

Crisis over graveyard maintenance

A conference is taking place to discuss what is described as a crisis in the maintenance of graveyards.

English Heritage says Britain has the world's best graveyard heritage, but that gravestones are deteriorating through weathering and vandalism.

The meeting in Oxford will discuss how the neglect of the sites also means a decay of their social history.

English Heritage hopes renewed public interest in genealogy will improve conservation efforts in cemeteries.

Britain has thousands of parish churches with graveyards dating back to Medieval times, which English Heritage says are repositories of a rich social history.

BBC religious affairs correspondent Robert Pigott says so many people have been buried and slowly decayed in churchyards that they are often conspicuously higher than surrounding ground.

He said collections of stone monuments and gravestones have been built up over the centuries, often bearing colourful inscriptions.

But they are slowly succumbing to weathering and the onset of undergrowth, and many gravestones have been removed by local authorities concerned for public safety, our correspondent added.

From The BBC

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