

October 2026

Centre for Death and Society



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HIGHLIGHTS

**Congratulations to Helen
Frisby**

**New Book from Visiting Fellow
Dr Edina Harbinja**

**The Commercialisation of
Death: contemporary
perspectives on mortality,
memory and money
call for chapters**

**John Troyer's Inaugural
Lecture**

Directors Note

Hello everyone and welcome to our October 2026 edition of the newsletter. Our headline this month is a **GW4 ‘Research Curious’ workshop** facilitated by our Visiting Professor (and creative coach) Gayle Letherby, held in Bath on 19th November. This is a workshop aimed at PhD students and ECRs based in the southwest, or those who are interested in pursuing an academic career in the southwest.

We are also delighted to share that **Helen Frisby has been appointed Fellow of the Royal Historical Society**, in recognition of her contribution to her discipline, which as many CDAS members will know is mainly around Victorian funerary custom and folklore. Well done Helen from everyone in CDAS.

And finally, following a successful professorial inaugural lecture by Kate Woodthorpe last month, **we invite you all to John Troyer’s upcoming inaugural this Thursday (15th October)**, either to join us in person at the University of Bath, or online. Full sign-up details are available in this newsletter.

As ever, please continue to share with us your news and events and we will do our best to promote them.

Naomi and Kate

Upcoming events

CDAS events

15th October: John Troyer’s inaugural lecture

27th October: Writing Day for postgraduate and early-career researchers

4th November GW4 ‘Research Curious’ workshop

CDAS community events

19th October: Libraries, Archives and Collective Grief – Virtual Book Launch

21st October: Centre for Open Thanatology Online Conference

27th October: International online conference on asylum burial grounds

6th -7th November: 5th Annual End-of-Life Doula International Research Symposium

17th-18th November: Annual Conference of the International Collaborative for Best Care for the Dying Person



CDAS News

GW4 Early Career Workshop

We are inviting Southwest based PhD students, early career researchers, and all 'research curious' students and practitioners, who work on dying, death, bereavement and loss to an early career workshop funded by the [GW4](#) at the Bath Royal Scientific and Literary Institute on 19th November 10.30am – 4pm.

Facilitated by creative coach Professor Gayle Letherby with Professor Emma Kirby, the workshop will build on work conducted throughout 2026 to identify and create a regional network of research-active academics, students and practitioners, who specialise in the end of life. We use the term 'end of life' in its loosest sense here and our work to date has brought together people from a wide array of academic disciplines, including urban planning and architecture, health sciences, psychology, anthropology, history, English, sociology, geography, international development, and nursing. We're keen to continue our multi-disciplinary dialogue and network building through this early career workshop, to help connect and amplify each other's work, identify and work towards research areas of excellence as a region, support your growing research ambitions, and to find ways to build on all the funded research that is going on across the region that relates to the end of life and its aftermath.

Places are limited and allocated on a first come, first served basis. If you would like to attend please let organiser Kate Woodthorpe kvw23@bath.ac.uk know, along with a brief biography (interests, background, career stage) to help us structure the day. We cannot provide travel expenses but we will be providing catering and refreshments throughout the day.

Please note, this event is in addition to the fantastic work being done as part of the [NIHR Palliative Research Incubator](#) and the [End of Life Matters Health Integration Team](#), to bring together Southwest-based academics and budding-academics working on the end of life including but also beyond health.

CDAS members connect over birds

Visiting Prof Avril Maddrell and our new visiting fellow Amelia Seraphia Derr met at the exhibition [The Wonder of Birds](#), at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, this month. The exhibition focuses on the extinction, decline, protection and recovery of different bird species. It combines texts and artefacts in the Bodleian collection with paintings by Jackie Morris and words by Robert MacFarlane.

Described by Amelia as "a beautifully curated and deeply poignant elegy for the Anthropocene", Avril's review of the exhibition will appear in the autumn 2026 edition of the Bodleian Record Journal (out soon!) <https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/about/about-bodleian/journal>



Rethinking death: IPR blog

Just before her inaugural lecture (see below) Kate Woodthorpe authored a blog on 'Rethinking death: a policy issue beyond healthcare' based on her presentation at the University of Cambridge earlier this year. You can read the blog published by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Bath [here](#).

Congratulations to Helen Frisby

Our hugest congratulations go to CDAS resident historian Helen Frisby, who has been awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Historical Society. This is the UK's foremost society for historians and history, and Fellowships are awarded to individuals who have made an original contribution to historical scholarship. Helen has been one of - if not *the* - most prominent historian specialists in Victorian funerary practice and folklore, and most recently supported CDAS through co-editing the collection 'Death and Institutions' from the 2023 Annual Conference, all while working in professional services at a University.

We are delighted that Helen's work and contribution to her discipline has been recognised in such a way. Helen is a role model for how to maintain and grow an academic identity and profile alongside a different career.

Very well done Helen, from all of us in CDAS.

Still time to submit

There is still time to submit a chapter proposal for a new CDAS edited volume on The Commercialisation of Death, edited by Catriona Brickel, Elaine Kasket and Kate Woodthorpe. By bringing together scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, this edited collection will showcase and problematise the variety of ways in which death is commercialised today, its risks and its potential. It will explore the ways in which the end of life and its aftermath have been, and can be, utilised to make profit and claim expertise, asking what the consequences of this are, for individuals, communities, and societies around the world. We are now inviting proposals for chapter contributions, with the full call and details of where to submit a chapter proposal later on in this newsletter.

New Book from Visiting Fellow Dr Edina Harbinja's new book 'Governing Digital Immortality: Artificial Intelligence, Deadbots and the Law', has arrived!

The book looks at the rapidly developing world of AI-mediated digital immortality and deadbots, e.g. who should be able to recreate the dead, what role consent should play, how these technologies affect dignity, autonomy, privacy, grief and memory, and whether our existing laws are remotely ready for them.

More information and the book here:

[Governing Digital Immortality](#)



An Introduction from CDAS's New Visiting Postgraduate Scholar - Zhi Chie Low

This month we welcome Chie to CDAS, who is our new visiting postgraduate scholar from Taiwan. We ask Chie to introduce herself to the CDAS community: "I completed my master's degree in the Department of Thanatology and Health Counseling at National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences (NTUNHS), and I am currently pursuing my PhD at National Sun Yat-sen University (NSYSU). My research focuses on the development and design of expressive arts-based life and death education, through which I explore issues of death, loss and the meaning of life together with children and student teachers. As someone from Malaysia, a culturally diverse country, who has also lived in Taiwan for many years, I have experienced and observed a Taiwanese society in which the population of new immigrants has been steadily increasing. This has led me to develop a theoretical framework for expressive arts-based life and death education, allowing people to explore and construct their perspectives on life and death within their own cultural, religious, cognitive and emotional contexts, and ultimately to ask: what do life and death mean to "me"?"



I am currently at the University of Bath as a Visiting Postgraduate Scholar, undertaking a short-term research visit with CDAS, under the supervision of John Troyer. During my time at Bath, we will be working together on a study of multicultural perspectives on the good death. The study focuses on Taiwan and the UK, two countries where palliative care and end-of-life care are relatively well developed, but which have different cultural and social contexts. We hope to explore how undergraduate students in Taiwan and the UK understand the "good death", and how their understandings are shaped by individual factors and the wider social and cultural contexts in which they live."

Inaugural lecture by Kate Woodthorpe

In the last month we held the first of our two professorial inaugural lectures, by Kate Woodthorpe entitled 'We all know how this ends: how death can help us make the most of life'. Kate wants to pass on her thanks to everyone who came to the lecture in person and watched online. The recording of her inaugural will be shared in due course.



CDAS Events

Inaugural Lecture of John Troyer, University of Bath

On behalf of John Troyer, we are delighted to invite you to this professorial inaugural lecture which will take place on Thursday 15th October 2026.

Event Details

Speaker: Professor John Troyer

Date: Thursday 15th October 2026

Time: 18:00-19:00

Location: CB 2.6, Claverton Down Campus, University of Bath

Spaces are limited so you must register to attend: [Professor John Troyer Inaugural Lecture – Fill in form](#)



Writing days for postgraduate and early-career researchers

Following the success of the summer series of writing days for postgraduate and early-career researchers, CDAS will be hosting two writing days during the upcoming semester. They will both be offered hybrid, so you may join us in-person or online. We are pleased to extend the invitation for these writing days to death studies researchers at any career stage. The first will be held on Tuesday 27th October and the second will be held during the week commencing 14th December (day TBC).

If you are interested in attending, please email CDAS PhD researcher, Catriona Brickel (cb2795@bath.ac.uk)

SAVE THE DATE: UPCOMING CDAS SEMINARS: Details to follow in the next newsletter

Coloniality, plurality and the politics of death and its aftermath

January 20th 7pm – 8.30pm GMT

Death, Mutualism and Social Inequality in Kerala

February 23rd 7pm – 8pm GMT

CDAS Community News

Congratulations to Ruth Toulson

Ruth's book, [*Necropolitics of the Ordinary: Death and Grieving in Contemporary Singapore*](#), was selected as the second prize winner for the Victor Turner Prize in Ethnographic Writing, the American Anthropological Association's most significant book prize.

The late Victor Turner devoted his career to seeking an accessible language that would reopen anthropology to the human subject, and the competition recognizes the innovative books that further this project. The prize awards graceful, accessible ethnographic writing which deeply explores its subject and contributes in innovative and engaging ways to the genre of ethnography and the field of humanistic anthropology.

Congratulations to Ruth on this recognition, from which we all benefit in terms of raising the profile of the work we do!

CDAS Community Events

Libraries, Archives and Collective Grief – Virtual Book Launch – 19th October 2026

Libraries, Archives and Collective Grief (Bristol University Press and Policy Press), co-edited by Kaylee Alexander and Robert Spinelli is now available.

To celebrate, they would love for you to join them for a virtual book launch on October 19. The event will feature the contributors introducing their chapters, discussing their research, and reflecting on the questions that shaped this interdisciplinary volume.

Bringing together scholars and practitioners from across the spectrum of library and information science, this volume explores how cultural heritage institutions document, preserve, and respond to grief, loss, and remembrance.

10:00 AM EDT | 7:00 AM PDT | 3:00 PM BST | Online via Zoom

[Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

If you'd like to pick up a copy of the book, Bristol University Press is also offering 50% off through December 31, 2026, with the code CNF26.

Centre for Open Thanatology Online Conference – 21st October 2026

The Centre for Open Thanatology online conference will take place on **21st October 2026 (9.30am–2pm UK time)**.

The Centre for Open Thanatology is The Open University's interdisciplinary research centre dedicated to the study and education of death, dying, loss, and grief across the life course and in diverse contexts. The theme for the day is ***Dialogue and Engagement with Death and Loss***, reflecting the Centre's vision to use research and education to foster open dialogue and critical engagement with death and loss.

The conference includes eight presentations from Centre members, ranging from criminology, palliative care, and cremation and burial studies. Plus a panel discussion on death and decolonisation, and a keynote from Prof Neil Thompson entitled "*A Career in Grief*".

Register for your place now via Eventbrite: [Register](#)

If you have any questions, please email Open-Thanatology-Admin@open.ac.uk

This conference is open to everyone – interested members of the public, practitioners, academic and community researchers, students, and service providers. Registration is open now until October 20th (although it may close early if the tickets sell out).

International online conference on asylum burial grounds – 27th October 2026

An international online conference on asylum burial grounds taking place on the 27th of October 2026. Further details are available on the [CRG homepage](#)

5th Annual End-of-Life Doula International Research Symposium

6–7 November 2026 | Online

Please join us online on 6–7 November 2026 for the 5th Annual End-of-Life Doula International Research Symposium: *Producing Knowledge, Shaping Practice*.



Hosted by the End-of-Life Doula International Research Group (EOLD-IRG), the symposium brings together end-of-life doulas, researchers, practitioners and community members from different parts of the world to share emerging research, exchange ideas and explore how knowledge can help shape the future of end-of-life doula support. The symposium is designed for everyone with an interest in end-of-life doula work - you do not need to identify as a researcher to take part. Research begins with curiosity about practice, experience and the questions that matter to us, and the symposium offers a space to connect that curiosity with emerging knowledge from across different cultural and practice contexts. We hope you will join us and be part of the conversation. Find out more and register here: [Upcoming Events - End-of-Life Doula International Research Group](#)

Initiation to Accompaniment at the End-of-Life

This workshop offers a space to step back from the theoretical and sit with the practice of accompaniment itself, explore, through embodied and reflective exercises, what it means to be truly present with someone as they approach the end of life. It's designed for academics, practitioners, or anyone who want to deepen their own capacity to accompany, not only to study it.

Initiation to Accompaniment at the End-of-Life is a 1-day intensive training workshop.

When: Saturday 7th November

Where: School of Computer Science, Jubilee Campus, Nottingham University

Cost: £120 with lunch, learning materials, and certificate included (20 places max.)

Places are limited to keep the group small enough for genuine reflection and exchange.

Book here: [Initiation to Accompaniment at the End-of-Life | Tickets | Nottingham](#)

Description: This experiential workshop is designed for those seeking to support a loved one, as well as for professionals in the social, healthcare, educational, or therapeutic fields, and anyone interested in their own personal growth and how to support others dealing with loss and grief.

This is a training program developed by a team with extensive experience in death, dying and end-of-life care, scientific research, and mental health. It integrates contemporary knowledge with ancestral techniques and a secular, accessible, and respectful way to engage with spirituality.

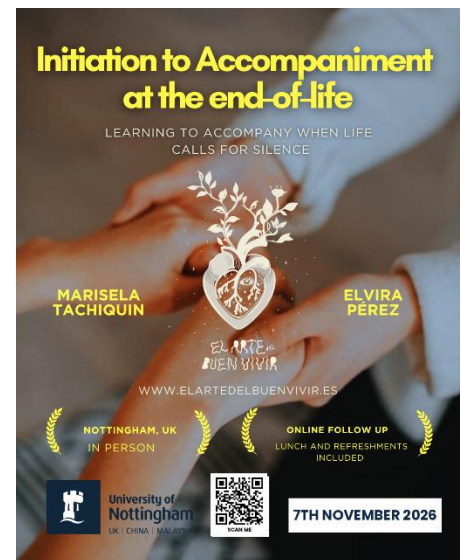
Initiation to Accompaniment is facilitated by Marisela Tachiquin (Psychologist and Gerontologist) and Elvira Perez (Professor of Mental Health and Digital Technology at the University of Nottingham). Marisela and Elvira are members of the Spanish Cooperative El Arte del Buen Vivir.

The course includes learning materials and 8-hrs training certification.

Lunch and refreshments are included and there is free parking on site.

If you need accommodation we recommend the Jubilee Conference Centre Hotel.

For more information please contact: elvira.perez@nottingham.ac.uk



11th Annual Conference of the International Collaborative for Best Care for the Dying Person

Registration is open for the 11th Annual Conference of the International Collaborative for Best Care for the Dying Person.

17–18 November 2026

Lund, Sweden

[Register](#)

International Collaborative for Best Care for the Dying Person is an innovative global network of clinicians and researchers working together towards a shared vision: “A world where all people experience a good death as an integral part of their individual life, supported by the very best personalised care.” [More information](#)

Calls

CDAS edited collection: The Commercialisation of Death: contemporary perspectives on mortality, memory and money

Editors: Catriona Brickel, Elaine Kasket and Kate Woodthorpe (Centre for Death & Society, University of Bath)

As the global population peaks and more people than ever before encounter dying and loss, the profile of death, dying and bereavement is entering something of a golden age. At the same time, in recent decades death has acquired a new character due to multiple cultural phenomena, including (but not limited to): the rise of AI and techno-optimism; the expansion of choice in the funeral sector; the increased diversity of death mediators; the authority of social media influencers; the growth in and consumption of pathographies; and the augmentation of therapeutic approaches to (and pathologisation of) grief. Today’s networked world has introduced multiple opportunities for money-making at the end of life, ranging from care and the process of ending life, to memorialisation products and bereavement therapy, to the massive expansion in applications of and proposed use cases for deceased people’s data.

In response, this new and innovative edited collection for submission to the Death and Culture Series published by Bristol University Press will seek to broaden engagement with issues of commercialisation by considering the multitude of ways in which money and mortality relate before, during and long after death. Given the speed at which much of these products and services are growing, this is a crucial moment to critically engage with the causes and implications of such provision, including issues of value extraction from the dead, consumer vulnerability and exploitation, and the role of state intervention and regulation. This new edited collection will create an international and interdisciplinary dialogue across the chapters to document, analyse, and critique the commercialisation of death, in examining what is happening, why, and what - if anything - to do about it.

By bringing together scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, this edited collection will thus showcase and problematise the variety of ways in which death is commercialised today, its risks and its potential. It will explore the ways in which the end of life and its aftermath have been, and can be, utilised to make profit and

claim expertise, asking what the consequences of this are, for individuals, communities, and societies around the world. We are now inviting proposals for chapter contributions.

Suggested topics might include:

- The price at the end of life: the industrial complex of 'care', care home and end-of-life care funding models, such as private equity and charity fundraising, the rise in death doulas and commercial practices around doula education, commercialisation around creating wills, powers of attorney and advance care plans, and the price of ending life.
- (Financial) cost of body disposal: contemporary methods of funding funerals via crowdfunding and pre payment plans, the short-term costs of funerals, the costs of 'international' or geographically distanced bereavement experiences, the price of land for burial, the trade-off between environmental and financial costs.
- Commercialising bereavement: physical memorial products, from ashes diamonds to memorial benches, digital memorial products, the use of professional mourners and the rise of social media influencers monetising grief narratives.
- Sustained profit from death: profiteering from mass death events, grief therapy, digital death, including grief apps and AI reanimation, and the wider commercialisation of the data of the dead.

We are particularly interested in receiving chapter proposals from early career researchers and scholars, such as those from the Global South, whose voices are underrepresented in the field.

Please submit a chapter abstract of between 300–500 words and a 100-word author biography including location and institutional affiliations(s) if appropriate to the editorial team by Friday 6th November 2026.

The collection editors will review all submitted proposals and notify applicants of their status by the end of November. We will then submit the book proposal to the publisher and go through the publisher's editorial process.

If the collection is accepted, chapters will be around 5,000 words (including notes and bibliography), with first drafts of manuscripts due in October 2027. All chapters will be subject to peer review; chapter proposal acceptance does not guarantee publication.

Expected publication will be mid-end 2028.

Please email your proposal and author biography to cb2795@bath.ac.uk by 6th November 2026

Pushing the Boundaries of Life: Discourses on Body Preservation, Ageing and Death

Editors: Kim Grego (University of Milan) and Simone C. Bacchini (The British Library)

Proposals are invited for chapters to be included in a planned edited research volume (we are currently in negotiations with Routledge) exploring the discourses surrounding attempts to preserve, prolong and extend human life – and, ultimately, to maintain a life-like body beyond death.

The relationship between language and ageing, and between language and death, has received increasing attention across linguistics, communication studies, the medical humanities and the social sciences. The aim of the proposed volume is to extend that scholarship by concentrating on practices that challenge conventional distinctions between youth and ageing, health and decline, life and death. It approaches these categories not as self-evident biological states but as concepts whose meanings, boundaries and ethical implications are continually constructed and negotiated through discourse.

The volume is particularly interested in practices intended to delay ageing, extend longevity or preserve the human body. These may range from comparatively established forms of health and lifespan optimisation to experimental or speculative technologies promising radical life extension. They may also include post-mortem practices – such as embalming, cryonics, plastination, mummification and digital forms of persistence – that seek to preserve the body, identity or appearance after biological death. The volume is also interested in discourse around life after death from the point of view of religious beliefs. Of interest, are the discursive practices used to talk about it (for example in sacred texts), and the ritual language (e.g. prayers and blessings) used to invoke and favour it.

Contributors are invited to examine how such practices are named, described, justified, promoted, contested or regulated, and how discourse negotiates their scientific credibility and ethical legitimacy. Particular attention may be paid to representations of the body; changing definitions of ageing and death; the medicalisation of ageing; and the ideological, commercial and technological imaginaries underpinning the pursuit of longevity or immortality.

Suitable topics include, but are not limited to:

anti-ageing, longevity and lifespan-extension discourses;
radical life extension and the representation of immortality;
the construction of ageing as a disease, technical problem or preventable condition;
biotechnology companies and the commercial promotion of longevity research;
cryonics and other forms of post-mortem body preservation;
embalming, mummification, plastination and the treatment of human remains;
historical changes in the conceptualisation of preservation, ageing and death;
scientific and medical representations of the boundaries between life and death;
legal, bioethical and public-policy discourses surrounding life-extension technologies;
media representations of emerging or controversial preservation practices;
transhumanism, posthumanism and technological futures;
inequalities of access to longevity and anti-ageing technologies;
gendered, racialised, class-based or ableist constructions of ageing and bodily preservation;

metaphors, narratives and terminologies of rejuvenation, preservation and immortality;
multimodal and visual representations of the preserved or technologically enhanced body;
digital afterlives, avatars and other forms of posthumous identity preservation;
public understandings and reception of speculative biomedical innovation;
life after death in religious discourse and practice.

Approaches and materials

The volume welcomes theoretically informed and methodologically rigorous work in applied linguistics and discourse studies, including:

corpus-assisted discourse studies;
critical discourse studies;
multimodal discourse analysis;
conceptual history;
lexicology, lexicography and terminology;
genre analysis;
narrative and metaphor analysis;
historical and diachronic discourse analysis;
health and science communication;
religious studies, sociology of religion.

Interdisciplinary contributions drawing on bioethics, medical humanities, death studies, ageing studies, science and technology studies, media and communication studies, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, or the history of medicine and science are also encouraged, provided that discourse, representation or communicative practice remains a substantial component of the analysis.

Contributions may examine contemporary or historical materials and may focus on any relevant geographical or cultural setting. Comparative and cross-cultural studies are particularly welcome.

Submission procedure

Please submit:

a provisional title;
an abstract of approximately 400-500 words, clearly identifying the research question, materials, theoretical framework and methodology;
up to five keywords;
a short biographical note of approximately 100 words for each author;
the authors' names, affiliations and contact details.

Proposals will be evaluated on their relevance to the volume, originality, methodological rigour, and contribution to a coherent interdisciplinary discussion of bodily preservation at the intersections of ageing and death.

Accepted proposals will be submitted to the publisher for final approval. Once approval has been received, authors will be notified and will have up to six months to submit their chapters. Chapters should be

approximately 8,000 words in length, including notes and references, and must be original work that has not been previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere.

Please send proposals and enquiries to both editors' email addresses, using the subject line "Pushing the Boundaries of Life – Chapter Proposal" by 31 October 2026

About the editors

Kim Grego is Professor of English Language and Translation at the University of Milan. Her research interests include Translation Studies, specialised scientific, medical and political discourse, Critical Genre Analysis, and Critical Discourse Studies applied to ethically contested issues. Her recent research has focused on ageism, end-of-life issues and the discursive construction of cryonics and life-extension practices.

Simone C. Bacchini is a subject specialist in Arts and Humanities at the British Library. His research interests include discourse analysis, Systemic Functional Linguistics and health communication. He is the author of *An Introduction to Language and Communication for Allied Health and Social Care Professions* (Routledge, 2023).

Conference Invitation Sport, Grief, and the Body May 13-14 2027

From recreational to professional athletics, sport can form a core part of one's identity and routine as well as their sense of belonging, health, and connection. As sport plays an important role in the lives of many, it is perhaps unsurprising that athletes face significant turmoil when they are no longer able to participate due to injury, aging, or unexpected events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. While the ending of a sport career may be recognized as disappointing, it may not necessarily be understood as a significant loss liable to provoke a grief response. Grief arises not only as a result of death-related losses but can be felt following a variety of non-death losses including injury, major illness, the dissolution of a relationship, or the end of a career. While death losses are often understood as significant and life-changing, non-death losses are frequently overlooked, invalidated, or fail to be socially supported.

This conference will explore the interconnections between sport and grief with the aim of validating the grief experiences of athletes and developing better ways to support athletes through life transition and loss. It will be held in a hybrid format, both in person at King's University College located in London, Ontario and online via Zoom. The event is being organized in collaboration between the Department of Sociology, Criminology, and Thanatology and the School of Social Work at King's. We welcome expressions of interest from academics, practitioners, coaches, athletes, and students in the form of paper presentations, panels, roundtables, workshops, creative works, and book talks.

If you are interested in participating, please email Lisa McLean (Associate Professor, Thanatology: lmclea43@uwo.ca) with a title and short blurb of approximately 200-300 words by October 31, 2026.

Further details about the conference can be found [here](#).

Contact us

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/centrefordeath

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13222099/>

Twitter: [@cendeathsociety](https://twitter.com/cendeathsociety)

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