

# NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2016



**HIGHGATE  
CEMETERY.**

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Cameron, Alex Boyt and Robin

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## Cover photograph

The bank of the Mound area in the East Cemetery has recently been planted with wildflower turf. The work was funded by the Pateman Memorial Fund. See page 10.

*Photo: Nick Powell*

## Chairman's note



Highgate Cemetery is luxuriant with vegetation right now. As you will see from the cover photograph, our new wildflower bank on the Mound in the East Cemetery has become established very well, and nobody would think that it is only a few months old. This is just one of the enhancements to the cemetery made possible by donations to the Pateman Memorial Fund.

Our gardeners have of course also been busy with regular maintenance, keeping on top of the grass and the ivy, and dealing with the trees which drop branches or threaten to fall over. We have purchased a new super-powerful shredder which enables us to convert most plant waste into compost. Gone are the days of the cemetery bonfire which, warming as it was in the depths of winter, also belched out smoke.

The damp weather has kept some visitors away, but our volunteer guides have nonetheless been leading tours every half hour at the weekends. We also opened late until 9pm on Thursdays in June and July; visitors could wander around the East or take tours of the West Cemetery. Our weekday numbers are holding up well thanks to booking on the internet, and we have had a good number of group tours as well. Our thanks to all the volunteers and staff who keep the cemetery running so smoothly. Do come and visit!

Diane Keaton and Brendan Gleeson were with us for a few days in May for a new film called *Hampstead* directed by Bafta Award-winner Joel Hopkins. We are sworn to secrecy about the details, so look out for it in the cinemas next year. Meanwhile we are set to feature in *SS-GB*, a new BBC drama based on the Len Deighton novel about how London may have looked if Germany had won the Second World War. Starring Sam Riley, it is due on our screens this autumn.

And, finally, we are looking for a new editor for this newsletter! If you might be interested, please see the note on page 14.

**Ian Kelly**, Chairman



## Guiding visitors in 1845

**People are often surprised to hear that guidebooks were published for cemetery tourists in the nineteenth century. Kensal Green was the first of the new cemeteries in London to have a guidebook, with two appearing in 1843. Two years later the first proper guide to Highgate Cemetery appeared, written by Thomas Dolby and entitled *Memorials of the Highgate Cemetery*. It is very hard to find – there is not even a copy in the British Library – so Friends will be interested to read this extract which describes the approach to the cemetery and the chapel as it was in 1845.**



The locality of the Highgate Cemetery is easily defined, it being a spot unequalled for the combined advantages of elevation and variety, on the southern face of Highgate Hill; and, although it has been consecrated but five or six years, (dedicated, with its Chapel, to St. James) its area is already thickly studded with monuments, sculptures, and works of decorative art, visible from every elevated spot in the northern parts of the metropolis. And the new Church of St Michael, on the summit of Highgate Hill, with its tapering spire, flying buttresses, and subordinate features, appears, at a distance, to arise out of the Cemetery; and to form the apex of a picture in which Nature and Art have contended for pre-eminence.

Parties resident in London, and desirous to visit this interesting and beautiful Cemetery, whether in carriages or on foot, should understand that the many northern outlets of the metropolis converge into three main lines of approach to it: the Kentish Town line, the Maiden Lane line, and the Holloway.

The Kentish Town line is available from all parts of the West End. On entering Swain's Lane, a turning to the right from the upper part of Kentish Town, and which has all the charms of an old English rural lane, with the modern improvements in road-making superadded, visitors soon find themselves at the chief or Chapel Entrance of the Cemetery.

From the more central parts of town the Maiden Lane line is preferable. Maiden lane takes a northerly direction from King's Cross, leading up to the village of Highgate; and though somewhat uninviting, when first entered, it soon, owing to its undulations and sinuosities, presents a succession of views, the latter of which are not unworthy of the pencil of a Stanfield; being unequalled for beauty and variety, on any other road so near the metropolis; while at the curves and successive elevated points in the road, the Cemetery gradually appears, with its turrets, pinnacles, obelisks, terraces and flower-beds, like a "drop curtain" in a theatre.

The Cemetery Chapel is the first object to be examined. Its ground plan

**Left** In the 1840s the area of Kentish Town near the Cemetery was a popular place for those escaping the noise and pollution of the metropolis. *Watercolour, 1841, in FOHCT archives.*

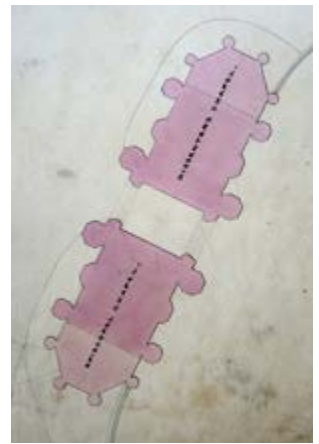
**Below** The chapels at the Swain's Lane entrance originally had tall pinnacles and a cupola.



may be described as two squares, separated by a gateway; each square having at its contrary extremity a kind of apsis. The gateway is under a surbased Gothic arch, with cross-springers, bosses, and corbels. Over this archway is a lofty room appropriated to the use of the Superintendent in immediate authority over the active business of the institution; and whose private residence is a castellated house a little further up, on the opposite side of the lane. This room has also a groined ceiling, with floral bosses and brackets. It is lighted by a lofty window of three lights, on each side of the edifice; the lower part being of an oriel character, and the upper lancet-pointed, and decorated with stained glass.

Over this room arises an octagonal tower, of several stages (containing the funeral bell,) with a profusion of crockets and ornaments. The archway is flanked on both sides of the edifice by octagonal buttresses terminating in crocketed spires; and there being a buttress of nearly similar character at all the angles around the building, of which there are many, and the walls being castellated, with a display of tabernacle recesses and gables, it makes a showy and a somewhat fanciful appearance. Its interior appropriateness, however, to and for the solemn rites of religion is complete.

Hearses, carriages, and funeral trains usually enter at another gateway, a few yards above the Chapel, and pass round into a spacious kind of court-yard; whence, the coffin having been taken out of the hearse, and the mourners having all alighted, the train passes under the archway, and turning

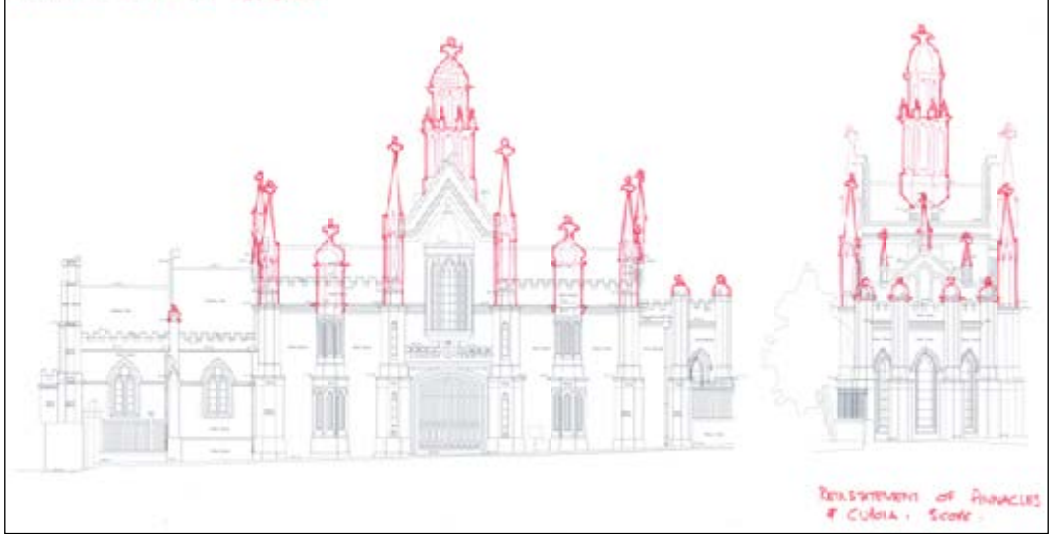


**Above** Plan of the chapels from the Cemetery maps, before the Anglican chapel was extended in 1855.

**Below** The 'colonnade' framing the courtyard.  
*Photo: Hugh Thompson*



HIGHGATE CEMETERY CHAPEL



**Above** Reinstating missing elements of the chapel roof-line (shown in red) would transform the building. Sketch by John Scott AABC.

**Below** The first cemetery superintendent's house. Photo: Nick Powell

to the right, preceded by the minister, all enter and take their places in the Chapel dedicated to the solemn services of the Church of England.

On the opposite side, under the same archway, is the entrance to the Chapel appointed for all denominations of Dissenters, who bringing with them their own ministers, here duly solemnize their funeral services, according to their respective formularies.

This portion of the service being concluded, the deceased is replaced in the hearse, and the train follows to the spot where the body is to be deposited. The acclivity in some parts of the Cemetery being very steep, carriages ascend by oblique and circuitous lines of road, and on the arrival of the mournful train, the minister, having ascended by flights of steps

and more direct paths, is found standing, surplice and uncovered, at the grave; where the last offices for the burial of the dead are solemnized in a stillness meet for the consecration of sorrow. Here nothing is to be heard but the subdued voice of prayer, the stifled sigh, or the wailings or moanings of grief; except an occasional gust of wind should gently agitate the surrounding foliage, as "Zephyrs through the clear blue sky, Their gathered fragrance fling."





**Maurice Melzak checks the beehives on the terrace**

*Photo: Chris Morphet*

## Highgate Cemetery honey

**MAURICE MELZAK** hopes that this year will be another good one for our bees

It has been reported that Albert Einstein once said something like, 'If the bee disappeared off the face of the earth, man would only have four years left to live.'

Unfortunately he probably did not say that, but it is fair to say that the honey bee is responsible for the pollination of a vast number of fruit and vegetable crops worldwide: apples, broccoli, cucumbers, nuts and strawberries to name just a few.

Bees have been in the news a lot recently because of a serious reduction in honey bee numbers. Sometimes the entire population of a hive mysteriously disappears in an event called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD).

People have put CCD down to a variety of possible causes. One of them is the varroa, a blood-sucking mite present in virtually all hives. Viral diseases are another, many of which are spread by the varroa. Pesticides and herbicides have also been blamed, as has the loss of bee friendly habitats with many flowers due to monocultures of plants like oilseed rape. And then there is climate change.

Many of these factors are more likely to affect rural bees than urban bees and people are often surprised that honey bees do quite well in towns and cities. In London, Buckingham Palace, Fortnum and Mason, the Natural History Museum and the Stock Exchange all have rooftop hives. And so does Highgate Cemetery: ours are on the roof of the Terrace Catacombs.

City bees will have varroa mites, but are less likely to encounter the





**Varroa mite on the head of a bee nymph**

*Photo: Gilles San Martin*

different chemicals used by farmers, nor the monocultures of oilseed rape. Rather they will encounter an abundance and diversity of plants. Can you imagine a better location than Highgate with its parks and gardens, Hampstead Heath and of course the Cemetery itself, all supporting a vast array of trees, shrubs and flowers, producing pollen and nectar? This variety is not only good for the bees, helping their immune system, it is also known to produce a better quality of honey.

Last year was a good one for the honey bees in the Cemetery. The bees are privately owned, but proceeds from the sale of honey in the Cemetery shop are shared with the Friends. Over one hundred jars were very quickly snapped up by visitors.

This year started with a very cold spring that made it very difficult for the bees to build up their numbers. I was very disappointed to lose a swarm early on and when I saw one of my hives was not producing a replacement queen, I decided to buy one. She came from a specialist supplier and arrived in the post, buzzing and peeping. The postman looked quite bemused as he handed over the envelope.

**Left: the Queen bee identified with a red dot**

*Photo: Maurice Melzak*

**Right: An almost-eaten jar of Highgate Cemetery honey**

Introducing the queen to an established colony is not straightforward and with Ian Creer, a fellow Cemetery bee-keeper, we placed the new queen in the hive in a small plastic cage. The bees may try to attack her at first, but also still feed her, and we hope, in a few days when she has taken on the smell of the colony, she can be safely released into the hive to begin laying eggs.

The bee season is short and we are hoping we can begin to match last year's honey bounty. Stocks should be in our shop at the end of the summer.





## Flowers or weeds?

**APRIL CAMERON, our landscape trustee, reports on the new wildflower bank funded by the Pateman Memorial Fund**

Visitors to the East Cemetery have commented very favourably on the new wildflower turf we have planted on the slope of the Mound, funded by the Pateman Memorial Fund.

Planting of wildflowers and annual and perennial meadows gained considerable popularity after Dr Nigel Dunnett and Professor James Hitchmough of the University of Sheffield planted them *en masse* at the Olympic Park in Stratford. Their meadows are slightly more ornamental than ours and include more non-native species.

Highgate Cemetery's Landscape Committee has been exploring ways to diversify the planting in the cemetery, but at the same time always maintaining the general atmosphere. Last July two committee members visited a wildflower turf farm near Basingstoke and returned very excited about the product.

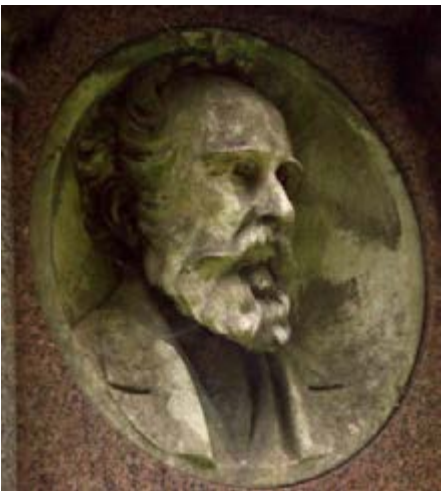
The advantage of laying turf over seeding is that it allows planting on quite a steep slope without any erosion occurring. In addition the turf has a dense root layer which acts as a barrier to the less robust perennial weeds, making longer term maintenance much easier. We also hope that planting on the slope will create a less fertile growing environment which the wildflowers will enjoy.

Frank Cano and his gardening team laid the turf in April and diligently watered it for several weeks to get it established. The turf is a mix of 34 native wildflowers and two grasses flowering in spring and summer providing food for birds and a habitat for butterflies and other insects. The first flowers, which appeared within a week, were red campion and many others have since followed.

The appearance of native wildflowers such as yarrow, toadflax, self heal, meadow buttercup, red clover and plantain in our own gardens at home would probably send us reaching for our trowels, but we can appreciate their beauty in the less manicured setting of the East Cemetery.



## The art of memory



**A new book has been published which surveys the sculptures to be found in cemeteries in and around London. Highgate Cemetery is well-represented**



London's cemeteries are surprisingly rich in sculpture. This new book allows you to take a virtual tour of the best examples from the comfort of your armchair.

The 102 entries are in chronological order so, as you would expect, Kensal Green features well in the early pages. But you may not be expecting Highgate to account for so many examples since 1955: Marx (1956, by Laurence Bradshaw), Anna Mahler (d. 1988, by herself) Esme Bawdon (d. 1997, by Timothy Lees, pictured left) and Philip Gould (d. 2011, by Charles Mackesy). Soon the Goldhammer Sepulchre will add another sculptor to that list.

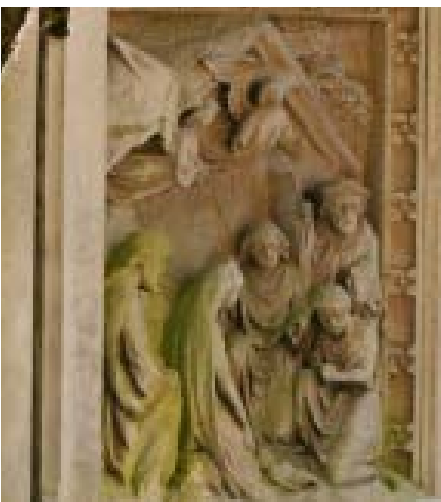
*The Art of Memory: Sculpture in the cemeteries of London*, by Richard Barnes. With an introduction 'A short history of the cemetery movement' by James Stevens Curl. Frontier Publishing, Norfolk, 2016. ISBN 978 1 872914 44 2. 239pp. £44 pb.

**Top** Memorial to Frederick Ibbetson (d. 1894), West Cemetery.

**Middle** Memorial to Esme Bawdon (d. 1997), East Cemetery.

**Bottom** Panel showing the nativity from memorial to Esther Uzielli (d. 1858), West Cemetery.

*Photos on this page by Nick Powell.*





## Lucian Freud remembered

**ALEX BOYT, Freud's son, writes about the new memorial in Highgate Cemetery West**

I don't know what to call the monumental object that sits on our father's grave. It is more than a headstone but less than a tomb; some members of the family have called it 'The Box'.

The main aim of creating a fitting memorial to my father was not only to build something plain yet strong, but to please my impressive number of siblings. I am grateful to report that they largely let me get on with it.

The thing also needed to be in keeping with the foreboding Victorian splendour of our Dad's new long term neighbours, and so the process of choosing a design began. I traipsed round old cemeteries and looked at too many glossy stonemason's catalogues until one evening I stumbled across the picture of half a crumbling ancient grave and we had a start.

By a stroke of luck, we have an English Heritage-trained stone carver in the family, namely Kim Meredew, so I forwarded the picture to him and asked if he could sketch up something similar. We met at Highgate several times to make sure we had just the right size for the space, to talk about the

width of the pillars and to agree the height that stood proud but didn't steal limelight from the old memorials behind. After each visit a new set of beautiful drawings arrived in cardboard tubes from Kim until we had it just right.

The stone we settled on was not the first choice – a deep blue Welsh Slate – as the main slab needed to be one piece and initially we couldn't find a quarry that could guarantee anything that large. The Irish Blue Limestone we eventually chose (the same stone as was recently used for the Richard III monument in Leicester Cathedral) arrived in due course and the proper work began.

The wording was a family collaboration and fonts were another decision-making process, but finally the foundations were installed and I nervously watched Kim work as 'The Box' took shape in the allotted place.

For few moments after completion it looked a little too shiny and I thought 'what have we done?', but soon enough it settled in and started to look as we'd hoped, people seem pleased, and I think we have something handsome that will stand the test of time.



## Archives uncovered

### **Our new archivist reports on work funded by the Pateman Memorial Fund**

by Robin Sampson

I have recently joined the Friends of Highgate Cemetery as a part-time archivist. Working one day a week, I am arranging, cataloguing and digitising the fascinating archive collection.

This collection is made up of a variety of material including correspondence, press cuttings, biographical research into the cemetery's residents, grave registers, maps and plans, photographs, annual reports, publications and even strange and unusual gifts left by visitors! It covers a wide range of subjects, from maintenance of the site to a compilation of 'eccentric' letters that we have received over the years. On a personal note, I was very excited to find photographs taken by John Gay, one of my favourite photographers.

My first task was to make sense of the collection. I am very lucky that one of our volunteers, Rose Constantine, had spent the past few months diligently arranging and sorting through the material, and this made my job much easier. I spent the first couple of weeks drawing up a catalogue structure to organise the records and make them easier to locate. Once I was happy with this, I made a big order of conservation materials such as acid-free boxes, melinex plastic sleeves and brass paper clips (steel and iron ones leave rust marks), so that I could preserve the material as much as possible. At the moment I am repackaging the press cuttings - the challenge is to not get too distracted by them.

Ultimately I aim to catalogue and repackage the entire collection, and then get as much of it as possible digitised so it can be available to researchers online.

I am also interested in taking in new material for the collections, to build as comprehensive a history as possible of Highgate Cemetery and the Friends. If you have anything you think might be of archival interest, please get in touch at [robin@highgatecemetery.org](mailto:robin@highgatecemetery.org).

# News roundup

## **Volunteer editor sought**

We are looking for a volunteer editor for this very publication! The ideal candidate will have a strong interest in Highgate Cemetery as well as cemeteries in general and a talent for producing crisp and accessible prose. They will encourage contributions from Friends and volunteers as well as soliciting articles from outside contributors. More information at [www.highgatecemetery.org/news](http://www.highgatecemetery.org/news).

## **Strathcona mausoleum to re-open**

For a number of years following its restoration in 1987, the Strathcona mausoleum at the entrance to the East Cemetery was open to the public as a visitor reception and information centre.

The mausoleum was restored again in 2014 as it had suffered from the effects of water penetration, and a missing panel of the window was re-glazed. The rusty metal shutter on the rear was replaced with finely-woven steel mesh panels to protect the windows.

Now we are working on plans to re-open it as an information centre which visitors will be able to access without charge. We expect this will be finished later this year.

## **Pocklington mausoleum under scaffold**

Next door to Strathcona, the large pink granite Pocklington mausoleum is now shrouded in scaffolding. There is a large crack in the roof through which daylight

can be seen, and so it is important for us to take action to prevent water damaging the structure. Inside, there is a beautiful art deco mosaic floor, bursting with colour, surprisingly vibrant for a mausoleum. Preliminary investigations are underway to assess what work is required, and we hope to complete this before the winter.

## **Spiritualist paintings on show**

Georgiana Houghton (1814-84), who is buried in Highgate Cemetery West, was a spiritualist medium and painter. Her



**Right: Pocklington Mausoleum awaiting repairs**

*Photo: Nick Powell*



**Volunteer Agnes Stewart keeps on top of litter in the East Cemetery**

*Photo: Jess Kohl*

abstract watercolours had detailed explanations on the back declaring that her hand was guided by various spirits, including several

Renaissance artists, as well as higher angelic beings.

In 1871 the pictures went on show to a perplexed London audience, but the exhibition was a commercial failure. It was just too strange. Now you can see her work in a temporary exhibition at the Courtauld Gallery until 11 September. See [courtauld.ac.uk/gallery](http://courtauld.ac.uk/gallery).

**Goldhammer Sepulchre update**

The new mausoleum next to the South Lodge in the West Cemetery is now up above door height, and exterior works are expected to be complete by the autumn. Already some of the beautiful hand-carved detailing can be seen flanking the entrance, and the bronze doors themselves are expected shortly. Interior fittings such as a marble sculpture of an angel will follow later. As the first new mausoleum for over eighty years, we are fortunate to have a building of such quality to enhance the West Cemetery.

**Summer evening openings**

On Thursday evenings in June and July the East Cemetery has been open until 9pm and there have been tours of the West Cemetery. The wet June meant that the number of visitors to the East was not as high as expected, but there have been a good number of people coming on West tours. We plan to repeat this in 2017.

**Friends of the Dead** is a new book by London-based photographer and recent Central Saint Martin's graduate Jess Kohl. Jess took portraits of cemetery managers, workers and volunteers from several of the 'Magnificent Seven' cemeteries. Among those included from Highgate are Neil Hollows, Dave Plested and Agnes Stewart. See [www.jesskohl.com](http://www.jesskohl.com).

**London Month of the Dead** will be back again this year, investigating the capital's relationship with its deceased residents with a series of events based principally at Brompton and Kensal Green cemeteries. Running throughout October and concluding on All Souls Day, the programme is at [www.londonmonthofthedead.com](http://www.londonmonthofthedead.com).

**Moribund comes to London**

Following 5-star reviews at the Edinburgh Fringe last year, this explosive neo-vaudevillian offering delves into death, dying, and the spectre of mortality that haunts us all. With vignettes, songs, dances and sketches, the show challenges some of our deep-rooted preconceptions about the human body and its inevitable end. Said to be 'grotesque, joyful and disturbing'. 22, 29 November, and 6, 13 December, 9pm at Brasserie Zedel W1, two steps from Piccadilly Circus. Information and booking at [www.brasseriezedel.com/crazy-coqs](http://www.brasseriezedel.com/crazy-coqs).

# 'Magnificent Seven' news

Some of the goings-on at our sister cemeteries



## ABNEY PARK

**Guided tours** first Sunday of every month at 2.30pm. Free. [www.abneypark.org](http://www.abneypark.org)

## BROMPTON

Brompton Cemetery is set for a major project to restore the chapel, colonnades and catacombs, to convert the North Lodge to a visitor centre with a shop and cafe and conservation work to monuments and landscape. Thanks to £4.5m from the lottery, £1.2m from the Royal Parks and £500,000 from the Royal Parks Foundation. It aims to be a model restoration of an urban garden cemetery.

**Guided tours** at 2pm on Sundays 7, 14, 21, 28 August; 11, 25 September; 9, 23 October; 13, 27 November. £6.

**Annual 'Dr Death' Lecture:** Robert Stephenson will talk on *The Royal Way of Death* on 18 August 2016. 6.30 for 7pm in the Chapel. £10.

More info at [brompton-cemetery.org.uk](http://brompton-cemetery.org.uk).

## KENSAL GREEN

**Guided tours** at 2pm every Sunday from the beginning of March to the end of October, and the first and third Sunday only in November, December, January and February. £7 [www.kensalgreen.co.uk](http://www.kensalgreen.co.uk)

## WEST NORWOOD

Here also there are plans for a new visitor centre and conservation work for the monuments and landscape. The aim is to enhance visitor amenities and accessibility and to encourage greater public use and engagement The first stage has been to secure a £241,000 lottery grant for development with a further application for up to £4.8m within two years.

**Guided tours** first Sunday of every month at 2.30pm from April to October, and at 11am from November to March. [www.fownc.org](http://www.fownc.org).

## NUNHEAD

**Guided tours** last Sunday of every month at 2.15pm and last up to two hours. The December tour will be on Boxing Day Monday 26 December. Free. Full programme see [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk).

## TOWER HAMLETS

**Guided tours** third Sunday of every month at 2pm. Free. See [www.fothcp.org](http://www.fothcp.org) for full events programme.

**Above** Interior of the chapel at Brompton Cemetery, designed by Benjamin Baud, c. 1840. Listed Grade II\*. Photo by Matt Brown / flickr.