

## **Public Archaeology and Church Monuments**

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### **Abstract**

*Church monuments within the parish church can provide a wealth of information to the public about the history of that community as well as broader social themes. However, traditionally, publicity available on monuments can be limited and churches operate disparate levels of public access and engagement. Where such access and information is available there is a tendency to focus on the most elaborate and anthropomorphic styles, such as effigies, with a concentration on who they represent. This article will consider why church monuments may be important to communities, and the impediments the public may face when engaging with church monuments, ranging from practical reasons such as accessibility, to the provision of misinformation, selective information, or the lack of any resources being provided. Finally, the article will consider how information about, and engagement with, funerary monuments within the parish church setting is consistent, well researched, and publicly available via digital and non-digital media.*

### **Keywords**

*Cheshire, church monuments, community, identity, parish church*

## **Introduction**

Researchers widely acknowledge that later medieval and early modern church monuments operated, and often continue to operate, as key components in both the secular and sacred landscapes of ecclesiastical buildings. They provide evidence of not only spiritual matters, but also support political ideologies in death (Aries 1977; Binski 1996; Litten 1991; Llewellyn 1991), commemoration (Badham 2015; Valdez del Alamo and Pendergast, 2000; Saul 2009), as well as status and lineage (Saul 2001). However, monuments can also support a sense of place and identity as part of the wider community landscape, and feature in local traditions and folklore from their creation down to the present day. In this last regard, biographical approaches to early medieval monuments and their significance as foci of community identity and traditions can be readily applied to later medieval and early modern church monuments (James et. al. 2008; Waterton 2006).

This article will look at examples of how church monuments operate as loci for identity and memory beyond their original subjects of commemoration, and will reflect on how we might further encourage the public to engage with them. For the purposes of this discussion, I will exclude external (churchyard) monuments, which can be far more difficult to read due to weathering, and already having a different history of investigation in Britain (e.g. Mytum 2000: xv). Examples will, for the most part, be taken from the historic county of Cheshire. This is because the county is the area of my ongoing doctoral research, but also the county has a distinctive tradition of folklore and choices regarding the presentation of its monuments.

Whilst public and community projects, such as those conducted by Big Heritage, York Archaeological Trust and Liverpool Museums, have successfully engaged communities with external field investigation, excavations and exhibitions, the opportunities for public engagement with internal church monuments could benefit from further development. Indeed, historically, church archaeology has concentrated on architecture and burials (Gilchrist and Morris 1996: 112), leaving church monuments to the domains of history and art-history (see Binski 1996; Crossley 1921; Esdaile 1946; Llewellyn 1991; Saul 2001 and 2009). Projects such as the Norfolk Medieval

Graffiti Survey (2018) have shown that community engagement within the parish church can be well received, and be adopted over a wide geographical area using simple replicable methods for data collection and dissemination. Yet church monuments hold a unique position in that they not only form part of the spaces used for worship by parishioners, but also the mortuary landscape of those using the service for funerals and services of remembrance, as well as personal mnemonic acts. Further still, these monuments are part of the communal landscape and its history.

### **Why church monuments?**

The survival of monuments, their recording over history, and the collective display within church buildings reveal how they can become of historical value to the community as well as professionals. The Church of England recognize the importance of church fabric (including monuments) and offer guidance on any activity that may affect them, such as restoration, removal or alterations (ChurchCare Guidance Note archaeology 2016; The Society for Church Archaeology ADCA Guidance Note 2013). Likewise, Historic England acknowledge the role of church monuments, highlighting the important role of monuments and human remains to both academia and the public, and drawing attention to their role in individual and collective identity, acting as a physical reminder of the dead (e.g. Bowdler 2011).

The definitions of identity given by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* are 'the use of material culture to aid understanding of the definition and status of individuals and groups in the past' and 'the way in which archaeological remains are widely used in order to promote and support particular views of contemporary personal, local, regional, and national identity' (Darvill 2008: 205). This is supported by the study of the ninth-century Hilton of Cadboll Pictish cross-slab. James et. al. (2008) found not only evidence of multiple uses and reconstructions of the monument through its life-history, but also of its changing role in the construction and preservation of local and national identity. By studying its biography, they establish that through the ages the cross has been adapted and taken many forms, which contributes to its survival and numerous re-erectments.

After being donated to the British Museum in the 1920s, there was protest at its movement out of Scotland and demand for it to be returned by Scottish antiquaries and politicians. This resulted to its move to the National Museum of Scotland, where it still resides. Interviews carried out highlighted that the cross-slab is important to the community's sense of social pride. It is considered as part of the identity of the village and as belonging there (James et. al. 2008: 257).

The enduring presence of church monuments in the community over generations, similarly to the Cadboll cross-slab, can evidence a shared local history, longevity and identity. Smith and Waterton (2009: 47) argue that 'memories need to be actively remembered, and thus memory needs to take root in the concrete object or site.' This concept of active remembering is shown via a concern for the survival and reverence of certain monuments. There are examples where churches purposely offer space to preserve and collectively display displaced material culture that form part of the history of the parish. For Cheshire, examples include St Mary's Acton; St Boniface, Bunbury; and St John's, Chester (Figure 1). Their significance can be encapsulated by Schofield et al.'s (2012: 302) portrayal of the relationship between the public and landscape: 'the local place is their own heritage, conceptualized in fabric, stories, and memories.' The parish church and its monuments form part of this local landscape, providing tangible, visual evidence and a focal point of a shared and established history in the parish, thus informing and perpetuating collective memory and identity. An example of this today can be found in St Mary, Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire. During the annual Remembrance Service, the names listed on two wall plaques are read out during the service, a case of the monument acting in both a visual and audial memorial role (Church Warden, personal communication, February 10, 2018). Whilst this could exclude those who are not from the local area, it does identify local narratives that visitors may relate to.

When considering the biography of monuments they can show numerous interpretations within local communities. They give meaning and memories via who they represent, their biography and the folklore surrounding them, assisting in evidence of an established and shared history and identity spanning generations. However,

despite this role, historically there appears a preference for elaborate monuments, such as effigies and effigial slabs where a human form is rendered, and particular importance given to older monuments or monuments of those who achieved significance status or fame. This may be due to their features, which are easy to humanize. Consequently, many other monuments within the church can be ignored by literature. Guides such as Pevsner (1971) incorporate only a small number of monuments recorded for each church. For example, for St Andrew, Bebington, Wirral, there are numerous wall monuments, brasses and reused grave covers in the floor and wall. However, nothing is recorded in Richards (1947) or Pevsner (1971). Similarly Pevsner (1971) only records the cross-legged knightly effigy at St Wilfred's, Grappenhall, Cheshire while remaining silent regarding its wall monuments and brasses. More specific literature on church monuments in Cheshire, such as Crossley (1924; 1939), heavily feature effigial monuments with other monuments given little attention. Is it time to encourage a systematic approach to all monuments on display within our parish churches?



Figure 1: St John's, Chester. Medieval monuments on display with information boards (photograph: Russell Cottier, 2018).

## **Current methods of engagement**

An advantage of approaching church monuments for public engagement is that they are already situated within local communities, so those visiting local parish churches, either for spiritual means, a family association, or because of an interest in architecture or history, may have a sense of communal identity or interest with the building and its contents. Unlike museums where objects can be situated behind glass or rope, most church monuments are tangible and highly accessible. This gives an opportunity for members of the public to approach and 'touch' history, giving a physical connection to the past. Surviving monuments are also, for the most part, in their original intended context, a church. Though there may be movement within, and occasionally between, churches (i.e. the Smith monument at St Mary's, Nantwich). They form part of a wider mortuary landscape, which can include other monuments and burials both within the church or graveyard and other forms of memorials (such as plate, windows, pews, architecture). As such, context should be considered, monuments being in their original setting (if not *in situ*), and likely in the presence of other historical items, visually could help in making their function and history easier to interpret and understand. In contrast, there are examples of monuments that have been displaced and placed in museums or art galleries, such as The Duchesse de Nemours effigy situated in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, alongside other sculpture. Observed in this environment, it is easy to approach the monument solely as an art form. Whilst this does ensure access to the monuments by the public, it does present the monument out of the context of their intended environment.

The Church Monuments Society, Society for Church Archaeology and Monumental Brass Society all offer events, annual journals and resources regarding church monuments. Although uptake is unlikely by those without an existing interest, such societies do ensure information is publically available to members and non-members. The Church Monuments Society offers a gazetteer, which gives a visual record of selected church monuments listed by church and county. This compilation is ongoing, and the gazetteer states that information and description is kept to a minimum: the aim is for a visual record. Whilst this ensures that interested

members of the public have access to the styles of monuments on display at regional churches, and information on the individuals or families they represent, further details such as position, inscription and history of the monument can be unavailable. However, what it does is provide a platform from which to identify monuments of interest, and support the organization of a visit, or further research. Social media also now contributes in the dissemination of information regarding church monuments. There are blogs and accounts that include information on church monuments and provides digitally accessible information (examples include Twitter accounts for Churchyard Sam, CB Newham and Sally Badham, and blogs such as Archaeodeath and Heritage Tortoise). Similarly, there are numerous recording projects, such as the Ledgerstone Survey and the Historic Graves Project. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission and War Memorials Online offer valuable online repositories for war memorials, which the public can search and suggest amendments and additions. Information submitted to War Memorials Online is shared with the Imperial War Museum's War Memorials Archive, Historic Environment Records and other heritage bodies to maximize accessibility. However, these repositories are each partial in different regards: they all exclude multiple categories of medieval and post-medieval monuments found within parish churches. It is important to consider the many monuments within parish churches that are unrecorded and those mentioned in written sources but no longer extant. Encouraging inclusive recording by both the public and researchers could ensure usually overlooked monuments are made accessible.

### **Possible impediments to public engagement**

Baker (1999: 105) states 'the standard of presentation in many fine and interesting churches has not yet caught up with the era of the tourist as customer' and this still rings true, particularly in the case of church monuments. Whilst knowledge may be available orally to the local community, in Cheshire, information available on-site to the casual visitor can vary. What is available usually concentrate on the person memorialized, on the more elaborate or effigial monuments, those of renowned individuals or those of significant age. There are examples in Cheshire of small boards

displayed on some monuments, as at St. Boniface, Bunbury, St. John's, Chester (Figure 1) and St. Michael's, Macclesfield. Again, this information, usually only consisting of a sentence or two, has a tendency to focus on effigies. Other monuments, such as wall monuments, brasses or floor slabs tend to be overlooked. This limited information can result in the public overlooking the potential of other monuments in these buildings.

There are exceptions to this situation. St Bridget's, West Kirby, Wirral, has an on-site museum (West Kirby Museum 2018). Whilst detail and biographies of monuments are typically limited, early medieval monuments are given a visually prominent position (see also Williams 2016a). The museum gives the history of both the church and village, and includes many stone artefacts and reconstructed monuments, giving the public a view of how they would have originally looked. Further south, a later exemplar is the De Grey Mausoleum in Flitton, Bedfordshire managed by English Heritage. Tatham (2016) discusses the interpretation of this site and the need for sensitivity when displaying not only human remains but also funerary monuments. The interpretation scheme for the De Grey Mausoleum includes a mix of paddle boards, discreet display boards and a downloadable audio guide. Information focuses on the history of the family and the development in monument styles, ensuring the memory of the deceased and their lineage is continued. This non-intrusive and subtle way of providing information is effective, giving an option of both audio and written materials to visitors without impeding the intended use of space.

Research on the relationship between the public, archaeologists and the dead has discussed the ethics and sensitivities that should be addressed when dealing with human remains (see Sayer 2010; Tarlow and Nilsson Stutz 2013; Williams and Giles 2016). Whilst no human remains might be handled, and the monument is already on display, the same principles can be applied in the dissemination of information and engagement with church monuments to ensure the embodied dead are respected and dealt with appropriately. Interaction with monuments of those deceased within living memory, or those with descendants in the locality, need to be approached sensitively. Considering a monument as an educational resource could cause upset to those with an emotional attachment



to the deceased, whether that be due to a family or community connection. Whilst a monument may be disconnected from its original burial (and indeed may have originally been a cenotaph to a grave located elsewhere), they still can be perceived to represent a person. A survey undertaken by English Heritage (2009) found the majority of respondents agree that human bones should be displayed in museums, this number dropped significantly when human remains were identifiable to an individual. In the case of monuments, the commemorated person is usually identified. This potential issue could be addressed via consultation with the local community and careful consideration of the format of display.

From a practical point of view, public access to church monuments can be problematic. In theory, churches are available to the public and free to enter (Cathedral and Church Buildings Division, Archbishop's Council. Visitors and Tourists). However, in reality, visitors often come across issues with accessibility, including churches that are closed to visitors due to services, ceremonies or only accessible via prior arrangement with a key holder. This can be problematic to the casual visitor if a visit needs to be pre-arranged. In addition, due to the age and design of church buildings, changes may be required to ensure the church can be functional and accessible as demands change. Adaptation may be required to ensure access for all, providing ramps or toilet facilities. These changes may result in the destruction or movement of original features, including monuments, or result in them being moved out of public view as chapels are sectioned off for storage or other uses. A visual account of the monument before they are removed or relocated would ensure a record is available for those who are interested. In addition, dwindling congregations and lack of finances means some churches, and therefore monuments, are at risk. An example of this for Cheshire is St. Mary's Acton, where an unrepaired roof leak has resulted in significant damage to the face of the fourteenth-century alabaster Sir William Mainwaring effigy.

The environment in which church monuments are situated could also pose a challenge, due to religious sensitivities and the nature of the building as a place of worship. Unlike other historical or archaeological venues, some members of the public may be reluctant to visit a building that they view as a tangible

embodiment of religion, specifically Christianity. The 2011 census highlighted that the number of Christians in the UK are falling, despite it still being the largest religious group in the UK, with a quarter of the population identifying as not religious (Office for National Statistics 2013). More recently, the 2017 British Social Attitudes survey suggests that half the respondents identify as having no religion and approximately 6% as belonging to a non-Christian religion (NatCen 2017). Despite this, churches remain religious buildings, and often retain functions as active places of worship. Any exhibition needs to be sensitive in both use of language and spatial usage to ensure it does not cause offence or intrude on church events or those visiting the church for both spiritual and heritage purposes. Literature available to the heritage market could use secular terminology, rather than spiritual and specific religious terminology, to help avoid any issues regarding difference in beliefs.

### **The potential of monuments**

Local stories of the monuments can give a glimpse of how they are perceived in the community and can contribute to the re-interpretation of monuments. According to Gazin-Schwartz (2011: 63) social groups 'own' folklore and that it has a role in how they maintain social identity. Local traditions and stories relating to monuments can support this, showing examples of how the community have interpreted and understood their local landscape. This is a valuable area of study. However, it may be beneficial to ensure information regarding church monuments distinguish between historical fact, past misinterpretation and folklore traditions, to ensure they are fully understood. Information provided can be factually incorrect or based on traditions that have no historical evidence to support them. A national example of this problem is the longstanding tradition that medieval cross-legged knightly effigies are taken to represent a 'crusader'. Although now dismissed, this interpretation is still occasionally referred to in church guides and information boards (Evans 1981: 292; Harris 2010: 430).

The 'Stanley boy monument' at Elford, Staffordshire offers a further example into the misinterpretation and folklore attributed to a monument. The small size, and a round object in the effigy's left hand, has led to a tradition that it represents the young John Stanley who died after being hit in the head by a ball in the fifteenth century. Its subsequent biography suggests that this may be a heart burial whose features, in this case the right hand held to the ear, may have been changed during restoration to support a local tradition (Oosterwijk 2010). Is this an example of the community trying to materialize a past inhabitant's story?

Similarly, a tradition at St Boniface in Bunbury, Cheshire states that Sir Hugh Calveley was a 'giant' and this information is included on a board next to his effigy. Cole in 1757 notes the story that locals believe Calveley ate a calf and a sheep a day due the size of his effigy (Rylands and Beazley 1917: 126). This story may be supported by his heraldry: a calf. In his biography of Calveley, Bridge (1908) also refers to Calveley likely being six foot nine inches tall, as this is the length of his effigy. Whether true or not, and no skeleton has been identified to confirm this; this is one example of a monument being active in oral tradition.

The nature of church monuments means that, on the surface, they mainly represent a selective group, with a bias towards male, gentry and nobility. They are lacking in diversity with regards to gender, ethnic minorities and the lower classes, who would not have been able to afford such memorials. Crossley's Cheshire survey (1924: 32) supports this. Ignoring those most decayed, he found twenty of the surviving medieval effigies represented the knightly class. Only eight represented women, plus four priests and two civilians. Saul (2009: 292) argues that when females are represented with a monument, the male associations dominate. Examples of this bias can be found in St Boniface, Bunbury, where a seventeenth-century grave slab commemorates Sarah Davenport. Other than her name and date of death, the remaining text relates to her husband. Similarly in St John's, Chester, an eighteenth-century wall monument commemorating Hannah Aldersey and Elizabeth Davies identifies them only in their roles of wife and daughter. In order to challenge the domination of the stories of the lives of upper class men, when researching information available,

monuments should be considered in a wider context rather than solely that of the life of the person they represent. Through the consideration of the interaction and practices of the community and surviving family, other voices can be heard from both the past and present community. This information may appeal to more diverse social groups, such as women or lower social class groups, and encourage further engagement with church memorials.

Returning to St Boniface, Bunbury, there is an example of a monument active in a narrative for someone other than the person commemorated. Situated high on the north wall of the chancel, there is a small wooden memorial board for Dame Mary Calveley (d. 1705). The inscription on her memorial board refers to money being left to 'sweep and make clean' the monument under which both Mary and her husband, Sir Hugh Calveley (d. 1648) (Figure 2), are interred. No monument to Mary and her husband remains: However in 1848 the vault under the fourteenth-century Calveley tomb chest and effigy was opened, and a coffin was found with the initials DMC attached, and which contained numerous large bones. Bridge (1908) suggests that the bones belonged to Sir Hugh Calveley who died in 1648 rather than his ancestral namesake who died in 1394. Dame Mary Calveley and her husband have become part of the biography of the older monument (Figure 3).

Those social classes not represented in church memorials may also be observed via graffiti or damage. An example can be found at St Mary's in Acton, where graffiti on the fourteenth-century Mainwaring effigy made by the boys of Acton grammar school (Emerton 2010: 33) gives visible memory not just an individual, but a collective group in the community. The damage caused to the monument leaves a lasting legacy of the boys' presence.

## **Moving forward with public engagement**

The Church of England are clear on their stance towards public engagement with the fabric of church buildings when describing the parish church: 'They have overseen centuries of history, recording events and people of significance throughout these times. They tell our national story' (Cathedral and Church Buildings Division, Archbishop's Council. Learning and Education). This is a similar



Figure 2: Mary Calveley memorial board, St. Boniface, Bunbury, Cheshire (photograph: Russell Cottier, 2018).



Figure 3: Sir Hugh Calveley monument, St. Boniface, Bunbury, Cheshire. The Mary Calveley board is situated on the north chancel 'wall above doorway' (photograph: Russell Cottier, 2018).

approach to that of Church of England cathedrals, which promote the visitor experience (see Centre for the Study of Christianity & Culture) and regularly hold exhibitions, for example the current event at Durham cathedral 'The royal house of Saxon kings and saints'. Should churches also have an educational role, and highlight the significance and stories of their monuments and memorials? Churches are used for various communal uses and welcome visitors (Cathedral and Church Buildings Division, Archbishop's Council. Visitors and Tourists). An increase in visitors to parish churches might mean more donations, and help to fulfil any funding requirements regarding public access and visitor numbers. However, it must also not be forgotten that most churches are working buildings with a spiritual role, so any approach must consider this and be sensitive around its primary role.

To increase public engagement, clear and well-researched information should be readily available. As discussed above, currently this can be limited or not effectively available. By providing information that includes the biography of the church monuments, and how the community have reacted to and interpreted monuments over history, as well as considering the local history that can be traced through the centuries via its monuments, could ensure the public can see past them as solely a piece of sculpture representative of one individual. Whilst the majority of monuments represent the higher classes, they form part of a landscape to which all levels of society engage and react. Mapping the mortuary landscape across the church and how monuments may relate to other features within or outside the building, can add to the story bringing a dynamic element to their history. Church monuments can help narrate a local identity, to which the community may be able to better relate. This is in addition to national and international events, for example, the Sir George Beeston monument at St. Boniface, Bunbury, Cheshire, which delivers the narrative of the Spanish Armada via its inscription and imagery, to a small Cheshire village.

Richardson and Almansa-Sánchez (2015) argue that: 'public archaeology is not only a matter of working with communities or providing educational opportunities. It is about management and the construction of knowledge and the concept of heritage. Sharing your findings with the public is not 'public archaeology' by itself'.

By including the public with the initial research rather than solely sharing output, is a logical way forward in this area. With this in mind, the local community could be encouraged to share their local knowledge. This could be done via interviews, surveys or open days. Churchwardens and local residents can be a source of information regarding local history, and oral traditions regarding both the church building and its monuments. Churchwardens may have access to church documents that are not available publically. To consult and involve them with research and fieldwork would be beneficial.

What may prove useful for both the study of church monuments, and engaging the public, is to encourage systematic recording across the United Kingdom. This should aim to include not just elaborate monuments and effigies, those representing famous individuals or by particular sculptors, but a methodical record of all monuments within each parish church. Records could include digital materials such as online photographs and videos in addition to text including monument details, biography and folklore. By providing information in this format, those who are geographically distanced or have accessibility issues will have quick access to online information. There are examples of local and borough councils receiving funding for similar community projects such as a cemetery interpretation projects (Wrexham Council 2015), or recording war memorials (Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service War Memorials Recording Project). From a community archaeology aspect, as mentioned above, volunteer recording projects such as the Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey have been successful. Currently it appears that community projects run by councils and archaeological organizations are not taking advantage of church buildings and their interior monuments.

There are databases available, such as Historic Environment Records (for example *Revealing Cheshire's Past* and *Archwilio*). Community projects could work in conjunction with HER officers to ensure monuments in their local church are listed. This in turn gives opportunity for wider access via Historic England's, *Heritage Gateway*. Currently HERs are not being utilized in regards to church monuments: for example, a search for 'effigy' on the Cheshire HER returns only four results, each of which are scantily mentioned within a description of the church in which they reside. Whilst

other databases such as National Heritage List for England exist, unfortunately they only include listed or scheduled buildings and structures, omitting the majority of church monuments.

Alternatively, there may be a need for a database similar to the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, or a wiki platform, which encourages the continuing voluntary recording of church monuments by members of the public and professionals. The benefits of a purpose built church monument database would be that the data entry template could be purposely designed to ensure a systematic record is kept, acting as a complete repository. In order to ensure information is accurate it could be beneficial for local history and archaeology societies or universities to take responsibility for monuments listed in their area, moderating content before it is published. Whilst pressures in higher education may mean this may not be widely attainable, there are examples of universities, such University of Chester, that offer community outreach and partnership with local authorities for archaeology projects as part of their programmes (CAER). Alternatively, if the Church Monuments Society, Society for Church Archaeology and the Church of England were consulted, the result could be a nationally supported and official database. If funding is successful this could be purpose built, or alternatively hosted by an existing national society website. Visitors could access this database prior to, or during, a visit to a church for information on its monuments.

The Church of England do offer funding to parish churches for conservation and repair, in 2016 £25,750 was awarded for monument conservation (Cathedral and Church Buildings Division, Archbishop's Council. Grants Report 2016). Unfortunately, this does not extend to community use of the church, and research. If an accepted database of information on church monuments is freely available, these materials could be used by parish churches to display information alongside monuments in order to encourage visitors to engage with them as an educational resource. The Heritage Lottery Fund offers grants for community and heritage projects in addition to money for both repair and restoration. Such projects could result in the gathering and exhibiting of local information on parish church monuments, which in turn be made available to the wider public via digital means. Traditionally, notice boards are a



standard way of displaying information in heritage environments. Due to the primary purpose of the parish church it might not be viable to display numerous information boards due to lack of space or other constraints. Audio guides are another method used in heritage sites for disseminating information, which may be a useful option for churches, as they should not impose on other users of the church. Parish churches could follow the De Grey Mausoleum example and produce downloadable audio files for visitors rather than providing hand-held audio device. Meaning information can be provided that does not require costly devices and take up space. An alternative could be the use of quick response (QR) codes. These discreet barcodes take up little room so will not impose or change the environment within the church. The QR code contains data, such as a URL, and can be scanned by smartphones, taking the user to a webpage containing information on the object. Though not without their disadvantages, which are discussed below, this would be a way of solving any sensitive issues around the use of the building, whilst providing information to the interested visitor.

Rapid growth in digital technologies offer opportunities for further interaction and broaden the dissemination of materials to a wider range of learning styles. King et.al (2014) survey results found digital tools enhanced public experience in an number of ways, including 'encouraging input from visitors, and the possibility for dialogue' and 'encouraging a new type of relationship... through greater interactivity'. Augmented reality (AR) is increasingly being used by education and heritage organizations in order to engage and attract younger visitors. In June 2017 Cadw introduced the game 'Little Dragons', a game in which the public can 'catch' hidden dragons across CADW sites. In another initiative, Big Heritage successfully incorporated a heritage trail into a Go Pokemon event held in July 2017 as part of Chester Heritage festival. Such strategies are not beyond critique: Eve, for example, argues that such use of AR does not engage people with heritage sites (Eve 2016). However, if interactive attractions and games attract people to visit a heritage site, engagement can follow. A possible example of using AR technology to engage church visitors is to digitally colour situated church monuments to give a view of how they originally looked, before restoration or general wear resulted in the majority of monuments becoming colourless. Similarly, Elgin

Cathedral, Scotland have worked with Napier University to create a light projection onto a Bishop's effigy, giving the viewer a taste of how it originally looked (Morrison 2018). Norton Priory uses digital touch screens for visitors to interact with its monuments, to see how they would have looked (for further discussion see Williams 2016b), though this not be viable within a parish church environment due to space constraints. Whilst AR may presently be costly for parish churches to implement, this could be of significance in the future.

The use of digital technology can have its disadvantages. Rural areas can suffer from limited broadband connection, with Ofcom reporting in 2017 that 17% of rural areas have no decent broadband (Ofcom 2017). However, improvements are continually taking place, such as the agreement between the Church of England and the government for church spires to be utilized in areas with limited 'digital connectivity' (The Guardian 2018). It is likely that work in this area will continue to push forward. In the meantime, additional information being available via other means (e.g. paddleboards or audio guides) would be beneficial.

Richardson (2014) highlights a number of user digital inequalities relating to the public's engagement with digital archaeology, such as demographics and socio-economic factors. Ofcom currently reports that the percentage of adults' offline increases with age (Ofcom 2018). This highlights again the need for a multi-faceted approach to displaying and access to information to ensure no disadvantage to those without use of a smartphone or internet access. However this issue appears to be narrowing, Ofcom also report that 74% of adults now use a smartphone (Ofcom 2018). Regarding demographics, Woolverton (2016: 141) argues that the majority of active community projects and archaeology societies peak in the age range 51–60. So whilst there may be an issue with the older population accessing online materials, it suggests that younger generations do need to be encouraged to engage in such activities. The use of digital technologies in archaeology and heritage environments may encourage younger generations, widening these demographics.

## **Conclusion**

There is still much work that could be undertaken regarding the collection and display of information concerning parish church monuments. It is clear that monuments form an important part of the publicly accessible historic landscape. The study of church monuments has the potential to support research into theories of identity and belonging, and their biographies can give minority groups an observable history by giving an opportunity to observe those other than the usually represented male gentry or nobility via, for example, folklore or graffiti. Communities could be encouraged to share their local knowledge and this knowledge collected and recorded.

The interpretation of monuments, their stories and associations can help establish a shared and owned history for local communities. To this end, local communities should be encouraged to share their knowledge and this information collected and recorded by advocating community volunteer projects or local history and archaeology societies. Furthermore, once this information is available digitally, it would ensure reliable, easy to source information is available for both public and church use. A database that collects local knowledge and traditions, as well as historical evidence, and goes beyond simply who the monument represents and its artistic style would be invaluable.

Despite the potential benefits of the discussed technologies, funding and accessibility may be a persistent issue. However, new interpretation strategies should be considered for when opportunity arises. Technology and public engagement has great advantages and it can only be beneficial to apply them to the monuments within parish churches.

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