



Study Day at the National Funeral Museum

Date: Saturday, 10 October 2026

Time: 1000 to 1600 (with optional drinks reception from 1600 to 1800)

Venue: The National Funeral Museum at T. Cribb & Sons Funeral Directors, Victoria House, 10 Woolwich Manor Way, Beckton, London E6 5PA [Map](#)

We are delighted to welcome you to this free event offering you the opportunity to learn, network, and expand on your research. You'll enjoy talks, activities, and explore the museum's collection as well as have plenty of time to network with your academic colleagues.

Please RSVP by Friday, 18 September to secure your place.

About the National Funeral Museum

The [National Funeral Museum](#) is one of the country's most important collections devoted to the history of death, mourning, and the funeral trade. Established by John Harris, the collection traces more than three centuries of British funerary customs, revealing how changing attitudes towards death reflect wider social, religious, and cultural mores.

The collection's significance lies not only in preserving the material culture of undertaking, but provides a valuable resource for historians, researchers and funeral professionals. Amongst its must-see exhibits are a mourning garter from the funeral of King Charles II in 1685, Victorian mourning jewellery, rare funerary hatchments, Burial Affidavits from the 1600s, and funeral invitations, stationery, and mourning wear.

Together these objects offer a remarkable and often moving insight into how Britain has commemorated the dead across the centuries.

About the event venue

The museum is located within T. Cribb & Sons Funeral Directors in east London. Founded by Thomas Cribb in 1881, we are the sole independent funeral directors in the London Borough of Newham and are led by the fourth and fifth generations of the Cribb family. As we are located in a working funeral home, you may encounter families visiting their loved ones while you are here, but we will be working in private spaces reserved for this event. We do not have a dress code so please wear whatever is most comfortable for you although we ask that memento mori-themed clothing or accessories are avoided out of consideration for visiting families. We are a fully accessible venue.

Event contact

If you have any questions before the day, please contact Andrea Woodside, Collections Curator at Andrea@TCribb.co.uk or on 07702 642 901.

How to find us

By public transport: we are located directly across the road from Beckton Dockland Light Railway station (**not** Beckton Park DLR), a 15-minute journey from Canning Town station. When you disembark at Beckton DLR, you will see us directly across the road to the left. [You can plan your journey here.](#)

If you are driving, there is plenty of car parking onsite. To access the carpark, turn down Thomas Cribb Mews (just off Woolwich Manor Way) and it's on your right. What3words: [///love.proud.hurray](#)



Accommodation

We regret that we are unable to book accommodation on your behalf, however if you require overnight accommodation, the closest hotel to the museum (a 2-minute walk) is [Premier Inn](#) in Woolwich Manor Way. If you prefer to stay in Canning Town which is 15 minutes from the museum on the DLR, we can recommend the following options. Both are located a one-minute walk from Canning Town station:

- [Ibis London Canning Town](#)
- [Holiday Inn Express Royal Docks](#)

What to bring with you on the day

Although there is no preparation required for this event, we suggest that you bring the following:

- As one of the day's activities will require you to take photos of the collection, please bring your phone charger with you as we will not have any available for use on the day.
- A notebook and pen.
- A business card if you have one (although we will distribute a list of delegates post event with everyone's contact details. If you do not wish to be included on this list, please let us know when you RSVP for the event).

Agenda

Time	
Anytime from 0900	Arrival, event registration, refreshments and networking
1000 – 1005	Welcome from Dr Helen Frisby Aims and purpose of the day
1005 – 1020	Roundtable introductions Who you are and your area of specialism
1020 – 1050	Keynote talk with John Harris Why funereal history is important
1050 – 1120	Keynote talk with Dr Brian Parsons Objects of Death: What Funeral Heritage can Teach Death Studies
1120 – 1150	Refreshments and networking
1150 – 1250	Individual activity: Object Encounters After time spent exploring the museum, you will choose an object that speaks to you; whether you find it emotionally resonant, it relates to your area of specialism, or it just makes you think, you will take a photo of it and send it to Helen. All photos will be included in a presentation which will take place at 1450. During that session, you will be asked to speak for a minute or two as to why you chose the object and how it informs the wider understanding of mourning or ritual.
1250 - 1350	Lunch and networking



1350 – 1435	Small group activity: Then and Now Collections Conversations You and your group will choose an object and discuss the following amongst yourselves: • What was this object's intended use? • Do we still use this type of object today? • If not, what has replaced it? • What does this object tell us about changing attitudes towards death?
1435 – 1450	Refreshments and networking
1450 – 1535	Object Encounters Montage Premiere The photograph you took in the Object Encounters session will be shown on the screen in the larger group. You will have one or two minutes to reflect on your findings in the larger group.
1535 – 1555	Intentions and reflections You will be invited to share in the larger group two prompts: 1. One lightbulb moment I experienced today 2. One action I will take in the next month to support my own research.
1555 – 1600	Closing remarks by Helen Frisby and John Harris
From 1600	Drinks reception and networking for those who would like to join us

Speaker biographies

Dr Helen Frisby

Helen obtained her PhD on Victorian funeral customs from the University of Leeds in 2009 and is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Death & Society, University of Bath. She also serves as the Hon. Secretary of The Folklore Society. Helen researches, publishes and speaks widely on the history and folklore of death, dying, and bereavement, and appears on The History Channel and BBC radio. Helen is co-investigator on the University of Bristol's *Grave Communications* project, researching the tools, techniques and other informal occupational culture of frontline cemetery staff.

Dr Brian Parsons

Brian has worked in funeral directing in London since 1982. He now focuses on staff training but also researches the history of funeral service along with the development of cremation and London cemeteries. He is the author of a number of books including *The London Way of Death*; *Committed to the Cleansing Flame*, *London Cemeteries: An Illustrated Guide and Gazetteer* (with Hugh Meller), and *From Dust to Ashes: The Development of Cremation in England & Wales, 1874-2025*. (with Peter C Jupp).

John Harris, MA

John is Senior Partner of T. Cribb & Sons, one of the United Kingdom's longest-established independent funeral directors. Founded in 1881 by John's great-grandfather Thomas Cribb in 1881, the family business has served communities across London and Essex for more than 145 years. John brings a deep understanding of the history, values, and evolving role of funeral directing in contemporary society, and is particularly interested in the preservation of funereal history across the ages. John attained his MSc in Death and Society from the University of Reading in 2000 and is a founder member of the Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF). John also established T. Cribb and Sons Ghana twenty years ago, the largest funeral directors in that country.

