribed as family graves (see Fig. 6.2). These stones marked the space as property with the right to use by a particular person or family. Declaring this right and the use of the grave-space or vault gave families the opportunity to ensure that their loved ones were protected from disturbance in the over-full burial grounds of the time. After their establishment, the use of heavy ledger slabs over burial ground vaults would even, for subsequent burials, have given some protection to the physical remains from ‘body-snatching’.

Once in place, monuments could also be a focus for visiting and remembering the dead. Mihailovic (2011, 214) found this practice to be uncommon before the early nineteenth century, that is, a little later than the increase in monument use in the later eighteenth century. She suggested that earlier in the eighteenth century this may have been viewed as “unnecessary and perhaps even superstitious”, as the dead were not accessible to the living, and that prior to, or in the absence of, a monument, memories of the dead were associated with broader locations, such as the burial ground as a whole (Mihailovic 2011, 214). In the nineteenth century, grave sites could be intense places of memory, becoming ‘shrines’ which families and friends visited to be close to the dead (Jalland 1996, 291). Interaction with a marked place of burial by the bereaved is at the heart of Sarah Tarlow’s (1999) influential study of changing attitudes to death and commemoration in the late eighteenth century. She identified a ‘gravestone boom’ in the final decades of the eighteenth century in which the use
of permanent burial markers increased dramatically. Tarlow (1999) explained this as a practice relating to changing attitudes to personal relationships in a context of ‘affective individualism’, rather than to emulation of elite practices of commemoration. Gravestones, then, were both “a memorial to the deceased, but also, crucially, a memorial to a relationship” (Tarlow 1999, 131). Bridget Millmore (2015, 117) has suggested that the proliferation of permanent markers of burial in this period may be partly attributable to the experience of using love tokens and other objects inscribed with names and dates. That is, that the development of inscribed burial markers may be related to the practices and customs of the working classes, as well as those of the middle classes. Tokens certainly served as an alternative form of commemoration for those unable to afford a headstone for their loved ones, or unable to visit the grave, that could be carried or kept close (Millmore 2015, 117). Idealised depictions of mourners and monuments can be seen on mourning jewellery of the 1770s to 1810s (see Chapter 7). The reality of urban burial grounds, or church crypts, at this time was very different to the leafy landscapes in which mourners leaned on urn monuments under willow trees, a scene that only became possible with the establishment of new cemeteries from the 1830s (Tarlow 2000). The new cemeteries enabled the association of mourning with a particular, pleasant place, close to the physical remains of a loved one but without evidence of bodily decay, but had been heralded by earlier depictions on monuments, jewellery and tokens.

Even at the time of their original placement, monuments had a public use beyond the intentions of those who commissioned them. Church monuments were, and remain, a large and accessible body of sculpture, appreciated for their aesthetic value (Curl 2000, 221). The work of well-known sculptors could draw visitors and modern architectural guides emphasise monuments to or by notable figures. In 1833, Charles Smith described the monuments of St John’s Wood Chapel as “most beautiful specimens of modern sculpture, by the most celebrated professors of the age” (Smith 1833, 136), drawing attention to particular “handsome” and “splendid” examples in the list that followed. (He was less fulsome in his comments on the monuments of St Marylebone, merely noting that many of them were “neatly, and even classically designed” (Smith 1833, 93).) Monuments could provide moral and aesthetic examplars in their inscriptions and design, and a focus on monuments to notable individuals and on those which are impressive or unusual have continued to dominate cemetery interpretation for modern visitors (Mytum 2007).
Conclusion

The monuments studied show both development and continuity in different aspects, but the ways in which they develop or stay the same are different from those of coffin plates of the same period. The use of emotional language, for example, was not chronologically significant within the monuments studied, being a consistent (though not universal) aspect, which stands in contrast with comparable coffin plates. The use of Latin on monuments showed a difference between the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples studied, where usually only one or two words were in Latin, and the seventeenth-century monuments, of St Stephen Walbrook at least, where most were entirely in Latin. Within this small sample, a higher proportion of church monuments included Latin than those of St John’s Wood burial ground. The typography of monuments did change over time, but this change does not appear to have been as dynamic as that of the lettering on brass coffin plates, with the early nineteenth-century monuments at St Marylebone demonstrating a stolid formality in their almost total use of Roman print lettering. However, even within the short period of use of monuments at St Marylebone Church, some trends were apparent within the use of motifs, with crosses used on later monuments (see Fig. 6.21).

![Fig. 6.21: Box and whisker plot of the use of selected motifs (urns, mourning figures with monuments, and crosses) on monuments at St Marylebone Church (see also Table 6.12)](image_url)

While coats of arms were used on both monuments and brass coffin plates, at St Marylebone in particular, the difference in their use points to one way in which differences between these
two related types of funerary material culture can be explained: the use of heraldry on monuments was gendered in a way that its use on coffin plates was not.

Overall, while the earliest and latest examples of brass or decorated lead coffin plates look, at first glance, to be very similar, with some styles remaining in use over extended periods, this cannot be said of the earliest and latest monuments studied (see Figs 6.22 and 6.23). The monuments at St Stephen Walbrook that date from the late 1760s and 1770s are clearly very different to the two dated to the 1840s in the church, one of which is Gothic in style (M217, dated 1845).

Fig. 6.22: Monument to the Deschamps family at St Stephen Walbrook Church (M212). The primary inscription is to John Deschamps (d.1776). Courtesy of St Stephen Walbrook Church.
The differences in style are not explicable in this case by not having compared like with like, as, particularly at St Marylebone, those commemorated on coffin plates and on monuments are from the same social background (to a large extent) and a significant proportion are the same individuals. Coffin furniture and monuments had different uses, meanings and, to return briefly to the ‘performance’ of funerals, audiences. Crucially, the way in which they were produced and supplied was also very different, with more complex networks involved for coffin furniture, compared with monuments (compare Figs 2.5 and 6.20), suggesting that feedback on styles from consumers to coffin furniture manufacturers, if any, was also indirect. Coffin furniture was one part of a furnished coffin, itself the centrepiece of a complex, multi-sensory and emotionally-charged event arranged by an undertaker, rather than being selected by clients directly, as monuments were. Because the monuments could be used over time, their inscriptions bind together families in stone, in a material way that is also visible in the use of family graves or vaults, the movement of coffined remains from one site to another and in the repeated use of the same undertaker, even the same coffin plate design, for related individuals. This is less immediately apparent from the coffin plate collections themselves, but the evidence of the monuments and the documentary records of burial places enables these to be placed in a context where the emotional ties of life continue beyond death.
Furnished coffins and monuments are types of funerary object that have often been considered together and in contrast, but both sit within a broader range of objects that commemorated the dead in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of the most personal of these, which also included motifs and inscriptions, was mourning jewellery, which is explored in the following chapter.
I think it would be comforting. ¹

Leadenhall Street, London. Wednesday 25th May 1808, around seven o’clock: ²

Mrs Taylor placed a tray of mourning rings on the counter of the jeweller’s that she ran with her husband Edward for the two young men to browse. Dressed in mourning, John and Charles Brown, probably brothers, were shopping for rings with mottoes and ordered three, worth seven and a half guineas in total, to be collected the following Saturday. They had come prepared, and Charles, the older and taller of the two, handed over a lock of hair to place in the ring and a brass ring of his own so that the Taylors could adjust the size to fit. While he made the order, John Brown said he had hurt his eye and Mrs Taylor sent her assistant, Henry Shaw, to fetch him a glass of spring water. However, the two men were not quite as they appeared, and as John Brown dabbed his handkerchief into the water to wipe his sore eye, he was hooking rings onto his little finger under its cover. The Browns left the shop, but their success was short-lived. Henry Shaw had spotted the theft and told Edward Taylor, who followed them up Cornhill to another jeweller’s shop, Mr Fearn’s, where they were again ordering mourning rings. Edward Taylor put his foot against the door and, after a scuffle, managed, with help, to secure both men. Until the sharp eyes of Henry Shaw and the firm grasp of Edward Taylor put an end to them, the plans of the Brown brothers seem to have been going well. Thirteen rings were found on them, only two of which were Edward

¹ Written by Lady Louisa Cathcart about lockets containing hair that she designed in memory of her brother Charles, who died at sea in 1788 (Scarisbrick 1994, 263).
² This account is based on the published proceedings of the Old Bailey trial of John Brown and Charles Brown (OBP t18080601-80).
Taylor’s. But their luck had run out and at their trial for theft, only days later, both men were condemned to death. Their sentences were respited to transportation, for John Brown, and imprisonment, for Charles Brown.

The published proceedings of the Old Bailey trial of John and Charles Brown on 1st June 1808 reveals some interesting information about mourning rings in the first decade of the nineteenth century (OBP t18080601-80). Although only two jewellers were named at the trial, it is clear that several had been successfully targeted by the Browns, and that sufficient jewellers in the area kept mourning rings in stock to make their scheme worth pursuing. Mourning rings were widely available in London, it seems, and not confined to specialist suppliers. The text also highlights the importance of hair in mourning jewellery of this period. The constable who arrested him found four parcels of human hair in John Brown’s pocket, carried to make his role of a bereaved customer appear plausible. It also gives a sense of the cost of mourning rings, with the ordered rings costing a guinea and a half or three guineas each. The designs of the stolen mourning rings are not given in detail, but those ordered by Charles Brown are described as “mourning rings with mottoes round them”, as well as having a compartment for hair (perhaps like the ring in Fig. 7.12; OBP t18080601-80). At the second jeweller’s, “their object was to buy pearl and mourning rings”, according to the shop assistant (OBP t18080601-80; possibly similar to the ring in Fig. 7.1). Mottoes, hair and pearls are characteristic of mourning rings of this period, part of a tradition within which styles developed over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

![Mourning ring](image_url)

Fig. 7.1: Mourning ring commemorating Andrew Wright (d.1806), with a panel of the hair of two people surrounded by a pearl border. The band is decorated with black enamel, 20 mm dia. (MoL A28556/12). © Museum of London
Mourning rings and other items of mourning jewellery offer an opportunity to examine another aspect of the funerary material culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Like coffin furniture and monuments, many also include motifs and, frequently, inscriptions, but were objects of private (though visible), rather than public, commemoration.

**Previous approaches to mourning jewellery**

Mourning jewellery of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has long been of interest to private collectors, whose acquisitions now form an important part of modern museum collections. Frederick Arthur Crisp published a detailed catalogue of his own large collection of mourning rings, dated between 1653 and 1835, in 1908 (Crisp 1908). Joan Evans collected and wrote comprehensive histories of jewellery, including mourning jewellery (Evans 1970). Parts of her extensive collection were donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, Birmingham City Art Gallery and to what is now the Museum of London collections (Garlick 2004). Mourning jewellery of this period has continued to be incorporated into accounts of the history of jewellery, by Charlotte Gere (1981) and colleagues (Gere et al. 1984), Shirley Bury (1984; 1985; 1991) and Diana Scarisbrick (1994), for example, particularly as it has, along with sentimental jewellery, tended to survive in greater quantities than jewellery of other types (Gere 1981, 123). Sarah Nehama’s (2012) book on Anglo-American mourning jewellery, based on her own collection and that of the Massachusetts Historical Society, testifies to the shared expectations of this material in Britain and what became the USA across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mourning jewellery has also been studied as one aspect of funerary material culture (Llewellyn 1991; Morley 1971) and as part of mourning wear (Taylor 1983). Hair jewellery has been a particular focus in studies of mourning jewellery of both the eighteenth (Holm 2004) and, particularly, nineteenth centuries (Lutz 2011; Scheumaker 1997). Marcia Pointon (1999; 2001; 2009) has approached mourning jewellery from an art historical perspective, as part of her anthropologically-informed research on the use of portrait miniatures. Arianne Fennetaux’s (2016) work considered mourning jewellery of the late eighteenth century in relation to the broader societal trend of sentiment, arguing that these objects contributed to shaping how gender was defined in this period. This chapter will also place the ‘new’ mourning jewellery of the late eighteenth century within the context of objects of sentimental jewellery of the time, which, Amanda Vickery noted, enjoyed “a massive vogue” at this time (Vickery 1999,
and which has been explored by Sally Holloway in her work on romantic love in this period (Holloway 2013; 2019).

The mourning jewellery collection that is the focus of this chapter is from the Museum of London Decorative Arts collections and was studied during a project to research and enhance the catalogue entries of mourning items. The initial list of objects was created by the Museum’s Curator of Making, Dr Danielle Thom, by thorough catalogue searches by keyword; additional relevant items were identified during the project and added to the list. In all, 259 objects were studied for this project. These included mourning objects associated with public figures, produced for sale to the public rather than for personal mourning, such as ceramics produced on the deaths of members of the royal family, funerary medals commemorating mainly royal and military individuals and a small number of items of jewellery relating to royal and public figures. These all include funerary motifs and are considered briefly below.

The jewellery collection studied comprised 238 items, including rings, bracelet clasps, pendants and brooches (several objects include both a suspension loop and a pin and catch, so could have been worn as a pendant or brooch). Sixty-two objects are items of jewellery made mainly or entirely of jet or materials of similar appearance. Jet, mined and worked in Whitby, North Yorkshire, was highly prized in the mid- to late-nineteenth century and the surface could be highly polished or given a more matt appearance, suitable for the first, deepest stage of mourning when shiny textures were to be avoided and widows’ clothes were covered in crepe. The objects that are not actually made of jet are mostly ‘French jet’, which is dark purple or red glass in a black metal setting (Muller 1987; see Fig. 7.2), but also include objects made of bog oak, vulcanite and ebonite (both early plastics). These date from between the 1840s and the end of the nineteenth century and none are inscribed. Rather than commemorating an individual, these items were suitable for wearing during a period of mourning (with the sole exception, in this collection, of a jet locket which includes a lock of hair and a photograph (MoL 63.113/4)).
Not all the inscribed objects studied include funerary symbolism. A bracelet slide of 1786, for example, while including seed pearl and gold wire decoration and a small oval plaque with a monogram, in common with contemporary mourning jewellery, depicts a birdcage with two birds (MoL C1696). It looks more likely to be an item of sentimental jewellery, but the inscription, “In remembrance of my Dear Mother, who departed this Life, the 5 Feb, 1786 æt 54”, reveals its commemorative role. A few of the objects studied may not have been used as mourning jewellery at all, and the rather hazy boundaries of these categories will be explored below. Detailed comparisons with other collections have not been made, but the timeline of stylistic development of this collection described below aligns with other examples in other museum collections and in publications.

The dated sample

The dated sample consists of 56 objects (two of which are a pair of bracelet clasps), dated, between 1724 and 1873, with a mean date of around 1794 \(^3\) (see Fig. 7.3 and Table 7.1). Fifty-eight people, commemorated by 47 objects were identifiable from inscriptions or, in a few cases, from other sources.

\(^3\) Three objects have more than one date so the earlier of the two has been used for this calculation, with 1775 used as an estimate for the earlier (incomplete) date of object MoL 62.120/48.
Table 7.1: Dated mourning jewellery from the Museum of London Decorative Arts collection

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<td>A5568</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>J C Ob' Apr. 5 1724 Ætat 67</td>
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<tr>
<td>A7506 ⁴</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sam Forth ob' 9 Aug 1724 æta 36</td>
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<td>NN6769</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>John Bancks Esq ob' 15 Mar 1724 æt 23</td>
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<td>A5569</td>
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<td>ring</td>
<td>E ORD OB⁷ 19 NOV⁷ 1727 Æ 25</td>
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<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>K P ob' 8 May 1729 æta 43</td>
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<td>1738</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>MARY PAWSON OB 17 OC 1738 Æ 36.</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>62.156/2</td>
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<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>In Mem : of Eliz: Whitaker. ob. 18 June 1741 æ : 46</td>
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⁴ See Fig. 7.4
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<td>62.120/43</td>
<td>1778</td>
<td>bracelet</td>
<td>L.B OB. 25. OCT 1778 AE 5 M°‡</td>
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<tr>
<td>56.37</td>
<td>1779</td>
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<td>CAT® KEARNS OB³</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>62.120/48</td>
<td>1782</td>
<td>pendant</td>
<td>E B W age 3 Ob Feb 24 '82</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>ring</td>
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<tr>
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<td>TO ETERNAL BLISS</td>
<td>TRANSLATED 18 JANUARY 1782</td>
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<tr>
<td>A23338</td>
<td>1782</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>ELIZ: BACON DIED 1 FEB: 1782 AGED 42</td>
<td>Be ye also Ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1692</td>
<td>1782</td>
<td>pendant</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sarah Eastwood Ob' 13th Nov 1782 Åt 31 WM\m Graham ob' 2d Sep' 1783 Åt 78</td>
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<td>1783</td>
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<td>62.120/42</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>pendant</td>
<td>IN MEMORY OF A FRIEND</td>
<td>Ann Lloyd ob 16 Apr 1784 at 78</td>
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<tr>
<td>C1886</td>
<td>1785</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>I F OB 27 MAY 1785 AE 58</td>
<td>A F ob: 10th Aug 1787 æ 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1787]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>62.120/47</td>
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<td>pendant</td>
<td>FANNY GORDON GRAY OB' 8 APRIL 1786 AE 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>62.120/62</td>
<td>1786</td>
<td>pendant</td>
<td>A DEAR REMEMBRANCE</td>
<td>The Rev\d WM Clark died 6 Ap\d 1786. Aged 60.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

\[Richard Osbaldeston, Bishop of London
\[See Fig. 7.5
\[This inscription is printed onto paper which has been pasted over a previous inscription, of which only part of the date “177]\[.]” is visible.
\[See Fig. 7.13
\[See Fig. 7.13 for a near-identical ring
\[See Fig. 7.14
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<td>ring</td>
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<td>Tho' Harrison, ob 4 Dec' 1787, æt 79.</td>
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<td>Sir William Draper K.[B] Ob' 8, Jan, 1787, Æt 65.</td>
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<td>NN12053</td>
<td>1787</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>NOT LOST BUT GONE BEFORE / TO BLISS</td>
<td>Ann Grundy died Mar 11th 1787 Aged 9 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>C1693</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>brooch</td>
<td>AFFECTION WEEPS HEAVEN REJOICES</td>
<td>Tempæ Carter Ob' 21 June 1789 Aged 37.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C1799</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>THE DEAR REMAINS</td>
<td>Ro'd Valentine, ob 20 Dec' 1789, æt 23 Ys. &amp; 3 M's</td>
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<td>1790</td>
<td>brooch/</td>
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<td>John Savill died March 26 1790 aged 2 Years &amp; 8 Months</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Ann Champion ob: 13 Mar: 1794 æt 30 Affection weeps; Heaven rejoices.</td>
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<td>JAMES . HENDERSON . OB . 19 . FEB . 1795 . Æ : 56</td>
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11 See Fig. 7.7
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<td>1796</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>M R / MARY . DUCHESS . OF . RICHMOND . OB . 5 . NOV . 1796 . Æ : 54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.120/61</td>
<td>1798</td>
<td>pendant</td>
<td>May he who gave it be ever remembered by the Person who wears it. Nov' 5ᵗʰ 1798. ¹³</td>
<td>CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A15619</td>
<td>1799</td>
<td>brooch</td>
<td>I. R 1799</td>
<td>J. Roberts shipwreck'd 31ᵗʰ Jan' 1799 aged 17 Yrs 8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.120/105</td>
<td>1802</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>Sarah Lam[b?] 1802 Aged 81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.120/97</td>
<td>1805</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Penelope Vaughan died 21 Novr 1805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.149/3</td>
<td>1806</td>
<td>locket</td>
<td>W. Pitt Ob' 23ᵈ Jan' 1806</td>
<td>The Honᵗʰ Charles Stanhope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A28556/12¹⁴</td>
<td>1806</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sacred to the Memory of my beloved husband, Andrew Wright, Esq' ob' 18 Feb'y 1806 æt 54.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.120/107</td>
<td>1807</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>JOHN GRIFFITHS OB: 3 JULY 1807 ÆT: 61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.26</td>
<td>1810</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ANN GODSON OB 17 MAR 1810 ÆT: 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.120/103</td>
<td>1810</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>HE LIVES TO FAME</td>
<td>In memory of L' Col Edward Hull 43 Reg' who fell gallantly &amp; universally lamented in the defence of the passage of the Coa against a greatly superior force of the Enemy 24 July 1810 Aged 37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹² Translated from German: ‘slumber gently’

¹³ The inscription is around the edge of the pendant.

¹⁴ See Fig. 7.1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Inscription (outside/front)</th>
<th>Inscription (inside/back)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62.120/99</td>
<td>1810</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>SACRED TO AFFECTION</td>
<td>Wm Burge born 24 Dec' 1749 Died 2 Sep' 1810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1871</td>
<td>1813</td>
<td>bracelet</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Rev'd Wm Huntington S.S. Ob'July 1 1813, æ' 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1872</td>
<td>1813</td>
<td>bracelet</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.247/2</td>
<td>1814</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>JOANNA SOUTHCOTT DIED 27 DEC: 1814 AGED 65</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A24358 16</td>
<td>1829</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>IN MEMORY OF</td>
<td>James Chase, ob' 15 April 1829 Æt 33.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A24356</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>In memory of</td>
<td>Crisp Brown, ob' Aug' 19th 1830 æt 62.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A25949</td>
<td>1847</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>A Commonwealth Relic Presented by Mifs Jane Porter to Dominic Colnaghi Esq. a memorial of her Brother, the late Sir R. Ker Porter's esteem for him, and of her own sense of his professional services to her after she had lost that honour'd Brother ob 1842 - her Gift 1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1775*</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>brooch</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Samuel Perry Mills Aged 10 Yrs drowned 15 May 1848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.273/2 17</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Hannah de Rothschild died Sep' 5th 1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A24359</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Maria Brown ob' 22 Aug' 1853 Æt 77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 William Huntington was a preacher and religious writer. He added the initials 'SS' to his name to represent 'Sinner Saved' (Brant 2004). This bracelet clasp forms a matching pair with C1872.
16 See Fig. 7.12
17 See Fig. 7.8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Inscription (outside/front)</th>
<th>Inscription (inside/back)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67.57/1</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>brooch</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Bernard Walter Feb’y 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1864 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.97</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>MFV</td>
<td>Jan’y 20th 1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.113/2</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>IN MEMORY OF</td>
<td>Sophia Hawes. ob’ 28th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1873 March 1873 aged 86.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The earliest seven dated objects are mourning rings, with dates between 1724 and 1741, which all include symbols of mortality such as skeletons, hourglasses and the pick and shovel, tools of the gravedigger (MoL A5568, A7506 (see Fig. 7.4), NN6769, A5569, A20482, A5567, 62.156/2). They are all gold finger rings, with enamel decorating the band, some with a crystal bezel. Four have black enamel, but the other three are enamelled in white, which was traditionally used for those who were not married when they died (e.g. the prophet Joanna Southcott, d.1814, MoL 74.247/2). Most carry the personal inscription on the inner side of the band, but in two cases the name, date of death and age are in gold lettering on the outside (MoL A5567, A5569). For example, the ring of Mary Pawson (d.1738) has black enamelled scrolls around the band which carry the inscription “MARY PAWSON OB 17 OC 1738 Æ 36”, along with a crystal bezel over a tiny painted skull (MoL A5567).

18 The surname is recorded in the Museum of London catalogue, and this was confirmed by consulting the death certificate (‘Bernard Walter Rust’ 1864).
While designs changed over time, black or white enamel with gold lettering remained a key component of mourning rings, from these skeletal bands of the early eighteenth century, to the plain hoops of the nineteenth, with 14 dated examples over the full span of this collection, from 1727 to 1873, occasionally in combination with other decorative elements, such as painted miniatures or hair compartments.

Within this collection, as in other museum collections and published examples, a significant shift in mourning jewellery can be seen to have taken place in the 1770s, when mourning rings were supplemented by brooches, pendants and bracelet clasps that included painted miniatures and hair (Bury 1984, 47; Evans 1970, 165). This development also affected ring design, which became more diverse from this period. The earliest-dated painted miniature in this collection is an oval bracelet clasp of 1778 with a painted ivory plaque and a dark blue enamel border under a glass cover (MoL 62.120/43, see Fig. 7.5). The painting is in sepia tones and depicts a funerary urn on a plinth with the inscription “L.B / OB. 25. OCT / 1778 / Æ. 5 MTS”, with a willow tree alongside. The foreground and parts of the tree are decorated with finely chopped hair, which has been mixed with an adhesive and applied to provide texture. It is in all respects a typical example of the mourning jewellery of the final quarter of the eighteenth century.

Fig. 7.5: Bracelet slide commemorating ‘L.B’, who died in 1778 aged 5 months, 39 x 30 mm (MoL 62.120/43).
© Museum of London
While the gold and black enamel rings can be seen as developing from the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century mourning rings, these painted miniatures are more closely associated with sentimental jewellery, in their design, use of hair and in their use. Indeed, it seems helpful to consider the roles and styles of the ‘new’ mourning jewellery of the late eighteenth century within a broader body of objects which created and maintained emotional bonds between people in this period.

Finely chopped hair is a feature of the ivory miniatures on the front of mourning jewellery from the 1770s. The first use of more substantial hairwork in the front of mourning jewellery in this collection is a ring dated 1795 in which plaited, light-coloured hair forms a background for an urn monument and tree made of mother of pearl and seed pearls (MoL C21). Further rings dated 1805 (MoL 62.120/97), 1806 (MoL A28556/12), 1810 (MoL 60.26) and 1829 (MoL A24358) all have a space for woven hair in the front of the bezel, though the hair does not remain in all cases. Similarly, a pair of bracelet clasps dated 1813 have small glassed spaces for hair as part of the design, one of which retains the original hair (MoL C1871, C1872). Rings of 1830 and 1853, commemorating Crisp Brown and his widow Maria, both have tightly woven strips of hair set around the outside of the band (MoL A24356, A24359), and one of the latest dated rings studied, inscribed with the date 1872, has a similar space, though no hair remains (MoL. 51.97). One of the later objects is a brooch containing a carefully arranged curl of hair, commemorating Bernard Walter Rust, who died of whooping cough, aged three, at home in Bedford Square in 1864 (MoL 67.57/1; ‘Bernard Walter Rust’ 1864).

The bracelet clasp described and illustrated above (MoL 62.120/43, see Fig. 7.5) is typical in its depiction of a monument consisting of an urn on a plinth. Urns, and funerary monuments more generally, are a key feature of objects of mourning jewellery in this collection, dating from the 1770s to the 1810s. Sixteen dated objects (1778 to 1813) feature urns, with a further small number featuring obelisk monuments (MoL C1887, dated 1787, C1882, dated 1789 and 62.120/48, first made in the 1770s, although this image also features a small urn), or a broken column (MoL C1799, dated 1789).

The dated sample also includes some unusual, even idiosyncratic, objects. The two rings commemorating the Woodmason children are discussed below (MoL 62.120/95 and A10537, see Fig. 7.13). A plain locket on a black ribbon, dated 1806, is notable for its prestigious connection, rather than its decoration; it commemorates William Pitt the
Younger, Prime Minister at the time of his death in 1806, and The Honourable Charles Stanhope, most likely his relative Charles Banks Stanhope, who died in 1809 (MoL 60.149/3). A ring given by the author Jane Porter to Dominic Colnaghi, a London art dealer, in memory of her brother, Sir Robert Ker Porter, an artist and diplomat, includes a miniature portrait, said to be of the seventeenth-century general Henry Ireton (MoL A25949). This could have been painted by Robert Ker Porter himself, as he specialised in historical subjects, and in any case suggests the choice of an image with personal meaning, rather than a more conventional scene.

Motifs and sources

The mortality motifs described above, including skulls, skeletons, hourglasses and picks and shovels, are almost all confined to the first half of the eighteenth century. The final dated object with substantial mortality motifs commemorates Elizabeth Whitaker who died in 1741. It not only has a full skeleton, hour glass and crossed longbones around the band, but also a tiny painted skull under the crystal bezel (MoL 62.156/2). The only exceptions are tiny mortality motifs which can, very rarely, be seen on later mourning jewellery. For example, an undated, large late eighteenth-century pendant which depicts two figures emerging from an obelisk monument to reach for a crown held by angels includes an extremely small skull and crossed longbones on the monument (MoL 62.120/56). Many of the images with mourners and monuments include cherubs in the sky, sometimes holding a scroll (see Fig. 7.6). One painted brooch or pendant, inscribed for John Savill, who died, aged two, in 1790, features small winged cherubs in a cloudscape (MoL 62.120/76). However, the winged cherub heads that are so common on coffin furniture are largely absent from mourning jewellery. The only example in this collection is the design used on the two near-identical rings commemorating the seven Woodmason children, who died in a fire at their home in 1782 (MoL A10537, 62.120/95, see Fig. 7.13). The painted bezel depicts the children as cherubs, with their sizes relating to their ages and the two smallest, representing two-year-old twins Elizabeth and John, close together. Angels also appear in a few designs, though by no means many, including the unusual image on an undated brooch or pendant of an angel carrying a gowned figure heavenwards, based on a contemporary print (MoL 62.120/70). More conventionally, two angels hold a crown in the scene of resurrection described above (MoL 62.120/56).
As the dated sample indicates, monuments, and particularly urns, are the most characteristic motif used on mourning jewellery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These appear in a variety of materials including mother of pearl, enamel and seed pearls, as well as being painted in watercolour. They are usually upright in form, although an enamelled ring of 1810 includes a wide urn (MoL 62.120/99). Urns are often depicted on a plinth, frequently with at least one mourning figure. ‘Mourner and monument’ designs were also used on monuments and other objects in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries including, later within this period, on some items of coffin furniture. On mourning jewellery this style was in favour from the 1770s to the 1810s. Within the dated sample studied, the latest item of jewellery including a mourner and monument, a ring, is dated 1789 (MoL C1799), while urns alone continued to appear on objects until 1813 (MoL C1871 and C1872). Other, undated, objects within the collection are likely to extend these date ranges of use, but it seems that mourning figures may have dropped out of use on mourning jewellery earlier than on monuments and other funerary objects. In addition to the urns and other monuments, one recurring design is of an altar or pedestal on which there is a sheep or a pair of doves. In some, a woman is placing a garland on the animal(s). These images are less obviously funerary, but a couple have commemorative inscriptions, confirming their role as mourning
jewellery, such as the ring commemorating Ann Champion, who died in 1794 (MoL 62.120/93, see Fig. 7.7).

Another design that is frequently found on mourning jewellery painted miniatures of the late eighteenth century is a ‘Hope and anchor’, a female figure holding a large anchor and often pointing heavenwards. These are often seen alone, or with a ship or shipwreck in the background (e.g. MoL C1692, C1798, 62.120/66, see Fig. 7.10) and one inscription explicitly refers to Hope: “DELUSIVE HOPE STILL POINTS TO DISTANT GOOD” (MoL 62.120/52). In one example, of 1789, the figure of Hope, holding an anchor, stands next to a grieving man next to an urn monument (MoL C1693).

The black-enamelled ring of Hannah de Rothschild (d.1850) is in the form of a segmented serpent, and is the only inscribed object to include this motif (MoL 38.273/2, see Fig. 7.8), but the collection also includes a bracelet made of jet in the form of a snake (MoL 35.127/1c). The serpent was a popular motif for jewellery in the mid-nineteenth century, but its use for
mourning objects perhaps also echoes the trend for the ouroboros lid motif used on the most expensive coffins from the 1830s onwards.

One surviving source reveals designs of jewellery miniatures of the late eighteenth century. The Victoria and Albert Museum collections hold two volumes of designs for hair devices by the engraver Garnet Terry (V&A E.2321 to E.2326-1931 and E.3379 to E.3387-1903). Each consists of pages with multiple oval or pointed oval images of different sizes, though all are a suitable size to be copied one to one onto items of jewellery. Terry himself was identified on one of his trade cards, at the same address as his self-published designs of 1789, as a “Jeweller & Engraver”, offering “Devices in Hair” and “Motto-Rings on the Shortest Notice” among other items (BM Banks,59.195). The title page of the later volume records that it was intended for “ARTISTS in GENERAL, & Particularly for Jewellers, Enamel painters, PATTERN DRAWERS &c.” (V&A E.3379-1903). One contains six plates of hair device designs, two with dates in 1781 (V&A E2323-1931; E2325-1931) and four with dates in 1789 (V&A E.2321-1931; E.2322-1931; E.2324-1931; E.2326-1931). Although the second, published in 1795, promises “new and allegorical devices”, six of the eight plates are identical to those of the 1780s. Both volumes contain designs for mourning jewellery, incorporating urns, monograms on a background of hair and people grieving with monuments. However, there are also many other designs in these pages. Some could possibly have been used for mourning objects, such as ‘Hope and anchor’ designs, but others, while similar in some respects, were perhaps most likely intended for sentimental jewellery. For example, one design depicts a woman holding a shield on top of a plinth with a ship (possibly a shipwreck) in the distant background and the shield inscribed “JE PENSE A VOUS” (I think of you)
There is one page in the later volume which consists mostly of designs that are clearly funerary (V&A E3380-1903), but on the whole the funerary designs are not separate, either within the page or between pages. The relationships between mourning and sentimental jewellery which are apparent in the objects are also clear in these designs. There is no sense that there was a clear dividing line between them for the designers, such as Garnet Terry, for the artists and makers who used these designs or for their customers.

Some objects also indicate wider sources of inspiration. One brooch, with a hair compartment at the back, dated to the end of the eighteenth century, has a painted image based on the painting ‘Maria’ by Angelica Kauffman, which depicts a character from Laurence Sterne’s novel *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, published in 1768 (MoL C1867; see Fig. 7.9). This very popular image was reproduced in prints and on a variety of objects (Goodden 2006, 134; see, for example, BM 1940,0306.11). The character of Maria was a grieving widow and this image would therefore have been an appropriate choice for mourning jewellery, although this item is not inscribed. Similarly, the image of an angel carrying a figure on one of the items of jewellery is based on a painting of 1783 by Rev.
Matthew William Peters, which was reproduced as a print (MoL 62.120/70; Gatrell 2013, 220; BM 1876,0708.2578). Mourning jewellery fitted into a wider cultural landscape of the celebration of sentiment in jewellery, prints, and other material culture.

**Hair**

Whether exchanged between lovers or friends in life, or taken from a corpse, a lock of hair was, in this period, a symbol of eternal affection. The survival of hair over long periods of time is illustrated by a ring in this collection which claims to include some hair of Edward IV (d.1483), whose tomb in St George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle was disturbed in 1789 (MoL 35.117). This quality of durability, proved by its survival in so many objects within this collection, along with its close association with the body of a loved one, gave hair great symbolic value in establishing and maintaining relationships (Holloway 2013, 76; Holm 2004). Items of hair jewellery could also become heirlooms, maintaining memories across generations (Vickery 1999, 187). The meanings attached to the exchange and ownership of the hair of another are illustrated in many novels of the period. In one of the better-known examples, possession of a lock of hair, displayed in a ring in one case, appears to confirm two romantic relationships in *Sense and Sensibility*, though in both cases these bonds prove to be breakable (Austen 2014 [1811]). By the mid-eighteenth century the use of hair in sentimental jewellery, given by friends or lovers, was well-established, and this relates directly to its use in mourning jewellery.

The ‘new’ mourning jewellery incorporated hair in a surprising number of different ways. Some of these are barely visible to the naked eye, such as the single strands used to enhance the shading on a painted textile in a tiny locket (MoL 62.120/86) or to represent the rigging of a ship on a brooch (MoL C1798, see Fig. 7.10). The smallest pieces of hair are those that have been finely chopped and used on many pieces, mixed with an adhesive and applied to add texture, particularly to the ground surface, or to shadows in the design (see Figs 7.5, 7.7, 7.10 and 7.14). More recognisably, plaited hair was set into glass compartments, usually, but not always, on the reverse of the object, which would lie next to the body of the wearer (see Fig. 7.9). Sometimes the colours of the strands suggest that the hair of two people has been combined (see Fig. 7.1).
Hair was a key component of mourning jewellery from the 1770s for at least a century, and in the nineteenth century was used in even more elaborate ways. Specialist hairworkers created whole objects of hair, including bracelets, brooches and earrings, sometimes using moulds to create tubes or netted clouds of hair (see Fig. 7.11). This was a big business; by the 1860s Antoni Forrer, hair jewellery by appointment to Queen Victoria, claimed to employ 50 people (Forrer n.d. [after 1862] a). From the 1840s, hairwork was also a craft carried out by women at home, guided by instructions in books and magazines (Holloway 2013, 77). In 1871 Alexanna Speight, a Clerkenwell “artist in hair” published a guide to hairwork which he addressed to young women, with instructions and diagrams for them to create designs at home, and advertisements for materials in the endpages (Speight 1871). He suggested that they might be moved to do this themselves to avoid any danger of substitution of hair by an unscrupulous professional (Speight 1871, 84). The Museum of London collections include 15 unset, and in some cases ungassed, hair designs, ranging from carefully but simply arranged curls of hair to the more elaborate ‘Prince of Wales’ feather’, identical to Speight’s illustration and including what appears to be hair from three people (MoL 27.61/5). These are undated but likely date to between around 1850 and 1880. By this period, even amateur hairworkers might perhaps have used hair in highly elaborate ways. Tiny petals and leaves...
made from attaching hair to strips of goldbeaters’ skin (animal intestines used in making gold leaf) are described in Speight’s book and used in a few items in the collection, made either by a professional or by someone following the directions of this, or a similar, book (e.g. MoL 27.61/2).

Not all of the hairwork jewellery of this period was mourning jewellery, and it can sometimes be impossible to distinguish between objects incorporating, or made from, the hair of the dead and those using the hair of the living. The latter would, of course, have added poignancy and emotional value after death. One of Antoni Forrer’s advertisements of the 1860s begins a long list with “FORRER’S Hair Jewellery for Presents. Hair Jewellery for Birthday Presents. Hair Jewellery for Marriage Presents. Hair Jewellery for Mourning Presents” (Forrer n.d. [after 1862] b). In his book, Speight suggests that preserving the hair of a loved one may be motivated by their death or by separation:

> When we think of the imperishable nature of human hair we can easily understand the anxiety with which a tress or lock cut from the forehead of a friend who is perhaps long among the dead, or separated from us, not only by miles and miles of ocean, but by new ties and new cares, is preserved.

(Speight 1871, 83)
One of the later objects containing hair, a jet locket, dating to the 1860s, opens to reveal a curl of hair on one side and a photograph on the other (MoL 63.113/4). This serves as a reminder that by the end of this period, although the popularity of hair as a sentimental token and a memento for the bereaved continued, photography offered a new, widely available method of capturing something of a loved one in life, to be cherished during separations and after death.

**Inscriptions**

Inscriptions on mourning jewellery take a variety of forms. As well as commemorative dedications, they also include makers’ marks on some gold rings and also faintly scratched marks, which were probably also made by makers or sellers. At the 1808 theft trial, the jeweller Edward Taylor said that he was able to identify one of his stolen rings by “a private mark, what we give and what we sell for; it is marked inside on the gold; it is never erased, it goes out to the purchasers with it” (OBP t18080601-80). The decorative and visible marks usually include the name or initials and date of death of the person commemorated, sometimes with additional details or, often separately in the design, a motto or phrase. The habitual inclusion of initials or names and dates is a feature of mourning rings from the mid-seventeenth century (Crisp 1908, 1; Gittings 1984, 160). They can therefore be seen as part of a broader trend of labelling objects with initials and dates in the early modern period, of which the use of depositum plates on coffins is also a part (Mytum 2017, 162; Tarlow 2011, 125). For example, one memorial pendant has a painted plaque depicting a funerary urn with the inscription “IN MEMORY OF A FRIEND” above, on a background of dark blue enamel decorated with gold thread and seed pearls arranged as branches and ribbons (MoL 62.120/42). The back is inscribed “Ann Lloyd / ob 16 Apr 1784 æt 78” around a compartment intended to hold a knot of hair. Sometimes, initials and dates have been added directly to the image, or onto tiny plaques which are incorporated into the design. In one case, unique in this collection and with no other examples apparent elsewhere, initials and dates including the year 1782 have been printed onto a piece of paper, which covers an earlier inscription from the 1770s on an ivory plaque (MoL 62.120/48). It would have been possible to add these inscriptions or plaques to pre-made images within a short period of time. Similarly, a few of the rings (from 1810 onwards) have a standard phrase around the outside of the band, with a personal inscription added inside, or under the bezel. A typical example
is the gold mourning ring of James Chase (MoL A24358, see Fig. 12). This has a compartment for hair, now empty, and the words “IN MEMORY OF” around the outside in gold, set into black enamel, with “James Chase / ob’ / 15 April 1829 / æt 33” engraved on the inside. Rings of this and similar designs could have been created in a range of sizes and then engraved with a personal inscription “on the Shortest Notice”, as contemporary trade cards promised (BM Banks,59.195).

![Fig. 7.12: Mourning ring commemorating James Chase (d.1829) with an empty panel for hair and black enamelling on the band, 21 mm dia. (MoL A24358). © Museum of London](image)

Personal inscriptions on mourning jewellery are usually of the same form as those on coffin plates, with the name, date of death and age. The inside of one white-enamelled memento mori gold ring, for example, is inscribed “John Bancks Esq ob’ 15 Mar 1724 æt 23” (MoL NN6769). Over a century later, a mourning ring with a tightly woven band of hair set around the outside has “In memory of” on the bezel and the inside is inscribed “Crisp Brown, ob’ Aug' 19th 1830 æt 62” (MoL A24356). There are variations, with a couple including the emotional language used on monuments of the period but almost never on coffin plates. The inscription on the ring made for Elizabeth Wright in memory of her husband, Andrew, begins “Sacred to the Memory of my beloved husband” (MoL A28556/12, see Fig. 7.1). Lack of space on some objects is a limiting factor for these personal additions, but they are also unnecessary in many cases, as the emotional link is expressed in words through mottoes incorporated into the design. The majority of these refer to bonds of memory between the living and the dead, such as “No time his dear remembrance can remove”, “Remembrance
“dear”, “HE LIVES TO FAME” or simply “in memory of” (MoL 62.120/33; NN16392; 62.120/103; 63.113/2). The inscriptions sometimes express a belief that, though lost to their loved ones, the dead await reunion in heaven – “heaven has in store what you have lost” (MoL NN6774) – which again emphasises the bond between the bereaved and those commemorated by these objects, and the experience of loss. Grief is also the focus of the bleak inscription, “I have lost my support”, though perhaps a pun is also suggested by the broken column in the design (MoL 62.120/55). There are two inscriptions in this collection that are unusual in this context, which also link the living and the dead, but on the lessons that death can teach the living, rather than on an individual emotional connection. “Prepare to follow me” (MoL C29) and “Be ye also Ready” (MoL A23338) are in the memento mori tradition, reminding the wearer that life is short and to prepare for judgement in the afterlife. However, both objects include typical funerary motifs of the final decades of the eighteenth century, and do not include mortality imagery. One is a ring with a painted ivory miniature and black enamel border commemorating Elizabeth Bacon, wife of the sculptor John Bacon the Elder, who was interred in the family vault at Whitefield’s Chapel on Tottenham Court Road, a Calvinist Methodist chapel, and it may be that her religious beliefs, and those of her family, influenced the choice of inscription (MoL C29). One of the most unusual inscriptions is on the two rings commemorating the seven Woodmason children (MoL A10537, 62.120/95, see Fig. 7.13). These have “TO ETERNAL BLISS” on the painted bezel and the underside of the bezel is inscribed “TRANSLATED 18 JANUARY 1782”. These inscriptions, like other aspects of the design, were a distinctive response to the unusual and tragic nature of the loss they commemorate, and these phrases were also used on the monument to the children in St Peter’s Cornhill (Crisp 1908, 197).
Fig. 7.13: Ring commemorating the seven Woodmason children, James, Mary, Charles, Harriot, George, Elizabeth and John, who died in 1782, 20 mm dia. (MoL 62.120/95).
© Museum of London

**Personalisation**

Like coffin plates, and from the same time, in the 1770s, mourning jewellery was usually pre-made, ready for the addition of a personal inscription and hair (Bury 1984, 47). However, in some cases, elements of the design were chosen or commissioned to relate to the commemorated individual. The pendant in memory of the Rev. William Clark (d.1786) has a painted panel with typical imagery, depicting a woman sitting in an attitude of mourning next to a funerary urn and plinth monument with a willow tree with draped branches (MoL 62.120/62, see Fig. 7.14). The only unusual element is the church visible in the background, unique in this collection and clearly a reference to Clark’s role as a clergyman. Similarly, the pendant commemorating Sir William Draper (d.1787) includes a palm tree in place of the...
more usual willow, referencing his military career in the East India Company (MoL C30). A palm tree was a feature of military monuments at this time (see, for example, monument M027 of General John Gordon of the East India Company’s Service at St Marylebone Church). The pendant of Fanny (Frances) Gordon Gray (d.1786) is one of the most elaborate objects in this collection, with the size, quality of materials and design suggesting a bespoke commission (MoL 62.120/47). The image depicts a woman in contemporary dress sitting next to a monument, though not touching it or holding her face as in most of the objects, with children around her, almost certainly representing Fanny herself, with her three children, rather than an idealised mourning figure (although Joan Evans suggested that it might depict the children’s aunt (Evans 1970, 165)).

Fig. 7.14: Mourning pendant commemorating Rev. William Clark (d.1786) with a painted panel, decorated with finely chopped hair, 43 x 26 mm (MoL 62.120/62). © Museum of London
Mourning jewellery production in London

As with other branches of the funerary trade, the making and selling of mourning jewellery was very often not separate from the wider business of making and selling jewellery, particularly in the eighteenth century. The trade cards of several London jewellers include mention of mourning rings in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as Samuel Taylor, who made “Motto, Trophy & Death Rings” in the mid-eighteenth century (Murdoch, 1991, 16). The 1808 London Post Office Directory provides a snapshot of the industry at a specific point in time (Critchett 1808). Only one specialist mourning ring maker is listed, John Gibbs of 11 Castle Street, Falcon Square 19 (Critchett 1808, 3), but at least five other jewellers, goldsmiths and watch-makers in the same directory can be identified as selling, and likely making, mourning jewellery from their trade cards, with two more named in Old Bailey proceedings in the same year (see Table 7.2). This is likely to be a significant underestimate of the number of people involved in making and selling mourning jewellery in London at this time.

Table 7.2: Mourning ring makers in the London Post Office Directory 1808, listed by surname (Critchett 1808).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J Dyer</td>
<td>Silversmith</td>
<td>10 Bishopsgate without</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>JJZ aad0864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Fearn</td>
<td>Goldsmith and Jeweller to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales</td>
<td>10 Cornhill</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>OBP t18080601-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Gibbs</td>
<td>Mourning-ring-maker</td>
<td>11 Castle-street, Falcon-square</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Makepeace</td>
<td>Goldsmith</td>
<td>6 Serle Street, Lincoln’s Inn Fields</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>JJZ aac2104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Skeggs</td>
<td>Watch-maker &amp; Goldsmith</td>
<td>355 Rotherhithe Street</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>JJZ aad0205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 This address no longer exists, but the location is next to the current Museum of London building at London Wall.
Later London trade directories include more specialist makers. This partially reflects the increase in listings in a more extensive volume but is likely also to relate to a growing trade in funerary goods in the nineteenth century. The 1841 Post Office Directory lists six people under “Mourning and Wedding Ring Makers”, mostly in Clerkenwell and Aldersgate (Kelly’s Directories 1841, 766). Jet workers were also listed, alongside coral workers, with five people named under a heading for both materials (Kelly’s Directories 1841, 694). Later in the century, this branch of the mourning jewellery trade would have a larger recorded presence in London, with 12 individuals and businesses listed under “Jet Ornament Manufacturers” in 1882 (Kelly’s Directories 1882, 1686), along with three coral and jet workers (Kelly’s Directories 1882, 1556). By this time, the Whitby Jet Company had London premises, in Ely Place, Clerkenwell, and promised a “stock of ten thousand dozens of goods, from cheapest to best manufacture, always on sale – wholesale & export” (Kelly’s Directories 1882, 1686).

Both Antoni Forrer and Alexanna Speight are examples of professional hair jewellery specialists in nineteenth-century London. The 1841 London Post Office Directory has “Hair Workers (Device)” as a separate category from other hair-related businesses, with eight names and addresses under this heading (Kelly’s Directories 1841, 728).

Mourning jewellery in use: acquisition, wear and interaction

For those who could afford it, multiple bequests of mourning rings were common. Samuel Pepys’ will is often mentioned in histories of mourning rings, as he left instructions for 128 rings to be distributed to named individuals after his death in 1703, carefully distinguishing those who should receive rings valued at 20s, 15s or 10s (Taylor 1983, 232). This practice continued through the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century. Judith Nicholson, buried at St Marylebone in 1841, left £10 each to her executors for rings (TNA PROB 11/1952/354), and Jeremy Bentham (d.1832) left 26 mourning rings to friends (Bentham
Such multiple bequests are attested to by several objects in the Museum of London collections. The gold ring with black enamel commemorating Richard Osbaldeston, Bishop of London between 1762 and his death in 1764, (MoL 62.120/91) is identical to one in the Victoria and Albert Museum collections (V&A 654-1864). There are also references to rings from the collections in wills. The will of Samuel Forth, a Southwark brewer, who died in 1724, includes bequests “for mourning” and, although this would also have been intended for mourning clothing, it is likely that the ring (MoL A7506, see Fig. 7.4) was made for one of the named relatives (TNA PROB 11/600/376). Penelope Vaughan’s will of 1806 included bequests of five guineas each to six women “to buy each of them a Ring in Remembrance of a Friend that whilst living highly esteemed them” (TNA PROB 11/1440/63; MoL 62.120/97). As these examples illustrate, mourning rings given by multiple bequests may represent a range of connections between the deceased and the recipient, including duty, esteem, business and friendship as well as familial or romantic love. The Palmerston gold chocolate cups, in the collections of the British Museum, demonstrate an unusual solution to the quantity of mourning rings bequeathed to one member of the aristocracy. Made in around 1700 for Viscountess Palmerston, the cups are believed to have been made from mourning rings, and include memorial inscriptions, with the subsequent bequest of these objects to her husband adding an additional layer of memory (BM 2005,0604.1 and 2005,0604.2). While the well-to-do and well-connected might have amassed large collections of mourning rings, many more people would have had one or two, with mourning rings frequently appearing in descriptions of stolen jewellery in theft trials of the period (e.g. OBP t17730707-6).

Unlike monuments, fixed in one place and publicly visible, mourning jewellery has two sides, with inscriptions and hair compartments often on the reverse or inside, lying next to the body of the wearer and concealed from view, particularly in the eighteenth century, although in the nineteenth century hair was often more visible. Rings in particular had strong symbolism throughout this period (and beyond) as tokens of love and affection. Items of mourning jewellery were portable, designed to be worn, handled and looked at. The interactions between the wearer and the object could take place over an extended period, even a lifetime or perhaps longer if bequeathed by the original owner to someone else. Some of the objects in this collection show signs of use, suggesting that they were worn for many years. The ring commemorating Sarah Lam[b?], for example, has an incomplete inscription, as the lettering has worn away around part of the band (MoL 62.120/105). In some cases,
mourning rings may have become inalienably associated with the wearer (or too difficult to remove after prolonged wear) and so were buried with them. A mourning ring of typical early-nineteenth century design, dated 1808, was recovered from a vault burial during excavations at St Martins-in-the-Bull-Ring, Birmingham (Bevan 2006, 179).

Both men and women wore mourning rings, as the trial proceedings above and the lists of recipients for these items in wills demonstrate. The use of the ‘new’ mourning jewellery, though, is perhaps more associated with women. Christiane Holm (2004) identified the hair mourning jewellery of the late eighteenth century as representing the gendering of mourning, as it became “a female task” (Holm 2004, 139), as did Fennetaux (2016). Similarly, Katherine Rieder’s (2009) study of portrait miniatures suggests that these objects of family memory were gendered, bequeathed to women, while large portraits, objects of public memory, were bequeathed to men. However, while the miniatures were gendered as female objects, they were worn or used by both men and women, though in different ways (Rieder 2009). While many of the people painted next to monuments on items of mourning jewellery appear to be generic neoclassical figures, some are clearly in contemporary dress and may have been intended to represent the bereaved individual who bought and used the object. If so, this would suggest that both men and women used these items, as male mourners are also depicted, albeit less frequently (see Fig. 7.6). The wider use of stock female figures, though, on jewellery for both women and men, helped to associate mourning with women, and with a passive role of heightened sentiment, which Fennetaux (2016) has assessed as an important stage in the gendering of mourning which became even more apparent later in the nineteenth century.

Mourning jewellery was also a visible sign of bereaved status, along with mourning clothing. The use of black clothing to denote mourning, particularly in the period immediately after a death, was well-established by the eighteenth century, but the nineteenth century saw the development of longer mourning periods and more complex rules, particularly for women (Taylor 1983). However, given the similarities in design between some mourning jewellery and contemporary sentimental jewellery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this was not necessarily always a very visible sign. The large black jet jewellery of the mid-nineteenth century much more obviously announced the bereaved status of the women who wore it and this was surely an important aspect of its appeal.
In almost every respect, the design of the object illustrated above (MoL 62.120/61; see Fig. 7.15) suggests a mourning role. The painting is of a woman sitting with an anchor, representing Hope, looking out to a ship at sea. It is similar to a brooch of 1799 commemorating J. Roberts, who died in a shipwreck (MoL A15619). The back of the pendant has a compartment with thick bands of woven hair and a seed pearl monogram. The main difference between this object and most of the many mourning objects of similar design is the use of colour, rather than sepia, for the miniature painting (although see Fig. 7.7), but despite this, it would have been catalogued as a mourning object were it not for the inscription around the edge: “May he who gave it be ever remembered by the Person who wears it. Nov’ 5th 1798”. This object, then, speaks of a different kind of separation, perhaps of people separated by a voyage, which would make the nautical theme particularly appropriate.

Marcia Pointon characterised the second half of the eighteenth century as one of elite mobility and “institutionalized separation” (Pointon 2001, 67), with an accessible and increasingly colonised world opening up to British elite men, especially, for travel for trade, war and even leisure, the ‘Grand Tour’ being a staple of an aristocratic education. Her exploration of portrait miniatures of the eighteenth century emphasises the portable and tactile nature of these objects, and their role as gifts, linking people through their use as the focus of contemplation (Pointon 2001). The more common use of female figures in these designs, grieving by a monument or waiting on the shore, might also suggest the gendered
roles of those leaving and those hoping for their safe return. These separations carried with
them a threat of permanence, giving these tokens an additional emotional charge. In a letter
written by James T. Power to Julia Woodforde in 1818 before his departure to Sierra Leone,
his told her that he had bought a diamond ring in which to place their braided hair and
intended to inscribe his name and ‘died’, leaving a gap in which she could add the date of his
death, should he fail to return to her (Fennetaux 2016, 32). Rieder also emphasises the role
of portrait miniatures in perpetuating private family memories, in contrast to large-scale
portraits that had a public role (Rieder 2009). Mourning jewellery, which also related so
directly to a loved and lost individual, might be expected to have been used in a similar way.

International separations between loved ones were, of course, not confined to the upper
classes. Bridget Millmore’s (2015) work has demonstrated that tokens that have been
grouped as ‘love tokens’ were made to commemorate all stages of the life cycle, including
birth, death, apprenticeship, leaving home and going to sea, as well as courtship and marriage.
These were made by adding personal inscriptions to coins or tokens which had been worn
flat, obliterating the original design, for the purpose. A few of these explicitly commemorate
individuals who had died, while some represent separations that were analogous to death, as
in the case of prisoners condemned to transportation, who were described as creating
‘memorials’ to themselves for loved ones (Millmore 2015, 136). Millmore describes these
tokens in similar terms to Pointon’s account of portrait miniatures, emphasising the
importance of the portability of these objects and characterising them as “mobile sites of
affection and remembrance” (Millmore 2015, 117). One of the tokens she catalogued,
uninscribed but of late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century date, has an image of a
grieving woman standing next to a monument under a tree, which is strikingly similar to the
designs on mourning jewellery and commemorative medals of the period (Millmore 2018,
token M035). It is unclear whether this token was intended as a mourning object or a love
token, but the imagery suggests a widely-shared expectation of commemorative motifs. This
imagery was also used on objects commemorating public figures, such as medals and
ceramics. In some cases, the grieving figure is appropriate to the individual, such as the
soldier mourning by a monument on a medal to the Duke of York and Albany (d.1827, MoL
96.79/325, see Fig. 7.16) or Britannia mourning George IV (d.1830, MoL 96.79/373). Similarly,
the design on a cup and saucer commemorating the death of Princess Charlotte in
1817 depicts a monument of unusual design, with angels in the clouds above and a weeping
Britannia (MoL 85.128a, 85.128b). Similar designs were also used on other items such as funeral cards (Rugg 1999, 207).

![Commander in Chief](image)

Fig. 7.16: Memorial medal (reverse) of the Duke of Albany (d.1827), 25 mm dia. (MoL 96.79/325). © Museum of London.

Clearly the experience of bereavement is, and was, qualitatively different from that of a temporary, even if long, separation, and it is important not to conflate these emotional experiences. However, there does not seem to be an easily drawn line between objects relating to separation and those relating to death, and similar motivations of the preservation of memory and even, with hair, something of the body of a loved one are apparent in the objects themselves and in how they were discussed by contemporaries. Mytum has recently highlighted the importance of material culture in managing grief in this period, identifying this as a key factor in the increase in funerary goods and of more elaborate funerals in the eighteenth century (Mytum 2017). It could be suggested that mourning jewellery, itself part of a broader tradition of materialising relationships, was the most personal type of object that fulfilled this role.
Conclusions

It is clear that a significant shift in mourning jewellery occurred in the early 1770s, when objects with painted ivory miniatures became popular. This is perhaps best understood within two related developments: firstly, the popularity of sentimental jewellery, which materialised emotional connections between people, maintaining them through separations, and, secondly, a focus on death and particularly the use of objects to manage bereavement, which was also manifested by the increased use of coffin furniture in the later eighteenth century, particularly from the 1770s onwards, and of gravestones (Tarlow 1999).

A second significant development, towards the end of the period of study, was the growth of specialist jewellery to be worn during mourning, particularly the objects made of jet and similar-looking materials from the 1840s onwards. Rather than commemorating an individual, these objects identified women in mourning and were therefore entirely about the experience of bereavement and the changed social status that accompanied it, rather than relating directly to commemorating the dead. While these objects do not, on the whole, incorporate motifs or inscriptions, they are indicative of the increased gendering of mourning and weight of expectation on the bereaved from the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

Mourning jewellery changed enormously between the early eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. As objects designed to be worn, in many cases by the well-to-do, who had the means to follow fashion, this is not, in itself, surprising. What is interesting about the development of mourning jewellery in this period is how and why it changed and, in the context of this study, how this contrasts with, and can inform understanding of, contemporary coffin furniture. The motifs and inscriptions used on mourning jewellery speak of a visual language of love and loss that is partly related to, but is broader than, the styles seen on contemporary coffin furniture and monuments. These objects would have been understood by their original makers, wearers and viewers within a cultural context of emotional objects with which people materialised and managed experiences of separation and loss.
8 Conclusions

Why, I dessay these London men get as much as three or four funerals every week, and it stands to reason as they can’t put the same ‘eart into it – let alone not knowing the parties. ¹

The fictional undertakers whose thoughts bookend this study give succinct views on how metropolitan undertaking had developed by the mid-twentieth century. One regrets the loss of grandeur in London funerals, taking a rare opportunity to display all the Victorian funereal trappings (Allingham 1950 [1940], 98). The other, reflecting wistfully on his own work in a village in the Fens, suggests that the smartness of urban funerals reflects a commercial response to high demand at the cost of a lack of attention to the individual (Sayers 2003 [1934], 124). This thesis has sought to explore the period in which the ‘pomp and circumstance’ of what became the Victorian funeral originated, the material culture of burial and commemoration that developed in this period and the relationships between choice and commerce. It contends that furnished coffins were of intrinsic importance to people in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They played a crucial role in demonstrating care of the dead and had a mnemonic function (see Chapter 4). Notions of decency and decorum underpinned the choice of coffin and its furnishings, as Mihailovic (2011) argued in relation to funerary practices more generally in the long eighteenth century. The growth of the undertaking trade facilitated a finely calibrated sense of what was appropriate in each case, with bereaved people delegating the detail of decisions to professionals (Chapter 3). Inscribed coffin plates were of particular importance, and these could also be argued to have a commemorative function. In that case, the growth in the use of coffin plates in the later eighteenth century may be interpreted in the light of the increasing use of monuments and in the development of mourning jewellery styles that were analogous to sentimental jewellery in both design and function (Chapters 6 and 7).

¹ The words of Mr Russell, an undertaker, in Dorothy L. Sayers’ novel The Nine Tailors (2003 [1934], 124).
Within this final chapter the research questions are revisited and the overall significance of the project and potential for future work are briefly considered.

**How did coffin furniture develop c.1750-1850?**

The changes discerned in coffin furniture design within the material studied for this project are less noticeable than the continuities. The innovations that are apparent, through analysis of the dataset of coffin plates in Chapter 5, were subtle, and in some cases coffin furniture could have been used many decades after its original manufacture without occasioning comment. This is in contrast with both monuments and mourning jewellery of the same period (see Chapters 6 and 7). Some changes in coffin furniture are less apparent in archaeological material than they might have been in the context of the objects’ original use. For example, the matt or shiny surface treatments seen on coffin plates in museum collections, but less clearly on excavated objects, would each have given a different appearance to coffins. Similarly, the overall context of the coffin, its size, weight and surface covering, for example, would have noticeably affected the appearance and impact of the metal objects.

*How different, and in what ways, is the design vocabulary and tempo of change of below-ground funerary material culture from above-ground items?*

The designs of coffin furniture, monuments and mourning jewellery were explored and contrasted in detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. In general, the design vocabulary of below-ground funerary material culture is quite different from that of above-ground objects, with some exceptions. Some aspects that are common to both, such as inscriptions, differed both in content and style. Emotional language, for example, was noted on only two coffin plates, both of infants of the same family, whereas it was common on monuments, and this is not explicable in terms of space or cost constraints. Some motifs were found on both coffin furniture and monuments, such as urns and crosses (on lid motifs), but these were on only a small minority of coffin plates and lid motifs and the periods of use did not align. Coats of arms were also used on both brass coffin plates and monuments, but their use on monuments was significantly associated with gender, with women less likely than men to be commemorated with an individual monument with a coat of arms.
To what extent, and in what ways, is coffin furniture conservative? Does lettering, for example, which is individually applied, develop at a faster or slower rate than the manufactured plates that were inscribed?

Analysis of the dataset of coffin plates in Chapter 5 has confirmed the conservatism of coffin furniture identified in previous work (see Chapter 1) and by the pilot project for this study (Hoile 2013). This has included investigating multiple aspects of coffin plates, not only the motifs, which has made it possible to explore the many plates within the dataset without motifs, through their lettering and shape, for example. This has enabled the inclusion of the many brass and plain lead plates recorded.

The conservatism of coffin furniture is apparent in the use of decorated designs over an extended period, either in exactly the same form, or with only very minor changes. The use of the ‘shield and flowers’ decorated lead plates continued over almost the whole of the period studied, with only fairly subtle changes to the shield types. Additionally, where motifs were used, these remained in use on coffin furniture long after they had become outdated on monuments. Brass plates with engraved coats of arms were used throughout the period of study. One subtle shift was in the shapes of coffin plates over time, which became more diverse in the early nineteenth century, and showed a shift towards trapezoid, rather than rectangular, plates. Lettering was found to be very different on coffin plates and monuments. While this is partly explicable in terms of materials, the lettering on brass plates and monuments of St Marylebone, both of which required highly skilled application, were notably different. However, the monuments at St John’s Wood burial ground showed slightly more variety, and it seems likely that this is broadly true of the differences between church monuments and burial ground monuments. Ongoing use of the long s (ſ) on coffin plates, even in lettering types not related to handwriting styles, suggests the continued use of an outdated style that was not apparent on the monuments.

What relationships are there between attributes of coffin furniture (e.g. types, motifs, lettering, material)? What relationships are there between the choices and attributes of coffin furniture (e.g. types, motifs, lettering, language) and the attributes of buried individuals (e.g. age, gender)?
The relationships between attributes of coffin furniture and between these and the attributes of buried individuals was discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and, with reference analysis of the dataset, in Chapter 5. While some coffin plate designs were used on lead and tinplate, designs of brass, lead and tinplate coffin plates largely developed along separate paths. Because of this, some associations between plates of different metals and stylistic aspects of coffin furniture are apparent, such as the use of multiple lettering styles in the inscriptions engraved on brass plates and the stamped borders of plain lead inner plates. The use of different types of coffin plates was also significant in other aspects, including the use of irregular shapes for lead end plates, suggesting the use of offcuts and the skill of the undertaker, rather than the use of manufactured objects, and the poor-quality lettering of some inner lead plates, which would not have been visible to observers. Within this dataset, the traditional use of lozenge-shaped plates for women was noted, though not all were unmarried. The use of coats of arms on brass coffin plates was not significantly associated with gender at St Marylebone, in contrast with their use on monuments at the same church.

Some aspects of coffin furniture and of coffins that were not available to study within this dataset have also been identified as related, either to each other or to buried individuals. The records of Garstin’s, the Marylebone undertakers, show differentiation between the colours of fabric used for covering the coffins of infants, children and adults, for example, and between the palls used in Catholic and Anglican funerals (CWA 948 3-5). The ‘monument and serpent’ lid motif combination, known from previous excavations but not named as such, is clearly identified as a pairing of these two items in Garstin’s accounts.

**Why did coffin furniture develop as it did c.1750-1850?**

The development of coffin furniture in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries does not only relate to its stylistic development, but also the ways in which it was used and understood. The making and selling of coffin furniture was one aspect of a growing funerary industry which included coffin-makers, masons, mourning warehouses and undertakers (see Chapter 3). It was also part of a larger industry in which many types of metal goods were produced in growing quantities and distributed through networks of wholesalers and sellers, including ironmongers. The supply of this material clearly met, and was stimulated by, demand from undertakers and their customers, for whom a furnished coffin was a marker
of ‘decency’. Death and commerce were inextricably linked in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London and the production and consumption of this material forms the backdrop for the exploration of changing, and unchanging, styles of funerary material culture. This commercial context is not necessarily in opposition to another aspect of the use of coffin furniture explored here: that it had a mnemonic role within the funeral as an important part of the presentation of the corpse, and can be viewed as an example of the use of material culture to manage separation and loss. The role of the furnished coffin with the funeral has been explored in Chapter 4 and the uses of other forms of funerary material culture, which provide a broader context in which to interpret the use of coffin furniture, has been explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

What factors influenced the development of styles of coffin furniture? How is the conservatism of coffin furniture to be accounted for?

While monuments and mourning jewellery have been shown to change significantly over the period of study, the lack of change in coffin furniture requires explanation. The overall stasis in the designs of St Marylebone demonstrate that this cannot be explained through the use of older coffin plates: these funerals were supplied by busy undertakers, such as Garstin’s, and represent a burial population of wealthy and discerning individuals. It is clear through comparison with other goods of this period, both funerary and non-funerary, that, had there been considerable demand for new designs of coffin furniture, producers could have supplied them, despite the commercial risks of copying by rival firms in the years before legislation to protect designs. It is possible that the registered designs of the 1840s and 1850s represent a significant change in style, but no coffin plates of registered design appear in this dataset and it is difficult to assess the extent of their use and influence in these early decades of design registration. The networks through which coffin furniture moved between producers and consumers were more complex than those of monuments, which might suggest that feedback on preferences moved more slowly, or in less clear terms. However, these more complex networks were not unique to coffin furniture, but used for other goods, such as pottery, and especially metal goods, which were responsive to their respective markets.

The role of the funerary industry, and particularly of undertakers, was the most important influence on styles of coffin furniture within this network, as being those who selected the
appropriate items for each furnished coffin. This does not need to be seen in negative terms, as exploitation of grieving people by unscrupulous undertakers. Rather, it could be seen as the outsourcing of multiple decisions, necessary within a limited time-frame and perhaps under stress, to a professional who could be relied upon to provide a suitable coffin that would meet expectations of ‘decency’ and ‘decorum’ and provide an appropriate focus for the funeral. While coffin furniture was only one aspect of an undertaker’s services, the choices of material, finish, size, quantity and style would have made a significant contribution to the appearance of the furnished coffin and to the funeral as a whole.

The role of the coffin within the funerary rite of passage provides the context for the development of coffin furniture, and its overall conservatism. The largely unchanging coffin furniture designs fulfilled a widely-held requirement for appropriateness in the vital but transient material culture of this pre-liminal stage of the funerary process. The furnished coffin’s brief visibility added to its importance, but meant that it was not subject to the development of changing fashions in the way that other funerary objects were, such as mourning jewellery and permanent commemorative monuments.

Is it possible to gain an understanding of the ways in which motifs and styles were understood by producers, consumers and those who viewed coffins? What factors influenced the selection of coffin furniture, and who made this choice?

The use of coffin furniture was explored in Chapter 4, including its role within the performance of a funeral. Viewing coffins was a customary and important aspect of funerary rituals and provided an opportunity to demonstrate decency in the care of the dead and an appropriate context for the display of the corpse.

Coffins could communicate a wealth of information to viewers, some of which was specific, such as the use of colour to denote age, for example. The selection of lid motifs was clearly correlated with the cost of the coffin. Other meanings are now less apparent. The significance of the shininess or dullness of coffin furniture is difficult to fully understand without the wider context of the coffin as a whole. The degrading of original surfaces in excavated examples further obscures the question. However, shininess and dullness may have had connotations connected with folkloric beliefs around death and may be interpreted in relation to broader notions of quality and care (see Chapter 4).
The designs of coffin furniture drew on broadly ‘funerary’ designs that, as described above, overlapped with those of monuments to a limited extent. Even in examples where motifs such as urns were used it is unclear that these details were of importance in themselves to purchasers or viewers, who would see them in the context of the whole coffin. It is probable that the designs of coffin furniture have been of much greater interest to modern archaeologists that to the Georgian and Victorian Londoners who paid for them. Materials, surface treatments, styles and quantities of coffin furniture contributed significantly to the appearance of the coffin, which was at the centre of funerary rituals, and it is likely that these aspects, rather than the detail of motifs, was the basis on which the appropriateness of a furnished coffin was judged.

Contemporary sources indicate that it was undertakers who made selections of appropriate coffin furniture within the bounds set by the cost of the funeral and social status of the deceased. The account books of Garstin’s, for example, give minimal detail of the designs of coffin furniture, with the material it was made from being more significant in terms of both cost and appearance. Undertakers differentiated between lid motifs and other aspects of coffin furniture, such as the shape of the coffin plate, depending on their clients. The most significant factor in the choice of coffin furniture, as anticipated, was cost, but gender and age could also influence the choice of coffin furniture. It has not been possible to draw conclusions about the influence of religion on choices of coffin furniture within this dataset. The burial ground at Islington Green was Nonconformist and the lead plates from this site were typical of those used elsewhere in this period, but these are not representative of the coffin plates of the burial population as a whole (see Chapter 2). The use of crosses and crucifixes on lid motifs has been discussed in contrast with their rarity on coffin plates and their use on monuments (see Chapter 6).

What was the purpose of inscribed coffin plates?

The introduction and use of inscribed coffin plates seems initially difficult to account for, as they were only briefly visible before and during the funeral before being buried or interred, out of view and unavailable. A limited exception is the small end plates fixed to the end of some coffins interred in church vaults, which were of use to the sextons responsible for placing coffins correctly, often alongside those of family members. Otherwise, the practice
of labelling of coffins that would not be seen again lacks an obvious practical explanation. However, several factors may be suggested as having contributed to the rise in popularity of inscribed coffin plates in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, it can be argued that it was exactly the limited but emotionally impactful context that gave inscribed coffin plates, as an important aspect of the furnished coffin, their meaning and value. The furnished coffin both concealed the corpse and represented it at the funeral. It could be suggested that a coffin plate, inscribed and dated, insisted on the humanity and individuality of the person within, even as they were separated from the world of the living, reduced to an object. The social identity continued, even as the physical body started to decay (Tarlow 2011, 124). This was, after all, an individual with whom an ongoing, though separated, relationship could be maintained through the use of mourning jewellery and monuments, by those who could afford it. We might also speculate that developing (albeit complex) notions of personal privacy in the eighteenth-century may have influenced the use of inscribed coffin plates. For the living, this can be seen, for example, in the labelling of personal boxes by servants who otherwise had little or nothing in the way of private space within the houses where they lived and worked. These, like the cheapest coffins, were often made of deal and marked with names or initials (Vickery 2008, 166). For the dead, those who could afford it were able to buy private burial space for their families in vaults beneath churches or in graveyards, but for those buried in stacked urban graves only the coffin itself, with a plate of name and dates, provided a separation from the earth and from the remains of others, providing thin walls of deal within which it was hoped that the deceased could rest undisturbed. As Amanda Vickery (2008, 167) put it, in discussing those for whom even a locked box was beyond their means, “access to privacy was an index of power”, and this was true after death as it had been in life. Additionally, for many, the inscribed breastplate was the only written form of personal commemoration that recorded their lives and deaths. This was particularly true of those whose families were unable to afford a permanent burial marker and it seems likely that this is part of what made an inscribed coffin plate of primary importance to those who paid for them to be added to the coffins of their loved ones. The mnemonic importance of the furnished coffin was discussed in Chapter 4. The coffin plate did not remain visible, but its commemorative function was fulfilled by its brief and emotionally charged appearance in the final scene of the funeral. In a sense, the commemorative function of coffin plates has continued, in ways unimaginable to those whose remains they are found with, as archaeologists have recovered and studied these objects in recent decades. The coffin plates that remain legible reveal details of individuals that enable further research to elucidate their
lives and the community in which they lived and died. As with all forms of commemoration in this period, though, it is the coffin plates of the wealthy, made of sturdy materials and well-preserved in vaults, that are most likely to have survived and the names and dates to be read.

**What are the origins and evolution of the modern (secular or Christian) British funeral?**

By the early nineteenth century, aspects of the funeral that are taken for granted in the modern secular or Christian funeral, such as the involvement of professional undertakers and inscribed coffin plates, were established across all levels of society. This was a pivotal period for the development of funerary material culture. The monuments, mourning jewellery and, it is suggested, the coffin plates explored in this thesis can be seen as precursors of later forms of public and personal material commemoration, including, for example, modern memorial benches or tattoos. The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also saw the development in London and elsewhere of what grew into an enormous funerary industry (see Chapter 3). Although much has changed since the nineteenth century, notably the introduction and rise in the use of cremation, professionals, now funeral directors rather than undertakers, remain in control of death and burial (Parsons 2018).

As noted in the Introduction, the legacy of the eighteenth and nineteenth century funeral is in opposition as well as in continuity. Many people now choose alternatives to dark clothing, wooden coffins and sombre processions when planning their own funerals or those of others. Debates on cost, suitable clothing and the tone of funerals within families, communities, the funeral industry and in the public realm take place in a context where more British people believe that funerals should primarily be “a joyous occasion celebrating someone’s life” than “a solemn occasion mourning someone’s passing” (Waldersee 2019). There continues to be emotional and moral weight in responses, both positive and negative, to the ‘traditional’ funeral as bereaved people attempt to define what ‘appropriate’ might now mean in relation to death and burial in the twenty-first century (e.g. BBC News 2018).
Significance

In their concluding chapter to Death Across Oceans: Archaeology of coffins and vaults in Britain, America, and Australia, Harold Mytum and Laurie Burgess (2018) identified style as a research area for future historic mortuary culture studies. They noted that “the ways in which style operates on coffin furniture in relation to wider taste and symbolism in society have, as yet, received limited attention” and the importance of placing such studies within broader archaeological, anthropological and cultural historical discourse (Mytum and Burgess 2018, 293). With this in mind, this study has considered coffin furniture within the living networks in which it was produced and distributed, as well as exploring in detail the specifically funerary context within which it was used, in order to consider the impact of both on its styles. By recording and analysing this material in detail and then comparing it with monuments and mourning jewellery, it has examined the styles and use of all three types of object, identifying areas of similarity and difference and placing each within a broader context. It is hoped that the study makes a contribution to archaeological and historical studies of death, burial and commemoration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially of the design, use and contemporary significance of the material culture of burial, which has previously received less attention than monuments, particularly outside archaeological publications.

Within this study, some aspects of coffin furniture have been identified that may have a directly practical application in the future interpretation of this material. The ‘monument and serpent’ lid motif set has been identified as an additional pairing, alongside the better known, and more widely used, ‘angel and flowerpot’ and ‘glory and urn’ types. This is supported by its appearance in undertakers’ records and by excavated examples. It is suggested that this set was, at least at first, used on the most expensive coffins, and that it is likely to have been introduced in the 1830s. Identification of this pairing in future assemblages or studies of documentary sources will help to refine this dating. Secondly, the use of ‘pinched’ shields on ‘shield and flowers’ type lead coffin plates has been identified from the 1830s. While this is not as noticeable as the earlier, better-known, shift from a Rococo to a classical shield type, it may be helpful in dating damaged plates. It is also hoped that this study has reiterated the importance of reconstructing the original appearance of a coffin in archaeological publications by bringing together reports on coffin materials, textiles and coffin furniture, although this is likely to be difficult or impossible in some cases. Where it is possible, each
aspect can then be better understood in the context in which it was originally used and seen by those involved in the funeral.

More broadly, a key aim has been to emphasise the value of coffin furniture, not only as a source of biographical information in support of historical or osteological research, but also as archaeological material culture worthy of study and interest in its own right, and of consideration in the development of approaches to later post-medieval burial sites.

**Future work**

This project has revealed areas of study that could build on the present work and further explore and extend the dataset.

Within this project, it was not possible to extend the analysis of coffin furniture styles into the later nineteenth century, and this would be a valuable addition to current understanding of coffin furniture and of burial practices, were sufficient material available for study. A significant change in coffin furniture design, occurring within the period of study, was the introduction of legislation protecting designs and the use of registered coffin furniture. By the early twentieth century this divide between registered and unregistered coffin furniture was firmly established, with the old-fashioned, unregistered designs recommended for ‘parish work’ (Dottridge Brothers n.d.; Plume n.d.), but it is currently unclear when this shift occurred. Additionally, little is currently known about which registered designs were used, which were popular, how these choices might be understood in terms of economic, regional or social factors, and what they might suggest about changing tastes and beliefs. While the designs themselves are available to study at The National Archives, the current lack of archaeological material from later nineteenth-century burials in the UK makes it difficult to establish the extent of their use. However, it is likely that more burial sites of this period will be excavated over the next few years and it must be hoped that the archaeological value of the artefacts are taken into account in the planning process and in monitoring and publishing such sites.

It would be of clear value to use this project as the foundation for broadening the area of study beyond London in order to explore whether regional variations are apparent in the
development of coffin furniture. In addition to the assemblages identified in Chapter 1 (see Table 1.2), further large burial sites including assemblages of coffin furniture have been excavated during the period of researching and writing this thesis. The site at Park Street in Birmingham is particularly interesting as not only is it a large, urban assemblage, but it is in the city which was the centre of British coffin furniture manufacture in the nineteenth century (MOLA Headland 2018). Additionally, well-documented sites from rural areas or smaller settlements, such as St Peter’s Church in Barton-upon-Humber and St Martin’s Church at Wharram Percy, would provide an interesting comparison to the large city sites, although the assemblages will, by definition, be smaller (Mays et al. 2007; Rodwell and Atkins 2011).

Finally, an interesting area for further study, building on this project, would be to explore the use of funerary material culture in creating and maintaining a British way of death across the British Empire in this period, suggested by sources identified in Chapter 3 and by recent publications on coffin furniture in different colonial and postcolonial contexts (see Chapter 1; e.g. Springate and Maclean 2018). This would also place the coffin furniture and other funerary material culture used in Britain in a broader context of colonialism and could be particularly interesting to apply to a site such as St Marylebone, where the connections with empire are so apparent and numerous. These could be researched in more depth and integrated with analysis of the material culture with this dataset.
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**BM – British Museum**
https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx

1858,0417.590  Funeral ticket, print by William Hogarth c.1721-1736

1871,0812.5392  The funeral car of the Duke of Wellington arriving at St Paul's Cathedral, November 18th 1852, print by Edmund Walker c.1852

1876,0708.2578  Print ‘Of such is the kingdom of God’, by William Dickinson, after Ref. Matthew William Peters, 1784

1881,1008.108  ‘The magnificent funeral car’ print, 1806

1940,0306.11  Print ‘Maria’, by William Wynne Ryland, after Angelica Kauffman, 1779

2005,0604.1 and 2005,0604.2  The Palmerston gold chocolate cups

2010,7081.2063  ‘The Right Hon.ble C.J. Fox's Funeral Car’ print 1806

Banks,59.195  Trade card of Garnet Terry, engraver

Banks,85.127  Trade card of William Pontifex, coppersmith

Banks,124.17  Trade card of William Guyer, coffin maker and furnishing undertaker
Trade card of James Johnson, tin plate worker, coffin plate chaser and oil man, c.1760-1818.

Trade card of J. Johnson, tin and coffin plate manufacturer and oil dealer, c.1760-1818.

Trade card of Samuel Emly, coffin furniture maker, c.1760-1818 [marked 1801]

Un-cut watch-paper/trade-card of Richard Whiteaves, goldsmith, jeweller, watch-maker and clock-maker

Trade card of Weatherley, goldsmith

Trade card of John Bucknall, auctioneer

Trade card for Edward Lillie Bridgman & Co., undertakers

Trade card for James Garth, undertaker

CWA – City of Westminster Archives

948/3 Cost books / day books of Garstin, Funeral Directors, January 1840 – September 1844

948/4 Cost books / day books of Garstin, Funeral Directors, September 1844 – November 1848

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aac2104 Trade card of Makepeace and Walford, goldsmiths & jewellers
Trade card of Thomas Capenhurst, Manufacturer of Coffin-Furniture, Jacob Street, Bristol

Trade card of Skeggs, clock & watch maker, goldsmith & jeweller

Trade card of Dyer, silversmith & jeweller


**LMA – London Metropolitan Archives**


**MERL – Museum of English Rural Life**

https://merl.reading.ac.uk/merl-collections/search-and-browse/

61/28/1-2 Coffin furniture: two zinc plates

61/26/1-8 Coffin furniture: eight coffin plates


**MoL – Museum of London**

https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/collections

Note that many of the objects referred to in the text are not in the online catalogue at the time of writing. Full details of the dated sample are given in Table 7.1.

**MoLAA – Museum of London Archaeological Archive**

CAS84 Site archive of excavation at Christ Church Spitalfields
OBP – Old Bailey Proceedings Online

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PROB 11/1440/63
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PROB 11/2137/213
Will of Thomas Capenhurst, Coffin Furniture Manufacturer of Stapleton, Gloucestershire. 15 August 1851

V&A – Victoria and Albert Museum
https://collections.vam.ac.uk/

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