

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2023



**HIGHGATE
CEMETERY.**

Vice Presidents

Derek Barratt
Ian Kelly

Chair

Liz Fuller

Trustees

Katy Baldwin
Alice Brown
Paul Candler
Simon Edwards
Claire Jebson
Steve Kennard
Stuart Orr
John Robinson
Charo Rovira
Stephen Smith
Andrew Yeo

Staff

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

Frank Cano *Head Gardener*
Gardeners

José Ballesteros Barragán
Zurab Gogidze
Erik Harris
Adam Howe

Editor

Ian Dungavell

With thanks to

Martin Adeney, David Drake, Judith Etherton, Liz Fuller, Gustafson Porter + Bowman, Leighann Heron, Penny Linnett, John Swannell.

Website version with corrections

The April 2024 issue will be posted on 12 April 2024. Contributions due by 28 February 2024.

Registered Office

Highgate Cemetery
Swain's Lane, London N6 6PJ
Telephone 020 8340 1834
Email info@highgatecemetery.org
Web www.highgatecemetery.org

Company Number 3157806

Charity Number 1058392

Trustee elections

In 2024 three trustees will come to the end of their first terms and have indicated that they will stand for re-election or re-appointment. One trustee has reached the end of her second term and so there will be one vacancy for a new trustee.

Any other member who wishes to stand should see our website for information. Applications close 14 March.

Chair's note3

Killed in action fighting the Vichy French troops4

Come for the views6

Conservation update 10

Highgate Cemetery Act first steps..... 12

From the archives 14

News roundup 15

Historic cemeteries news 16

Cover photograph

The Lebanon Circle in the snow, looking towards the Rosa mausoleum.

Photo: John Swannell

Chair's note



Renewal both to secure the future of and also preserve the character and use of Highgate Cemetery is at the heart of the conservation project and planning. This was the subject of the Highgate Cemetery Act 2022, which set out the processes according to which grave renewal could proceed, enabling us to continue as a place of new burials. It follows precedents already in use elsewhere. As we explain in more detail in this issue, the first steps will soon be taken to start this programme of reuse.

In the meantime, work to prepare for the next phase of the conservation project has been continuing and we held the first of a series of information sharing events with volunteers, whose help will be critical in informing the emerging proposals and, later, in their implementation. The contribution of the volunteers who meet, guide and form the public face of the cemetery is already central to its smooth running. On behalf of the staff and trustees, I would like to give huge thanks to everyone who has given their time this year to ensure that the cemetery can welcome visitors and grave owners on a daily basis.

I would also like to thank our dedicated staff who have met the demands of continuing to run the cemetery whilst also delivering a huge amount of work on the project.

We expect to hear the outcome of our National Lottery funding application very shortly. Whatever the outcome, the New Year will see renewal in all senses, not least the renewed commitment to ensure the preservation and protection of this treasured place.

Liz Fuller, Chair



Killed in action fighting the Vichy French troops

DAVID DRAKE on one of the many buried elsewhere who are remembered at Highgate

Following the defeat of France in June 1940, a French government under Marshal Pétain established itself in Vichy, committed to collaborating with the Germans. At the same time Charles de Gaulle, then a little-known French general, had made it to London from where he was urging his fellow citizens to join him to continue the fight against Nazi Germany.

According to the terms of the Franco-German armistice agreement signed on 22 June, the French empire survived intact under the authority of the Vichy government. Along with nearly all France's overseas territories, the Levant (Syria and

Lebanon), which had been part of the French empire since the break-up of the Ottoman empire, remained loyal to Vichy.

In May 1941, the Vichy government agreed to allow German planes to land in Syria. Fearing Germany intended using the Levant as a springboard for an offensive against Suez, Britain planned an invasion of Syria and Lebanon with the participation of British and Australian soldiers and de Gaulle's Free French troops.

Captain William Arthur Farmiloe (1913-41), known as Robin, was one of about four hundred members of No.11 (Scottish) Commando which launched a

daring amphibious landing on the coast of Lebanon, near the mouth of the River Litani, on 9 June 1941. Their mission? To seize the main bridge over the river near the coast and hold it until the arrival by road of the Australian 7th Division.

From the very start, No. 11 (Scottish) Commando's operation was bedevilled by bad weather and bad luck. The first attempted landing had to be aborted in full view of pro-Vichy French troops; one unit landed on the wrong side of the river and another unit, which included Farmiloe, came under such heavy enemy machine gun and mortar fire that their landing crafts had to back away from the beach leaving about half the men to swim or wade ashore.

Under the command of Lt. Col. Dick Pedder, the commandos captured a barracks held by pro-Vichy French troops. A small party led by Farmiloe put some French mortars out of action and caused French machine gunners to desert their posts. But the commandos themselves soon came under heavy fire once more.

Less than five hours after the landing, Pedder ordered his men to withdraw but almost immediately he was shot dead by a French sniper. Lieutenant (now acting Captain) Farmiloe assumed command of No. 1 Troop. The fierce fighting continued



Above Lt Robin Farmiloe

© NMS/2012 National Museum of Scotland

and Farmiloe was reported wounded but initially none of his comrades could reach him. When it was possible to do so, it transpired that he too had been shot by a French sniper,

sustaining a severe wound to the right temple. It is almost certain that he died immediately after being hit.

By the end of the day, exhausted, almost out of ammunition and water, the remaining commandos surrendered. In all, of the 406 men that landed 130 had been killed or wounded during nearly 29 hours of fighting. The survivors were relieved the following day by the arrival of the Australian troops who overwhelmed the pro-Vichy French troops guarding the prisoners. Now it was the pro-Vichy French soldiers' turn to surrender.

The Allied invasion did however succeed in its objective. Despite meeting stronger resistance from pro-Vichy troops than they had anticipated, on 23 June Allied troops forced their way into Damascus and on 12 July took control of Beirut.

These battles, like the one at the Litani River, were overshadowed by the German invasion of Russia on 22 June 1941 and largely neglected in the history of World War Two. Furthermore, neither the image of Free French and pro-Vichy French soldiers fighting each other, nor the fierce fighting between Vichy French forces on the one hand and British, Australian on the other, sits very easily with conventional post-Second World War narratives.

While Farmiloe was buried in Plot 1.1.13 of the Beirut War Cemetery, he is remembered at Highgate Cemetery on the monument on the grave of his grandparents, William and Amelia Farmiloe, overlooking the Circle of Lebanon. It bears the inscription: 'In loving memory of William Arthur (Robin), Captain Rifle Brigade, only son of Constance Eveline and George Arthur Farmiloe who fell in action 9th June 1941 at the Litani River, Syria aged 28 years.' ■



Come for the views

While views are much valued for their beauty, IAN DUNGAPELL discovers that thoughtful cemetery visitors could also find in them consolation

Early visitors to Highgate Cemetery had no need of a map to find their way there. They would simply head for the slender spire of St Michael's Church, a newish landmark on the northern skyline of London. The London Cemetery Company advised them to avoid Highgate Hill by approaching from Kentish Town.

Climbing Swain's Lane, they would have caught glimpses of the impressively pinnacled pair of chapels at the southern entrance. A small building, it had to pack a lot of punch: while chapels were often used as features within cemetery landscapes, objections from Highgate village had relegated it to a spot at least three hundred

yards from St Michael's.

Stephen Geary's original plan was that the Church should be the cemetery's Anglican chapel, with the northern entrance from Highgate down the now-lost lane to its east. A new Dissenters' chapel would have been perched on the plateau we now call 'The Meadow' part-way up the hill, and the southern entrance was to have been a pair of lodges flanking a barrel-vaulted archway, an arrangement which looked more like Kensal Green, or Gravesend or Brompton.

But, while none of that happened, St Michael's retained its dominant position on the brow of the hill, crowning the landscape in the same way as William Tite's pair of

Above A view of Highgate Cemetery in 1841 showing St Michael's Church, seemingly perched on top of the Terrace Catacombs, with the Chapels in the middle distance. FOHCT

Below Two photographs from the 1850s show St Michael's Church dominant on the Cemetery horizon. FOHCT



chapels at West Norwood Cemetery. Some contemporaries even saw it as 'one of the grandest ornaments of the cemetery', and the Terrace Catacombs reinforced that impression by appearing to be its crypt. So many prints and photographs show it as part of the Cemetery landscape that visitors would have been certain that it was.

And, no doubt, this would have pleased the cemetery company. It can only have been a comfort to those buying graves that the cemetery looked like a giant churchyard. Administratively, too, the cemetery was linked to the parish: its chaplain, the Rev. Thomas Causton, was also the perpetual curate of the parish (a



Above St Michael's Church recurs as a prominent feature in views of Highgate Cemetery. (Anonymous print from the early 1840s).

Below The Terrace Catacombs seem to belong as much to St Michael's Church as they do to the Cemetery. ФОНСТ



position well-known for being poorly paid).

Once visitors had made their way up to the Church they would turn around to take in the magnificent view of London from the roof of the Terrace Catacombs. There are fewer pictures of this as it was difficult to produce an image which adequately conveyed the spectacle, although the dome of St Paul's

might be sketched in for orientation. But it was often referred to in print.

The London Cemetery Company advertised 'the view from the Gothic terrace for thirty miles' as one of the 'objects of peculiar interest and beauty' in the Cemetery, while the *Morning Post* thought it was 'perhaps the finest view of any round the metropolis, surrounded by the most picturesque scenery'. Visitors agreed. One reported that, 'on a fine day, there is the most beautiful and extensive view imaginable. Altogether the scene is quite enchanting, and worth a visit at any time.' Another found 'the beautiful terrace [was] the great object of attraction to all visitors, as commanding an extensive view of the surrounding country.'

Visitors to the cemeteries at Nunhead and West Norwood also noted with appreciation the views of London which they afforded, as also did those to the famous cemetery of Pere-Lachaise, the touchstone of the garden cemetery movement, which had 'a complete view of Paris, lying before you like a map.' Views were part of the cemetery experience.

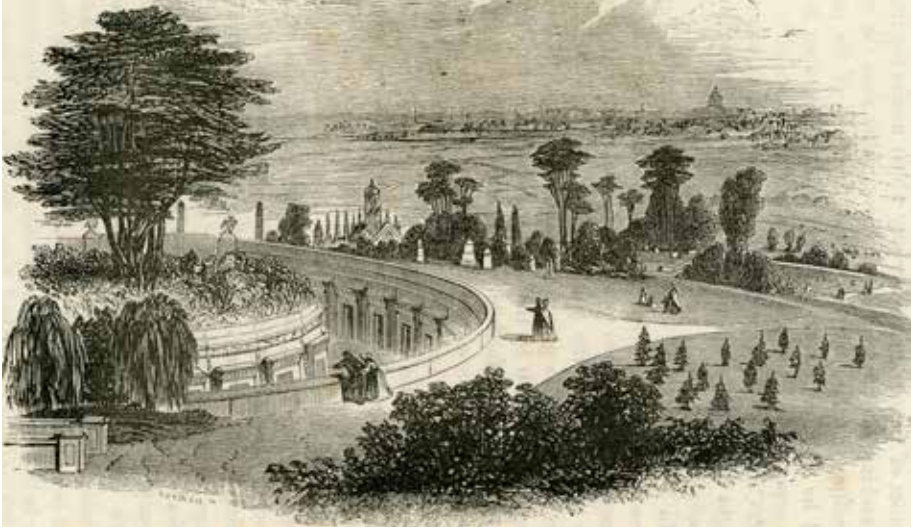


Above 'Highgate Cemetery' from *The Illustrated News of the World*, 15 January 1859. There was no caption to explain that the church was not the cemetery chapel. ФОНСТ



Above The tower and spire of St Michael's were evident even as the trees grew. ФОНСТ

Below The dome of St Paul's Cathedral is clearly indicated on the skyline in this early engraving. The cupola and pinnacles of the Cemetery chapels can be seen too. FOHCT



There was more to this than simple beauty. Such views were made poignant by the contrast of the peaceful city of the dead in the foreground with the noise and bustle of the city of the living below. Highgate offered, according to the *Observer*, 'the most delightful and picturesque spot for the tombs of the departed, overlooking the Great Babylon of modern years.'

The *London Saturday Journal* noted that Cemetery, 'neatly laid out, covers the slope of the hill, looking like a flower-garden,' while, 'in the distance the great metropolis is spread out before the eye, east and west – all its towers, spires, and domes standing conspicuously out from the mass of roofs.'

Perhaps surprisingly it was *The Builder*, the architectural trade journal, which spelled out clearly the effect of the view on the contemplative mind: 'Here in the foreground rest peaceably the dead; among that huge mass of dwellings, which lie like a map below the eye, what cares, what hopes, what pleasures,

and disappointments! A bright ray of sunshine lights up the river Thames, and its crowds of shipping, Shooter's-hill, and other distant parts of the view, and reminds us that active energies are at work, which will effect much good.'

The view of London from the Terrace Catacombs is today blocked by trees, while at Nunhead Cemetery visitors are delighted at the sudden view of St Paul's. Were the view from Highgate Cemetery to be opened up it would no longer be of nineteenth-century London. But that matters not at all. Like the visitor described in *The Builder*, we would still find beauty in the foreground and, in the distance, consolation that our futures lie in the active energies of the living. ■



Conservation update

Being invited to apply for lottery funding was a significant milestone

The Trust's bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund was submitted in August, and we expect to hear the result by the end of December. With any luck we will receive a grant towards the £200,000 development phase of our conservation project. This is the first step to securing larger investment to implement the project.

The project focuses on the cemetery landscape as that is where lies the most urgent need, as well as the conservation of the Egyptian Avenue and the Terrace Catacombs. The result will be a more accessible site better able to welcome a wider range of people.

Selective openings in the tree cover will reveal views and monuments, while increasing plant and habitat diversity. Planting will reflect the historic massing, individual tree positions and blend of

coniferous and deciduous trees, while species will be chosen for their resilience to the effects of climate change and suitability for the soil hydrology.

New surfaces on major paths using historically appropriate materials will help deal with a greater volume of water being released by increasingly frequent storms. Free draining soils and gravel either side of paths can reduce runoff and allow for the infiltration of the rainwater in the ground. Resting points and benches will compensate for the steepness of the site, making it more accessible.

The former Dissenters' Chapel will be reopened as a public space for workshops, events and exhibitions.

All this will stay true to the founding mission of the Trust in seeking to promote the public benefit of Highgate Cemetery. We

Above To reduce run-off, rainwater can be collected in reservoirs beneath the paths from where it can disperse slowly later. Images by Gustafson Porter + Bowman.

Below Following the removal of diseased ash trees, a more open landscape in the East side will provide a greater variety of habitats



hope to connect more meaningfully with local communities and partner with local organisations. We will reveal more stories from more diverse perspectives, and find ways to demonstrate our social impact.

With 36 acres of land and the need to remain open at all times, this will not be a sudden transformation. Nor will it

be cheap. The budget for Phase 1, until 2030, is £18 million. Of this, the Trust plans to contribute £10m of designated reserves, supplemented by (we hope) £6.8m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and £1.2m of additional funding from individuals and charitable trusts. ■



Above Landscape works proposed in Phase 1 including removal of diseased ash and planting enhancements afterwards, as well as renewal of priority paths



Highgate Cemetery Act first steps

The first list of graves in which burial rights are proposed to be extinguished will soon be published, explains IAN DUNGAVELL

The *Highgate Cemetery Act 2022* empowers the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust to extinguish rights of burial and disturb human remains for the purpose of increasing the space for interments and the conservation of Highgate Cemetery. We are calling this process 'grave renewal'. It means the Trust can take back the ownership of graves which are no longer wanted and of the memorials on top of them. New burials can be made in empty graves, on top of part-used graves or in space created by lifting and reintering earlier remains at greater depth.

Such powers are already available to local authority cemeteries in London under various Acts of Parliament, and the *New Southgate Cemetery Act 2017* gave similar

powers to another private cemetery.

Within the consecrated part of the Cemetery, any disturbance of remains is subject to authorisation from the Church of England via the Consistory Court of the Diocese of London. However the Church has taken a realistic approach to the problem. Indeed, the Chancellor of Southwark Diocese has stated that 'there should be an expectation that grave spaces will in due course be reused, and this is necessary to economise on land-use at a time when grave space is a diminishing resource.'

Graves must have been last used over 75 years ago or, if the grave is empty, been sold more than 75 years ago. We must first try to contact the owner by writing to them

at the address recorded in our register. Notices will also be placed in *The Times*, on the Trust's website, at the cemetery entrances, and on or near the grave itself. We will also notify the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Historic England.

There are strong safeguards for owners and relatives. If within six months the owner objects to the extinguishment, it will not proceed. If someone else objects, the consent of the Secretary of State is required. If an objection is received from a relative of any person buried in the grave whose remains are proposed to be disturbed, or the owner of the extinguished or expired right of burial, such disturbance cannot be proposed again for a further period of 25 years.

Heritage is very important too. We do not propose to remove as part of the programme of grave renewal any of the significant memorials which make Highgate Cemetery such a special place. There are about eighty memorials protected by listing, and all pre-1925 memorials in Highgate Cemetery are protected by conservation area designation. And as Historic England and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are notified of all proposals to extinguish rights of burial or disturb remains, it is unlikely that any graves of interest to them would be affected.

We will publish a policy on our website setting out how the Trust will exercise its powers in relation to the removal of memorials. Most of the graves we select for renewal in the early stages will be those with no memorial or where the memorial is extensively damaged. Records would be made of any removed memorial and deposited with the Registrar General. Guidance will be developed to ensure that the design of new memorials on renewed

graves is appropriate to their context.

The Trust wants Highgate to continue as a working cemetery and not become simply a tourist attraction. But neither will it be swamped with new memorials. Renewed graves will be piecemeal insertions rather than comprehensive redevelopment. And we hope that, in addition to providing a small number of private graves, there will also be an opportunity to provide shared ashes burials at a much lower price, thus making a Highgate resting place an option for a larger number of people.

Our first list of graves may seem long, but it is a very tiny fraction of the 53,000 in the Cemetery. There are two main areas we will focus on as well as a number of individual graves dotted around both sides. Several rows in the unconsecrated area of the East side around Marx's former grave are accessible via narrow paths while our other main focus area in the consecrated part of the West side, opposite the gardeners lockups, is less regimented. In both areas there were only a couple of graves which had been used less than 75 years ago (and so are excluded from our list), and many without memorials.

Providing a place of burial is the best way to preserve the special character of Highgate Cemetery and prevent its decline. With their loved ones continuing to be buried here, future generations will value Highgate Cemetery as a spiritual landscape, different in character from other open spaces such as parks. ■

See highgatecemetery.org/future for the official notice with list of graves and their owners. There is also information about how to object to our proposals in relation to individual graves, or how to register interest in graves not yet proposed for renewal.



From the archives

Until recently, this early photograph of Highgate Cemetery was in the collection of the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution. But following a strategic review it has kindly been given to the Trust as a more appropriate permanent home.

The Trust's archives and collection has been put on a professional footing over the last six years by our part-time archivist, Judith Etherton, assisted by a small group of very dedicated volunteers. Items are stored in proper archival materials, and records catalogued on AtoM, a web-based archival description application that is based on International Council on Archives standards.

The photograph shows a view of Highgate Cemetery looking towards St Michael's Church. It has been dated to 1857 by our former Registrar, Justin Bickersteth, who noticed the open grave near the bottom

left-hand corner.

The photographer was Dr John Oakeshott who lived in Highgate High Street and was medical officer of the Hornsey Local Board of Health. He died following an accident on 25 February 1879, leaving a widow and nine children, and is buried in Highgate Cemetery. His funeral attracted a large number of mourners and shops in the Village were closed out of respect.

Oakeshott had been crossing Northumberland Avenue when he was struck by a pole extending from a mineral water delivery van, knocked to the ground, and then trampled by a horse, cracking his skull. Although the judge noted that 'it was hardly sufficiently understood by drivers that the public streets did not belong exclusively to them.' the driver of the van was found not guilty of manslaughter. ■

News roundup

South Gate repaired

Few people noticed that the vehicle gate into the West side of Highgate Cemetery disappeared for several weeks while it was taken away to the heart of Herefordshire for expert conservation repair – such was the quality of its temporary replacement!

Having suffered numerous minor injuries over the years, a recent accident left it needing a comprehensive overhaul. The pictures on this page show the progress of just one of the repairs. A large structural crack was fixed with a carefully-concealed reinforcement and painted over - it's now invisible. The gate is back in place.



Law Commission project on burial, cremation, and new funerary methods

Is the law governing how we dispose of the bodies of our loved ones fit for modern needs? No longer is it just a choice between burial and cremation, as new methods of disposal are being developed and used in other countries which are unregulated here.

Nor does the law ensure that a person's own wishes as to the disposal of their remains are respected. Disputes can also arise as to who is entitled deal with a person's remains.

The new Law Commission project will run until the end of 2027. See <https://lawcom.gov.uk/project/burial-cremation-and-new-funerary-methods>. ■

Historic cemeteries news

What's on at our sister cemeteries



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

Cemetery tours every Sunday at 2pm, £10. For 2024 Programme see brompton-cemetery.org.uk/events.html

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY

Walks restart in March 2024. See www.tbcs.org.uk

KENSAL GREEN

20 Jan. Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens and Friends £25 includes buffet lunch.
24 Feb. Talk: Regency Funerals and Walk: Funerals: Traditions, Customs and

Curiosities. £25 includes buffet lunch. Guided tours 2pm first and third Sunday November to February. £12 donation requested. Booking essential. www.kensalgreen.co.uk

WEST NORWOOD

Guided tours first Sunday of the month: 11am to March; 2.30pm April to October. Donations welcome. Book online. See www.fownc.org.

NUNHEAD

2024 tour programme already on website! Guided tours last Sunday of the month 2pm, donation. See www.fonc.org.uk.

TOWER HAMLETS CEMETERY PARK

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park events are at www.fothcp.org.

Abover The proposed restoration of the East Lodge at Nunhead Cemetery by Roger Mears Architects for Southwark Council. The Nunhead Cemetery Conservation Management Plan has recently been published on the Council website.