**The quick and the dead.**

**The changing meaning and significance of jewellery beyond the grave**

**Abstract:**

Q. When is a piece of jewellery not a piece of jewellery?

A. When it is considered an amulet, charm or spell

The National Museums Scotland holds in its archive the 1st Century Egyptian ‘Rhind mummy’, excavated in 1857 which was re-examined in 2012 by MRI scans made by the museums curators (J. Tate and S. Kirk) and University of Edinburgh anthropology departments (E. Kranioti, B. Osipov, J. Ouranos). Alongside the object attached carefully to considered locations on the outside of the Mummy’s body there was a piece of metalwork attached to the skull beneath the wrappings.

This project sought to reach beyond the identification and medical examination of the body and began to question if the mummy’s amulets and talismans might be classified as jewellery or religious and spiritual charms? These and other outcomes were discussed at the network’s first symposium held in Edinburgh, Scotland March 31st 2016.

The **Adorned Afterlife** network (est. 2015) brought together researchers from across Design, Archaeology, Forensic Anthropology, History, Philosophy and Museum Studies to examine objects of adornment captured with digital technologies.

Museums contain many intangible artefacts from our past that relate to the body as adornment. These objects may be represented in paintings and carvings, or literally buried in sarcophaguses or beneath layers of funereal wrappings. Often placed in the past out of sight and reach, but now made visible or recognisable as symbolic or spiritual objects, often relating to death or the afterlife.

The network aims to explore these objects with new technologies non-invasive techniques, such as computerised tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanning, to reach, less tangible objects in museum collections that might be considered ‘Otherwise unobtainable’ (Harrod).

Sharing our insights and knowledge we will collectively question:

* Their purpose (*why were they made*)
* Their significance (*both then and now*)
* How they were made (*and by whom*)

[308 words]

**Prof Stephen Bottomley**