

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2022

Obit
Frank Paul
of
John William Griffith,
Esq.
Architect,
of
London.

**HIGHGATE
CEMETERY.**

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Our apologies that this issue is slightly late due to circumstances beyond our control.

With thanks to

Martin Adeney, Zurab Gogidze, Penny Linnett, Robin Oakley, Liam O'Farrell, John Shepperd, Wolf Sulhan, Andrew Yeo

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Cover photograph

Highgate Cemetery West in the snow, showing the grave of the architect John William Griffith (1789-1855). Not to be confused with John Griffith of Finsbury, architect of the Greek Revival buildings at Kensal Green Cemetery.

Photo: Guinevere Short

Chair's note



As I write, the temperature is still sub-zero in Highgate and the Cemetery gripped by the most dramatic snowfall for some years. It descended overnight and although we stayed closed for the start of the following morning, there were queues of people undeterred and anxious to enjoy the special atmosphere.

Thanks to the path-clearing work of Victor, our Sexton, and the gardening staff, under Guinevere's supervision, we were able to open the gates later in the day, and while it has remained very cold, we have continued to be a sought-after destination. So thanks to everybody who went above and beyond to make it possible; staff, and volunteers who have turned out in numbers in spite of the weather to operate the tills and lead the tours.

And congratulations to those who braved the weather for a very jolly talk, complete with parlour tricks, about Charles Dickens's sideline as a conjuror. Suitable Christmas fare. It was a reminder about how fascinating our talks programme is, and there are more to come in the New Year. So if you haven't been....

Next year is going to be an exciting one. The Trustees have agreed to proceed with the next stage of the Conservation Project. The essential survey and scoping work already carried out will now help us to produce the detailed and costed design proposals for the future on which we will be consulting you, as well as, of course, the planning authorities. We shall have the information to make the decisions about which of our projects we will be able to afford.

A huge amount of technical spadework and organisation has gone into the project and our thanks are particularly due to Kate White, our Projects Director. She is leaving us temporarily on maternity leave and we wish her the very best. In her place we welcome Leighann Heron, another architect with an impressive record.

Wishing you the very best of seasonal greetings

Martin Adeney, Chair

Connections with colonial slavery

ROBIN OAKLEY finds a number of people with links at Highgate Cemetery

Highgate Cemetery opened in 1839, six years after slavery was legally abolished in the British Empire. Among those buried in the Cemetery in its early years, however, are a number of people with connections with the institution of slavery in the Americas, including both anti-slavery campaigners and persons directly involved in the slave economy.

Well-known anti-slavery campaigners include Samuel Lucas and his wife Margaret Bright Lucas. Samuel, born in 1811, was a Quaker and newspaper editor who attended the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840. His memorial in Highgate Cemetery West records that he learned of the ending of slavery in America just a few hours before his death in 1865. Another prominent anti-slavery campaigner was the Polish-born feminist Ernestine Rose (1810-92), who is buried in the East side.

Persons directly involved in the slave economy in the Americas are more

difficult to identify. Cemetery records do not hold such information, and I have not found evidence of connections on grave inscriptions. Through internet searches, I have identified three persons with links to the slave economy in the West Indies, all of whom are buried in the West side.

The most prominent is Benjamin Greene, (1780-1860), founder of the Greene King brewery chain. His impressive pink granite monument only identifies him as being 'of Bury St Edmunds', where he had founded the brewery business and owned the local newspaper. He later became a leading London-based sugar merchant and plantation-owner who publicly opposed the Slavery Abolition Bill. Like many plantation-owners he did not reside in the West Indies, though he sent several of his sons out to manage estates. The UCL *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership* project found that he was awarded £4,033 15s 7d as compensation under the Slavery



Above Samuel Lucas died 'a few hours after hearing the tidings of the destruction of the slave power in the United States...'

Photo: Robin Oakley

Abolition Act for the 231 slaves he owned on estates that he had inherited in St Kitts and Montserrat. His grandchildren include Graham Greene and Christopher Isherwood, the novelists, and Sir Hugh Carleton Greene, Director-General of the BBC from 1960-69.

A second person is John Hibbert (1768-1855), a member of the extensive Hibbert family who were major plantation and slave owners in several of the West Indian islands. Highgate's John Hibbert, however, was based not in the West Indies but in London, and (from the records of the UCL project) he does not appear to have been personally engaged in the management of the plantations. The only direct connection I can find is that he was appointed in the Will of an older brother as trustee of a large estate in Jamaica (with nine hundred slaves) on behalf of a nephew. However, he was a director of the London and South Western Railway, which reflects the close interconnections between wealth raised through the colonial slave economy and the industrialisation process in Britain.

A third person, recorded as a 'West India merchant' in the 1861 census, is Enoch



Ballard, born in Shoreditch in 1801 and died in Islington in 1866. He appears to have lived in London all his life, and his connection with the West Indies seems to have been as a sugar trader rather than through any direct involvement with the ownership and management of plantations and slaves. At his death he lived in a large house in Highbury New Park, and he also had an office in Leadenhall Street in the City.

Enoch Ballard was no doubt in the company of many other traders who made their affluent living from the 'post-slavery' economy in the West Indies. The merchants who gained their wealth from this source would be only the tip of an iceberg of many thousands of (mostly small) investors who benefited financially from the legacy of slavery. Many of those buried in Highgate Cemetery in the early decades are likely to have benefited in this way, despite having no direct connection with the Caribbean. ■



Above The grave of Benjamin Greene, late of Bury St Edmunds. *Photo: Robin Oakley*



Highland gentleman, Bristol banker and West India merchant

ANDREW YEO explores links to slavery in the Lebanon Circle

In 1833, to achieve the support necessary for the abolition of slavery, the government committed twenty million pounds, forty percent of its annual budget, to compensate those with interests in the slave trade for the loss of their human 'property'. It was only as recently as 2015 that these enormous debts were finally expunged from the nation's balance sheet. Some forty-six thousand slave owners were awarded compensation with one of the biggest beneficiaries of this dubious largesse being Colonel Hugh Duncan Baillie, who together with his brother James Evan Baillie and business partner George

Ames shared £81,000.

The vault in the Circle of Lebanon which they purchased in 1857 at a cost of £157 would therefore have been small change for the Baillie family. It was acquired on the death of Mary, second wife of Hugh Duncan Baillie, with the owners being recorded as three of his sons. Despite eighteen years since the Cemetery's consecration, this was only the third vault to be sold in the Circle. It is next to that belonging to the Duke of St Albans in what would have been the most prestigious location, directly facing the imperial staircase. This grand exit point was removed in the 1870s when the

Above The Baillie Vault on the Lebanon Circle, Highgate Cemetery West

outer Circle was developed and the Beer mausoleum built in its place.

According to the burial records, the vault accommodates eight interments spanning four generations of the family. Baillie and his wife are reunited with a son, a daughter, a sister-in-law, a granddaughter, a grandson and great granddaughter, the latter two being infants.

Born in 1777, Hugh Duncan Baillie was of a line that had held land and position in Scotland for five centuries. It was his father Evan Baillie of Dochfour who enriched the family by building significant interests in West Indies slave plantations having served in Cuba during the Seven Years' War. Like his father, Hugh Duncan entered the army at sixteen and at a time when commissions were purchased at considerable expense rather than earned through merit, he rose quickly through the officer ranks reaching that of colonel before retiring in 1825. In 1802, aged twenty-five, he went on half pay in order to focus on business and politics.

Together with James Evan he took over the running of the family firm Evan Baillie, Sons & Co with its extensive plantation and shipping interests. The UCL database on *Legacies of British Slavery* and the *Records of Bristol Ships 1800-1838* indicate that Hugh Duncan and his brother owned or had substantial interest in nineteen plantations, sixteen ships and 2,465 enslaved people. The brothers were also partners in Bristol Old Bank, the city's first banking house and an institution with its roots well established in the West India trade.

Baillie's father Evan was much involved in local politics serving as Councilman, Alderman and Sheriff of Bristol, before being elected MP for the city, a position he held for ten years. Hugh Duncan looked to carry on his father's political legacy and

in 1818 stood for the Whigs in Bristol. His political views were unclear and a rather half-hearted campaign, with no appearances on the hustings, saw him come in a distant third having withdrawn and then rejoined the race at the last moment. Nevertheless, as a wealthy banker and merchant, he was prominent in Bristol society and in 1817 received Queen Charlotte at his house during her visit to the city. His political ambitions were fulfilled when he was successful standing for Rye in 1830 and Honiton in 1835, a seat he held for eleven years.

As well as owning property in London and Bristol, Hugh Duncan had estates in Scotland. On the death of his father he inherited Tarradale on the shores of the Beaulieu Firth near Inverness. In 1838, enriched with his slave compensation, he bought the neighbouring Redcastle estate where he engaged eminent architect William Burn to undertake renovation. As a prominent landowner, in 1843 he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ross-shire, the Queen's representative with command of the County's militia; a position he held until his death in 1866.

Baillie's connections with slavery left his posthumous reputation untarnished. 'Few men have passed through a long life more sincerely respected than the deceased,' reported the *Inverness Courier*, while noting approvingly that he 'had acquired a princely fortune as a West India merchant in Bristol.' That was merely one of 'some remarkable circumstances in the history of this highland gentleman' which included witnessing the battle of Culloden as a boy, serving as an officer under George II, and 'as he was fond of relating', having been in the company of Burke, Johnson, and Reynolds. ■



A near to faultless building on former Cemetery land

Is it possible to admire a building we once hated? asks IAN DUNGAVELL

Few private homes in London enjoy such a special site as 85 Swain's Lane, with its extensive views over Highgate Cemetery West. A strikingly modern intervention in a landscape of crumbling monuments and overgrown trees, visitors are surprised, as they turn the corner down the Faraday Path, to see the lives and collections of its inhabitants on display through its curtain walls of glass.

Known as 'The Grey House', it was finished in 2008, designed by architects Eldridge Smerin and built for Richard Elliott, a chartered surveyor and photographer. He was inspired by an earlier house

of theirs, 'The Lawns', in South Grove, Highgate, described by architecture critic Tom Dyckhoff as 'the most important house built in Britain for years'. It had been nominated for the prestigious Stirling Prize and won awards from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Civic Trust, as well as the 2002 Camden Design Award. It was praised as an example 'of how the 21st century house can be incorporated into historic Conservation Areas as part of the continuing evolution of domestic architecture'.

The Grey House was very different, only twelve metres square, with no room for a

Above *The Grey House*, designed by Eldridge Smerin architects, built for Richard Elliott

garden and little outside space. There are two bedrooms and parking on the ground floor and two more stacked on top of each other on the north side of the building, leaving large open-plan living areas on the first floor and kitchen and dining room on the second which enjoy spectacular views of the Cemetery and, in winter, of London. There is so little obvious structure and the detailing is so minimalist that the building seems barely to be there.

Its glassy modern style follows the precedent of John Winter's Grade II*-listed house of 1967 further down the hill near the Chapel, and Winter was much taken by it: 'I am lost in admiration for the excellence of the building work and the thorough rigour of the design,' he wrote. 'This comes as near to being a faultless building as I have seen for a long time.' That was quite something, as Winter had also designed the previous house which was demolished to make way for it.

Elliott had lived in that house for a number of years before deciding to take it down. Built for Michael Hardy in 1981, it looked rather nautical, clad with blue colour-coated profiled sheeting with white steel framing and two large porthole windows. The main rooms were on the first floor and the south side to the Cemetery



Above 81 Swain's Lane, designed by John Winter for himself, 1967. Now listed Grade II*, it is soon to be sensitively restored and extended

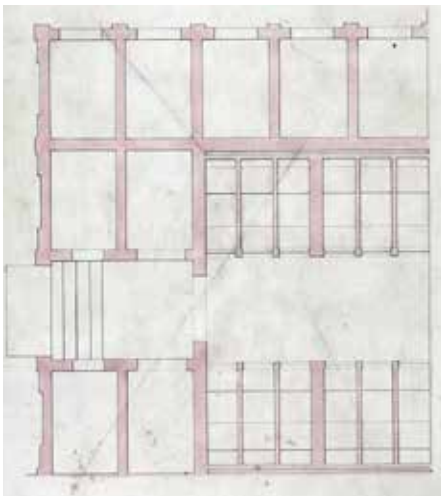
Below The Hardy House, predecessor to the Grey House, in 2004



was entirely glazed to take advantage of the views. Trying to make it more liveable, Elliott got planning permission for two different remodelling schemes in the early 2000s but in the end decided that he could not make the house work.

Soon after the Hardy House was built, *Building Design* magazine described it as 'a quirky box of tricks', and Winter explained that because of the poor soil and proximity to graves 'it was decided to support the house on one central concrete pillar and to truss up the first floor as a cantilever.' But it turned out to have been badly insulated and poorly built: within twenty years the cantilever had failed and the house was propped up by the Cemetery wall.

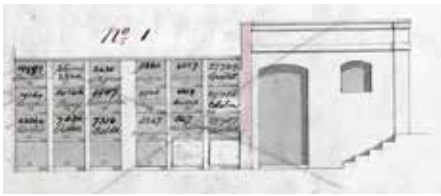
Surprisingly, there is an earlier design by Winter for a house at 85 Swain's Lane which dates back to 1967 when he was also building his own further down the hill. The site was owned by the London Cemetery Company and on it were the Dissenters' Catacombs. A note on the Cemetery plan records that 'the Catacomb was declared unsafe May 1967 and now demolished. All coffins removed...' However, four months earlier, Winter had drawn up plans for a small house there for a Mrs Anne Hing, who



Left Plan and internal elevations of the Dissenters' Catacombs, sold by the London Cemetery Company in 1967 having been declared unsafe.

a wall of glass overlooking the Cemetery. As *The Times* later enthused: 'The site is spectacular, surrounded on two sides by the overgrown cemetery and on a slope so hilly that the view must be amongst the best in London.'

Eldridge Smerin took full advantage of that view in their house for Richard Elliott by such extensive use of glass that when standing inside, you feel like you're standing in the Cemetery itself. And it was a whole storey taller than its predecessor. (Hardy had been prevented from building higher by a restrictive covenant in favour of the house next door, which Elliott bought so as to remove it.)



Not surprisingly, on seeing the plans lodged with Camden Council, the Friends of Highgate Cemetery objected strongly to such a glass monster. It was 'a totally unacceptable intrusion on the privacy of the Cemetery,' according to Derek Barratt, a Trustee and an architect by profession, showing 'complete disrespect towards the grave owners'. And Jean Pateman, the Chairman, lamented that the house 'places all activities within the Cemetery on permanent display to the residents'.



The Highgate Society described the house as 'an excessive and overwhelming massing of buildings'; the Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee condemned it as over-development; and English Heritage objected to the additional floor and the greater overlooking of the Cemetery which resulted. But Camden's planners were so entranced by the reputation of its architects and their hope for another high quality modern house in the area that they ignored the objections.

took a 99-year lease on the site in March 1967. Actually, two leases: one was for the front range of the building where there were no interments, the path to the side and in front; the other for the vault behind where there were around thirty coffins. If the Home Office didn't grant permission for the removal of the coffins, or if it turned out that the land had been consecrated, then the sale would be cancelled.

The Home Office did grant permission, and most of the coffins were removed to the Cuttings Catacombs, but the Hing House does not seem to have materialised. However, like its successors, it featured

The Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Brian Woodrow, said 'The cemetery is so large, with greenery



around it. This small intervention is not so significant.' The officers wrote 'the site is not directly visible from the principal network of paths through this particular part of the cemetery. Similarly, those listed monuments that are visited by the public... are situated in a wooded top corner, from which point the proposal will not be visible.' The design 'illustrates an inherently sensitive grasp of the site's context... unique and responsive, but suitably neutral'. And so planning permission was granted.

Elliott soon realised that glass cuts two ways. 'I'm a very private person,' he told *The Guardian* in 2008, 'but I've just built a glass house.' While the journalist was inside interviewing him, 'a group of tourists being led past the floor-to-ceiling windows of his living room stop, point, and take photographs. You can sense their

surprise...' Surprise on both sides that not everyone in the Cemetery was dead.

There is no denying the architectural quality of the Grey House. Even if it wasn't as lauded as 'The Lawns', it won a RIBA award and was shortlisted for RIBA London's Building of the Year. It is a remarkable building, robustly finished inside with granite and shuttered concrete, and filled with light. And, of course, the views into the Cemetery are amazing.

Perhaps it is the unexpected intrusion of domesticity into the Cemetery which makes it feel so inappropriate for its location? If it were used instead as Cemetery offices, with the large open plan areas for classrooms and displays, would it be less of an interloper? ■

The Grey House, 85 Swain's Lane, is marketed by Knight Frank, with an asking price of £7m.

Above Visitors to the Cemetery are requested to respect the privacy of the occupants of the house by not taking photographs





Peace on paper

ZURAB GOGIDZE, who works at Highgate Cemetery as a gardener and grave-digger, will exhibit his drawings at Lauderdale House in January

My favourite spot in Highgate is the 'Top Circle' in Highgate Cemetery, where the now young Cedar of Lebanon II reigns in peace — the charming peace where death and life meet in a strange, silent harmony. I spend a lot of time here at work, and I think I exist as part of here, continuously allowing this incredibly comforting peace into my mind. The peace which then I draw on paper.

The drawings I have selected for this exhibition are from the last three or four years — my Highgate years. It includes some from the series *Mourning Stones of Highgate* which I have donated to

the Cemetery (illustrated here), a few illustrations to my own unpublished stories as well as some portraits and figure studies.

The majority of works in the exhibition though come from the mysterious realms of the moon and shadow, of mermaids and fishermen, of the sea and sky, of calm and of peace... ■

Lauderdale House, Upper Gallery. 4-30 January 2023. Check opening hours at <https://www.lauderdalehouse.org.uk/plan-your-visit/opening-days-hours>. Zurab will be in attendance on Saturday 7 and Sunday 29 January, and happy to chat with any interested visitor.





News roundup

New temporary West ticket hut

During the summer we sold tickets from a desk beneath the Colonnade, but the cold weather put a stop to that. In autumn, sales reverted to the Chapel, but that proved rather draughty and wasteful of heat, and prevented it from being used as a place for quiet remembrance.

Our temporary solution is now in place, a well-insulated site hut providing a comfortable workplace for visitor assistants and 360-degree views of the Courtyard. It can be moved with a forklift, if needed, giving us the flexibility to test arrangements before building anything permanent.

New trustees sought

At the AGM of the Trust in May 2023, four of our twelve trustees will be stepping down. As we are at the early stages of our conservation project, we are particularly

seeking candidates with skills and experience in oversight of large projects, fundraising or finance. Applications close on 9 March 2023 and details are on our website at highgatecemetery.org/news.

Volunteers

In 2022 our volunteers contributed an impressive 11,574 hours of invaluable assistance! We welcomed 38 new volunteers, but are always on the lookout for more!

Cities of the Dead

We were thrilled to see Highgate Cemetery included in this book of 'the world's most beautiful cemeteries', by Yolanda Zappaterra. 240pp, £32 hb.



Left Highgate Cemetery blanketed with snow
Photo: Wolf Sulhan

Historic cemeteries news

What's on at our sister cemeteries



Above Limited edition print of Abney Park Cemetery, by Liam O'Farrell.
Available from www.liamofarrell.com/shop/print-of-abney-road-cemetery-hackney

ABNEY PARK

Abney is in the midst of a £5m lottery-funded project and many exciting things lie ahead: new Trust premises, a café and many activities. See www.abneypark.org

BROMPTON

2023 Programme is yet to be announced. See brompton-cemetery.org.uk.

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY

Guided tours start again in March 2023, £5. See www.tbcs.org.uk/walks.HTM.

KENSAL GREEN

23 April 11am: John Passmore Edwards festival, free. Guided tours 2pm 1st and 3rd Sundays monthly until March, monthly thereafter. £12 donation requested. Booking essential. www.kensalgreen.co.uk

WEST NORWOOD

18 February. Lecture: *The Margravine Cemetery* by Robert Stephenson

18 March. Lecture: *The Development of Modern Medicine* by Prof Sir Colin Berry

Guided tours first Sunday of the month: 11am November to March. Donations welcome. Book online. See www.fownc.org.

NUNHEAD

20 May: Annual Open Day.

Special tour programme on website.

Guided tours last Sunday of the month 2pm, donation. See www.fonc.org.uk.

TOWER HAMLETS

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park events are listed online. See their website at www.fothcp.org for details.