



FRIENDS OF HIGHGATE CEMETERY TRUST

# Annual Review 2022-23

THE SACRED  
MEMORY OF  
ELIZABETH GRAHAM  
SMITH  
SOMETIME RESIDING AT  
CAMPHILL, GLASGOW  
WHO DIED IN LONDON  
2<sup>ND</sup> JUNE

This review covers the financial year 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023  
Printed April 2024

**FRIENDS OF HIGHGATE CEMETERY TRUST**

**Registered Office** Highgate Cemetery, Swain's Lane, London N6 6PJ

**Telephone** 020 8340 1834

**Web** [www.highgatecemetery.org](http://www.highgatecemetery.org)

**Company Number** 3157806 **Charity Number** 1058392

# People

## Vice Presidents

Derek Barratt, Ian Kelly

## Chair

Martin Adeney                      retired 17 May 2023  
Liz Fuller                              elected 6 July 2021

## Trustees

Doreen Aislabie                      retired 17 May 2023  
Katherine Baldwin                  re-elected 6 July 2021  
Alice Brown                            appointed 11 May 2022  
Paul Candler                            elected 17 May 2023  
Simon Edwards                        appointed 17 May 2023  
Charo Guardiola                      elected 17 May 2023  
Claire Jebson                         elected 17 May 2023  
Nicola Jones                          retired 17 May 2023  
Steve Kennard                        re-elected 11 May 2022  
Stuart Orr                              re-elected 11 May 2022  
John Robinson                        elected 6 July 2021  
Stephen Smith                        appointed 6 July 2021  
Evelyn Wilder                         retired 17 May 2023  
Andrew Yeo                            elected 11 May 2022

## Staff at 1 February 2024

Dr Ian Dungavell <small>FSA AICCM</small>	Chief Executive
Judith Chadbourne <small>FCCA</small>	Head of Finance
Leo Crane	Director of Development
Judith Etherton	Archivist
Claire Freston <small>AICCM</small>	Registrar
Victor Herman	Sexton
Leighann Heron	Project Director
Kim Nazarko	Volunteering Manager
Nick Powell	Visitor Experience Manager
Guinevere Short	Head of Operations
Sally Taylor	Bookkeeper
Kate White	Project Director

Frank Cano, Head Gardener with gardeners José Ballesteros Barragán, Zurab Gogidze, Erik Harris, Adam Howe



## Chair's welcome

Visitors are returning to Highgate Cemetery in numbers almost as high as before the Covid pandemic. Together with income from grave sales, this means that the Trust's core activities continue to generate a surplus.

The surplus is reinvested in our conservation project, now called *Unlocking Highgate Cemetery*. We completed RIBA Stage 2 during the year, on budget, including a wide range of detailed surveys and reports which are the essential foundations of a solid and sustainable scheme.

These studies supported our application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for development funding, and in January 2024 we were delighted to hear we had been successful. We now have a grant of £105,000 against a potential delivery phase grant of £6.7 million which is being used to develop the project further and establish a programme of activities to widen our audience. We are greatly encouraged to have the support and experience of the Heritage Fund as its oversight is very rigorous.

Work began in February 2024 on RIBA Stage 3 which will see designs for new buildings come into focus for the first time, together with detailed plans for rehabilitating the landscape. Due to the sensitivity of the site, Camden Council has required a full planning application for all elements of the project, contributing to the projected cost of this stage being £1.7 million.

This is a significant sum, but such an outstanding site demands an experienced and expert team. And to help us meet our additional fundraising target of £1.2m we have appointed our first Director of Development to help us find additional supporters.

With the Highgate Cemetery Act allowing the reuse of graves and the renewed interest of visitors, the Trust can be confident that *Unlocking Highgate Cemetery* is based on firm footings. It is the most ambitious conservation project ever undertaken by the Trust, and I would like to thank the staff, volunteers, trustees, the project team and everyone who has contributed to the project so far.

Hard work lies ahead but there is a deep awareness that we are engaged in a task of great importance for the future of the Cemetery.

**LIZ FULLER**

Chair

**Left** Frank Cano and Zurab Gogidze using waste ash logs from the Cemetery to make play equipment for Brookfield School. Photos: Matt Maran

# Report of the Trustees

Visitors enjoying the tranquillity of Highgate Cemetery would no doubt be surprised to hear of the amount of work going on behind the scenes to ensure it is fit to face the future. Our conservation project, *Unlocking Highgate Cemetery*, reached a major milestone with the announcement of a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards the development phase. During 2024 the first renewed graves will become available, thanks to the Highgate Cemetery Act, meaning that it will continue as a working cemetery. And our wonderful volunteers continue to welcome visitors and guide tours in impressive numbers, almost back to the highest levels before covid.

Highgate Cemetery is not just the best of London's Victorian cemeteries but is arguably one of the finest in the whole country. While the international importance of its picturesque layout has been recognised with its designation as a Grade 1 registered landscape, there is no official designation that can capture its importance as the final resting place of generations of Londoners and others, famous or otherwise.

The Cemetery opened over 180 years ago in 1839 as a profit-making venture for a private company. But the original owners, the London Cemetery Company, finally collapsed in the 1970s in a financial scandal having devoted progressively less of its diminishing resources to the upkeep of the Cemetery. In 1975 the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, a charity, was formed by local people who were concerned for the future of the Cemetery. Today the Trust tries to maintain the precarious balance of the appearance of romantic decay with the needs of conservation. We want this special place to be available to future generations to appreciate and value as we do.

We report on our work under the three charitable objects set out in our constitution. These are linked, as through promoting the public benefit of the Cemetery and continuing to bury people here, we are more likely to be able to conserve the Cemetery as a respectful sanctuary for the benefit of this and future generations.

- PROMOTING THE PUBLIC BENEFIT: 'to promote the public benefit in relation to Highgate Cemetery by any means appropriate and likely to preserve it as a place of historic and other interest and beauty'
- BURYING: 'to permit the Cemetery to be used as a public burial ground'
- CONSERVING: 'to secure the repair, restoration and preservation of the Cemetery, its monuments and buildings and other artefacts and their setting for the public benefit'

The Conservation Project, *Unlocking Highgate Cemetery*, will contribute to all of these objects and is reported on under a separate heading.

We review our aims, objectives and activities each year. This report looks at what we achieved in the financial year ended 31 August 2023 and considers the success of each activity. We have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

# Promoting the public benefit

*'to promote the public benefit in relation to Highgate Cemetery by any means appropriate and likely to preserve it as a place of historic and other interest and beauty'*

## **Headline numbers**

93,855 visitors, a 12% increase

17,653 took guided tours

10% increase in visitor income

246,342 users of our website

around 160 volunteers

One of our greatest achievements is keeping Highgate Cemetery open every day of the year, with the exception of Christmas Day and Boxing Day, which allowed us to welcome 93,855 visitors, an increase of 12% on the previous year (2022: 83,574), yet still down on our highest attendance before the pandemic (2019: 103,290). Now that visitors may visit the West side without a guided tour, more choose to do so (2023: 62,502; 2022: 52,156) rather than confine their visit to the East side (2023: 31,353; 2022: 31,418). The number of people taking tours is also increasing once again (2023: 17,653; 2022: 7,278), and we expect that this will continue in the future. Visitor income increased by 10% to £693,486 (2022: £627,615). Of those 223 visitors who reviewed us on the TripAdvisor website, 96% of rated their experience 'Excellent' or 'Very good' (2022: 91% of 114 reviewers), giving an average score of 4.9 out of 5 (2022: 4.6).

The notion of charging to visit a cemetery surprises some of our visitors until they hear that Highgate Cemetery is owned and run by a charity which receives no regular public funding and that the money they pay goes towards its maintenance and enhancement. Lingering concerns are allayed by the discovery that so much of the work is done by volunteers. Their contribution is crucial, and we pay tribute to them for the many hours they give so willingly to us. Our visitor assistants and tour guides are the public face of the Cemetery to most visitors, but we also appreciate the hard work of gardening volunteers and grave tenders who are less visible but no less important for that. Our events' working group has been busy planning and running our events programme. Our trustees and committee members are of course volunteers themselves, ensuring that the Trust is well-run and looking towards the future. Our volunteer rota numbers around 160 names and we are actively recruiting for more, but there is tremendous competition for volunteers.

Our events programme once again featured talks connected with Cemetery residents on topics as diverse as the Rossettis, prize fighting in the nineteenth century, traditions of death and burial, six notable women interred at the Cemetery, Wordsworth's son, people who make death their life's work, and a magic show based around Charles Dickens. The Marx Memorial Lecture by Donald Sassoon was on Gramsci, Mussolini and the Rise of Fascism. Once again we published three issues of our newsletter, sent to members as a benefit of membership; back issues are available for download on our website. Our grateful thanks to all the contributors. Our website recorded 246,342 users (2022: 220,524), 70% of whom were from the United Kingdom (2022: 71%), and 10% from the United States (2022: 12%).

We remain a popular venue for filming, especially relating to Highgate Cemetery itself or the people buried here, but commercial productions were still limited this year. Filming income amounted to £33,125 (2022: £32,642).

The works to provide swipe card access at Chester Road gate for grave owners and members which has been long delayed by an assortment of difficulties have at last been completed and, barring further difficulties, will be gradually put into use this year.

### **Plans for future periods**

The introduction of self-guided visiting throughout the Cemetery has been hugely popular and enables a greater diversity of visitors to enjoy this special place. We will be looking at ways to increase visitor diversity further through partnerships with local groups, further enabling the cemetery to play a supporting and enriching role in local life.

We need a lot of volunteers to keep the Cemetery open and to provide information and tours for visitors but recruitment, especially of visitor assistants, remains difficult. We will continue our recruitment and training programmes for visitor assistants and tour guides, and we hope to have more available at peak periods.

# Burying

*'to permit the Cemetery to be used as a public burial ground'*

## **Headline numbers**

65 burials – 18 full burials and 47 cremated remains

38 new graves sold – 10 full size graves and 28 for cremated remains

10 new memorials completed by us

45 ownerships transferred

It is important to us that Highgate Cemetery continues to be used as a burial ground for as long as possible as this helps to maintain its significance as a place of remembrance and keeps it knitted into the local community. To that end, we sought powers already available to local authority cemeteries in London, namely, to take back ownership of abandoned graves and make them available to a new generation for the burial of their loved ones, subject to specific safeguards. The Highgate Cemetery Act 2022, enabling the sustainable use of the Cemetery, became law on 20 April 2022. The first list of the rights of burial we propose to extinguish was published on 16 January 2024 and barring objections these will take effect on 16 July 2024.

In addition to re-opening existing graves, we sell a small number of new graves each year but, with a few exceptions, they may not be purchased in advance of need. We sold 38 new graves, 10 full size £555,433 and 28 for cremated remains £147,431. (2022: 46, 17, £495,687 and 29, £137,230 respectively) and there were 65 burials, 18 full burials and 47 of cremated remains, £59,112 (2021: 71, 25 and 46 respectively £64,390). The East side cremation path area has been extended to create over 100 new cremation plots while being respectful of the environment: here we insist on biodegradable containers, plastic-free floral tributes, and planting out from a select list of natives only. The trustees will continue to set the price of grave space to maximise this asset in the short and long terms.

The Trust endeavours to maintain the historic character of Highgate Cemetery which is valued by both grave owners and visitors alike, so we have strict controls on the types of monuments which may be erected and the decorations which may be placed upon them. We encourage grave owners to think carefully about choosing a memorial of quality and individuality rather than a catalogue item. We show them different stone types, sizes, shapes, the difference between hand and machine cut text, as well as inscriptions to think about. This year we completed 10 memorials (2022: 15), and 28 permits to erect a memorial were issued to outside

contractors (2022: 28).

We encourage grave owners to retain their connection with the Cemetery and the right to use graves which they may have inherited. Publicity around the Highgate Cemetery Act has generated more interest in grave ownership. There is a legal procedure to transfer the ownership of rights of burial that must be followed, and we advise this to be done as soon as possible after the death of the owner to avoid difficulties later. This year we transferred 45 ownerships (2022: 29). Grave passes are issued with a five-year validity to encourage grave owners to keep their contact details up to date.

Highgate Cemetery is deservedly world famous as a heritage attraction and the revenue from visitors is crucial to the maintenance and enhancement of the Cemetery. But we are always conscious of the needs of the families and friends of those who are buried here. Grave owners can normally visit every day of the year except Christmas Day and Boxing Day. For the purpose of demonstrating the importance of our funerary activities, we have begun counting the number of non-paying visits by those attending the funerals or visiting the graves of family and friends.

As Highgate Cemetery will remain for the foreseeable future a working cemetery, where people choose to bury their loved ones and visit their graves, it will continue to be our duty to honour the memory of the dead and to provide their living relatives and friends with access, sympathy and respect, and to maintain the Cemetery with the greatest of care.

### **Plans for future periods**

Now that the Highgate Cemetery Act 2022 is law we have begun the process of reuse of burial space, starting with unconsecrated areas of the cemetery. We will continue discussions with the Diocese of London about what faculty permissions may be required for grave renewal on consecrated ground. This would enable us to continue burials at Highgate Cemetery in the long term.

# Conserving

*'to secure the repair, restoration and preservation of the Cemetery, its monuments and buildings and other artefacts and their setting for the public benefit'*

Day-to-day work to maintain and enhance the cemetery grounds continues. It would be both undesirable and impossibly expensive to restore the Cemetery to its earlier more manicured appearance when teams of gardeners were available to keep nature in check. Many people, grave owners and visitors alike, now appreciate its wilder character and find poetry in the precarious balance of the memorials and the vegetation that, left alone, would destroy them.

## **Mapping the Cemetery**

Work continues on a new digital map of the Cemetery which records not only the location of each grave but also the form of each memorial, linked to a database of burials and grave owners. An accurate map is an essential first step to the future conservation of the Cemetery. The visible surviving memorials have now been mapped, and work is continuing on linking them to the burial records. Free online public access to the burial records is now available on our website at <https://highgatecemetery.org/visit/searches>.

## **Plans for future periods**

Our conservation project, *Unlocking Highgate Cemetery*, reported on below, will enable the Trust to balance the conservation of the natural and historic environments for the benefit of all. We are writing a 'Conservation approach for monuments' which will set out how we plan to deal with allocating resources according to the significance and condition of monuments. We will seek public views on the approach. We are preparing documentation to enable the removal of diseased ash as they become afflicted by ash dieback.

# Unlocking Highgate Cemetery

The Trust's plans for the conservation of Highgate Cemetery received a great boost with the announcement in January 2024 that we had been successful in obtaining £105,000 development funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards a £6.7million grant for the delivery phase of *Unlocking Highgate Cemetery*. Together with just over £10m from our reserves and £1.2m from funds still to be raised, that would represent an £18m investment in the future of the Cemetery. To support these ambitious plans, the Trust has recently appointed its first Director of Development.

Much work in the past year was devoted to preparing the bid to the Heritage Fund. The three core themes of *Unlocking Highgate Cemetery* are heritage, nature and community. As a result of this investment, Highgate Cemetery's built and natural heritage will be in better condition through conserving and repairing the historic structures and landscape, enhancing biodiversity, resilience and sustainability and providing new facilities for those who care for and interpret the place. The project will involve a wider range of people in heritage, through local partnerships to reach low-income families, young people, schools, and people with poor mental health or physical and learning differences. Neighbourhood days, youth engagement projects and volunteering programmes will engage the local community, enabled by new accessible facilities. More inclusive stories will be told.

Developing the project has been complicated by the very constricted nature of the site and the presumption against building on Metropolitan Open Land, the need to maintain the character of the Conservation Area and to preserve the setting of listed buildings and monuments. Camden Council will require a full planning application, meaning that a higher level of detail and reports have to be submitted than had an outline application been acceptable. The benefit is that, once granted, such consent would provide us with a secure path forward which could be implemented as our resources allow. Meanwhile, ash dieback continues to spread, and it is likely that a large number of diseased ash trees will have to be removed even before we receive our Heritage Fund grant.

## Plans for future periods

The Trust is carefully managing the project following the industry-standard RIBA Plan of Work. We began RIBA Stage 3 – 'spatial coordination' – in February 2024 with a focus on preparing planning and listed building consent applications for submission in September 2024 which we hope will be approved by March 2025. The applications will cover the entire project, but it is intended that the consents are implemented in stages beginning in 2026. Having been granted planning consent will surely strengthen our application for 'delivery phase' funding to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2025. The budget for Stage 3 is £1.7m inclusive of VAT and contingencies. During this stage we continue to engage widely to ensure the views of grave owners, visitors, neighbours, members and volunteers inform the plans, as well as those of authorities such as Historic England and Camden Council.

# Financial report

## Income and expenditure

Total income amounted to £2,035,284 compared with £1,730,351 in the preceding year, an increase of £331,933 attributable to higher visitor and burial rights income, together with a substantial legacy of over £90,000 and an increase in investment income of £71,873.

Total expenditure increased from £1,750,752 to £2,267,063, predominantly due to spending on the Conservation Project £937,053 (2022: £686,231), and costs relating to tree management.

An increase in investment values resulted in unrealised gains of £18,875 compared to unrealised losses in the previous year of £592,046.

As a result of these changes, net expenditure amounted to £212,852 compared with £612,976 in the preceding year.

## Funds and reserves

The Trust's total funds at 31 August 2023 were £11,682,086 including investments managed by BNY Mellon, our professional advisor, and CCLA of £11,370,212 and cash of £167,990.

The accounts do not put an asset value on Highgate Cemetery because of the difficulty of calculating a reliable and meaningful figure. There is a small but valuable asset of land which may continue to become available for burial, but there is also a substantial and continuing need for

maintenance and conservation.

The trustees' policy is to maintain the Trust's reserves over time to enable the preservation and restoration of Highgate Cemetery to continue in the future. At 31 August 2023, unrestricted funds were £11,674,584 Excluding tangible fixed assets used by the Group, reserves amounted to £11,626,738.

The Board of Trustees has adopted a Reserves Policy which is based on the evaluation of major risks facing the Trust. The objective is to provide sufficient unrestricted reserves to minimise the impact on cemetery services should any of the risks materialise, but not fully to cover all the main risks as the Trustees believe that this would result in an excessive level of reserves. Trustees review at least annually the amount of reserves to ensure it is adequate to fulfil the Trust's obligations. As the risks could result in loss of income or increased costs, the Board seeks to mitigate their effect by holding around £500,000 to cover normal operating expenditure for at least six months, and around £1 million to cover emergency building repairs and short-term cash flow fluctuations which may arise.

The Board designated £10m of funds in 2022 towards the Conservation Project.

As at 31 August 2023 the balance of general funds was £2,736,873, excluding designated funds (2022: £1.887m). The balance of funds designated to the

Conservation Project at 31 August 2023 was £8.937m.

**Fixed assets**

Full disclosure of all matters relating to fixed assets is set out in the notes to the full financial statements.

**Investment policy**

Under its Articles of Association, the Trust has the power to make any investment which the trustees see fit. The trustees have considered the most appropriate policy for investing funds, and the portfolio objective is long term capital growth, consistent with sufficient liquidity to draw down from the investments to fund the Conservation Project. The Trust has delegated its investment management to BNY Mellon Fund Managers Limited. This arrangement was reviewed during the year and Trustees decided to maintain the position. Investments are predominantly held in the Newton Growth Fund for Charities.

**CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds 2023 £</b>	<b>Restricted Funds 2023 £</b>	<b>Total Funds 2023 £</b>	<b>Total Funds 2022 £</b>
<b>INCOME FROM</b>				
Subscriptions, donations and legacies	158,519	-	158,519	76,457
Charitable activities	1,580,546	-	1,580,546	1,421,240
Other trading activities	39,089	-	39,089	45,546
Investments	257,130	-	257,130	185,257
Other	-	-	-	1,851
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<u>2,035,284</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,035,284</u>	<u>1,730,351</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>				
Raising funds	82,166	-	82,166	76,560
Charitable activities	2,184,897	-	2,184,897	1,674,192
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<u>2,267,063</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,267,063</u>	<u>1,750,752</u>
	(231,779)	-	(231,779)	(20,401)
Net gains/(losses) on investments	18,875	-	18,875	(592,046)
Taxation	52	-	52	(529)
<b>Net (Expenditure)/Income</b>	<u>(212,852)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(212,852)</u>	<u>(612,976)</u>
Transfer between funds	-	-	-	-
<b>Net Movement in Funds</b>	<u>(212,852)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(212,852)</u>	<u>(612,976)</u>
Total Funds brought forward	<u>11,887,436</u>	<u>7,502</u>	<u>11,894,938</u>	<u>12,507,914</u>
<b>Total Funds carried forward</b>	<u><u>11,674,584</u></u>	<u><u>7,502</u></u>	<u><u>11,682,086</u></u>	<u><u>11,894,938</u></u>

All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

**CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET  
AS AT 31 AUGUST 2023**

	<b>2023</b>		<b>2022</b>	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>				
Tangible fixed assets		47,846		44,457
Investments		<u>11,370,212</u>		<u>11,111,535</u>
		11,418,058		11,155,992
<b>Current assets</b>				
Stocks	15,366		10,290	
Debtors	77,378		29,472	
Cash at bank	<u>465,247</u>		<u>1,074,219</u>	
		557,991		1,113,981
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>		<u>(293,963)</u>		<u>(374,478)</u>
<b>Net current assets</b>		<u>264,028</u>		<u>739,503</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		11,682,086		11,895,495
Provision for liabilities		-		(557)
<b>Total net assets</b>		<u>11,682,086</u>		<u>11,894,938</u>
<b>Funds</b>				
Unrestricted funds - general		2,736,873		1,887,436
Unrestricted funds - designated		8,937,711		10,000,000
Restricted funds		<u>7,502</u>		<u>7,502</u>
<b>Total funds</b>		<u>11,682,086</u>		<u>11,894,938</u>

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of the accounts. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

We confirm that the information contained in these summarised financial statements is taken from the audited annual accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023 and includes details relating to both the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet.

The audited accounts were approved by the trustees on 27 March 2024, are subject to an unqualified audit report, and have been submitted to the Charity Commission and filed at Companies House. These summarised statements may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust.

For further information, the full accounts, the relevant auditors' report and the trustees' report should be consulted. Copies can be downloaded from our website, [www.highgatecemetery.org](http://www.highgatecemetery.org), or from the Charity Commission, [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission).

**LIZ FULLER**  
Chair

**CLAIRE JEBSON**  
Director

# Thank you!

The Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust thrives thanks to the loyalty and support of grave owners, volunteers, members, visitors and donors. With your help, we can unlock Highgate Cemetery's future as a sanctuary for heritage, nature and community.

With funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and our own reserves, we can begin the vital work of conserving the 36-acre site, securing listed monuments, opening up access and restoring a rich biodiversity.

To find out more about *Unlocking Highgate Cemetery*, how you can make a donation and remember us in your will, please visit: <https://highgatecemetery.org/help/donate>.





**HIGHGATE  
CEMETERY.**

**FRIENDS OF HIGHGATE CEMETERY TRUST**