The Medieval Cemetery

The cemetery and its development over time
Corisande Fenwick

Medieval funerary archaeology is an emerging field in Italy. Despite a huge wealth of information about medieval churches and monasteries, very little is understood about medieval burial, cemetery organisation, or the preparation of the corpse.[1] Our excavations aimed to explore these issues through an integrated analysis of the cemetery of Villamagna, now the largest published sample of medieval burials in Italy.[2] This chapter describes the development of the cemetery and changes in funerary practice in relation to the broader changes in ownership and management of the estate. It considers how funerary evidence can provide information on identity in life as well as shifting patterns in religious practice. Issues of demography, disease, mortality and diet derived from the anthropological and isotopic analysis of the bones are presented below, xxx-xxx, but the results are discussed here where appropriate.

Excavations revealed a complex history of burials in and around the church, here divided into early, central and late medieval periods.[3] A total of 470 individuals were excavated from 383 graves (Table 7.xx), the majority of which were found inside the church, or to its west.[4] Unfortunately, we know very little about the areas to the south and east of the church. Surface scraping around the exterior of the church apse revealed loose human bone at the surface, as well as some wall divisions: clearly the cemetery extended in that direction as well. The phasing is based on the analysis of all stratigraphic relationships between graves and structures, the use of pottery and artefact dates (even if residual) for *termini post quos*, and a radiocarbon suite (Figs 7.74, 7.75, Table 7.4).

The Early Medieval Phase (Fig. 7.76)
The apsed building in the middle of the courtyard of the abandoned villa was rebuilt as a church in the sixth century, as discussed above, xxx-xxx. At some later point, perhaps still in the sixth century, a narthex was constructed against the façade. Much later still, the southern third of the narthex was filled with a series of below-ground tombs cut into the clay and lined with stones (Fig. 7.76). This cluster of tombs may have belonged to a wealthy extended family group: the earliest tomb (**T322**) identified was constructed against the church façade and contained a large adult male aged between 45 and 55 years,[5] two tile tombs **T318** and **T323** contained infants,[6] and **T325** contained the articulated skeleton of an adult female between 30 and 40 years, and the disturbed remains of an adult aged between 35 and 45 years and probably female. The tomb was covered by marble slabs, presumably the traces of the narthex pavement. To the north was **T331**, which contained a juvenile aged

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[1] In contrast to the long history of research on Lombard, Goth and Byzantine burials, little has been written about medieval burial in later periods, Gelichi 1997: 157. Medieval cemeteries in Italy have seldom been fully published: interim articles typically either examine the anthropology or palaeopathology or present the results of the excavation, with exceptional

[2] Medieval cemeteries in Barbiera 2008: 492, fig. 1. Note that only the anthropological data have been published for the majority of cemeteries dated 900–1600.

[3] For the different phases of the church and monastery, Goodson above p. xxx; for the medieval village, Totten, above p. xxx.

[4] 426 articulated individuals were identified in the field; a further 44 were identified from reductions and fills in the anthropological study, Candilio, below p. xxx.

[5] **3864*** (**T322**) is dated to *810–970 cal. (95% probability; OxA–26150).*
[6] **3833*** (**T318**) is dated to *870–980 cal. (95% probability; OxA–25050).*

between 12 and 15 years. **T311** contained three individuals and was built against the western narthex wall on a north–south orientation. Of the articulated individuals, one was an adult female between 25 and 35 years and the other a young juvenile. The cluster in the southern narthex includes two infants, two adolescents, three adult females and a single elderly male, a demographic profile that fits that of an extended family.

A single tomb lay north of this cluster inside the narthex.[7] **T330** constructed of a yellowish, degraded tufa and lined with Roman marble and tile slabs, lay north of the cluster described above. Intriguingly, it does not follow the east–west orientation of the church, but is aligned upon a southwest–northeast axis, perhaps in line with an earlier structure in the churchyard. The tomb contained the remains of eight adults, all male or probably male, which may indicate the gendered use of communal tombs at this time.[8]

The sample size for this period is small: only seven tombs were uncovered containing nineteen individuals. The radiocarbon results reveal that burials in the narthex commenced in the ninth century, a moment when the church interior was given new liturgical fittings.[9] The burials span a maximum period of *0–90 years (95% probability) or 0–40 years (68% probability)*, that is two to four generations. We might imagine that these walled tombs were used to bury the occupants of the ninth-century elite housing in Area A. The ninth-century burials support the argument for a significant occupation at Villamagna in this period, before the estate was given over to the monastery.

Central Medieval Phase
After the estate was transferred to the monastery in 976, we see major changes in the cemetery organisation, which can be divided into three subphases, A, B and C. We do not know the full extent or whereabouts of the various cemeteries in this period, though the mortality profile of the population we excavated makes it clear that there must have been other cemeteries. Monastic burials are most likely to be found in the unexcavated areas of the cloister and around the apse, where bones are visible, and there was probably also a separate lay cemetery near the church.

Central Medieval A (Fig. 7.78)
In the late tenth century, a monastic precinct was built to the north of the church. Typically, the cemetery was a feature of the monastic precinct that was planned in conjunction with the major buildings.[10] At Villamagna, nine tombs were found in the precinct, carefully laid out in two distinct rows, with approximately 1.7 metres between the rows (**T377, 380, 381, 382, 385, 386, 388, 389, 390**).[11] The majority of these tombs were walled or lined with stone, all contained adults or juveniles, predominantly male, though two skeletons were identified as possibly female. A few of these tombs had some sort of headstone cut down into the ground. Despite the presence of the women, this may have been the monastic cemetery.

Outside the precinct's western wall, further isolated earthen graves containing single burials were found dug into a deposit of dark earth and the ruins of the Roman buildings there. **T371** used the doorway of the substructure of the imperial residence, and contained a woman aged between 40 and 50 years whose legs were flexed in order to fit her into the space; she was partially covered with tiles. **T370** has a large

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[7] Further walled tombs were visible in the northern section of BII above the Roman walls, which may date to the early medieval period, though the chronology is not certain.
[8] **3946* (T330)** is dated to *890–980 cal. (95% probability; OxA–26149).*
[9] McNamee, above p. xxx.
[10] Horn and Born 1979 on the Plan of St Gall, for the cemetery, II, 210–2, fig. 430.
[11] **4541* (T389)** is dated to *890–1020 cal. (95% probability; OxA–26153).*

posthole in its centre from later construction, perhaps even from scaffolding for the monastic precinct.[12] The full extent of this outer cemetery is unclear: west–east burials continue to the north and are visible in the section. An isolated central medieval tomb **T118** containing an elderly female in the southwest corner of our excavations may also date to this subphase, given the presence of a limestone headstone similar to those found within the precinct.

Three walled tombs were built in front of the church (**T262**, **321, 328**), each containing several individuals. **T328** contained the remains of three mature adult males, though only one was articulated.[13] Immediately to its south, **T321** seemed to re-use the walls of the drain in the centre of the courtyard; it contained at least four individuals, including a mature man and woman and two juveniles. The latest burial **3859***, a juvenile aged between twelve and fifteen, had three rings, two on the left hand and one on the right.[14] This is one of only two examples of a burial with jewellery in the Central Medieval period. **T262** uses ninth-century liturgical furniture in its wall, perhaps indicating that the church interior was refurbished at the time of the monastery's foundation.[15] The graves in this phase date to the late tenth or early eleventh century and were deposited over a short period of time, according to the radiocarbon results no more than 50 years.

Central Medieval B (Fig. 7.79)
The construction of cloister, bell tower and porch marked a significant shift in burial practices; the churchyard was no longer used for burials, and we have yet to identify where the bulk of the inhabitants of both the monastery and the new village built in the ruins of the earlier winery were buried.

Tombs built in a similar style, typically of brick and tile and containing several individuals, were found in the church and cloister and scattered outside the monastery. Inside the church, two walled tombs (**T241** and **281**) were identified against the north wall that probably date to this subphase. **T241** was largely intact and contained the articulated skeleton of an adult man and the disarticulated remains of another adult male skeleton. A later, probably late thirteenth-century, bell-casting pit disturbed these tombs. Given the amount of human bone, broken marble slabs and bricks found in later fills in Area C, it seems likely that there were more tombs of this sort within the privileged burial space of the church. Only one tomb **T374**, built over **T377**, can be securely dated to this phase within the cloister; this walled tomb contained a 30-40-year-old male and was covered with brick and stone slabs.[16]

Strikingly, there are no burials in the area in front of the church in this or the next sub-phase, suggesting that while the cemetery was under monastic control, burial was confined to distinct areas away from its facade. West of the precinct, **T369** was lined with slabs of reused *cocciopesto*, tiles and marbles, and contained the articulated skeletons of an adolescent female and an adult male between 35 and 45 years, as well as the bones of a further two male and three female adult individuals in its fill.[17] Another walled tomb **T335** was constructed against the north wall of the bell tower and the eastern wall of the ossuary (see below, Fig. 7.87). This tomb contained at least

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[12] **4274*** (**T370)** dates to *980–1040 cal. (95% probability, OxA–24972).*

[13] **3898*** (**T328)** is dated to *980–1030 cal. (95% probability; OxA–26151).*

[14] **O1050, 1051, 1052.** 3859* is dated to *1020–1120 cal. (95% probability, OxA–26154).*

[15] **3688*** (**T262)** is dated to *1010–1060 cal. (40.9% probability) or 1070–1160 (54.5% probability; OxA–26155)*

[16] **4342*** is dated to *1100–1160 cal. (95% probability; OxA–24973).*

[17] **4285*** is dated to *1120–1160 cal. (95% probability; OxA–24971).*

ten individuals, six of which were articulated.[18] To the south of the bell tower, and likely also belonging to this phase is **T126** containing at least three adults.[19]

The builders of the new constructions seem to have been unconcerned about disturbing earlier tombs, with both the cloister and bell-casting pit destroying numerous tombs. Fig. 7.80 shows a grave in the monastic precinct, bisected by the foundations for the new cloister: no attempt had been made to clear the grave's occupant before the building works.[20] It is perhaps this burst of construction activity inside churchyard and monastic precinct that required the construction of a walled underground ossuary against the bell tower, as a place to store the disturbed bones (Fig. 7.81). The ossuary itself (3.75 x 3 m) lies some 0.70 m below the level of the churchyard. It must have been covered in some way, though it is unclear what its superstructure was and whether it was used continuously over a period of time to curate bones. Subdivided into two, the ossuary was filled with bones, predominantly crania and long bones.[21] The notable absence of small bones suggests that only larger bones were transferred to the ossuary, rather than whole skeletons.

Central Medieval C (Fig. 7.82)
At some later point, the area outside the monastery walls was converted from use as a cemetery into a lime kiln, before being once again used for burial on a small scale. A group of fifteen burials located about ten metres west of the monastery wall stand out as exceptional. These are the only graves in this area; none of them had any finds. All are on a north–south or south-north orientation, all are adults or teenagers, predominantly male, though the fragmentary nature of the bones made it hard to definitively sex the individuals.[22] The graves themselves were very shallow and seem to have been dug over a stretch of time, between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The strange orientation of these burials is worth emphasising; Christian burials are almost universally laid out on a west-east orientation. There are a few other north–south burials at Villamagna, but these all seem to be oriented in this way in order to maximise space in the cemetery. In this northern area outside the monastic precinct, however, there were no spatial constraints. One of the earliest burials in the sequence, **4146*,** a young adult of 18 to 23 years, probably male, was found lying face down in a shallow grave, with his arms crossed below his body (Fig. 7.83). Radiocarbon analysis puts the date of death at *1160-1260 cal. (95% probability; OxA-24968)*, the height of the monastery's power. This is the only prone burial at Villamagna, and its presence among this group of adults buried in alternatively oriented, shallow graves, suggests that they were excluded from the main cemetery for some reason.[23]

A further three north–south burials were found to the east of this group; these date to this phase or the Late Medieval phases. A few of the burials show signs of a violent death, such as (**4348***), which dates to the end of the phase.[24] This 25–35 year-old adult male was buried with a projectile in his head in a corridor of the cloister. His location within the still-occupied cloister suggests that he was of a higher status than those excluded burials.

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[18] The earliest articulated individual **3536*** is dated to *1090–1160 cal. (95% probability; OxA–24966)*.
[19] This tomb was exposed but not fully excavated.
[20] A parallel comes from the major redevelopment *c.* 1221 of the priory church at St Mary Merton, Surrey and at St Mary Spital (*c.* 1280–1300), Gilchrist and Sloane 2005: 195.
[21] Other charnel pits were found across the site, related to building activity and were usually simple pits filled with earth and bone. The composition of the ossuary fill is quite different to these more ad hoc solutions to disturbing graves.
[22] Candilio, below p. xxx.
[23] A similar example of an isolated prone burial of an adolescent female (**T58**) lying face down with hands placed below the pelvis was found at Pieve di Pava, Mongelli *et al.* 2006.
[24] **4348*** is dated to *cal. 1260–1300 (95% probability; OxA–26156)*. For the palaeopathological indicators, see Candilio, below p. xxx.

The earliest burial dates to 970–1150 cal. (unmodelled, **4274*,** OxA-24972) which fits with the foundation date of 976 in the documents. 76 individuals were excavated from a total of 44 tombs, though lack of completeness inhibited the analysis of age and sex. The vast majority of individuals were adults, with almost half of those recovered aged over 30 years. The sexed adults were divided almost equally between males and females, with a slight preponderance of males.[25] Subadults were present and represented 24% of all individuals, the majority adolescents. There were no children below the age of seven years present, suggesting that they were buried elsewhere. There does not seem to be any zoning by sex: men and women were found both within the privileged location of the monastery and the walled tombs outside. Caution must be used, however, as we are missing much of the cemetery in this period.

Late Medieval phase (Fig. 7.84)
After the suppression of the monastery in 1297, a substantial cemetery appeared in front of the church, presumably that of its remaining villagers.[26] This cemetery seems to have been bounded on four sides by a cemetery wall creating a firmly enclosed yard (8 x 10 m) in front of the church within which the majority of the graves were found. The walls were constructed of a roughly dressed limestone, reused bricks and a mortar containing large clumps of hard, blue-violet mortar. At least one entrance has been detected in the southeast corner, next to the church. If the overall area used for burying the dead at Villamagna shrunk dramatically in this period, the new smaller cemetery was used far more intensively than before, as is attested by the large number of burials in the enclosed area in front of the church. For the first time, tombs intercut into one another on a large scale. These cemetery boundaries were not absolute, however, for as in the Central Medieval phase, a few outlying graves were located beyond the western boundary wall.

The churchyard was first filled with a series of walled tombs, which seemed to be largely confined to the area west of the porch, presumably still standing at this point. Eight have been definitively identified: **T336**, **337** and **338**, which were emptied, rebuilt and reused in Late Medieval C, **T343** which contained two adult females and an infant, **T339** which contained three adult males and a juvenile, **T187** which contained an adult male and two infants, **T340**, which contained an adult and **T216** which contained an adult. **T336** and **337** were built in the interior of the destroyed narthex and **T343** was built inside the porch area. On the west side, a row of rectangular walled tombs (**T338**, **339**, **340**, **216** and **187**) abuts the still partially standing narthex walls. Three graves (**T108**, **247**, **313**) oriented north–south and containing single burials of adults or juveniles probably also date to this period and may also have been walled. A further three possible walled tombs were tentatively identified in the southwest quadrant of the churchyard, however this zone was not completely excavated.

The walled tombs are oriented east–west, contain single or multiple burials, and are fairly uniform in depth. The walls consist of courses of roughly finished rectangular blocks of the local limestone, sometimes combined with brick or tile, and a crumbly white mortar. They are usually finished on the interior, sometimes plastered, and were cut down from ground level as far as the underlying Roman pavement. Individuals were buried supine with heads to the west and feet to the east. After the first individual had been buried, the tomb was filled with earth and reopened at various points in order to insert additional individuals. These later interments disturbed the earlier burials. Disarticulated bones were retained within the tomb as the fill. Although the sample size is small, the variety in age and gender of the

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[25] See Candilio, below p. xxx.
[26] Zadora-Rio 2003 has argued that this polarization of the cemetery space around the church (from the tenth and eleventh century onwards in France and Britain) is an important stage in the conceptualisation of a parish church.

individuals buried suggests that these tombs were family plots. A female juvenile **2351*** had earrings on either side of her skull **(O206, 332)** (below, Fig. 7.100). Otherwise the individuals buried in this phase were devoid of grave goods or personal belongings.

The area was then quickly covered by hundreds of simple earthen graves. The late medieval churchyard cemetery was used with great intensity over a short period of time; radiocarbon dating suggests a maximum period of 100 years, the equivalent of three or four generations. It was rarely possible to determine distinct grave cuts, since in nearly all cases the graves were intercut or disturbed by later activity.[27] The stratigraphy was further complicated by the presence of earlier, still partially standing, walls which in effect created different zones of non-contiguous graves. Thus, for example, graves north of the porch within the area of the earlier narthex cannot be securely linked to other burials in BI. Moreover, the burials were cut into layers of cemetery earth containing material re-deposited from underlying strata of pre-existing buildings or occupation layers.

This intensive superimposition of burials defied a traditional archaeological approach which reconstructs cemetery organisation in successive phase plans. Instead, we imported the survey data into ArcScene for three-dimensional viewing. In this model, each skeleton was represented by a three-dimensional 'grave' of standardised proportions. Examining the vertical 'stacking' of graves, and the degree to which each successive burial aligned with its predecessor allowed us to reconstruct several distinct burial strategies in the churchyard cemetery.[28] In the earlier phases, individuals seem to have been buried in burial plots. The mixture of ages and sexes buried within these burial plots suggests that families may have had their own plots, perhaps marked by headstones or wooden crosses. Later the burial plots seem to be replaced by a more orderly laying out of individual graves in rows. However, a cluster in the southwest corner of the graveyard of adult and child graves, each buried with a coin (see below), does suggest that certain cemetery areas were used by different family groups. In both cases, a narrow path was retained through the centre of the cemetery to the church door. Otherwise, no provision seems to have been made for access space between rows. The regular geometry was further disrupted by ad hoc efforts to maximise the use of cemetery space, particularly in the final phase of its use, with shallow burials, often those of infants, being crammed in between earlier deep graves.

The graves in the earthen cemetery are remarkably similar, with little obvious indication of differentiation: all skeletons were laid out supine, though there was some variation in arm and leg position. The majority were buried on a west-east orientation, although there are a few north–south burials against the church and western cemetery wall, presumably to maximise the limited space within the enclosed cemetery. A few burials stand out in this generally undifferentiated group. An adult man **3737***was buried with a roof-tile covering his face (Fig. 7.85).Covering the face in death was not common in Italy, unlike Northern Europe.[29] In this case, the covering of the facial features with a roof-tile may have been a deliberate attempt to

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[27] The later fortification wall **[2001]** which cut through the entirety of the late medieval cemetery posed major obstacles to our reconstruction of the cemetery layout and development.

[28] Dufton and Fenwick 2012. See the recent MOLA publication of the Victorian St Pancras burial ground for the use of Google Sketch-Up in a similar manner. Emery and Wooldridge 2011: 13–14, 44–57.

[29] Fourteenth-century Italian funerals openly displayed the corpse of the deceased which typically lay in full view on the bier, dressed and with its face, hands and feet exposed. See Strocchia 1992: 39, 49.

depersonalise the features of the deceased, perhaps as an act of humility or piety in death. Shrouds or face-cloths would have served as a similar purpose, though they do not survive archaeologically. A flint projectile point (**O1096**) found in the skull of a juvenile **2173*** suggests a violent death, and the anthropological analysis found further evidence of violence in the form of, for example, sword wounds on the crania of an adult female **2110*** and adult male **2312*,** the latter most likely a fatal wound.[30]

Our small trench inside the church also revealed fifteen Late Medieval burials in earthen graves, and it seems likely that much of the church's interior would have been given over to burials. Our excavations seem to have uncovered the burial area for a wealthy family (Fig. 7.86). Not only were the majority of adult burials here accompanied by finger-rings and other goods, but the finds were of a far higher quality than those discovered outside. In the centre, a woman **3048*** of 30–50 years was interred in a large, deep grave, around which many infant and child burials were later placed. The importance of this individual is indicated by the presence of two rings and a piece of worked bone in her tomb (**O5, 7** and **536**). Another woman **3061***, aged between 20 and 30 years, was buried nearby, with a similar ring (**O6**) with a circular bevel on her right hand. The disarticulated bones of a neonate were found above her pelvis, suggesting that she may have died during pregnancy or childbirth. The burials of two adult men were found against the northern wall, again with finds including a bronze ring and a pierced clam shell. A further eleven infant burials were found, placed carefully around the three adult tombs. Their location around the adult burials suggests that this was a family group, preserving the intimacy of family in death.

We have no textual evidence from Villamagna which tells us how and where people chose to be buried, and little of such evidence exists from rural churches. By contrast, late medieval wills from a number of Northern Italian cities do indicate that people often requested burial near the grave of their husband, wife, father, children or ancestors.[31] *Sepultuari*, lists composed to keep track of the whereabouts of burials, also reveal that tombs almost always include multiple generations of a family, so that one grave marker will mark many burials.[32] If our interpretation of the stratigraphy is correct, it seems that at Villamagna too, people were also buried near their family members, often in the same tomb or plot.

At some later point, three above-ground walled tombs were built against the northern churchyard wall in the same location as three of the earlier walled tombs. Constructed of reused Roman bricks, blocks of limestone and dark white mortar, they appear to have continued to serve as tombs while the area around them became an open churchyard covered by a series of plaster surfaces and no longer used for burial. Two of these were later robbed out; the remaining one contained a minimum of nine individuals of mixed ages and sexes **(T62)**. Inside the church, a grave containing an adult man and woman oriented south-north, each with a coin, and one accompanied by a rosary appears to be the latest uncovered by our excavations, and may even post-date the church's decay in the fifteenth century.

Burials in the cemetery seem to have started between *1280–1380 cal. AD (95% probability)* and most likely ceased by the latter part of the fourteenth century since no fifteenth-century material culture has yet been found on the site. Certainly, burials in the outside churchyard ceased with the construction of the fortification

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[30] See Candilio below, p. xxx

[31] Cohn 1992 suggests for Siena that this is a later phenomenon dating to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

[32] Bruzelius 2007: 222, n. 42 based on her reading of the *sepoltuari* of the mendicant churches of S. Francesco and S. Domenica in Bologna.

wall, an event we believe did not long precede the abandonment of the site.[33] The 375 articulated individuals excavated from the 332 graves dating to this period form some 80% of our total sample (470 total). There is no doubt that this cemetery was that of the workers of the site after the suppression of the monastery. Although we have yet to locate their village, we can perhaps estimate its size by comparison with excavated late medieval Italian village sites. At Rocca San Silvestro, for example, an entire village of about 50 houses was excavated as well as *c.* 250 skeletons from the cemetery.[34] We might imagine a slightly larger village complex at fourteenth-century Villamagna, which is unlikely to have lain too far from the church and burial ground.

Tomb types

Several different styles of tomb were found at Villamagna, though the majority were simple earthen graves (*fosse terragne*) into which a body was laid, and then the earth was piled back on top of the body. The early medieval period is characterised by rectangular below-ground tombs, either cut into the clay and lined or built of re-used Roman tile, brick, stone and marble. The central medieval period also has a series of below-ground tombs, used for multiple inhumations, slightly less well constructed and often using existing walls to form part of the tomb structure. A good example of such a tomb is **T335**, built against the bell tower's north wall (Fig. 7.87). Earthen graves appear for the first time in the central medieval period and were used for single inhumations, occasionally lined with a headstone. The vast majority of late medieval graves, by contrast, are simple earthen cuts and contain a single individual, although occasionally several infants were placed in the same grave. In a few cases, it was possible to identify the shape of the grave cut as oval. The late medieval period also featured a number of walled tombs containing multiple burials, both below-ground and above-ground, built out of reused Roman tile, brick and stone.

There is minimal evidence of grave furniture in any period. A Roman roof tile was used to cover two infant burials in the late medieval period (for example **T265**, **81**). In a small number of graves, a single Roman tile was placed beneath the skull (as is the case with **T325**), but generally, there was no material or taphonomic evidence for the presence of headrests or pillows. The absence of nails and the oval shape of grave cuts, when visible, demonstrate that wooden coffins were not normally used. Analysis of taphonomic processes seems to confirm this hypothesis (Fig. 7.88).[35] The skeletons in earthen graves present the typical characteristics of decomposition in a filled space: the majority of individuals conserved their anatomical connection, though there is often some small displacement of bones in the chest area. Many of the skeletons buried in walled tombs, however, show the classic signs of decomposition in an empty space, indicating that the walled tombs were covered with a slab, plank or some other sort of covering (Fig. 7.89 for examples of taphonomic variation in walled tombs). No grave markers were found *in situ*, although two examples were found in later medieval pits: both are semi-circular in shape: one has a crude star marked on it (**AE693**) and the other a simple cross (**AE630**) (Fig. 7.90). The graves may have been marked by wooden posts, or simply by the hump of returned earth from the grave which could take a long time to subside.

Analysis of grave alignment suggests that the church and cemetery boundaries were the prime determinants of grave alignment and positioning. The majority of graves were aligned within 10° of each other on an alignment parallel to that of the church,

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[33] See Goodson above, p. xxx.

[34] See Francovich and Gruspier 1999.

[35] Duday 2006.

80° rather than true east–west (Fig. 7.91). A few graves were uncovered on a north–south alignment: aside from the excluded group of burials in Central Medieval C described above (see Fig. 7.82), these date to the late medieval period and were found parallel to the church facade or the western cemetery boundary, presumably to save space within the limited cemetery area.

Laying out the body

The standard arrangement is typical of medieval Christian burials. The corpse was laid on its back, with the legs extended, and the head at the west end of the grave, so that the body might rise for the Last Judgement and meet Christ coming from the East.[36] The head was usually placed facing upright, occasionally falling to one side or another as a result of post-depositional activity. Variations of this arrangement were extremely rare in all periods: a number of juveniles and children, and less frequently adults, were found with their legs flexed – in some cases this seems to be caused by the corpse being fitted into a grave that was slightly too short for the body, while in others, it is the result of post-depositional processes. Six infants were placed curled on their sides, a position that Gilchrist and Sloane suggest may mimic a natural sleeping position.[37] These examples all date from the late medieval period, and three are placed next to each other in front of the church entrance (**T107**, **124** and **265**), perhaps indicating a family plot.

There was considerably more variation in arm position, which could be established securely in the case of 146 individuals:
1. arms by the side (5 examples)
2. arms on the body, with hands on pelvis (16 examples)
3. arms on the body, with hands crossed on the chest (10 examples)
4. arms on the body, with arms crossed at the waist (67 examples)
5. one hand on pelvis (16 examples)
6. one hand on chest (31 examples)

The dominant arm position (67 examples or 46 % of skeletons where the position of both arms could be reconstructed) was for the arms to be crossed. Binski has noted that Italian tomb effigies and religious paintings often depict the dead with their arms folded in this way, a devotional position related to submission or passivity noted by Tertullian, and later by Gregory of Tours and the Chanson de Roland.[38] Position 3 is often associated with placing the hands in a praying position, however at Villamagna, only a small proportion of burials were arranged in this manner.[39] More frequent is the placement of one hand over the heart (Position 6). At other Italian cemeteries, there is often more uniformity in arm position according to period or sex, but this is not the case at Villamagna.[40]

Amidst this uniformity in corpse arrangement, the peculiarity of the single prone burial is even more striking, and it is worth considering its significance. Some scholars argue that prone burials are penitential: an account of Abbot Suger's works at St-Denis, in the mid 1140s recounts that Charlemagne's father, King Pepin, was buried outside the entrance to the abbey church, face down for the sins of his father.[41] Another possibility is that prone burial may be a strategy to protect the living from the dead rising again: popular superstition in northern Europe held that the soul of a

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[36] Young 1997. Bishop Guillelmus Durandus, writing in the twelfth century, says 'A man ought to be buried so that while his head lies to the west his feet are turned to the east, for thus he prays as it were by his very position and suggests that he is ready to hasten from the west to the east,' Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* vii. 35.
[37] Gilchrist and Sloane 2005: 155–6.
[38] Binski 1996: 99.
[39] Daniell 1997: 118.
[40] For Cosa where men tended to have their hands clasped over the pelvis and women over the chest, see Gruspier 2003: 353–62.
[41] Suger, *De Administratione*, XXV.

body buried face down could not haunt the living, and this may apply to Italy.[42] More pragmatically, prone burials sometimes indicate hurried burial, such as in plague pits. However, the location of **4146*** outside the main cemetery area within a group of atypical burials indicates that this prone individual was more likely to have been an outcast barred from being buried in consecrated ground, whether because of crimes, of suspected sorcery, suicide, or other reasons.[43]

Dressing the corpse

Archaeologically, it is difficult to determine the percentage of people who were buried clothed. Textiles rarely survive, and when they do, it is often difficult to distinguish between clothing and shrouds and other wrappings. At Villamagna, preservation of organic materials is particularly poor and textile remains were only detected in one grave **T44** from the late medieval period. In this example, fragments of a brown, coarse, tightly woven wool fabric were found over the ribs and pelvis of a 20–30 year-old male. Although only the top half of the skeleton survives, the taphonomy suggests that this is unlikely to have been a shroud burial, as there are no signs of the compression or bone displacement characteristic of this type of burial. There is, however, some movement in the arms; the humeri have fallen out and slightly rotated away from the shoulder bone, the clavicles and sternum however remain *in situ*; this indicates that the burial was loosely wrapped or perhaps clothed.

Scholars have tended to assume that only wealthy people or those in religious orders were buried clothed, everyone else was buried naked in a shroud.[44] The shroud was sometimes sewn together, or tied together at head and feet, or fastened by a metal or wooden shroud pin. At Villamagna, no shroud pins were found, and taphonomic analysis suggest that only a few skeletons may have been buried this way. It is more likely that the normal procedure was for bodies to be buried clothed, loosely wrapped, or, less frequently, in a shroud. If there is little evidence of the use of tightly woven shrouds, the taphonomy of many skeletons does suggest the presence of some form of wrapping. The skeleton **2890*** is a particularly clear example: there are signs of constriction at the shoulders and arms; the rib cage has collapsed; the hands are in an unstable position over the ribs; and the stomach had disarticulated indicating that the soft tissues were not immediately replaced by soil (Fig. 7.92). This suggests that wrappings survived long enough to allow decomposition of the labile joints and the rib cage, but decomposed before the more persistent joints. The cause of these small voids is likely clothing, rather than a shroud. Shrouds typically cause severe constriction of the skeleton, particularly the verticalisation of the clavicles.[45] There is no indication of major constriction, and thus it seems more likely that this individual was either buried clothed or loosely wrapped.[46]

Dress items

Analysis of the dress accessories supports our preferred hypothesis that many late medieval individuals were buried clothed, rather than simply wrapped in cloth.[47]

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[42] For Northern Europe, see Caciola 1996 and 2000, though it is unclear whether this was also a practice in Italy and the southern Mediterranean.

[43] See Dean 2010 on the practice of burying criminals in late medieval Italy. See Reynolds 2009 for examples of prone burials from England. The cemetery of St Margaret in Combusto (Norwich, UK) contained a large number of burials on unusual orientations, with the head aligned abnormally and often thrown into graves face down. Documentary sources revealed that the cemetery was used for criminals who had been hanged. See Stirland 2009.

[44] Piponnier and Mane 1997: 112.

[45] Duday 2009. For a similar conclusion about contemporary medieval Italian burials, see Redi *et al.* 2011: 262.

[46] Decomposition of a body in a wide space created by a generous coffin or built tomb shows the opposite effects. There need be no linear alignment or constriction, the clavicles, scapulae and humeri maintain anatomical position, and the pelvis disarticulates.

[47] See Goodson and Mariani, below p. xxx for detailed discussion of dress accessories.

Twelve graves contained dress accessories. The majority are simple belt buckles, usually an iron or bronze annular buckle with a tang ranging between 38–51 mm in diameter. When found in situ, the buckles were usually found below the pelvis or on the top of one of the femurs. Two bronze buckles shed some light on how the dead were dressed for the grave. The buckles were found *in situ*, between the mid point of the thigh and the hip-bone (Fig. 7.92), and as such would have been hose or 'braghe' buckles.[48] All the buckles were found in association with adult males, with the exception of one child and one youth. The child (**2756***) was found with the buckle resting on the femur, and is aged between seven and eleven, which fits with the argument of costume historians that gendered clothing was adapted around the age of seven or eight, with boys wearing tunics and hose and girls wearing long gowns.[49] We cannot confirm that this child was male, but given a clear correlation between buckles and males at Villamagna, it does seem that buckles are an indicator of male dress and that men were often buried clothed.[50]

We found limited evidence of other dress items typically found in medieval contexts, such as strap ends, lace chapes or shoe buckles. There were also very few buttons.[51] Their relative paucity on the site may relate to the date of abandonment at our cemetery, as the use of buttons on clothing does not become common until the fourteenth or fifteenth century.[52]

Jewellery

Twenty-two graves contained some form of personal adornment, usually a ring, but earrings and crosses were also found.[53] Many rings were also found in the general cemetery fill without direct association to an individual, so we may presume that a greater number of the deceased were buried with jewellery. In a few cases, individuals were found with two rings (**2688***, **2842*** and **3664***), but the majority of graves only contained one item. The rings were often found in situ on both the right and left hands, though decompositional factors made it difficult to recognise which finger the ring was worn on. The rings may have been wedding bands, keepsakes or family rings (Figs 7.98, 7.99, below). As noted above, similar rings were found on two individuals, one on the right hand of an adult female and the other on the left hand of a teenage boy both buried in the upper levels of the most western row of the churchyard, though not close to each other.[54]

Burial with jewellery appears to have been closely linked with age and may shed some information on the way in which different age-classes of medieval society were treated.[55] Children and infants are rarely found with any jewellery. Only two infants out of a total of 78 (3%) in the Late Medieval phase were buried with any adornment; in both cases with a small bone cross pendant which would presumably have been

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[48] **O667** and **668**. '*Braghe*' were a male undergarment held up by a belt around the waist; from either side of the belt hung straps that terminated in buckles and were used to support hose, Gilchrist and Sloane, 2005: 85–6. Russell-Smith 1956 notes that all medieval illustrations of their use date to the fourteenth century, and archaeological evidence generally supports this dating. For Italian examples dated to the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Lapadula 2003b; Zagari 2005: 145. Ermeti (*et al.* 2008: 165–7, tav 2) gives a convenient typology.

[49] Pipponnier and Mane 1997: 104.

[50] This is not always the case, an adult female was found with two buckles on her pelvis at the site of S. Vito di Calci, Pisa, see Amante Simoni *et al.* 1986: 255.

[51] A possible button in the form of a lead disk (**O641**) was found in **T163**. Two bronze buttons were found of a spherical nature, typical of those in fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Europe (**O12**) was found in the built tomb **T62**, in association with an adult female (2066*) aged between 35–45 years. An almost identical one (**O1114**) was found in the cemetery fill layer 2082.

[52] On the chronology of buttons in England, Gilchrist 2012: 71.

[53] Goodson and Mariani, below p. xxx for detailed description of the jewellery.

[54] **O635** (**2842***) and **O59** (**2210***).

[55] Lewis 2007; Gilchrist 2012.

fixed around their necks (Fig. 7.101, below). There are no other examples of mortuary crosses found at Villamagna, and these may be a way of showing the children's Christianity. The only other example of a child being buried with an item of personal adornment is that of a 3- to 5-year-old buried with a bronze chain placed around its neck. Originally a chain to hang an oil-lamp, it may have been re-purposed as a necklace; perhaps we might see it as a child being buried with its favourite thing. These items differ in quality and type to the jewellery found with adults and adolescents, underscoring the importance of external markers for age status.

Aside from these examples, items of adornment seem to have been reserved for adults and adolescents. Two male adolescents were found with rings, both aged between 12 and 18. Earrings with three globes were found in situ on either side of the head of a 12- to 14-year-old juvenile, presumably a female, and perhaps part of her dowry or engagement gifts (Fig. 7.100, below). Similar earrings were found on an adult female at S. Lucia di Rocca di Cambio where the excavators suggest that earrings were part of the nuptial gifts given from a groom to his bride.[56] These examples suggest that the presence of jewellery may mark the transition to adulthood. Strikingly, women found with rings were those of childbearing age, most typically in their 20s. Mature women over the age of 40 were not found with jewellery, though their male counterparts were, and this may reflect the nature of widowhood in late medieval society. Widowhood was a distinctive stage of the life course, which required specific dress and behaviour, and legislation indicates that widows were not supposed to wear jewellery.[57]

Other grave goods
Aside from jewellery and dress accessories, few other artefacts were placed deliberately in the grave. Those that were may have had some form of apotropaic function. A particularly interesting pattern emerges from the distribution of coins: ten late medieval graves contained a coin. The coins were often found on the pelvis and chest, indicating that they are not residual, but were rather originally placed in the hand, presumably during the burial preparations.[58] The presence of coins in medieval burials is often associated with infants,[59] but while four of the ten burials with coins are infants or young children, the adults are predominantly older males. At Villamagna, rather than being a gender- or age-specific phenomenon, it may reflect the dominance of family burial preparation in the fourteenth century: the graves with coins are all from the latest cemetery layers, and form three clusters. The first consists of three infants and two adults in the southwest cemetery; two in the central churchyard; and two graves inside the church contained coins - one of these graves contained two individuals and two coins.[60]

The appearance of coins in graves at Villamagna in the fourteenth century fits with a broader trend across Italy identified by Traviani, facilitated by the greater quantity and circulation of small-value coins from the twelfth century.[61] Our coins are of

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[56] Redi *et al.* 2011: 263 cite a statute from Aquila describing the nuptial gifts from the groom to his bride (for the statute, *Statuta civitatis Aquile*, 289, cap. 491).

[57] Gilchrist 2012: 96.

[58] A coin was found on the pelvis in three cases (**2187*** (**C224**), **2241*** (**C32**), **2335*** (**C39**) and on the chest in two cases (**2214*** (**C6**) and **2294*** (**C33, 34**).

[59] See Gilchrist 2012: 165 for the use of Roman coins as amulets to protect infants.

[60] Church: **C1, 5** (in fill associated with **3042*** and **3022***), **C3** associated with children (see **(3050), 3059*** and **3060***).

[61] Traviani 2004: 179; see also Fornaciari *et al*. 1981: 455–8. Degasperi 2012 has also noted a surge of single-coin deposition in tombs in the fourteenth century in Tuscany. That the practice was commonplace by the late Middle Ages is reflected in the number of bulls specifically banning the burial of coins with the dead which postdate the Council of Trent and the church's attempt to stamp out magical or superstitious practice. On circulation of small-denomination coins in Italy, Rovelli 2012.

varying ages and denominations, including a *denaro provisino* (**C6**) and a *piccolo di mistura* (**C151**) of the fourteenth century, and a Roman coin of Antoninus (**C23**).[62] Their meaning is unclear, but some sort of apotropaic or perhaps magical function seems possible.[63] Unfortunately, most of the coins were illegible, but since the two fourteenth-century coins both have crosses, we might imagine that the crosses might have been intended to protect the deceased after death.

We also uncovered a few objects which were probably buried with the dead to demonstrate the strength of their Christian faith in life. A pierced clam shell in a tomb was probably a sign that the deceased had participated in a pilgrimage and prayer beads might signify that the man was a member of a devotional group or military order.[64] Finally, as mentioned above, two infants were found with small bone cross pendants.

A bronze button, or possibly a *tintinnabulum* (bell), (**O12**) was found in the built tomb **T62**, in association with an adult female (**2066***) aged between 35–45 years (Fig. 7.95, below). An almost identical object (**O1114**) was found in the cemetery fill layer **2082**. If these are indeed bells rather than buttons, they might also be interpreted in the same way as the coins, as an apotropaic measure to ward off evil and ease the deceased through difficulties in the afterlife.[65]

Social Identity in Life and Death: Gender, Age and Status
One of the main reasons for the neglect of late medieval cemeteries in Italy is the lack of obvious differentiation in age, gender and social status in graves. Spatial analysis of our cemetery at Villamagna provides subtle indications of the different treatment of age and gender in death related to stages in the medieval life course, as well as indications of status in life.

The life course: Gender and Age
It was commonly believed by medieval European Christians that baptised souls would be resurrected on the Day of Judgement at a particular age, sometimes stated to be 33, the age at which Christ died on the Cross.[66] In life, however, age was an important component of identity with different dress, behaviour and rules. Burial practices at Villamagna reveal that sub-adults were treated differently throughout the Middle Ages and suggest that adults too might be buried in different ways depending on their place in the medieval life course. Gilchrist and others have suggested that the medieval life course can be divided into several stages related to the human lifecycle, including infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age.[67]

In the early and central medieval periods, there is a striking absence of sub-adult remains. Two infants in tile tombs were found in a family plot in the narthex in the early medieval period. Three older children, aged between seven and twelve, were found in walled tombs in the central medieval period. By contrast 135 sub-adults

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[62] Bianchi, above p. xxx.
[63] Maguire 1997; Gilchrist 2008.
[64] On these Goodson and Mariani, below p. xxx. Forey 1986 for the Pater Noster and military orders: testimony from Templars in the early fourteenth century attests that members were supposed to say a fixed number of Pater Nosters each day for each of the canonical hours and for the souls of the living and the dead.
[65] A key (**O73**) found in **T25** with a 4- to 6-year old child could be interpreted in a similar way. Gilchrist and Sloane 2005: 178 have suggested that keys in graves have ritual significance, perhaps as a symbol of Saint Peter. Here, however, it may simply be residual.
[66] Bynum 1995 on medieval debates about the age, sex and rank of the resurrected body.
[67] Gilchrist 2012; Lewis 2007.

(under the age of 12) were found in the late medieval period, some 38% of the total.[68] How are we to explain this disparity? Often, the absence of infant skeletons is attributed to the fragility of infant bones and it is presumed that they do not survive. At Villamagna, the excellent survival of infant bones in the late Roman period (as well as in other periods) means that this cannot hold true.[69] One explanation might be church control over burial practices and changing traditions in baptismal practices. The baptism of infants became widespread in continental Europe in the twelfth or thirteenth century.[70] Thus, we might see the almost complete absence of infants and children in the early and central medieval periods as reflecting the fact that unbaptised children were buried elsewhere.[71]

In the late medieval period, children continued to be buried differently from adults and this is reflected in the location of infant burials, the arrangement of the corpse and the distribution of finds. The burials of infants (0–2 years old) are seemingly relegated to the periphery of the cemetery to the north and south of the entrance. It is striking that only the burials of infants show any indication of clustering.[72] The distribution of finds also reflects different treatment for infants and children. In Italy, children were dressed accordingly to their status, only wearing gendered clothing similar to adults around the age of seven or eight.[73] In death, a similar division appears. While we have limited evidence for clothing, only adults or sub-adults over the age of seven were found with dress accessories. A similar pattern occurs with jewellery: only two infants and one child were found with objects, the infants each had a small mortuary cross and a lamp-chain reused as a necklace which was found in situ around the child's neck, perhaps a child's favourite thing. These affective objects are not the same as those buried with adults, and support the argument that childhood was seen as a distinctive stage of life.[74]

This sort of differential treatment need not imply that infants were viewed in a negative light, but rather that they were regarded as a separate social group.[75] The time between birth and two years is particularly distinct, as it marks key developmental thresholds (such as walking, talking, social interaction) and often weaning. At Villamagna, the isotopic results suggest cessation of breast-feeding around two years of age with very little inter-individual variation in the timing of weaning.[76] Combined with the funerary evidence, this suggests that breast-feeding duration was constrained by cultural factors that saw two years as a critical turning point in the life course. Further important thresholds appear around the age of seven or eight, when gendered clothing first appears and around puberty, when we see the presence of jewellery in a number of graves. In adulthood, age-classes may have

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[68] It should be noted that this infant mortality figure aligns with commonly assumptions about the mortality rate of infants in non-modern contexts (Hanawalt 2002), but is rather higher than that of contemporary medieval cemeteries in Britain, for example Mays *et al.* 2007 (Wharram Percy), Waldron 2007 (Barton) and Magilton *et al.* 2008 (Chichester). Cohn 2002: 212–6 on the way that repeated incursions of plague-affected children more than adults in Italy, who once exposed acquired some immunity.

[69] For the late Roman burials, see Andrews above p.xxx and Cox below, p. xxx

[70] Arnold 2005: 136.

[71] Elsewhere in Italy, in the ninth to twelfth centuries, infants and young children were often buried separately from adults, thus at Monte Gelato, the abandoned baptistery seems to have been reserved for infant burials: 79.2% of those buried in the baptistery died before the age of five, see Potter and King 1997: 166.

[72] Gilchrist 2012: 205 points out that this is a common pattern in parish, hospital and monastic churches in Medieval England.

[73] Pipponnier and Maine 1997: 104.

[74] Hanawalt 2002: 452; see Gilchrist 2012: 134–44, 206–10 for examples of material practices which emphasized the distinct stage of childhood in the medieval life course.

[75] Gilchrist 2012: 206.

[76] Nitsch, below p. xxx.

differed depending upon gender. Although the number of graves is small, only women in their 20s and 30s, that is child-bearing age, were provided with funerary goods whereas men were found with rings at all ages. As suggested above, the earrings found with the juvenile (presumed female) may be a nuptial gift.

There is no unequivocal evidence for zoning by sex in any period: even in the privileged masculine area of monastic precinct and cloister, women seem to have been present. This contrasts with the pattern observed elsewhere in Italy, where at monastic sites, the burials were separated along gender lines.[77] However, for the early and central medieval period, our sample size is simply too small to generalise about this issue. Certainly in the late medieval period, there was no zoning by sex.

Status
If all baptised souls were to rise again at a particular age, the social hierarchy on earth was believed to continue in Heaven. Medieval souls were perceived as bodies marked by rank, gender and occupation.[78] There are a number of different ways by which we can examine the strategies used to display the status of an individual in life through burial, attempts to ensure that status in the afterlife. Perhaps the most archaeologically detectable is the spatial location of the grave.

In the ninth century, cemeteries were usually outside churches by law.[79] If burial inside churches was not permitted—and we have little idea of the situation inside the church at Villamagna—the area around the church, the portico, the apse and so on was not only sanctified for burial but the area where the most privileged members of society would have been buried. At Villamagna, the narthex area was presumably where the inhabitants of the former winery were buried.

There continued to be a good deal of controversy over the right to be buried within the church. Gratian's *Decretum* of *c.* 1140, for example, dictates that 'No one may be buried inside the church or close to the altar, where the body and blood of the Lord are prepared,' whereas Italian liturgical manuals, such as that of Sicard of Cremona in the twelfth century, state that the evil or excommunicated were to be buried outside consecrated ground; the rich and priests were allowed inside the church and closer to the altar. Lower social orders were not allowed in the church but buried outside, creating a clear spatial hierarchy within the cemetery.[80] In practice, however, these lines seem to have been blurred. By the thirteenth century, papal bulls of Gregory IX in 1229 and Alexander IV in 1255 were issued allowing lay burial within monastic cloisters and churches of mendicant orders.[81]

Testamentary evidence from thirteenth- to fifteenth-century Northern Italian wills shows that people who were privileged enough to leave a will often specified their

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[77] See, for example, Classe (Ferreri 2011). At S. Vincenzo, only male burials were found in the monastery church and churchyard (Hodges 1993), cf. Britain, Gilchrist and Sloane 2005: 24.
[78] Bynum 1995.
[79] While we know little about in the situation in Italy, Carolingian royal edicts certainly forbade lay burials inside churches. In 813 the Council of Mainz declared that 'no dead body was to be buried within a church, except those of bishops and abbots, or worthy priests or faithful laity.' *Capitularia regum Francorum*, I, n. 78 (813), p. 17, c. 20. See La Rocca 2007 for northern Italy.
[80] Gratian, *Decretum*, C. 13 q. 2 c. 15. Three chapters later, however, he includes the statute of the Council of Mainz quoted in the preceding footnote which suggests in fact that the clergy and certain laymen could be buried within the church. This reflects far more accurately the situation in Italy suggested by Sicard of Cremona's manual (*Mitrale*: 9, 50) where the rich and powerful sought the choice tomb sites inside churches and monasteries.
[81] The Benedictines were the first to receive the privilege of burying lay people within their monasteries. On *ius sepulchri* and the tensions between clerical legislation forbidding burial within the church to lay people and the desire of wealthy lay people to be buried within churches, see Naz 1965: 730–5.

burial places to ensure that it reflected their status in life.[82] Burial within zones like the cloister and church were particularly important because of ritual processions and intercessionary masses which would have linked the living and dead. Often, people requested burial near the grave of their husband, wife, father, children or ancestors. The wills also shed some insight into the cost of different burial plots: burial inside churches and monasteries was more expensive than in the normal cemetery, and burials by the altar, where the concept of the holy was physically located, the most expensive location of all.[83]

During the life of the monastery, there is a divide between those buried within neat rows in the monastic enclosure and church, occasionally in stone or brick tombs, and those buried in the simple earthen graves to the west of the enclosure. Burial within the monastic precinct or cloister, as in the church, was a privilege that could be bought by the rich and pious. The desire to be buried within these privileged zones was matched by the desire of monastic orders to attract bodies to their cemeteries. As early as the ninth century, burial dues are mentioned as valuable revenue for churches and monasteries, and became a considerable source of conflict between monks and clerics.[84] The cemetery adjacent to the church of S. Pietro would thus have brought considerable economic benefit to the monastery. Burial was not necessarily restricted to men in religious orders, although there is some indication that it may have been restricted to lay people who took monastic vows and 'took the habit' at death. A number of wills, again from cities in northern Italy, show that people took religious vows in order to be buried within a monastery.[85] The women buried within the monastic precinct at Villamagna might have been family members of members of the monastery or have taken vows at some point. However, it is perhaps more likely that these women were lay patronesses who were buried in the precinct in return for gifts to the monastery in life.[86] Such donations (of property and so on) by women as well as men are mentioned in the monastic documents, though no mention is made of provisions for burial.[87]

Certain categories of the dead were in principle excluded from burial in consecrated ground. The group of eighteen burials in Central Medieval C seem to fall into this category. As argued above, the burials were oriented in contravention of typical mortuary practices at Villamagna and against the norms of Christian practice. The liminal location of this group of decidedly non-normative burials is a very strong signal that these differently buried individuals were marked out and punished for some reason in death, by being firmly separated from the rest of the community.[88]

After the suppression of the monastery, a spatial hierarchy in burial remained. Differentiation can be shown not only by the location of tombs but also by differences in the distribution of finds. The majority of the 'grave goods' found at Villamagna are dress accessories or personal ornaments, and date between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The appearance of costume elements, jewellery

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[82] Wills usually specify the chosen place of burial (sometimes even specifying the location in the cemetery), the cost of the funeral ceremony and money *pro remedio animae* which typically consisted of commemorative prayer and intercessionary masses to be made at regular intervals; Cohn 1992. Timbal (1975: 24) notes that to die in 1227 without a will and specification of how to be remembered through prayer was equivalent to dying without receiving the last sacrament.

[83] Cohn 1992: 133–61.

[84] Constable 1971: 314–5 on revenue from burials, and Cohn 1992 and Bruzelius 2007 on conflicts between clerics, monks and mendicants over the right to burial. Bruzelius notes the commodification of the body.

[85] Cohn 1988: 60.

[86] Postles 1996.

[87] Goodson, above p. xxx. Carocci, below p. xxx makes the case that the peculiar nature of the monastic lordship at Villmagna particularly encouraged female protagonism.

[88] These burials are also discussed in Fentress and Goodson 2012.

and signs of clothing in the fourteenth-century lay cemetery at Villamagna, a rural community, is significant for several reasons. Sumptuary laws appear in Italian cities from the mid-twelfth century, and particularly from the mid- and later thirteenth centuries, proscribed clothing, fabrics, colours, and jewellery for different social groups on behalf of public good and morals (*boni mores, utilitas reipublicae*).[89] In Florence, every redaction of sumptuary law between 1293 and 1473 included a provision mandating that people be buried only in a simple linen shirt.[90] The presence of jewellery, in particular, was in direct contravention to sumptuary laws. Priests and bishops equally condemned the practice of burial in fine clothes.[91] Yet, archaeological evidence from Villamagna and other contemporary cemeteries in Italy shows that despite these repeated proscriptions, most people in Italy were buried not only clothed, but in their finest clothes and with symbols of their rank, such as jewellery, swords and chalices.[92]

At Villamagna, there no obvious spatial or gender patterning in finds in the late medieval churchyard, which arguably speaks to the ubiquity of dressing and adorning the dead at Villamagna. If there is little spatial differentiation amongst those buried in the churchyard, a major distinction appears between the graves inside the church and those outside it. Although all are simple earthen cuts, a far greater percentage of graves inside the church (35%) contained objects than graves outside the church (11%). The objects in these graves are also more varied and more elaborate, ranging from prayer beads and a clamshell to bronze finger rings with glass gems. It was argued above that dress accessories are predominantly found with adolescent or adult individuals and if we examine the distribution of these finds between the two areas, we see that adults and adolescents buried inside the church wore rings, buckles and necklaces more frequently (83%) than those buried outside (10%). This is a strong indication that burial inside the church was reserved for those of a higher status than those outside it.

A second privileged area is that in front of the church. This is demonstrated by plotting the results of the isotope analysis.[93] Fig. 7.93 shows adult individuals buried in late medieval graves with high marine or animal protein signals. The assumption is that higher quantities of meat or fish indicate a higher-status diet. Such individuals in earthen graves are generally buried close to the facade of the church, which would appear from northern Italian wills to be the most expensive plots.[94] Three other adults from the late medieval period also had high marine signals: two of these individuals were buried in built tombs outside the church, and one inside it. There are also two infants with high animal protein signals. While this indicates more about the diet of the mother, it is also worth noting that both infants also bear signs

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[89] Killerby 2002: who shows that contrary to Denholm-Young and Kantorowicz (1933) sumptuary legislation was not restricted to the northern city-states, but extended throughout the Italian peninsula.

[90] Strocchia 1992: 43.

[91] In 1306, Bishop Biliotti of Fiesole issued a decree that laypersons should be buried in a cloth of goat hair or some simple vestment, because 'if it is done otherwise, one sins against God and brings about the destruction of property, property which could be sold and given to the poor in the name of the defunct.' see Trexler 1971: 128. In contrast, Sicard of Cremona states that the dead should be clothed according to their status and rank (*secundum statum et ordinem suum*), lay people in hairshirts and ashes for penitence and clerics in the robes of their order, *Mitrale*: 9, 50, 213, 427.

[92] Excavations at S. Reparata in Florence found thirteenth- to fourteenth-century tombs within the church containing spurs and swords. Unsurprisingly, the most ornate were found in the tomb of Giovanni di Medici (d. 1352). A number of gold belt buckles and other things were found, including a pouch of coins with one of the individuals, Buerger 1975: Toker 1975. At S. Vito di Calci, Pisa, several individuals wore a long shirt with spherical buttons at the wrist, and sometimes the neck or chest, Amante Simoni *et al.* 1986.

[93] See Nitsch, below p. xxx.

[94] Cohn 1992.

of more privileged burial. One is buried within the church, and the other was buried with a small bone cross, one of only two infants (out of 78) with accompanying grave goods. Aside from this infant, none of the individuals with high marine or animal protein signals had accompanying finds.

If the items found with the dead seem to reflect a concern for maintaining social status into the afterlife, they also reveal something of the life of the peasants in fourteenth-century Villamagna, whose village we have yet to locate. The dress accessories are very simple, often of iron, and never ornately decorated. The jewellery is simple, usually of bronze, even in what we assume is the more privileged location inside the church. It is notable that more costly items discovered elsewhere on the site, such as bronze religious medallions or spurs, are not found in graves at Villamagna.

Conclusions

The church of S. Pietro at Villamagna provided a sanctified place for the local community to bury their dead between the ninth and fourteenth centuries. Over the course of the church's history, then, our excavations revealed a number of changes in mortuary practice which relate both to shifts in the ownership of the church and broader religious changes in Italy and Europe.

Although a church stood at Villamagna from the sixth century, our earliest identified burials coincide with the elite reoccupation of the winery in the ninth century. This seems to mark the emergence of a cemetery in association with the church for the first time. While the Roman church did not closely follow Carolingian reforms, by the ninth century Christian burial usually occurred in consecrated ground throughout Europe, presumably related to the emergence of the idea that the church and graveyard were the physical expression of the Christian community uniting the living with the dead.[95] We know little about the extent of this cemetery, but assume that it relates to the inhabitants of the winery.

If being buried within consecrated ground marked a person as a member of the Christian community, the actual place of burial within that ground reflected one's moral and worldly status within that community. Those buried inside church and monastery, or within walled tombs, show signs of a more privileged diet, concomitant with their burial in what must have been the more expensive tombs or areas. While we only have uncovered a small portion of the cemetery area in the monastic period, it is clear that the monks closely controlled the whereabouts of burial and the funerary rites, and in particular which categories of the dead could be buried in consecrated ground. The absence of infants and children from our excavated areas suggests that they were being excluded from the rites of burial, presumably they were buried elsewhere. It is in this period too, that we find a group of burials buried against Christian rite outside the sanctified limits of the cemetery, presumably being punished in death for some act in life.

New mortuary practices emerge with the transformation from a monastic church to what was initially a church under the purview of the bishop of Anagni.[96] The refocusing of the cemetery around the church after the suppression of the monastery might be considered the physical expression of a new sense of community, centred around a church presumably supported by the bishop and clergy for the workers on the estate.

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[95] On the shift to burial in consecrated ground, see Zadora-Rio 2003. On the process of consecrating a cemetery, see Effros 1997; Paxton 1990.

[96] Goodson, above p. xxx.

What is particularly striking about burial practices at Villamagna in the fourteenth century is that they seem completely new. The appearance of items in graves and the clothing of the dead at Villamagna, as Gilchrist and Sloane have remarked for medieval Britain, seem to coincide with the debates in the thirteenth century about whether purgatory was a physical place[97] in which the dead, a distinct social group,[98] resided while awaiting the Last Judgement. The dead now occupied a tangible space between life and salvation; objects signifying rank buried with them (jewellery, clothes) would guarantee their status in the afterlife, other more apotropaic objects, like coins, crosses, or shells might ease a soul's suffering in Purgatory. What the dead wore to the grave and where they were buried not only located them — their rank, status and gender — among the living but also projected their social identity in the next world. It may, of course, be that the appearance of grave goods relates to the ending of monastic control over funerary practices, rather than concerns about purgatory. Certainly, the appearance of children and infants in large quantities speaks to the relaxation of certain requirements for burial in the church area, and perhaps the increased participation of women in the burial rite of preparing the corpse, taking over from the monks.[99] Villamagna however does reflect wider changes across Italy: the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a period of rapid change in legal and social practice in relation to burial, and other medieval excavated cemeteries equally demonstrate the appearance of dress accessories and jewellery in this period.

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[97] Arnold 2005: 164–7.
[98] Geary 1994.
[99] In England, Gilchrist and Sloane 2005 have noted that even in monastic cemeteries, the presence of items accompanying the dead in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries may reflect the preparation of the corpse at home by women, and that monastic control was confined to the funerary procession and deposition of the corpse in the grave.