The ‘Invisible Dead’ Project Conference, Friday 6th June-Sunday 8th June 2014

“Engaging with the dead: exploring changing human beliefs about death, mortality and the human body”

Formal disposal of the dead is widely practised today and this is often assumed to have been the case in the past. However, for some periods and geographical regions so few burials are encountered that it appears to have been the exception rather than the rule. Universal formalised burial may not have been a widespread expectation among communities of the prehistoric and early historic periods, and its adoption in more recent centuries may have fundamental implications for changing attitudes to death, the body, and issues of identity. This inter-disciplinary conference will bring together academics working on a range of different aspects of ‘death studies’ from two main study regions; Britain and the Levant. Together we will explore the different theoretical and methodological issues faced by researchers examining the mortuary record and how it may be possible to account for large portions of potentially ‘invisible dead’. Can adopting a broad framework and long term perspective help us to identify changing attitudes to death, and what implications does this have for the ways in which we understand and conceptualise mortality within the contemporary world?
Friday 6th June 2014 6.30-8.30pm
Evening Public Lecture, “Packed Generations”: long-term processes at two royal burial places at Qatna, Syria (Professor Peter Pfälzner, University of Tübingen) (Business School Lecture Theatre) and Opening Reception (Oriental Museum) for Conference

Saturday 7th June 2014 9-6pm Dawson Building Lecture Theatre

9.00 Chris Scarre (PI, Invisible Dead Project, Durham University): Introduction and Welcome

9.30 Jennie Bradbury and Mandy Jay (Durham University): The ‘Invisible Dead Project’: Lessons from a Big Picture Approach

10.00 Alexander Smith (University of Reading): Death in the countryside: New light on Romano-British rural burial practice.

10.30 Charlotte Roberts (Durham University): Developing and implementing important big picture approaches in bioarchaeology: opportunities and challenges

11-11.30 Coffee

11.30 Mandy Jay and Chris Scarre (Durham University): Tracking death in the Neolithic: the ‘Invisible Dead’ in Britain

12.00 Arkadiusz Sołtysiak (University of Warsaw): Pattern of bone preservation and completeness in ossuaries and secondary burials: a case study of Late Roman cemeteries in Chhim and Jiyeh, Lebanon

12.30 Amanda Murphy & Andrew Chamberlain (University of Manchester): Looking Forward to Look Back: How investigations of historical burial populations can inform our interpretations of prehistoric burial practice

1-2pm Lunch
2.00 Candida Felli (University of Firenze): Protracted burial practices and the beginning of cremation in the ancient Near East: two independent phenomena?

2.30 Sarah Lange (University of Tübingen): The Distribution of Graves and the Food within – the Evidence from 2nd Millennium B.C.E. Mari, Syria

3.00 Ian Armit (University of Bradford): The visible dead: ethnographic perspectives on the curation, display and circulation of human remains in Iron Age Britain

3.30-4.00 Coffee

4.00 David Ilan (Hebrew Union College): Iron Age Mortuary Practices and Beliefs in the Southern Levant

4.30 Megan Perry (East Carolina University): Sensing the Dead: Mortuary Rituals and Tomb Visitation in Nabataean Petra

5.00 Sarah Yukich (John Hopkins University): Variations on a Tomb: The Umm el-Marra Mortuary Complex in the Context of Elite Burial Ritual in 3rd Millennium Western Syria

5.30 Bruno Frohlich (Smithsonian): t.b.c.

6.30pm-7.30pm Evening Public Lecture, “Dead and (un)buried – problems and perspectives in funerary archaeology” (Mike Parker Pearson, UCL) Dawson Building Lecture Theatre
**Sunday 6th June 2014 9-3.30pm Dawson Building Lecture Theatre**

**9.00** Karina Croucher (University of Bradford): Continuing bonds past and present: A reinterpretation of Southwest Asia’s Neolithic mortuary practices in light of contemporary theories of bereavement.


**10.00** Jo Brück (University of Bristol): Reanimating the Dead: The circulation of human bone in the British Later Bronze Age.

**10.30** Jacqueline McKinley (Wessex Archaeology): Mind the gap ...what did Late Bronze Age people do with their dead?: Evidence from Cliffs End, Kent

**11-11.30 Coffee**

**11.30** Julie Rugg (Cemetery Research Group): Conceptualising the Dead Body: The image of the corpse in burial reform

**12.00** Tim Taylor (University of Vienna): The demography of the dead in Neolithic and Copper Age Austria

**12.30** Douglas Davies (Durham University): Patterns of Disappearance: Modern Cremation, Natural Burial and the Dead

**1-2pm Lunch**

**2-3.30pm Discussion and Summing Up**