**Lizzy Craig-Atkins: Human Osteology and Funerary Practice**

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**Research Biography**

My research explores funerary practices of the the last millennium from the nascence of churchyard burial to the present, integrating the analysis of human skeletal remains with evidence for treatment of the body after death. I am interested in how this evidence illuminates past lifeways within a social and cultural context, and how identity is embodied in both life and death.

**Case-study: The Impact of the Norman Conquest on Funerary Practices**

An absence of characteristic post-Conquest funerary rites in England has led to the conclusion that the arrival of the Normans had little effect on burial customs. While documentary sources recount sweeping changes to many walks of life, they neglect to mention any significant changes to burial practices. In this project I sought to evaluate the archaeological evidence for the impact of the Conquest on funerary rites in England.

Documentary, archaeological and osteological evidence were integrated to revisit key themes – the decline and disappearance of execution cemeteries, the impact of castle construction on Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and the relocation of cemeteries to new sites following the Norman invasion – and to introduce new themes deriving from in-depth analysis of osteological data such as the differential treatment of infants, and patterns of health and disease.

****Some developments considered characteristic of the 11th and 12th centuries were identified through their effects on burial practice: the disappearance of a widespread execution/deviant rite as the Church became increasingly separated from the State; the appropriation of burial grounds and the highly varied effect this had on their use (see figure, right, showing the clearance of only adult’s graves prior to castle construction at Pontefract, W. Yorks.), changes in the parochial system, manorial landholding and lordship precipitating and directing cemetery relocation; and, finally, developments in the ways that certain people were treated in death, most notably infants and lepers, that derived from broader changes in perception of the status of the living and the fate of the dead.

Lack of accurate dating, the limited integration of osteological evidence and absence of direct comparisons between English and French practices before and after the Conquest were problematic. These issues might be overcome through the collaborative aims of the current project.

**Relevant publications**

Craig-Atkins, E. 2017. Seeking ‘Norman Burials’: evidence for continuity and change in funerary practice following the Norman Conquest. In Dyer, C and Hadley, DM. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series: 139-58.