



## Podcast 16:

### Into the earth and into the light: practices around death and bereavement

Poppy Mardall, John Lampard and Emma Pavey

What resonated most with you in listening to this podcast?

What gave you pause for thought?

#### Some quotes to reflect on:

- \* (9.05) Poppy: 'I think there's something very grounding about caring for our dead and it's certainly something we've been doing as a species for a very, very long time for a reason because when we care for our dead, we are building a relationship between ourselves and our ancestors and our past and our future and our own acceptance that one day we'll die. Living with that can give us a very powerful way to live.'
- \* (14.03) John: 'The medieval attitude [was] when a person was hung, drawn and quartered, their body was scattered so its place knew it no more, and so those who were not sinners like that, their bodies were treated with a measure of reverence and were buried. We seem now to have gone back to the medieval attitude - you can scatter a body anywhere as long as it's ashes, but you wouldn't scatter human remains in the same sort of way, all over the place, so I think there's a sort of disconnect.'
- \* (18.15) Poppy: 'Even that word 'disposal'...means...chucking something in the bin...that is sometimes what it feels like is happening...I've been playing with the word 'reposal'...it's got really lovely connotations for someone to be 'in repose'.'
- \* (22.52) John: 'One of the problems of cremation, if you're trying to do a service, a Christian service for cremation, the imagery of fire has both a positive and a profoundly negative [meaning] - disappearing into the fires of hell.'
- \* (36.18) Poppy: 'There's something very powerful about having a discussion about what you might want for your funeral, about having that conversation with the people who are going to be there to enact it. There's no point making a funeral plan and not telling your kids.'
- \* (37.51) Poppy: 'Death is in front of us all the time. It's rare that I walk to school with my kids and don't walk past a leaf that's fallen off a tree or an orange that's gone mouldy, or a fox that's been hit by a car. We have all these opportunities to talk about death and think about death before it becomes a crisis moment.'



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- \* (42.50) Poppy: 'Death is a transformation...not just for the person who's died back into the soil, [but also] for the community [and] the people heavily impacted by the death...Like other rites of passage that we've lost rituals around, it's so often the lack of validation of that transformation that causes so much of the pain.'
- \* (45.13) Poppy: 'You know that bit in the marriage ceremony...'Does everyone here promise to uphold this union'?...It should be the same at a funeral...'You've all come here today. Your job for the next 3-5 years is to keep showing up because one day your turn will come and you'll be in that inner circle, and you'll need [people] with their hands at your back'...

John: 'I really like your idea of the funeral service placing a sort of responsibility on the wider body of mourners. Next time I'm involved in writing a funeral service, I'll bear that in mind - a promise from the mourners to support the immediate family. I really like that, it's excellent.'

- \* (47.00) John: 'The biggest change that has taken place in funerals – one of the biggest – is that they have moved from being forward-looking to being backward-looking...[in the past] the joys of future life, resurrection life, life with God was the focus of the service. Now so much of the focus of the service is around the eulogy.'
- \* (58.12) Poppy: 'I feel like there's something important about facing mortality that [says] you are special and also everyone is special and this isn't about you. You're one of many and you're part of something much greater.'

# The Susanna Wesley Foundation



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- \* **Resources and references mentioned**
- \* Poppy's Funerals
- \* Law commission project: Burial, Cremation, and New Funerary Methods
- \* Resomation information