

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2017

A photograph of a cemetery. In the foreground, several large logs are stacked on the ground. In the background, a person is visible near a large, ornate gravestone. The scene is set in a wooded area with trees and greenery.

**HIGHGATE
CEMETERY.**

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Studies and Archives Centre.

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Cover photograph

Following Storm Doris a large bifurcated ash came down near Cuttings Road, destroying several monuments. The photograph on page 13 shows what it looked like before we cut it up.

Photo: Frank Cano

Chairman's note



Winter has been more than usually destructive, as you can see by the dramatic photographs in this issue which show the aftermath of just one tree having come down following Storm Doris. Unfortunately it is not the only one. It is a miracle they did not cause more damage than they did.

Nevertheless there is much good news to report. The roof of the Colonnade in the West Cemetery has been re-ashphalted, the walls have been re-pointed and the steps taken up and re-laid level. New handrails will be installed to make it easier for everyone to get up and down.

At the entrance to the East Cemetery, the Strathcona mausoleum has been repaired again and once again houses a display, as it did back in the 1980s with the permission of the family. This time the focus is on the cemetery itself, but a new leaflet on Lord Strathcona is being prepared so that visitors do not forget the man behind the mausoleum. In the meantime the text of the 1980s display is available for them to read.

Our latest mausoleum is nearing completion: final landscaping works are underway to the Goldhammer Sepulchre, next to the South Lodge to the West Cemetery. The building is complete except for the internal sculpture which is due later this year. It makes a very fine addition to the cemetery.

Plans are being drawn up for a new entrance pavilion to the East Cemetery. The present hut creates bottlenecks at busy times, is not accessible for disabled people, and can be perishingly cold in winter for our volunteers as the wind whistles through.

And work on our conservation plan is underway. Tree specialists and ecologists have already begun their surveys and public consultation will start soon. As I come to the end of my term as Chairman at the AGM in April I am heartened to see so much good work in progress which will help maintain and enhance this very special place.

Ian Kelly, Chairman



Why did they build the tunnel to Highgate Cemetery East?

Various explanations have been offered for the tunnel which links Highgate Cemetery West with its extension on the east side of Swain's Lane. What is the truth? asks IAN DUNGAVELL

When the East Cemetery was laid out in 1854-55, it was joined to the West by a tunnel beneath Swain's Lane. From the end of the Anglican chapel, coffins could be lowered on a hydraulic bier down into the undercroft and carried along a quadrant-shaped cutting, through the tunnel, and then up a long pathway into the East. The cutting and the pathway have been mostly filled in, but the tunnel is still there. Why was it built in the first place?

In *Highgate Cemetery: Victorian Valhalla* Felix Barker says the tunnel was just a way that coffins could be carried across Swain's Lane without holding up the traffic. Really? Mourners crossing from the chapel would have been just as disruptive, if not more so. Some guides tell a variant of this story which focuses on safety, but Swain's Lane was hardly a motorway. Surely the directors of the company would have wanted a better reason to part with their money.

Another story popular with some guides is that the tunnel allowed the body to be kept on consecrated ground for its passage to the East, although nobody can point to anything written about this. There do not seem to be any prohibitions on Anglican funeral processions crossing unconsecrated ground on their way to the grave; had there been, this would have caused circulation difficulties in the West Cemetery itself. Nor was there anything in the service of consecration for the East Cemetery which specifically mentioned the tunnel, so we can not even be sure if it is consecrated.

Another answer might be because having a tunnel meant they could then have a hydraulic coffin lift, which was something of a 'must have' in technologically-advanced cemetery circles. There was one in the Anglican chapel at West Norwood cemetery, dating from 1839, and another at Kensal Green from 1844, which took coffins down into the catacombs below. Highgate had not earlier needed one as the catacombs were detached from the chapel. Even if by 1855 a hydraulic bier could hardly be said to be the latest thing, it was singled out for mention early on in the pages of Highgate Cemetery's 1865 guidebook.

The real reason becomes clear if we go back to the 1850s and consider what was going on with burials in London. The so-called 'Magnificent

Left Looking south down Swain's Lane, from just below the tunnel crossing, in 1904. The East Cemetery is on the left. *Photograph: S.B. Bolas. Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre.*

Seven' cemeteries had been founded in the 1830s and 1840s as a means of dealing with the problem of overcrowded churchyards and the sanitary hazards of burying the dead in the midst of the living. But London had grown faster than anyone imagined and by the early 1850s the city was encroaching upon the new cemeteries which had once been on its outskirts. So the 1852 Metropolitan Burials Act put an end to burials in the metropolis, with some exceptions including St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Jewish and Quaker burial grounds — and the recently-established 'Magnificent Seven', of which there were then still eight.

No new burial grounds could be set up within two miles of the metropolis without the approval of a Secretary of State, but parishes were enabled to form burial boards to provide new cemeteries further out. The St Pancras Burial Board opened St Pancras Cemetery at Finchley, two miles up the road from Highgate, in 1854. At over eighty-eight acres it was the first of the new cemeteries to be created under this Act.

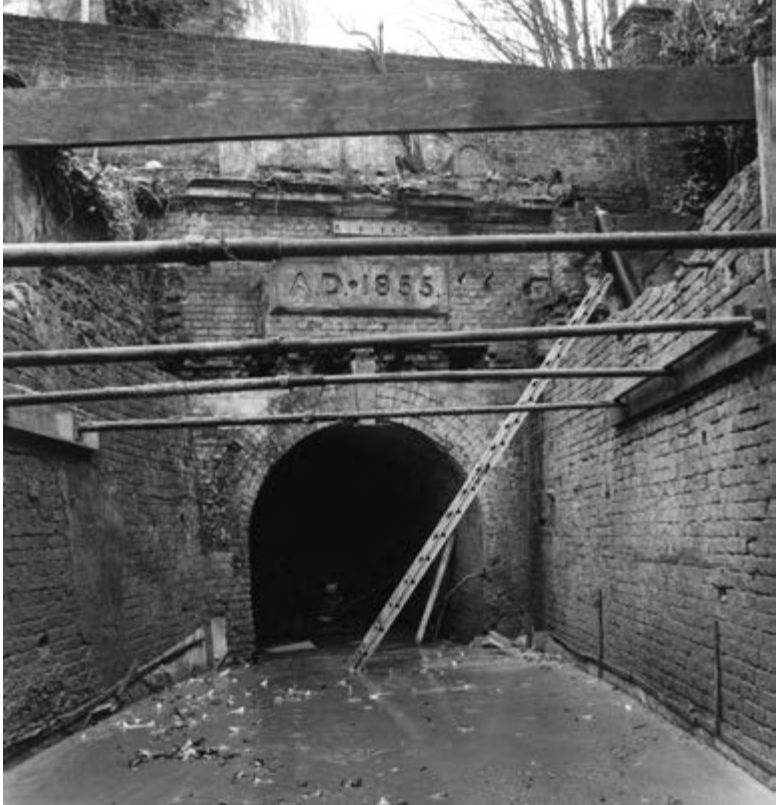
By the 1850s areas of Highgate Cemetery were already densely packed with burials. Nobody imagined it would be a serious competitor with the new borough cemetery for long. So the St Pancras Burial Board was most alarmed to hear, late in 1854, of workmen digging foundations and building new walls for a fifteen-acre addition to the Cemetery on the other side of Swain's Lane. The Burial Board complained to the Home Office and Dr John Sutherland was sent to investigate. Sutherland (1808-91) is best known today for his work with Florence Nightingale on the sanitary condition of British soldiers in the Crimea, but then he was advising the Home Office on cemeteries.

Sutherland was quite certain that the 'new ground' at Highgate was unsuitable for a cemetery, especially as it had the unfair advantage of being two miles closer to town than the new one at Finchley. It was only about two hundred yards from the smallpox hospital and there was 'a large and increasing neighbourhood of houses' with 'new streets and villas being laid out at no great distance'. The soil was 'a tough impervious clay very unfit for the interment of the dead'. Accordingly the Home Office wrote to the directors of the London Cemetery Company to inform them that the new ground could not be opened without the consent of the Secretary of State, and that such consent would not be given.

Plans for the East Cemetery were not so easily derailed. The company wrote back to the Home Office setting out the legal grounds which enabled them to extend the cemetery without further permission from government. Section 54 of the 1852 Metropolitan Burials Act had sought to protect the interests of those companies who had already established cemeteries by specifically stating that the Act would not 'take away, diminish, alter or prejudice any of the rights, powers or authorities' they enjoyed. The Act prohibited the provision of any *new* burial ground or cemetery without the permission of the Secretary of State. But was Highgate's 'new ground' a 'new cemetery'?

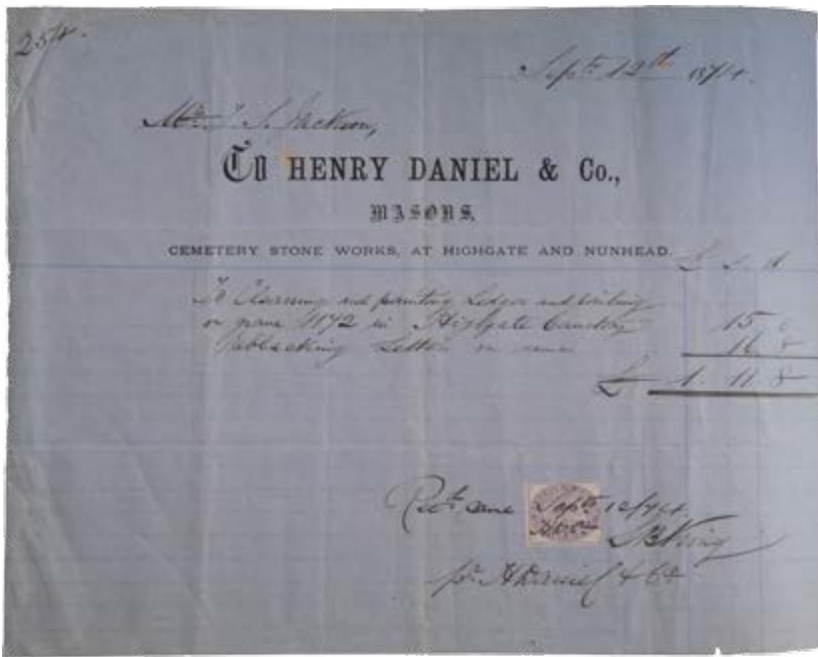
Right Looking into the tunnel from the East Cemetery. The date stone is still there today, at the back of the works enclosure which has been built over the top of the cutting.

Photo: John Gay / FOHCT archives.



The Company reminded the Home Office that the London Cemetery Company Act 1836 allowed it acquire up to fifty acres of land for a cemetery in the northern part of the metropolis, and this extension would give them only thirty-five. Their Act had anticipated the likely difficulty in finding fifty contiguous acres and so contained an unusual clause in section 32: the “Fifty Acres shall immediately adjoin each other, except in case any of the said Cemeteries or Burial Grounds may be intersected by a Road, in which Case it shall be lawful ... to join the Parts ... by means of a Tunnel, and ... when so joined shall be deemed or taken to be One Cemetery or Burial Ground”. The Home Office realised it was powerless to resist and backed down.

Thanks to the tunnel, the East Cemetery was not a *new* cemetery but just a part of an established one and so not caught up by the new legislation. Whatever practical purpose it may have served, the tunnel was far more important as the legal mechanism which enabled the company to extend its very profitable operations. It was well worth spending money on. ■



The thrill of the chase

STEPHEN SOWERBY tells Ian Dungavell how an unremarkable purchase on Ebay led to a trail of discovery

ID: What did you find on Ebay?

SS: I found two invoices for masonry works from *Henry Daniel & Co* whom I knew were the official masons to the London Cemetery Company at Highgate and Nunhead.

So you bought them. Sure. They were only £4.99 each and I thought they would make a nice addition to my cemetery scrapbook.

Tell me more. One invoice was from 1874 and the other from 1878, and both were addressed to a Mr Jackson, for work to grave number 1172. But there was some very faint pencil writing on the back of the earlier invoice: 'William Jackson, died 27th July 1844, Whitby, Yorkshire.'

Whitby. Isn't that where the famous explorer Captain James Cook was born?

Yes, but Goths today are more likely to think of it as where *Dracula* made landfall. The second most famous seafarer from Whitby was Captain William Scoresby (1760-1829), who was Europe's most successful whaler. His son William (1789-1857) was also a master mariner who surveyed and mapped the East coast of Greenland in 1822.

Oh, and I'm from Whitby, too. That's what made me determined to uncover the story.

Where did you start your research? Looking in the cemetery registers I found the grave had been purchased by a Thomas Jackson of Whitby all the way back in 1844. But it also had the full name of the poor William Jackson who died in 1844: 'Scoresby'.

So your William Jackson might have been related to the famous Scoresby family?

That's what I thought. And thanks to the Ancestry website my mum was able to show that his grandfather was Captain William Scoresby the whaler! His mother was Scoresby's fourth child and married Thomas Jackson. The 1841 Census shows William, aged thirteen, living with them at 42 Church Street, Whitby.

William would have only been sixteen or seventeen when he died. How did he end up at Highgate? I thought the family perhaps moved to London, but every census up to 1881, the year his mother died, shows them still in Whitby. My second guess was that perhaps he was in London serving a maritime apprenticeship. I still needed more information, so I got hold of his death certificate.

And did that help? A bit, but it didn't tell me everything. It said he died, aged 16, on 27 July 1844 in the Serpentine River. The cause of death was given as 'accidentally drowned when bathing'. Ironic, really.

The Serpentine was a hugely popular spot for bathing but drownings were a regular occurrence. The Royal Humane Society operated a sort of rescue service from boats, and had built a 'receiving-house' on the north bank with warm baths and beds for anyone injured. (The architect of this building was James Bunstone Bunning, who designed the Colonnade at Highgate Cemetery! What a coincidence.)

I found an article about this in the *Illustrated London News* of August 1844 which reported that in June and July of that year alone there were thirty-one accidents of which three proved fatal. William would have been one of these.

What more did you expect to find out?

I still wanted to know what William was



doing in London. The death certificate didn't help, but as St George's Hospital was then at Hyde Park Corner I had a hunch that he might instead have been a medical student. Training as a surgeon or physician would have been appropriate for someone with his background. His youngest brother, Robert, ended up doing just this.

But you had reached a dead end, so to speak. Not at all. A drowning like that was still likely to merit an inch or two in the papers. Both the *Standard* and the *Morning Post* carried news of the coroner's report. My hunch was correct: William was indeed a medical student, a pupil with the firm of York and Humby, surgeons, of Maida Hill.

About seven o'clock on Saturday morning, William had been swimming with a fellow pupil, Charles Poulter, and their boss, Edwin Humby, when he got into difficulties. The alarm was raised, and it was said that the Humane Society's boatman allowed William to sink and resurface before attempting to save him. Nonetheless a verdict of 'accidental death' was returned.

And did you find his grave? Yes, but that's never easy at Highgate. On the ledger stone I could just make out an inscription which confirmed the story: 'Here lies the mortal remains of William Scoresby Jackson, who died aged 17 years, the beloved son of Thomas and Arabella Jackson, who lost his life bathing in the Serpentine'. ■

Frederick Akbar Mahomed

ROBIN OAKLEY tells the story of this pioneering Victorian physician of Indian background

Set slightly back from the main path of the West Cemetery lies the modest gravestone of a pioneering physician of the Victorian era: Frederick Akbar Mahomed. Despite dying young, he made significant contributions in several fields of medicine, and is also of interest for his family background.

Frederick Henry Horatio Akbar Mahomed (his full name) was born in 1849 in Brighton, where his father Frederick Mahomed ran a fencing and gymnastics academy. His grandfather was Sake Deen Mahomed, a prominent character in Georgian Brighton who had established fashionable Indian-style 'vapour baths' (*below*) for health treatment and was appointed 'Shampooing Surgeon' to King George IV. Born in Patna, Bengal in 1759, he had served as a young man in the East India Company Army, and then accompanied his commanding officer back



to Ireland where he converted from Islam to Christianity before eloping with an Irish wife and moving to London. He became well-known for publishing an account of his travels around India, and prior to settling in Brighton opened the first ever Indian restaurant in London, the 'Hindoostane Coffee House'.

Frederick Akbar Mahomed began his medical studies at 18, at the Sussex County Hospital in Brighton. After two years, in 1869, he transferred to Guy's Hospital in London, qualifying as an MRCS in 1872. He next worked at Highgate Infirmary for a year, before moving to the London Fever Hospital in Islington. In 1874 he became an MRCP and was appointed to St Mary's Hospital Paddington, but in 1877 returned to Guy's Hospital. In 1881 he obtained an MB from Cambridge University, having been elected Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians the previous year. Then in 1884, when still only 35, he succumbed to typhoid, probably caught from a patient at

the London Fever Hospital.

His main contribution to clinical medical research was in the field of blood pressure. He explored the characteristics and causes of 'hypertension' or high blood pressure, distinguishing the more common condition of 'essential hypertension', found in otherwise healthy persons, from 'secondary hypertension' which is caused by specific factors such as 'chronic nephritis' (kidney disease). The modern blood pressure monitor (sphygmomanometer) had not yet been invented, but he had developed a more basic form of measuring device while still a medical student.

However, the field in which he was something of a visionary was that of data collection. He realised there was a need to shift medicine beyond reactive hospital-based treatment of disease to preventive approaches based on understanding of the causes and progress of disease in individuals' lives. To this end he persuaded



the British Medical Association to establish a programme of 'Collective Investigations', in which medical practitioners outside hospitals enlisted individuals to compile 'family history records', so the data could be used to analyse life-histories and explore statistical patterns. This methodology looked forward to modern epidemiology and clinical trials, and the approach was copied in several other countries. In Britain though, the initiative lost momentum after Mahomed's early death, and was largely forgotten until recently rediscovered by medical historians.

His gravestone also commemorates his first wife Ellen Chalk, daughter of a Brighton solicitor, who died of septicaemia following the birth of their second child in 1876 and was buried in Brighton. His second wife (though it appears they never formally married) was her younger sister Ada with whom he had three more children. Ada outlived him by 56 years, and later became 'Lady Superintendent' (matron) of a surgical house in Harley Street. Only one of his children, Archibald, went into medicine. In the 1910s, both he and Ada changed their surname from Mahomed to Deane. ■

Top Frederick Akbar Mahomed's gravestone in Highgate Cemetery West

Far left Sake Deen Mahomed's 'vapour baths' in Brighton

Left Frederick Akbar Mahomed

(Pictures, except for gravestone, courtesy of Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove)

The last resting places of the famous

A new publication from Shire Books is a must-have for anyone who likes to potter around cemeteries and burial grounds

This excellent book does three very useful things. It has an index of over 1,000 names enabling anyone easily to find the answer to the question posed by its title, *Who's buried where in London*. So it is a very handy work of reference if you needed to find out that Bram Stoker is in Golders Green or that William Heath Robinson is in East Finchley. But it also helps you find them: Stoker is in an urn on the ground floor of the East Columbarium, just past the West Cloister; you find Heath Robinson by following a

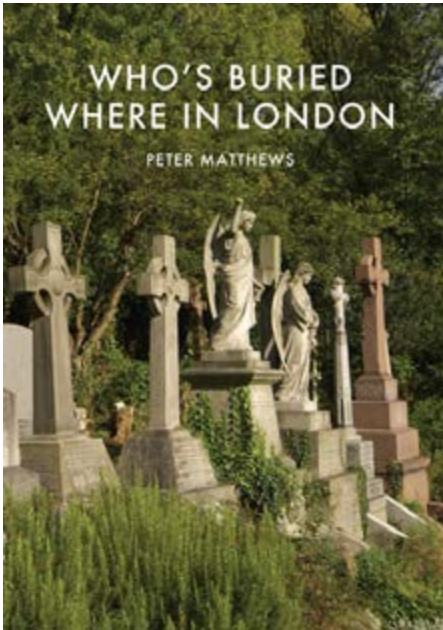
narrow path off Cypress Avenue, just past Yew Avenue, opposite the Crematorium. Thirdly, it takes you on little tours of the burial grounds or cemeteries to see other graves of interest, enlivened by snippets of information or anecdotes about the residents. And who better to do this than a trained Blue Badge guide.

The acid test of course is how well it works for Highgate. Friends can put it to the test by trying the excellent potted tour of Highgate Cemetery East which follows the main path and branches off into a number of diversions. It's the next best thing to one of our guided tours.

The book is generously illustrated which means that it is quite interesting to glance through. Heath Robinson's grave has none of the appeal of his inventions, alas, and Matthews observes that some of the most important people have quite modest memorials.

Thankfully there are many exceptions: Bazalgette's mausoleum at St Mary, Wimbledon; the curious tomb of Joseph Ismay, head of the White Star Line shipping company, at Putney Vale cemetery; and the desert tent in stone of the explorer Sir Richard Burton at St Mary Magdalene, Mortlake, to name but three. Worth a trip! ■

Peter Matthews, *Who's buried where in London*, Shire Books, 2017. ISBN 978 0 74781 296 8. £12.99.





Storm Doris wreaks havoc

One day in February when Storm Doris was at her worst we had to close the cemetery. Although only one tree came down on that day, in the fortnight that followed we lost several more, all in the West Cemetery.

Above The tall monument clasped between the branches survived the onslaught, but only just. In the photo on the front cover you can see it braced with yellow boards. *Photo: Frank Cano.*

Our team of gardeners has been very busy with their chainsaws recently, as the illustration on the front cover shows. First it was a mis-shapen hornbeam in the Meadow, but this large bifurcated ash near the top of the Cuttings Road soon followed. It destroyed several headstones although some monuments survived with only minor injuries. A few days later another ash tree came down just near the Glade, miraculously sparing some new memorials. A large yew at the end of the Meadow is also on its way over, but we hope it can be saved by propping it up.

It has been an enormous amount of extra work for the gardeners. Trees don't look so large when they are vertical, but when they hit the ground their true size and destructive force is all too readily apparent. ■

News roundup

Friends of Allerton Cemetery visit

Recently we hosted a visit from the recently-formed Friends of Allerton Cemetery in Liverpool. Allerton opened in 1909 and is still one of the main burial sites for the Metropolitan Borough of Liverpool. But its problems are greater than ours: 150 acres, and three unlisted chapels, all needing work! One for Anglicans, one for Nonconformists and one for Catholics. It is a good example of a large Edwardian public cemetery. See www.friendsofallertoncemetery.com. We wish them all the best of luck in their endeavours.

New Operations Manager, Paul Waite

Paul joins us from the Royal Geographical Society and Sir John Soane's Museum. Paul started in earnest at the end of January and is making great progress. His main tasks are getting on top of health and safety and standard operating procedures, and he will manage various new projects such as the membership database, the Chester Road gate access point and the proposed new tools and equipment store compound.

Summer hours

The Cemetery has already moved to summer hours, meaning that we are open until 5pm every day. We open at 10am Monday to Fridays and 11am weekends and public holidays. We switch back to closing at 4pm on 1 November 2017.

Wednesday late openings

In June and July the East Cemetery will stay open until 9pm every Wednesday (last entry 8.30pm) and there will be tours of the West Cemetery available to book online. Highgate is such a beautiful place to visit in the golden glow of a summer evening that we expect these events to be very popular once again.

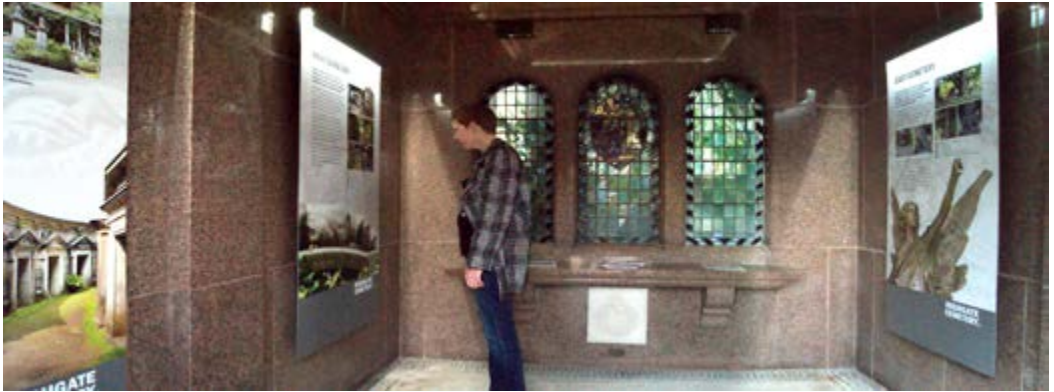
New Club Car

We will soon take delivery of a six-seater Club Car we can use to ferry disabled visitors around the site. It will also act as an emergency vehicle so that staff can get to the scene of any accident quickly. It will be equipped with a first aid kit and a defibrillator, which hopefully we will never need to use. It is electric and so not only low emission but also very quiet!

Goldhammer sepulchre

At last the scaffolding has come down and the full glory of this wonderful new building can be appreciated. Its fine bronze doors, decorated with pomegranates, are particularly striking. It is a powerful visual symbol to reinforce the message that we remain an active cemetery.

Work is underway on the final landscaping around the building which will considerably improve the setting not only of the South Lodge but also the graves of Jean and John Pateman whose contribution to the Friends we continue to remember.



Above The new display in the Strathcona Mausoleum. The fine stained glass window by Karl Parsons (1884-1934) of 1924 was recently identified by stained glass expert Peter Cormack and is now visible again for the first time in many years.

Photo: Nick Powell

2017 Annual General Meeting

The date is Wednesday 26 April 2017 and the venue is the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, Pond Square. The evening will start at 7pm with a talk by Sally Prothero on the Heritage Lottery Funded project at Brompton Cemetery. The meeting itself will start at 8pm and finish at 9.30pm. All members welcome.

Strathcona re-opens

'Old' Friends will remember the days when the Strathcona Mausoleum at the entrance to the East Cemetery was open to visitors with a display about the life and times of Lord and Lady Strathcona. It also served as a sometimes rather chilly base for ticket sales before falling into disuse once the new entrance kiosk was acquired.

Now it has been restored once again and re-opened, this time with a display on the cemetery itself, with a video fly-through of a West Cemetery tour. There will also be a new leaflet on Lord Strathcona which will make a whole new generation of cemetery visitors aware of his distinguished career.

SS-GB on BBC1

It might have been a little difficult to hear at times but nonetheless it was impressive to see Highgate Cemetery as a location in the recent five-part BBC drama, SS-GB, based on a novel by Len Deighton. It is 1941, and the Germans have won the Battle of Britain. The Russians have decided to take Karl Marx's body to Moscow, but the Resistance disrupts the exhumation ceremony with a bomb which kills or injures many leading Germans. Available on DVD for those who missed it, Highgate features at the end of episode three and the start of episode four.

'Magnificent Seven' networking

Led by Brompton Cemetery and the Royal Parks, representatives of the so-called 'Magnificent Seven' cemeteries friends' groups have been getting together to talk about shared issues and the possibility of producing joint promotional material. Topics have also included diversity in cemeteries and the use of social media. But with other London cemeteries also wanting to join in, it may not stay limited to the 'Magnificent Seven' for long.

Historic cemeteries news

What's on at our sister cemeteries

ABNEY PARK

'Abney unearthed'. A project to create an online digital plot map of Abney Park and a searchable database. It will recover the burial information lost through illegible maps or damaged records.

Guided tours first Sunday of every month at 2pm. Free, but £5 suggested donation. Spring Open Day: Saturday 20 May, 12-4pm www.abneypark.org

BROMPTON

Special walks 'Symbols and Symbolism in Brompton Cemetery' by Carole Tyrrell, Saturday 8 April at 2.30pm; Saturday 22 April at 2.30pm a walk led by Roy Vickery of the South London Botanical Institute

Guided tours at 2pm on Sundays 9, 23 April; 7, 14, 21, 28 May; 5, 11, 18, 25 June; 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 July. £6 donation requested. For other dates see brompton-cemetery.org.uk.

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY

Guided tours first Sunday of every month from March to November at 2pm. £3 donation requested. Various themes. See www.tbcs.org.uk for details.

BUNHILL FIELDS BURIAL GROUND

Guided tours with access 'behind the railings'. Every Wednesday from April to October at 12.30pm. £8. www.citygardenwalks.com

CITY OF LONDON CEMETERY

Guided walks usually run every month throughout the summer. Phone 020 8530 2151 or email cemetery@cityoflondon.gov.uk.

KENSAL GREEN

Guided tours normally at 2pm every Sunday from 1 March to 30 November. £7 suggested donation. www.kensalgreen.co.uk

WEST NORWOOD

Saturday 21 October 2017 AGM and Lecture: *Sir Horace Jones* by Dr Jennifer Freeman

Saturday 18 November 2017 Lecture: *The Music Hall Guild of Great Britain and America* by Matthew Neil

Guided tours first Sunday of every month at 2.30pm from April to October, and at 11am from November to March. www.fownc.org.

NUNHEAD

Open Day Sat 20 May 2017, 11am to 5pm

Special tours at 2.15pm 'Cemetery Symbols', 9 April; 'Crypt & Chapel', 23 April; Waterloo Anniversary Event, 18 June; LWT Bat Sighting Walk, 23 June (starts 9.30pm); 'Crypt & Chapel', 2 July; 'Military Connections', 16 July; 'Music Hall Artistes', 13 August.

Guided tours last Sunday of every month at 2.15pm and last up to two hours. Free. Full programme see www.fonc.org.uk.

TOWER HAMLETS

Guided tours third Sunday of every month at 2pm. Free. See www.fothcp.org for full events programme.