

A photograph of a cemetery with several people working on graves. One person in a dark jacket is on the left, another in a grey jacket is in the center, and a person in a light blue jacket is bent over a grave in the foreground. A person in a green and black jacket is on the right, holding a clipboard. The background shows various tombstones and trees under a cloudy sky.

Our Digital Ancestors

Dr Rachel Askew (Caring for God's Acre)



Our Digital
Ancestors



Our Digital Ancestors

- Run by Caring for God's Acre
- Funded primarily by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England
- Supporting burial grounds of all denominations to record memorials and engage communities
- Running until October 2028



Caring for God's Acre

- Established 2000
- Promotes conservation of all burial sites, regardless of denomination
- Hosts Love Your Burial Ground Week and Churches Count of Nature
- Runs a Shropshire-based volunteer group
- Heritage to Inspire



ODA Aims

- Work with communities to map and record burial grounds
- Increase public engagement with burial ground heritage through activities and resources
- Tell the stories of the deceased and reconnect them with the living



Case Study: Warstone Lane, Birmingham

- Mapped by Atlantic Geomatic as part of Birmingham's Beautiful Burial Grounds (2019-2022)



The process

- Base map produced by AG Intl
- Volunteers photographed and recorded memorials
- Recording completed as part of ODA
- 2,657 memorials/7,070 people
- 28 volunteers, 1150 volunteer hours



The map

<https://warstone.burialgrounds.co.uk/mapmanagement/#/>



What does it show?

- Location
- Named individuals
- Individual details
- Memorial photos
- Memorial type
- Memorial condition



Public portal

First name(s)
Mary

Last name
Smith

More ▾

Broad Exact

Total results: 9

Name	Burial Date	Age
Angela Mary SMITH	-	53
Mary SMITH	-	58
Mary SMITH	-	83
Mary SMITH	-	78



Associated activities

- Guided tours
- School workshops



Online Resources

- 2 courses, free to all.
 - How to use BGMS
 - ODA Course (Memorial Recording)
- ODA Course. 4 modules:
 - Health and Safety
 - Memorial Photography
 - Memorial Recording
 - Researching Individuals
- Sign up here:
<https://community.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/register/our-digital-ancestors/>





Future plans

- Further training courses:
 - Producing plans from aerial photographs
 - Creating a trail leaflet for your burial site
- Expanding activities across England
 - Recording Key Hill cemetery, Birmingham
 - Currently working in London and Midlands, supporting work in burial grounds elsewhere
 - Working with cemeteries, churchyards and United Synagogue, London

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Thanks for listening!

Rachel@cfga.org.uk



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