

# Colonial experiences of death, burial and memorialisation in West Terrace Cemetery, Adelaide: applying a phenomenological approach to cultural landscapes in historical archaeology

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*The study of cemeteries, with their accumulated material culture, is a popular topic in historical archaeology, eliciting a number of methodological approaches. This paper describes the application of a phenomenological approach, best known previously in archaeology for its use in prehistoric landscape studies, to a historical public cemetery. The plan and layout of the colonial section (1837–1900) of Adelaide's West Terrace Cemetery is analysed within the context of nineteenth-century visitation patterns, prevailing attitudes to death and burial in Britain and their influence on South Australian colonial society, to consider what factors influenced the layout, selection, placement, accumulation and display of material culture within the cemetery. The study concludes that beyond the immediate practicality of the deceased's disposal, the colonial cemetery landscape developed during a time of more regulated cemetery visitation, was intended as a place of movement and experience demonstrating private and public expressions of religious and social beliefs to the observer. Its conscious construction was designed to project a sensory experience of prevailing attitudes to death, burial and society in the nineteenth century. The visitor immersed within this landscape, was engaged in a reflexive sensory dialogue through the mediums of space and material culture. This experiential communication could invoke the power of memory to conjure the deceased's persona, invite contemplation of personal loss, prevailing community attitudes and religious beliefs, and reaffirm and perpetuate social worldviews.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Historical archaeology in cemeteries

The location and layout of a cemetery with its graves, gates, pathways, buildings and plantings, combine to form a consciously constructed cultural landscape. It is an evolving tableau that, notwithstanding its primary function as a place of disposal, reflects changing beliefs and social expectations in its accumulation of memorials and their spatial presentation. For the visitor the cemetery provides a locus of experience inviting reflection and interpretation, both intellectually and emotionally (Tarlow 1999:21). Such places can affect us all in different ways based on the feelings and beliefs we carry with us and the interplay between our senses and the landscape being traversed, ranging from an intensely personal experience at a family members gravesite to a broad curiosity of past lives and their representation of our own inevitable mortality.

Historical archaeology in cemeteries has been pursued in the United States and Britain for several decades following Deetz's (1977) examination of typological frequencies in tombstone motifs over time and subsequent analysis of how the social selection of shape, form and image reflected prevailing community views of death and religion (Dethlefsen 1981:187). In turn, issues of class structure have been explored through applying a Marxist approach, with the memorialisation of the dead seen as a 'social advertisement' of 'the material expression and objectivation of idealised relationships' in the class struggle (Parker Pearson 1982:110) and that spatial arrangement, form and inscription projected ideologies of death, family and social status to the cemetery visitor in the form of a dialogue (McGuire 1988:436-437). McGuire suggested that the perpetuation of ideology, itself a masking distortion of true reality, was driven by class struggle and power relations designed to project and sustain the world view and class interests of the deceased. However, McGuire

(1988:436-437) acknowledged that class alone could not account for the variation observed in the cemetery landscape.

This issue was taken up by Tarlow (1999:29) who investigated the role of emotion as an important determinant in the choice of tombstone form and inscription, cautioning against the inadequacy of power-centred models to explain all of the choices that construct a funerary landscape. There are phenomenological concerns in these hypotheses, with attention given to the route of the funeral, the placement of the tombstone, and the process of grave visitation. Mytum (2004:11) in discussing the theoretical approaches employed in the study of historical burial grounds, noted that little phenomenological analysis had been attempted, and its application could be 'a very productive line of inquiry'.

Much of the work undertaken by Australian archaeologists rests in unpublished theses and focusses on particular elements of the cemetery (notably Casey 1992; Denny 1994; Farrell 2003; Keirs 1988; Marin 1998; Matic 2003; Nicol 1985), and on a diverse range of articles on historical cemetery survey, excavation, and cultural analysis (Abraham and Wegars 2003; Anson and Henneberg 2004; Donlon *et al.* 2008; Haslem *et al.* 2003; Paterson and Franklin 2004; Stanger and Roe 2007). However, a phenomenological study of an entire cemetery landscape has not previously been undertaken in Australian historical archaeology.

## PHENOMENOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Although there are different models of phenomenology according to different philosophical developments (Macann 1993, Tilley 2005:202), this study primarily reflects the approach of the French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). Merleau-Ponty emphasised 'the primacy of perception' as the main human function, a process that can only occur through the foundation of the human body (Macann 1993:160). The interrogation of perception attempts to understand how people experience and make sense of their world through the physical act of being immersed in and

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moving through that world as a participant yet separate (Merleau-Ponty 1968:xvii; Pollio *et al.* 1997:8). Merleau-Ponty (1968:xviii) argued that human self-consciousness creates a gap between the individual and the world that they strive to bridge through the use of cognitive, sensory and physical skills. The use of the five senses and physical movement through space by bodily mechanics such as walking or running, allows people to perceive their environment. In turn the sensory and physical experience of being in a place influences the internalised thought processes of memory, emotion, belief and intent.

Application of this philosophical approach to the perception of place in geography and then archaeology during the 1970s and 1980s led to a theoretical debate about the nature and interpretation of landscape (Ashmore and Knapp 1999:3; Hallam and Hockey 2001:84). A phenomenological approach to archaeological landscapes was applied to address criticisms of processual theory (Johnson 2002:103, 2012:271-272; Thomas 2001:165-186; Tilley 2005:202-203). Proponents argued that by developing archaeological practice along purely scientific lines, archaeological space had become abstracted from human relationships; a universal backdrop to human action focused only on economic and political forces to the exclusion of other social factors (Ashmore and Knapp 1999:1) with the imposition of western capitalist concepts of exploitation and commodity onto the past resulting in minimalist and empiricist interpretations of landscape (Johnson 2002:103; Tilley 1994:2). This approach appeared to exclude the capacity for other considerations of the ways that people may have viewed and understood their surroundings (Ashmore and Knapp 1999:1; Bender 1993:9; Thomas 2001:165; Tilley 1994:74, 2005:203).

In response, rather than seeing landscape as an abstract vessel separate from human action, it was argued that landscape should be seen as the medium through which thought and action are articulated. By recognising that human understanding of the landscape is subjective and formed through personal experience and interaction with the natural and cultural environment through subject-object relations and its space and features given meaning, the artificial separation of the 'material and the ideal' could be rejected (Johnson 2002:103). Archaeologists could thus formulate questions of the landscape concerning ritual action and ideological meaning, as well as the more familiar focus on economic survival and resource usage (Ashmore and Knapp 1999:3; Johnson 2002:103; Pollio *et al.* 1997:8; Taçon 1994; Tilley 1994:9-10, 2005:201). Consequently, if landscape is primarily the cultural construct of a subjective reality invested with meaning through human thought, perception and action, then landscape is dynamic and reflective of changes in human activities and beliefs (Hallam and Hockey 2001:5; Tilley 1994:10-11). The landscape becomes 'the arena in which and through which memory, identity, social order and transformation are constructed, played out, re-invented and changed' (Ashmore and Knapp 1999:10), the medium through which these meanings can be communicated and interpreted by those physically negotiating it (Panja 2003:499; Tarlow 1999:48; Tilley 1994:10). The application of phenomenology to landscape archaeology focuses on the formulation of questions of how people constructed, moved through, perceived, experienced and articulated space as an ongoing reflective and dialectic process to seek new insights about the use and meaning of the landscape through its archaeology.

The application of phenomenology to landscape archaeology has engendered much criticism within the discipline (Johnston 2012:276-279). Concerns arise that phenomenology seeks to extract data by coming to know the experience and therefore minds of past peoples, and that any conclusions may well be predicated on the researcher's own subjective

experience of the site, risking a descent into fiction (Fleming 2006:278; Johnson 2002:86; Johnston 2012:277; Tarlow 1999:25). In part, this concern has arisen from the application of phenomenology to Neolithic sites in the United Kingdom. Here the verification of interpretations about the applicability of contemporary bodily experience to understanding the spatial siting and social significance of prehistoric monuments in the landscape is not only contestable but also subject to evolving technologies that may offer new interpretative potential such as Geographical Information Systems (Cummings and Whittle 2003; Eve 2012; Johnston 2012:279-280; Panja 2003; Peterson 2003).

The potential for subjective bias is hardly unique to a phenomenological archaeology. Indeed, an awareness of such subjective bias is crucial to phenomenological enquiry as '[t]hings are active rather than passive and we cannot interpret them in any way we like, precisely because, unlike texts, they have direct sensory effects on us' (Tilley 2005:205). One must acknowledge then that the application of a phenomenological approach, by definition, involves the researcher's own immersion in the landscape in question. The archaeologist cannot simply disengage from being in the world in the pursuit of an absolute objectivity. Rather, an awareness of what Edgeworth (2006:11) terms a 'practical dialectic', the interaction between person and material culture and how each influences the other, provides a perspective to move forward self-critically. My own sensory experience of West Terrace Cemetery (Figure 1), of walking its paths, viewing the arrangement of its monuments, reading the graves' inscriptions, and even of just being in the landscape over countless hours of fieldwork, must be considered. Like any other visitor my senses were engaged with and actively interrogating and interpreting the landscape and the objects that constitute it. From this self-aware process questions can be developed and then tested.

Johnston (2012:279) has commented on the potential for applying phenomenology to the archaeology of societies to allow for the application of greater contextual information than the potential offered by Neolithic and historical archaeology offers such potential. Historical research coupled with archaeological findings provides an additional process by which to test and compare phenomenological assertions derived from the archaeology (Mytum 2004:179). The nineteenth-century cemetery landscape, as a place of repeated private and public visitation rituals, and material culture accumulation over time, is ideally suited to test such an application.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The development of the public cemetery has its origins in eighteenth century Britain against a backdrop of increasing industrialisation, rising urban population, the development of a wealthy middle class, and high mortality rates resulting in the churchyards of Britain becoming increasingly overpopulated (Curl 2001:37-38). The poor state of burial grounds saw them viewed as sources of disease, particularly when adjacent to dwellings. The release of 'poisonous exhalations' in the course of digging new graves was blamed as a principal cause for epidemics (Morley 1971:34).

In response, the establishment of public cemeteries gained increasing support in the first half of the nineteenth century as public health reform and pressure for urban space influenced the creation of burial grounds on the outskirts of cities and towns. A combination of capitalist opportunity, influential landscape gardening principles, and middle class moralities then created the romanticised concept of the garden cemetery, resulting in the establishment in 1832 of the first British example, Kensal Green in London (Curl 2001:25; Loudon 1843:9). A contemporary remarked '[w]hat an escape ... from the choked charnel house to the verdant wide expanse, studded



Figure 1: Location map of West Terrace Cemetery.

with white tombs of infinite shapes, and stone marked graves covered with flowers of every brilliant dye!’ (Morley 1971:43).

Religious views of death and burial were also undergoing change influenced by evangelical Christianity that emphasised death as a family event underpinned by the certainty of family reunion in heaven (Jalland 1996:3). High mortality rates meant that death touched families often and the loss of children posed a spiritual test of the highest order. Across Christian denominations there grew an emphasis on the ‘good death’ – making one’s peace with God, and accepting suffering and finality with fortitude as a test of God’s will (Jalland 1996:26-28; Matthews 2004:31).

In 1837, Adelaide’s first public cemetery was placed in the southwest corner of the parklands belt surrounding the settlement by Surveyor General Colonel William Light (Lock-Weir 2005:25) (Figure 2). Light’s curvilinear paths were never implemented, although its oval shape was retained. Ad-hoc burials commenced soon afterwards, with the first registered burial dated to 2 July 1840 (Peake 1986; Nicol 1994:4). Almost immediately the location of the cemetery became an issue, with ‘the cemetery question’ (whether to close West Terrace and relocate a public cemetery further away from the settlement), impacting on the development of the cemetery landscape. This concern was related to issues of hygiene raised by the British experience, and Adelaide’s hot summer climate (*South Australian* 20 Nov 1846:5; *Register* 8 Dec 1862:3). Accordingly, as above ground mausoleums were not allowed subsurface family crypts were built by those with means.

Early regulation of the landscape commenced in August 1839, enforcing the size of burial plots to 5.4 m (18 x 18 feet), the erection of fencing, buildings, path maintenance and financial conditions. Faced with an Indigenous landscape

interspersed by randomly selected burial sites, the Cemetery committee sought to impose European order over the site. Roads 4.2 m wide (14 feet) were marked out to facilitate access. Provision was also made for the erection of chapels and monuments. The committee minutes of 3 October 1839 noted, ‘they can select any spot in any section on application to the sexton’ (West Terrace Management Committee GRG 38/17:4-6). Initially an unornamented headstone/board and small footstone/board was allowed, with inscriptions requiring prior approval from the trustees to ensure they reflected the dignified nature of the planned necropolis (West Terrace Management Committee GRG 38/17:2, 16-18). The town surveyor determined the position of each grave, which was staked out leaving 0.9 m (3 feet) between plots. Fencing the cemetery boundary was deemed to be of great importance to protect graves from incursions of wandering stock and wild dogs (*South Australian* 14 Aug. 1839:3). In 1854, a new dwarf stone wall and iron railing was erected to replace the increasingly dilapidated original wooden fence.

By 1849, a sketch map of the cemetery shows a third of the south western area and a separate small rectangular area surrounding the gravesite of the Reverend C.B. Howard (died 1843), as reserved for the Church of England (Nicol 1994:24). Influenced by the arrival of the new Catholic bishop in 1844 and the concerns of the Catholic community about existing cemetery regulations, in 1845 four acres was granted to create a Roman Catholic cemetery abutting the north western boundary of the General cemetery. By 1850, the General cemetery had been divided into four distinct areas: Anglican, Jewish, Quaker, and General. In 1854, the current system of roads and rows was drafted and laid out (Nicol 1994:24, 37; Colonial Secretary 1854). This allowed for the orderly laying out of plots with sufficient length for two graves back to back

## West Terrace Cemetery

161 West Terrace  
Adelaide, SA 5000  
Australia

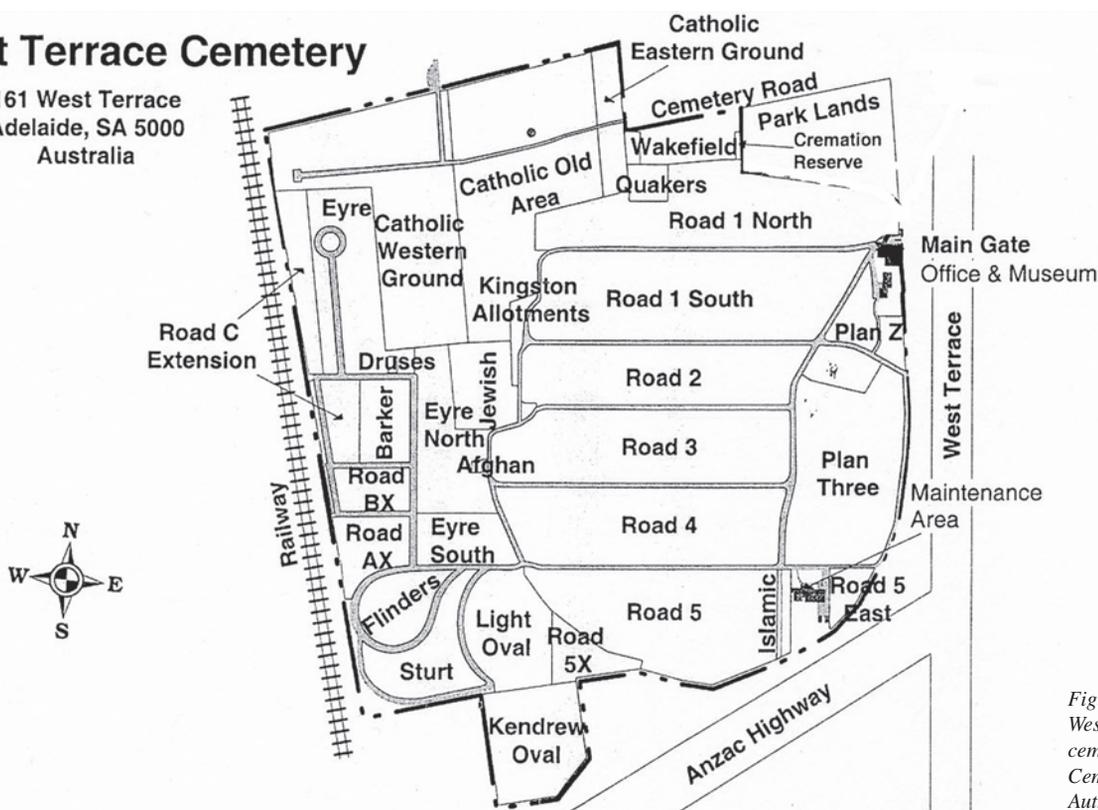


Figure 2: Map of West Terrace cemetery (Adelaide Cemeteries Authority).

and east-west roads dividing the site into recognisable sections with paths running north-south between them (*Adelaide Express* 25 Apr 1866:2). This layout facilitated access to and movement around the cemetery.

In comparison, the Catholic cemetery adopted an irregular grid system. These grids were marked at each corner by a wooden peg, and numbered sticks marked the plots within. Catholics were a minority in the early days of settlement, comprising only 15 per cent of the population in 1866 (Prest 2001:96), with the colony dominated by Anglicans and Non-Conformists (Whitlock 1977:193-194). Their status is reflected in the small allocation of 10.8 h of low-lying and flood-prone land, resulting in a haphazard burial layout. In 1870, the central addition of the Gothic revival style Memorial Chapel finally gave the Catholic cemetery a focal point.

The main cemetery entrance from West Terrace enjoyed repeated attempts at modest beautification. In 1860, the view is described as a wide avenue with plantings of native acacias and introduced cypresses lining either side; the latter species symbolic of mourning and the 'cemeteries of the ancients' (Nicol 1988:274). Such was the density of foliage that the tombstones were described as peeping out from the spaces between (*South Australian Weekly Chronicle* 25 Feb. 1860 [Supp]:1). An 1872 photograph looking west from the main entrance shows a dense scene of trees and shrubs lining the edge of the roadways, and represents the popular idea of the garden cemetery in fashion at that time (Nicol 1994:84). These plantings have not survived due to burn offs, herbicide use and roadside clearance in the early twentieth century to make room for new burials (T. Struthers pers. comm. 9 August 2006).

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHOD

The West Terrace Cemetery, including its twentieth-century extensions, occupies a total area of 27.6 h and contains approximately 30,000 gravesites. It was chosen as a suitable site for this study as it is the earliest and largest public cemetery in South Australia retaining a large chronological

and stylistic range of nineteenth-century material culture within its surviving colonial layout. Given its large size, chronological and spatial limitations were imposed to ensure a manageable study, with a focus on the surviving colonial section of the cemetery (1837–1901), providing the potential for comparison between practices in Britain and colonial South Australia.

Archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in three stages. Firstly, a pedestrian survey of the General and Old Catholic sections was undertaken to establish the spatial integrity of the colonial layout. The cemetery's oval shape, as shown in Light's map, remains intact and can be clearly seen in recent aerial photographs of the site (South Australian Dept. of Environment, Water and Natural Resources 2002).

Secondly, to understand the chronological distribution of monuments across the site, the primary date of death and monument height was recorded from each colonial tombstone in the General and Old Catholic sections. This amounted to 14,000 graves with 12,000 in the General cemetery and 2000 in the Old Catholic cemetery. The recorded information was plotted onto a map to show the chronological distribution of burials by decade across the colonial and Catholic sections.

Thirdly, a targeted sampling strategy was used to select the four areas to be subjected to more detailed analysis. Any tombstones within the samples dated later than 1900 were not considered. Three samples (A, B and C) were located in the General section and the fourth (D) in the Old Catholic section (Figure 3 and 4). Each sample contained 50 plots which totalled 229 tombstones (as some plots had more than one monument). Sample A (Road 1 South, rows 20 east to 24 west) has a broad chronological range of material culture (1840s–1870s) (56 tombstones), including a prominent Clergyman's grave, and is located next to the main entrance roadway. Sample B (Road 3, rows 9 east to 13 west and rows 6 east to 10 west) (60 tombstones), has a similar chronological range (allowing for comparison with Sample A) but spreads across Road 3 allowing for consideration of how this passage may have affected the landscape arrangement. Sample C

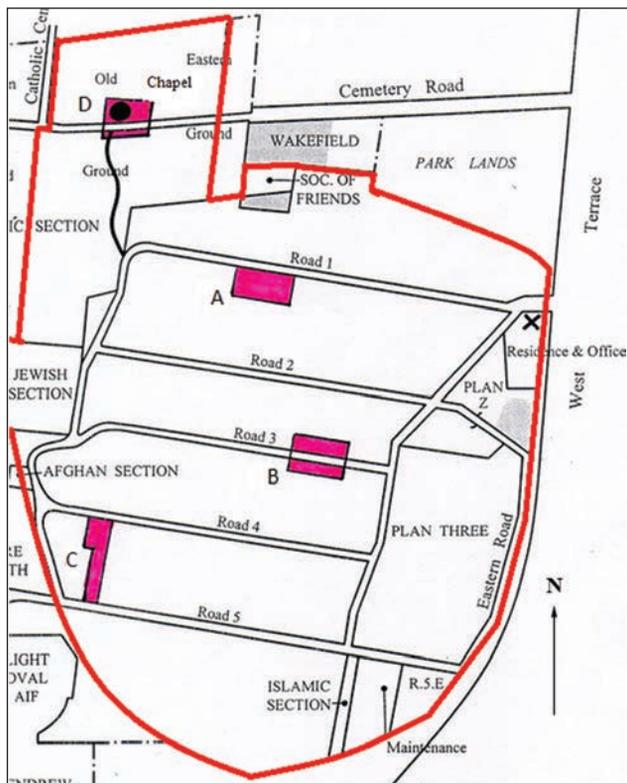


Figure 3: Map showing sample areas (Adelaide Cemeteries Authority).

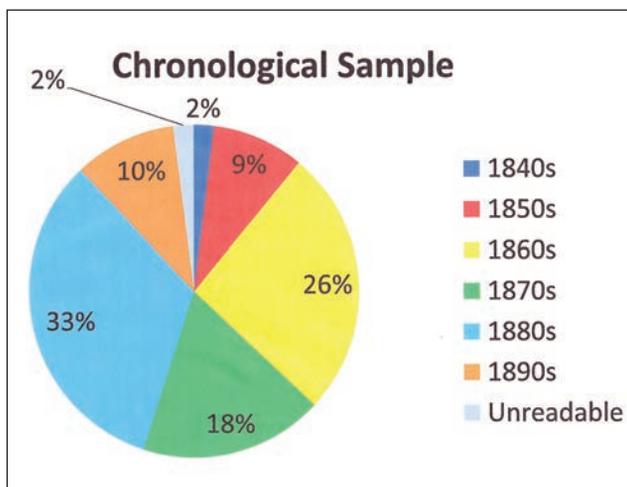


Figure 4: Tombstones by decade in sample areas.

(Road 4, rows 28 west to 30 east) (57 tombstones) is chronologically later (1880s–1890s) and Sample D (Grids C7, D7 to D8, and E7 to E8), in the Catholic section (56 tombstones), whilst enjoying a wide chronological range, allows for denominational comparison with the other samples to explore possible differences.

Detailed recording was undertaken of all material and spatial elements of the gravesites including, tombstone/plot orientation (including association with any other plots), type (individual, double or group burials), tombstone dimensions and visibility, associated grave items, inscription, motifs; fencing/borders, and relationship to roads and paths.

## RESULTS

The application of a phenomenological approach to considering the trends indicated by the archaeological data and supported by the available historical information, helps to

demonstrate how both functional and ideological factors in combination have influenced the spatial design, visual expression and communicative experience of the cemetery landscape. It is important to understand that cemetery visitation patterns in the nineteenth century involved both personal ritualised remembrance practices and a public recreational role. Family and friends of the deceased were expected to undertake frequent and socially prescribed visitation to the gravesite in the first year after death (usually several times a week) before gradually reducing to weekly, monthly, and then significant family anniversaries (Jalland 2002:291). Recreational use of West Terrace was common by 1854, the cemetery sexton noting that hundreds of people were frequenting the cemetery for pleasure walks, particularly on a Sunday afternoon. In 1856, dependent on good weather, groups of 200 to 300 people, including children, undertook such recreation (*South Australian Register* 18 Oct. 1854:3, 4 Nov 1854:3; *The Register* 8 Nov 1856:3). No historical records clarify the patterns of movement by these visitors, but such social habits continued on well into the century, with one newspaper informing ‘ramblers’ in 1891 of the nicest sections to walk in (*South Australian Register* 12 Sep 1891:5).

## Orientation and size

The row system imposed on the general cemetery in 1854 is clearly reflected in Samples A to C. This plan organised the gravesites into double-sided east-west facing rows running north-south. However, a small number of plots have variant layouts and orientation in each sample; five tombstones in sample A (nine per cent), two in sample B (three per cent) and three in sample C (five per cent). As most post-date 1854 this cannot be seen as a remnant of the pre-regulated cemetery landscape. Eight of the graves are larger in size than the surrounding graves suggesting a conscious choice to seek greater visual exposure and prominence within the landscape. Two plots are on or directly adjacent to Road 1 South and the monuments are positioned so that their inscriptions face north to the road. In form they are spatially large and altar shaped. Altars are rare in the other samples and when they do appear they are always next to or extremely close to roadways (Figure 5). This location is essential as the altar’s relatively low height required both a large spatial footprint and an unimpeded sightline to draw attention. The generally lower railings used for altars (usually 25 to 50 cm in height) can also be seen as an attempt to avoid impeding visual access. With the proliferation of material culture over time and the filling of roadside positions, this form of expensive monument lost favour, as evidenced by its absence beyond the 1860s.



Figure 5: Altar tomb in Sample A looking south.

Sample A is dominated by the Reverend Charles Beaumont Howard's large rectangular plot (died 1843), measuring 5x6 m, is the largest plot and central landscape feature in this area (Figure 6). The marble obelisk replaced the original deteriorating monument in 1921, (no image or description of the original is known). The plot also contains a secondary marble cross, commemorating the Reverend and his wife, erected by their children, and an ornate altar tomb for the Reverend's second daughter (died 1866). A low cast iron railing (60 cm in height) completes the scene. The plots large size has affected the later introduction of the standardised rows, resulting in a truncation of row 22 west, commencing after Howard's grave and requiring the access path to curve around his plot before realigning itself to the normal north-south axis. A small course of curved brickwork can be observed in the ground here showing the original path edge.

An examination of adjacent graves revealed the identities of other significant early colonists. Immediately west of Reverend Howard is the grave of Osmond Gilles (died 1866), whose tombstone proclaims him as the first treasurer of South Australia. Three plots northwards is the fine marble altar tomb of John Finnis (died 1872), who made his fortune from farming and mining (Prest 2001:615). Several other adjacent graves display inscriptions denoting the deceased's profession or their status as a 'colonist', emphasising their pioneering role. As the original Church of England section it is understandable that burial here reflects a denominational choice, however the congregation of high status burials is also evidence of status association. Burial close to an esteemed figure, as reflected by the size of the Reverend's plot and praising inscription, allowed for an enhanced projection of social connection and status to the onlooker. A contemporary newspaper report reflects that the

area near the Reverend's grave, 'thus became a desirable spot, and many persons selected it' (*South Australian Register* 23 Oct 1854:3). This 'neighbourhood' also enjoyed easy and direct access from the main cemetery entrance, and would have allowed for a highly visible funeral procession. A stone block on the road verge here acted as a step for the coachman (Struthers pers. comm. 9 August 2006).

Larger plot sizes, if easily perceived, could make a strong statement about the social status of the family, however West Terrace's flat topography meant that ultimately height would trump space as the cemetery filled up. An example of this 'competition' is seen in Sample B where Captain Bagot's plain tablet and inscription (died 1880) is projected by its situation within a large plot 2.5 x 6 m (W x L) that occupies both sides of the row. Contemporaries would have known him for his mining and political interests (Prest 2001:612), and noted the spatial symbolism of success this footprint denoted. Yet distracting from this space is its more decorative and taller neighbour. In 1863 the Wadham family, of whom the father William was a prominent politician, erected a statue in memory of their daughter, Fanny Louisa, who had died aged seven. The marble monument (Figure 7). features a life size figure of Fanny perched atop a square plinth decorated with a remarkable mixture of symbolic motifs (upturned torches, anchor, cross, wreath and scrolls). Standing three metres in height, the monument attracts the visitor's attention and must have evoked an emotional response for the loss of one so young, as well as an appreciation for its contribution towards a suitably appropriate landscape. Positioned on the road verge with head slightly turned towards the visitor, the monument drew contemporary praise as a, 'prominent object in the grounds' (*Adelaide Express* 25 Apr 1866:2).



Figure 6: Howard's family plot in Sample A looking west.



Figure 7: Detail of Fanny's tombstone in Sample B.

Many of the taller monuments in this sample are family plots, as evidenced by the lengthy inscriptions updated over time. Their height and varied designs catch the eye from Road 3. They usually have one main monument (sometimes accompanied by a secondary, lower and plainer addition). In layout, the colonial families of Adelaide were following overseas trends in which originally separate family monuments arranged side by side were replaced by the demarcated family plot, with the father as patriarch symbolised by a large single memorial, and other family members recorded in the context of their relationship to him (McGuire 1988:447). The higher number of family plots in Sample B compared to more individual burials in Sample A accounts for the significantly greater tombstone height profile of this sample. The creation of a family space presents as the driving force in the spatial layout of sample B. A contemporary noted that, in order for a 'burial to meet with public approval [there] must be a spot specially set apart for the purpose, where each family can have its own appointed space' (*The Advertiser* 10 Dec 1891:7). Contemporaries understood that the grave would be viewed, read and commented on by family, peers and potentially the broader community (McGuire 1988:460).

By comparison, Sample C reflects an essentially intact late nineteenth-century landscape (1880s–1890s) of increasing spatial uniformity in layout and form. Variations in plot size, so pronounced in Samples A and B are rare. The standard layout of double rowed plots aligned east-west and running north-south is broken by only three plots, two of which are directly adjacent to the road.

In marked contrast the Old Catholic section presents a very different landscape experience, despite being chronologically comparable to Samples A and B. Here the grid layout aligns the plots in disorderly east-west rows with monuments facing north or south, presenting a crowded and irregular landscape. A contemporary observed, 'the whole place was in a state of

chaos, the dead being packed as closely as they could be' (*Express and Telegraph* 10 March. 1898:4). The site's lack of space meant that the pressure on securing a burial space left little possibility for the more ordered pathways and rows of the General cemetery. The lack of paths and the high percentage of cast iron railing plot fences make movement through this section difficult and in some places impossible.

An average of 80 per cent of the sample's plots were enclosed by fencing and/or kerbing with cast-iron railings retaining their popularity throughout the nineteenth century (69 per cent of the total sample and representing 85 per cent of all enclosed plots). Larger family plots were accessed by a gate that could be locked, whereas single plots were simply fenced off post-burial. Fence heights varied between 25 cm to 1.5 m and protected the grave from stray animals, vandals and indecent people walking over the gravesite. Low kerbed plots made of marble, brick or concrete denoted the plot boundary but did not physically impede access to it. The percentage of unfenced plots is consistent across the samples. These may have had wooden fences that have not survived (Nicol 1994:84; *South Australian Weekly Chronicle* 25 Feb 1860 [Supp.]:1).

### Height

The third factor at play after orientation and size was height, allowing for increased visibility over a greater distance within the competing elements of the cemetery landscape. In the areas sampled monuments vary between heights of 500 cm to three m. The majority of tombstones (75 per cent) stand between 1.5–2 m in height. Those below 1 m (11 per cent) include altars. Fourteen per cent of tombstones stand at over 2 m of which 3 per cent are 3 m or higher. These expensive and visually prominent monuments, often pillars or obelisks, became more popular in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The height range across the samples is mostly consistent, with the majority of monuments over 1 m in height. Material choice influenced height with softer materials, such as slate, having mostly lower heights, compared to the more resilient marble. These trends are consistent with a known increase in monument heights in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Mytum 2002:10).

Interestingly, the tallest average landscape with 67 per cent of tombstones standing at 1.75 m or more, and 7 per cent (the highest of any sample) exceeding 3 m is found in Sample D. The erection of the Neo-Gothic Smythe Memorial Chapel in the middle of the section (1870) and facing the main eastern entrance road, provided a central focal feature that could be easily reached by a procession from the eastern Catholic gate (Figure 8). The chapel acted as a spatial magnet for the burial sites of clergy and Catholics of means, in a similar way to that of Howard's plot in Sample A. A contemporary newspaper noted that 'several costly monuments' are prominent around the chapel, including Luke Murphy's ornate neo-gothic obelisk, standing at over 3 m in height, with an inscription on Sicilian marble and a cross surmounted on Bath stone (*The Register* 4 Jan. 1872:7). Also present are the communal plots of priests and nuns, erected in the 1870s and 1890s, varying in height from 1.75 to 4 m. The concentration of monument heights near the chapel creates an image of holy spires orientated to face the road to ensure public exposure, in spite of the spatially encumbered layout, as a space of religious and social status. Perhaps the burial of the South Australian Governor, Sir Dominick Daly, nearby in 1868 influenced the siting of the chapel. Whilst no one factor is evident for this higher landscape, it is likely that the spatial limitations of the site, the availability of locally sourced marble (80 per cent of the sample) and denominational preference combined to create this suitably visible landscape.



Figure 8: Entrance to Catholic section (Sample D) looking west with Smyth Memorial Chapel centre right.

## Material

The materials used in the manufacture of grave monuments are important as this choice contributes to the most dominant visual element of the cemetery landscape and the perception of uniformity or diversity across such sites. Four main materials were observed in the sample areas: slate, sandstone, marble and granite. Whilst not remarkable in themselves as such materials are consistent with known historical trends in Western monument manufacture and usage generally, the choices at play here are reflective of both local realities and the influence of developing ideological tastes in presentation, arising from abroad.

Marble accounts for the majority of the total sample (77 per cent), and is the most commonly used material in all samples. It is almost totally dominant in the chronologically later Sample C (93 per cent), with no slate, and granite just beginning to gain purchase (5 per cent). This clearly reflects its increasing popularity and dominance of the cemetery landscape in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century. Its popularity is twofold. Firstly survival of the monument itself was crucial to the idea of a symbolic immortality (Francaviglia 1971:502). The hardness of marble combined with its varying colour (white or cream to pink or grey), and potential for polishing to enhance its presentation, made it a superior material when exposed to the elements as it would not split or erode like slate and sandstone. Its strength also made it suitable for more ambitious tombstone sizes and heights.

Secondly, the use of marble in neo-classical grave monuments also reflected the desire for both visual and material connection to the idealised classical civilisations of the west (Francaviglia 1971:507). Such a vision is suggested at West

Terrace by the use of mostly white or cream coloured marble that stands out visually against the backdrop of vegetation, railings and pathways.

Slate tombstones (14 per cent) and sandstone tombstones (6 per cent) tend to reflect the earlier availability of local, and therefore more affordable material, at a time when monumental masonry was primarily worked by hand (Tillett 1994:1). The slate tombstones are mostly of tablet form, although some slate slabs are present in sample B and slate altars in sample C. In colour slate ranges from medium to dark grey, and therefore blends into its environment. The use of slate peaked in the 1860s, before sharply declining in the 1870s as marble, previously an expensive imported option, became locally available and more affordable. Improved technology also made the production of more ornate marble design concepts possible. The majority of slate tombstones in the samples date from the 1860s or earlier.

The small number of sandstone tombstones date from the 1850s and 60s, and had virtually disappeared from the cemetery landscape by the 1880s. Ranging in colour from a dull yellow to brown, it was primarily sourced locally from Tea Tree Gully (Young 1997:2). The existence of some bare plots in the samples may be indicative of graves whose monuments have not survived to the present, remembering that wooden markers were also used.

Granite accounts for 3 per cent of the sample. This durable silicate of variable colour polishes well. It overtook marble as the material of choice in the first quarter of the twentieth century as new trends in monument style emerged in the cemetery (Griffin and Tobin 1982:98). One metal monument, a lone metal cross (with no inscription) whose form and style

suggests a nineteenth-century provenance, appears in the sample. The overall visual impression is of a white sea of marble interspersed by small patches of alternate materials.

### Form

The form of a monument represents a public statement reflective of personal family choice, social expectation, conscious spatial display and ideological communication. In all samples, and across all decades the tablet form is strongly dominant (71 per cent of total sample), usually standing 1.7 m tall (the average height in all four samples), with 57 per cent of plain design (no motifs), and the remainder displaying foliage, flowers, wreaths and scrolling (Figure 9). This monument form is traditional, originating in Britain in the seventeenth century and reaching its largest size (and heights) in the nineteenth century when public visibility became an important consideration (Mytum 2002:5 and 10). The next most common form is crosses (11 per cent) and obelisks/pillars (10 per cent). The latter holding a consistent spread chronologically across the samples, suggesting a steady popularity for those who could afford these more expensive memorials. Pillars topped by urns date mainly from the 1880s onwards, although this neo-classical form was used throughout the nineteenth century (Mytum 2004:76-77), and its original association with the Roman practice of cremation purely symbolic in an age of burial (McKnight 2005).

Altars (4 per cent) are concentrated mainly in Sample A, dating mostly from the 1850s and 1860s. Also referred to as chest tombs, this shape is suggestive of both classical sarcophagi and medieval tombs, reflecting the revival of Classical and Gothic architectural styles in the Victorian period (Gilbert 1980:33; Mytum 2004:69). They are mostly present on large sized plots containing family vaults (an expensive option). Their decline in the sample after the 1860s is likely the result of a move towards increasing monument height by those of means, in a landscape filling with burials (Mytum 2004:69).

Less common forms such as ledgers, statues, rocks/blocks and combined forms account for 1 per cent each or only 4 per cent in total, suggesting that conformity to prevailing styles was the norm. This is further emphasised by the statistical uniformity found across all samples in relation to the dominant form choices. This period had produced a highly ritualised and visual funerary process within a context of acceptable decorative and symbolic styles. Social expectations of appropriate display, in tandem with the developing and responsive funeral industry, combined to achieve the desired landscape effect.

Statues and busts of the deceased are few in West Terrace, with only one in the sample (Fanny in Sample B). For those who could afford expensive monuments it would appear that symbolic forms rather than realistic figures were preferred in keeping with British tastes as opposed to the ornate figural sculptures found in European or European influenced cemeteries such as Pere Lachaise in France and Ricolta in Argentina (Mato 2009).

Form also provided the visitor with visual clues amongst the landscape. A good example of this is a row of ornate monuments perched on the eastern edge of Sample A (Row 20

east). These include a lamb and broken pillar. These symbolic markers denote premature death, and would have been recognised as such by visitors. The lamb, a religious symbol of gentleness and innocence (Nicol 1988:272), signals the grave of two babies and is a rare example of imported masonry from Highgate, London, (the location of one of the most ornate of Victorian public cemeteries) (Jenner 1999:147). The broken column, symbolising a life cut short, memorialises a young man lost in a shipwreck. These forms convey information about the death of the deceased visually before the visitor consults the confirming inscription.

### Motifs and inscriptions

Interaction with the monument was accentuated by the evocation of motif and inscription consciously intended to communicate at both a personal and public level within the cultural context of nineteenth-century attitudes and beliefs. West Terrace Cemetery contains a diverse representation of tombstone motifs that reflect both prevailing British cultural fashions and social attitudes to death and burial. However, the use of motifs does not appear to have been essential and initially was discouraged by the cemetery authorities. Samples A and B have no motif on over half the tombstones (57 and 58 per cent respectively). Sample C demonstrates an increased use of motifs in the latter decades of the nineteenth century (73 per cent of the sample).



Figure 9: Marble tablet in Sample C looking east.

The Old Catholic cemetery (Sample D) is the opposite with 70 per cent of tombstones having motifs. The use of the cross motif generally, including the Celtic ringed cross, is also higher here with 30 plots from a sample of 56 displaying it. This trend is reflected in other Catholic cemeteries (Mytum 2004:140). In general, most of the larger graves display some form of decoration, suggesting a link between visibility and decoration (and the affluence it suggests).

Motifs are both decorative and symbolic. Flowers and foliage, appearing on a third of the tombstones, impart coded messages about the deceased's character to family members, whilst also providing more generalised religious meanings (McKnight 2005, Meller 1985:32-33, Nicol 1988:27-273, Weston 2012:36-38). Victorian flower symbolism suggests attributes of personality, such as the rose for sinlessness, although even more specific and personalised messages, known to the bereaved, are now lost to us (Mytum 2004:80). Edgetta (1992:89-90) terms these 'personality revelations' designed to trigger family memory and associations through religious messages of eternal wellbeing. The cross and several other religiously symbolic motif types (i.e. dove, anchor, and book) are represented in smaller numbers.

Initially, many inscriptions were primarily factual and simple, bearing only the deceased's name and date of death, although some biographical and cultural references do occur, for example 23 per cent of inscriptions reference occupation, suggesting a landscape more concerned with extolling the virtues of those colonists who did well in this life, rather than an obvious emphasis on the next.

Samples A and B contain many primarily factual inscriptions. For example Young's grave (Sample A No 3):

SACRED  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
John Thomas Young  
Who departed this life  
On the 24th day of January  
1851  
In the 46th year of his age  
He was a native of Bantern in  
Ireland and one of our  
Early Colonists

The information provided avoids any religious reference but communicates to the visitor Young's ethnicity and status as a contributor to the colony. The emphasis is on his life rather than an afterlife. This focus is particularly notable amongst the earlier graves of the General Section samples with an absence of any religious reference on 68 per cent (Sample A) and 55 per cent (Sample B). These 'pragmatic' inscriptions appear to correlate with the lack of decorative motifs (albeit not initially encouraged by the authorities) and may reflect the dominance of non-conformist religious beliefs that shied away from excessive display, in favour of a social sobriety (Whitelock 1977: 194-198). Sometimes more overt personality references are employed in inscriptions, for example this statement in Sample C, 'Strange that a harp with a thousand strings could keep in tune so long', suggests a complex nature.

However, the key concept expressed across all samples is the notion of memory, a thought process often invoked through visitation, of being physically in a place. The standard opening inscription 'In Memory of' appears on 87 per cent of tombstones in Sample A; 90 per cent in B and 73 per cent in C. Despite denominational differences in the Catholic section (Sample D), the phrase still occurs on 57 per cent of tombstones there. The family member, through reading the inscription, conjured forth a living memory of the deceased couched in an emotional response based on feeling and obligation.

The prefix 'beloved' or 'loved' is also popular but is usually applied to the secondary burial, for example 'beloved wife of', usually with 'In Memory of' framing the primary burial name. Euphemisms for death are generally avoided with 'died' favoured on an average of 75 per cent of tombstones in samples A, B and C. Only in the Catholic section does the use of gentle euphemisms for death such as 'resting' and 'sleeping' appear much higher (46 per cent), suggesting a clear denominational preference for these gentler and religiously-laden terms.

Christian religious themes are consistently used across the samples and average 45 per cent with the exception of sample A (32 per cent). Two types of religious inscription are observable. The first are standardised phrases such as, 'Thy will be done' or 'Who fell asleep in Jesus'. The second are biblical quotations that suggest careful individual selection and may say something about the nature of the deceased.

Inscriptions, whilst often formulaic in structure and content, developed more emotive, expressive, and overtly religious statements as attitudes to death evolved in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the chronologically later Sample C, key wording remains consistent with the other samples; however the introduction of more emotive flourishes, small statements of grief, longing and hope, whilst not unique to this sample, are more common. This corresponds to the general understanding of an increased emotional context in the latter half of the nineteenth century, reflecting the idea of a heavenly family reunion in God's house (Jalland 1996: 267-268). For example, Hammill's 1888 monument conjures such domestic imagery,

No sin, no grief, no pain,  
Safe in my happy home;  
My fears all fled, my doubts all slain  
My hour of triumphs come.

Soothing images of an afterlife were also invoked to ease the grief of the visiting family member or friend, such as Prisk's 1885 grave which projects the following image,

Shall we gather at the river,  
where bright angels feet have trod,  
with its crystal tide for ever  
flowing by the throne of God

Again, religious ideological difference is apparent in the inscriptions. The Catholic belief in the capacity of the living to use prayer to influence the deceased soul's passage from the intermediate state of purgatory to heaven places a different expectation upon the visitor (Jalland 2002:3, 145, 173; Mytum 2004:139) as evidenced by Kennedy's inscription:

Of your Charity  
Pray for the Repose of the Soul  
Of  
Dean Kennedy

The inscription implores the onlooker to active participation in a ritual of prayer for the benefit of the dead, and thereby transforms the process of visitation into a dialogue of action. The entreaty appears on 20 per cent of the monuments in Sample D.

## CONCLUSION

This article has been a first step in demonstrating the application of a phenomenological landscape approach to the historical archaeology of cemeteries, and has potential possibilities for the study of other historical landscapes. The combination of archaeological recording and historical research within a phenomenological analytical framework has proven fruitful in considering the observed archaeological site

patterns at West Terrace and to interpret historical social attitudes and physical experiences from them. The data obtained from the samples in relation to spatial layout, burial positioning, monument form and style demonstrates how regulated and important the process of visitation was in the Victorian-era cemetery, and confirms that these layers of meaning, communication, and experience remain embedded and potentially interpretable from the surviving archaeological landscape.

Consideration of the choices still visible in the sample areas illustrate the experiential emphasis involved in the formation process of the Victorian-era cemetery. Over this timeframe intense grief was transformed into a process of remembrance within a spatial context that reinforced and communicated social position, community norms, and religious beliefs to the visitor. The tombstone became an anchor by which communication could occur through person-object relations involving all the human senses within a reflexive, idealised and ideological landscape. This landscape served as both a place of personal grieving and reflection, and a location for public visitation, social appreciation and the perpetuation of dominant ideologies about the nature of both material and spiritual existence.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Associate Professor Heather Burke, from the Department of Archaeology, Flinders University, Adelaide, for her comments on and suggestions for this article. Thanks also to the anonymous ASHA reviewer whose comments have improved this paper.

Thanks also to Russell Pilbeam (ACHM GIS Dept.) for creating the map for Figure 1 and the Adelaide Cemeteries Authority for providing the maps used in Figures 2 and 3. Any mistakes and omissions are my own.

The thesis from which this article was developed can be found online at: [www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/fms/archaeology\\_files/dig\\_library/theses/Muller2006.pdf](http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/fms/archaeology_files/dig_library/theses/Muller2006.pdf) Reference list

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