

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2020

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The grieving widow on a memorial near Comforts' Corner in Highgate Cemetery West.

Chair's note



First of all a big thank you. To all of you who took part in the vote to support the submission of our Parliamentary Bill, and particularly to those who braved the weather to attend our Extraordinary General Meeting.

We were anxious about whether we would reach the required quorum but in the event more than sixty members came to hear an explanation of the reasons for the Bill and to have their say. It was very good to meet so many of you and we appreciated your support.

But we have also taken note of concerns expressed, particularly about how people can have graves monitored as the generations pass and how the proposed extinguishing of rights can be most effectively publicised. We are considering with our lawyers how we can address them.

The 96 percent vote in favour gives us a powerful platform for the next steps in the Parliamentary process. Currently the Bill has had its largely formal First and Second Readings in the Lords and after an examination to check all is in order it will proceed to a Committee. We will keep you informed as things develop.

Meanwhile back at the Cemetery, nearly five hundred of our friends and neighbours took advantage of our late February Neighbour Day to visit the East in spite of a rainy morning. Neighbour Days are one of the few times when we open the Chester Road Gate to visitors. I am delighted to say that since our last Newsletter Camden have given formal permission for the new structures which will enable us to provide a general exit with electronic entry for Friends and grave-owners. The final details are now being worked out and we are testing systems. We hope to appoint contractors soon.

The impact of coronavirus is still uncertain but we will try to keep open at least for grave-owners and cemetery operations as far as circumstances allow.

Martin Adeney, Chair



A mother's sacrifice

A grieving daughter's appreciation for her mother lies behind the unusual symbolism of a monument in Highgate Cemetery West, discovers STUART ORR

Walking up past Comfort's Corner towards the Egyptian Avenue, many visitors notice on the rising ground to the left a large white monument with a well-preserved relief of a bird with her chicks.

It depicts the legend of a pelican sacrificing herself to save her offspring in times of need by pecking her breast and letting them drink her blood. The story was taken over by Christians as a symbol of Jesus's sacrifice, his blood nourishing the people of the Church, marked by the feast of Corpus Christi.

But whose monument is it? There is nothing on the stone to record who is buried there; at least nothing readable. On each side is a carving of a lyre, suggesting

it was someone musical. On the back there are traces of a long but illegible inscription.

However, below the pelican are the words, 'Ici repose ma meilleure amie, ma mère! — Rosalbina'. ('Here lies my best friend, my mother! — Rosalbina')

This inscription turned out not to be a well-known quotation, but a much more straightforward tribute from a grieving daughter. 'Rosalbina' was Maria Caterina Rosalbina Caradori de Münck, the child of Baron de Münck, from Alsace, who had been a Colonel in the French Army. After her father's death in 1820 when she was twenty, the family was left with relatively little money.

Her mother gave her a musical education

and she became an opera singer, a soprano. She first performed in London in 1822, and in the following year she married Edward Thomas Allan, secretary of the Kings Theatre in London, where she often performed.

Performing as 'Madame Caradori', she was very successful and at one stage earned £1,200 a year, said to be the equivalent of about £90,000 today. In his recent book, *Victorian Vocalists*, Kurt Gänzl describes her as one of the very greatest of Victorian vocalists.

The grave, purchased by her husband, is that of Rosalbina's mother Elizabeth de Münck who died in 1841, aged 79. They lived in neighbouring houses off Fitzroy Square.

The French inscription was included in Frederick Cansick's 1876 book of Highgate epitaphs, but without further identification. As it was also in William Justyne's 1865 guide to the cemetery, who added, 'Close under a spreading tree we notice a curious stone...'.

However, a search of Thomas Dolby's rather eccentric 1845 guide came up trumps. Unusually for him, he provides a description of the grave and what appears to be the missing epitaph together with some biographical details of both mother and daughter.

Dolby recorded that the pedestal was the work of Daniels, the regular Highgate stonemasons, and was about seven foot high and two foot square. He transcribed the epitaph as:

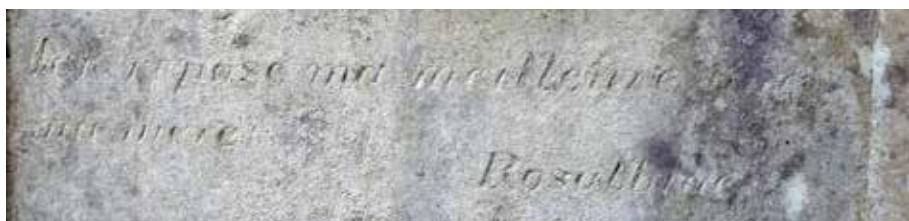
ELIZABETH CHRISTINA BARONESS DE MÜNCK
Widow of Lieut. Colonel the Baron M.X.A.
De MÜNCK,
Chevalier of the Order of St Louis.
She was born at St Petersburgh, 1768.

and continued:

'Madame la Baronne de Münck, the lady to whose memory this monument was raised, was distinguished for musical and other attainments of the highest order, including a knowledge of languages, of which she was reported to have spoken five, fluently. In the various scenes and transactions of a long life, much of which was harassed by the calamities of revolutionary times, she exhibited the resources of a vigorous, cheerful, and intelligent mind; and over all, a probity of principle and amiability of deportment, which endeared her to a great number of ladies of the British aristocracy, her pupils.

Of such mother, no more suitable memento could perhaps have been offered than that which, on this sacred spot, was dedicated to her by her daughter and pupil, — the disciple whom she loved, MADAME CARADORI ALLAN, — whose voice, in the sublimest strains of Sacred Harmony, audiences truly musical are ever delighted to hear.'

Rosalbina died in Surbiton in 1865, three years after her husband and, like him, was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery. ■





A garden of remembrance for the outcast dead

ROBIN OAKLEY admires the work of the Friends of Cross Bones at their memorial garden

Cross Bones Graveyard in Southwark is in many ways the extreme opposite of Highgate Cemetery – small, very old, central, a burial place for the poor, and entirely devoid of original grave monuments (let alone the names of those buried there). In these respects it is closer to what a parish churchyard would have been like in the days when memorialisation was unusual, the antithesis of the modern cemetery.

In the Middle Ages, Cross Bones was one of a number of graveyards on the south bank of the River Thames, in the parish of St Saviour's Church that is now Southwark Cathedral. The area accommodated not only the Bishop of Winchester's Palace and the inmates of 'The Clink' prison, but also those who through poverty and/or profession were unable to live within the City of London, and therefore had to reside in the hovels on the swampy south side of the river.

Prominent among these were the prostitutes who were banned from working in the City, and instead licensed to do so by the Bishop of Winchester who owned



Above

Cross Bones Graveyard on
Rocque's 1746 map of London



St Saviour's and the land around it which constituted 'The Liberty of the Clink'. They were popularly known as the 'Winchester Geese', and worked in the brothels (or 'stews') that lined the alleys lying between the church and London Bridge (the only bridge at that time).

There is some debate as to how closely Cross Bones Graveyard is linked to these excluded women sex workers. Early historians such as John Stow in 1598 wrote of an unconsecrated 'Single Women's Churchyard' in Southwark, and William Taylor in 1833 identified its location on the corner of Redcross Way and Union Street, as now. Excavations by Museum of London archaeologists showed it to be an extremely overcrowded burial ground, with layers of bodies piled up on top of one another, the great majority of whom were women and very young children. However, historian Gillian Tindall has cautioned that there is no hard evidence that the graveyard was specifically linked to the women prostitutes.

By Shakespeare's time the area had become more of a pleasure-ground, and home of theatres such as The Globe. Later, it seems, as the population increased and the demand for burial space grew, the graveyard was used for pauper burials in the parish. Eventually in 1853 the burial

ground was closed: up to fifteen thousand people in all were estimated to have been buried there.

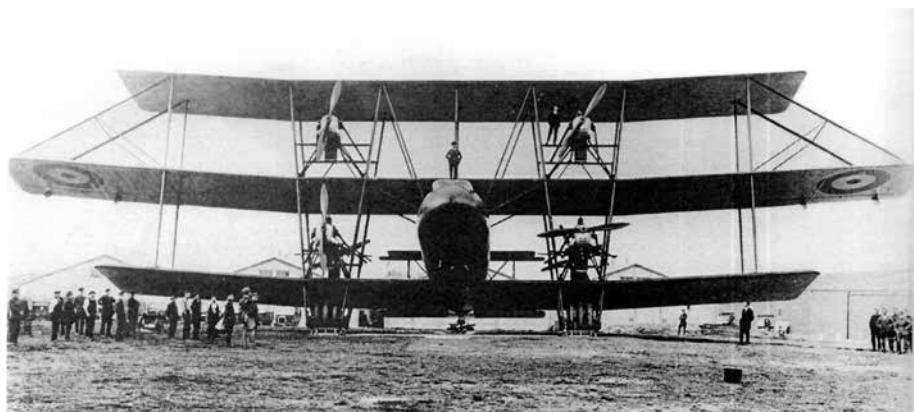
For the next 150 or so years, the site was used for various purposes, and latterly for warehousing. Then around 2000 a local group, the Friends of Cross Bones, campaigned successfully to turn it into a permanent memorial garden, and they now manage the site under the aegis of the Bankside Open Spaces Trust. Events are held, entry is free, and the graveyard gates are covered with ribbons and messages inspired by the history of outcast women in Southwark.

Despite the many differences between Highgate and Cross Bones, there are similarities too, not least of which is that the futures of both were secured by volunteers. Also, Highgate too has a history of burials of outcast women, albeit on a far more limited scale. A small number of women from the Highgate Penitentiary for Women (where Christina Rossetti worked) were buried from 1862 onwards in an unmarked grave just inside the West Cemetery by the wall on Faraday Path. ■



Above

Plaque photo © Max Reeves



An unfortunate end for the largest airplane in the world

RUSS HOWELLS uncovers the fascinating story of an aircraft engineer buried in the East Cemetery

There are at Highgate Cemetery over three hundred graves of military personnel who died in the UK as the result of wounds or diseases suffered or contracted during the hostilities of WWI or WWII. Many are marked by the standard Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone, while others are family graves with their own memorials.

In the East Cemetery is the grave of Captain Percy Townley Rawlings DSC who contributed to early aeronautical engineering development. It is on the left of the main path leading to Karl Marx in the second row behind the large vault of John Morris with its cross on top.

In 1910 he went to Woolwich Arsenal as an advanced workshop student, and in the following year he obtained a commission in the Royal Engineers (RE). In 1912 he entered the Public Works Department of the Sudan Government, and during

1913-14 acted as engineer to the Egyptian Irrigation Service on the construction of the Blue Nile Dam.

On the outbreak of the War he was sent to France as Lieutenant in the 2nd Field Company of the Royal Engineers, being transferred in the following year to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve for engineering duties with the Royal Naval Air Service. In this capacity he took part in a successful attack on the Turkish-German fleet lying off Constantinople in July 1917. One of Germany's major ships, the battlecruiser *Goeben*, was hit and damaged. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his part in this action.

He returned to the UK joining the Experimental Department, Aircraft Production at Farnborough. His next role was with W.G. Tarrant Ltd, a well-known

property developer and building contractor at Byfleet, Surrey, which also built aircraft components during the First World War.

Tarrant had been involved in the design and construction of a new bomber sufficiently long-range to be able to bomb Berlin. The aircraft, the Tarrant Tabor triplane, was for a short while the largest in the world. It had three wings, one above the other, supporting six Napier Lion 450hp engines. Four were attached between the lower and middle wing assembly and two between the middle and upper assembly. The rear two lower engines had four-blade pusher propellers. With a length of 73ft and a wingspan of 101ft 3inches, it had a top speed of one hundred miles an hour.

However, the war ended before the plane was ready for military service, so it was to be adapted for commercial use. Rawlings became General Manager of Tarrant's aircraft department and assisted with the design. The plane had successfully completed wind tunnel tests, but things did not go so well with the trial flight.

Before sunrise on 26 May 1919 the giant plane was positioned ready at Farnborough aerodrome. On board were the senior pilot Captain F. G. Dunn, assistant pilot Rawlings and five other crew members. The *Daily Mail* reported that 'Taxi-ing some distance along the ground preparatory to take-off, the machine failed to rise and dug its nose into the soil.'



Above

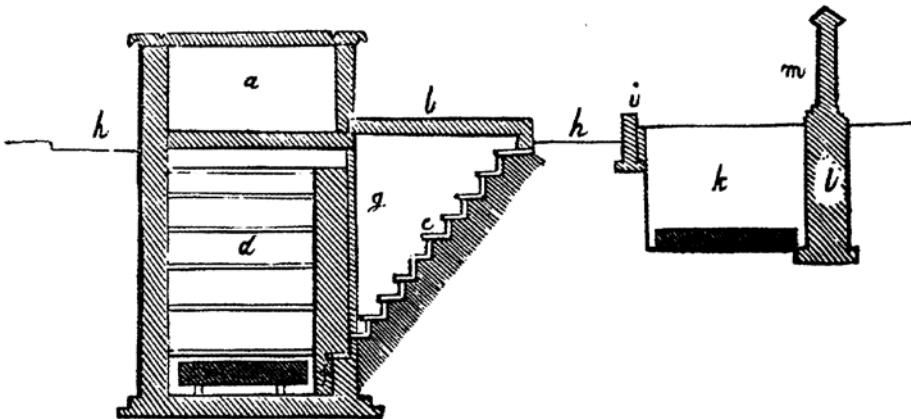
The sole Tarrant Tabor F1765 pictured after its crash in 1919

It appears that the plane started with only the lower four engines running which did not provide sufficient power to lift it off the ground. The upper engines were started yet the aircraft not only failed to rise from the runway but nosedived into the ground, projecting its massive tail into the air. Tarrant was reported as saying that 'the top pair of engines were started too quickly, with the result that they pulled the aeroplane onto her nose. They were supposed only to be ticking-over while the machine was on the ground. The aeroplane is wrecked beyond repair.'

While Rawlings died from his injuries within an hour of reaching hospital, Captain Dunn lasted two days longer. He was buried with full military honours at Aldershot. None of the other crew members suffered more than minor injuries. Rawlings was buried in an existing family grave at Highgate.

While the *Daily Mail* reported that 'a second example of the same type is now under construction', not surprisingly this was later cancelled. ■





Loudon and cemeteries

JAMES STEVENS CURL describes ‘the most amazing and comprehensive book ever written on cemeteries,’ which he has just republished

John Claudius Loudon (1783–1843), Scots agriculturist, encyclopædist, landscape-gardener, horticulturist, architect, influential critic, and polymath, ‘conducted’ *The Gardener’s Magazine* from 1826. There he published a series of articles in 1843 entitled ‘The Principles of Landscape-Gardening and of Landscape-Architecture applied to the Laying out of Public Cemeteries and the Improvement of Churchyards, including Observations of the Working and General Management of Cemeteries and Burial-Grounds’, and this, edited, formed the basis of his 1843 book, *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries; and on the Improvement of Churchyards. With Sixty Engravings*, the most exhaustive tome ever written on the subject, and a mine of information, which includes detailed ideas for landscaping cemeteries that were widely followed.

It carried not only descriptions of cemeteries, but articles on almost every aspect of cemetery design, including shuttering for graves, planting, layouts, buildings, and so on. It should be

remembered that when Loudon was active, cemeteries were relatively new phenomena: although the desirability of establishing large cemeteries (as opposed to small churchyards) had been argued for some time, nothing much was done in London until the ferocious arrival of Asiatic Cholera in 1831 concentrated minds: in the 1830s and early 1840s Parliament authorised the formation of five commercial cemetery companies in the London area alone.

It is interesting that Loudon was favourably disposed towards the innovations of Edward Buxton (c.1816–65), later Secretary of the London Cemetery Company, which owned the Cemetery of St James, Highgate. For some eighteen years, until his death, Buxton practised an ingenious system of fraud and forgery, issuing bogus ‘shares’ and dipping his grasping hands in the till as often as possible. Not until after he had died did the Company find that the colossal sum of £18,179 3s. 2d. was missing, a disaster that almost ruined it, and from which it never really recovered.

Top Loudon’s drawing of a brick vault with monument over and steps down, *left*, and a common grave with footstone and headstone, *right*

Loudon's concept of the cemetery as a landscape-garden/arboretum, with all plants clearly labelled, was part of his belief in mass-education and improvement of tone in society, and he argued that once cemeteries were full they should become places of contemplation and quietness, with the monuments conserved rather than swept away.

'Churchyards and cemeteries', Loudon wrote, 'are scenes not only calculated to improve the morals and the taste, and by their botanical riches to cultivate the intellect; but they serve as *historical records*'. Indeed, one might be forgiven for gleaning the impression that there was no aspect of life which could not be improved by cemeteries, which were claimed to be educational, capable of raising tone, and bringing untold benefits. Yet while his obsessions about hygiene are ever-prevalent, he constantly emphasised that cemeteries could improve the sensibilities of all classes, but *more especially those of the great masses of society*.

Throughout, his views on cemeteries were dictated by hygiene, by the need to allow for the free passage of air over the surface of the ground (to dry it and carry away 'noxious vapours'), by efficient drainage, by logical layouts for ease of keeping records, and by the necessity of not disturbing bodies once they were interred.

He opposed the creation of mausolea, vaults, or catacombs, as he predicted such structures would become targets for vandals (how right he was!): indeed, buildings in which dead bodies were deposited could soon become wasting assets, and unless adequate sums of money were provided for their upkeep, would inevitably be very considerable liabilities.

He believed cremation would one day become universal: cemeteries, however, with clever landscaping and appropriate monuments, could eventually become public parks, permanent places of resort, yet with historical and mnemonic aspects essential to the wellbeing of society. ■

Only a few copies of the fine, limited, numbered, enlarged, indexed, hardback, facsimile edition of Loudon's great 1843 book, *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries ...* with an illustrated Introductory Essay by James Stevens Curl, and a Foreword by Ian Dungavell, are still available at £80 inc. p&p (UK only) from Professor James Stevens Curl, 15 Torgrange, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 0NG, UK, tel: 028 90 425 141, e-mail: jscurl@btinternet.com. Crossed cheques or postal-orders payable to James Stevens Curl, or cash, please (if the last, please send Special Delivery Royal Mail). For orders outside the UK postage will be charged: information obtained from jscurl@btinternet.com



Above 'Mr Jukes's Truck-Hearse', a carriage for walking funerals, drawn by two people in front.
'It would be a great blessing to the poor.'

The lost Dickens

JOHN SHEPPERD finds that this exciting discovery has a Highgate Cemetery connection

The discovery of a lost portrait of Charles Dickens is one of the most remarkable artistic stories of recent years. It had last been seen in public in 1844 when it was shown at the Royal Academy and then disappeared completely.

In 2017, Philip Mould's gallery in London received a parcel from South Africa. Inside was a miniature painting which had been found in a box of trinkets. Despite being dirty and covered with a 'virulent yellow mould', it was soon recognised as that of Dickens last seen over 170 years ago.

Philip Mould said, 'the subject fixes you with an arresting gaze, boring into you with the same eyes that recorded a wealth of material about his life and times.'

But how did it end up in South Africa? The story that unfolded has a Highgate Cemetery connection through one of our residents, George Henry Lewes, the long-time partner of George Eliot.

The painting, by well-known miniaturist Margaret Gillies, was done in autumn 1843 when the 31 year-old Dickens was busy writing *A Christmas Carol*. Yet already by 1886, when she was asked about the whereabouts of the painting, Gillies said she had 'lost sight' of it. Until now it was known only by a simplified black-and-white print as the frontispiece of a book entitled *New Spirit of the Age* (1844).

The South African connection comes through the family of George Henry Lewes. He had three sons from his marriage prior to his scandalous relationship with George



Eliot. Eliot and Lewes knew Gillies well, evident when Gillies' adopted daughter Gertrude married Lewes' eldest son Charles in 1864. Lewes' two younger sons emigrated to South Africa to try their luck in the colony — Thornton in 1863, and Herbert in 1866 — and the assumption is that the portrait went with them. Establishing a new life was hard and so the portrait may have been sold, or gifted to one of the families who gave them much needed help.

Restoration of the portrait was successful and after a fund-raising campaign it was acquired by the Charles Dickens Museum at 38 Doughty Street, where it is now on permanent display. ■



The new Cedar of Lebanon

At just a couple of metres tall, the weight of expectation on this young tree's shoulders is enormous. The soil around it will soon blossom into a wildflower meadow. ■

News roundup



Children playing in Highgate Cemetery

The Friends of Highgate Library recently screened *One Two Three*, a short film made in 1975 about the pioneering Children's Centre in Dartmouth Park Hill. A group of mothers managed, with some support from Camden Council, to set up a nursery in a house which was due to be demolished as part of the comprehensive redevelopment of Highgate New Town.

The film as a whole is certainly worth watching, (how much progress in childcare is still to be made!) but there are also some fascinating glimpses of Highgate Cemetery as the children go on a beetle hunt around Karl Marx, and later play with a discarded record player near Harry Thornton's piano, almost engulfed by mare's tail.

Produced by Sue Crockford, edited by Margaret Dickinson, and made by Liberation Films, the original 16mm film has been transferred to video and is now available at the London Community Video Archive at <http://www.the-lcva.co.uk>.

Marx to be mended

In February last year vandals attacked the Marx memorial with paint and a sledgehammer. While the paint was quickly cleaned off, it has taken a little longer to work out what to do with the damaged central panel which was the original Marx family gravestone.

With the generous assistance of Historic England, specialist conservation advice was obtained. The Marx Grave Trust now proposes to install protective glass to deter future vandals and prevent ultraviolet light damaging the repairs.

The next step is to apply for consent from Camden Council, as the memorial is Grade 1-listed. In the meantime a clever photograph of the missing panel continues to ensure that the memorial does not disappoint visitors.

A new mausoleum on Cuttings Road

Plans are afoot to erect a new mausoleum facing Cuttings Road in the West Cemetery. It would take the form of an open-fronted stone temple with two Doric columns, sheltering double sarcophagi stacked one above each other either side of a central area with a seat. The new building would add drama and enhance its setting by creating a pivot in the journey down Cuttings Road. To be erected for a private client, the architect is Craig Hamilton, designer also of the Goldhammer Sepulchre in the Courtyard. Construction should begin later this year.

'Sanctuary'

There are some exciting big ideas starting to come together about what changes should be made at Highgate Cemetery following our Conservation Plan.

Already we are thrilled that our tours gain a huge number of five-star ratings from visitors, but what else should we do to be a 'five-star cemetery'? That's not only a question of additional facilities; it's about how it feels to be here. It's about the character that makes Highgate Cemetery special and distinctive.

We've picked out four key values we think are essential to preserve and enhance: Highgate Cemetery should be enchanting, respectful, nurturing and visionary.

Enchanting as we are thinking about the specialness of the place and our presentation and interpretation of it. Not just its beauty and atmosphere, but also the great stories we tell.

Respectful as we think about how we deal with the dead and the bereaved and their memories, and the history of the place.

Nurturing is about how we treat our people – visitors, volunteers and staff – and provide for their physical, emotional and intellectual needs. And of course it's also about nurturing the place by encouraging biodiversity, and nurturing the world by reducing negative environmental impacts.

And, finally, being **visionary** is about being outward and forward looking. While we are rooted in the past, we have to be focused on the future.

All that is easy to say, but it will be much harder to achieve. The values come together under a central organising thought: **sanctuary**. As a garden of memories, a peaceful haven, the Highgate Cemetery of the future will be a precious 'landscape of love'.



Praying for deliverance

There is a constant tension in the grounds of Highgate Cemetery as monuments are at risk from the self-set trees which have been allowed to establish themselves over the decades. Rarely is it so clear as in this example when a praying woman came face to face with a leaning cherry tree which threatened her with oblivion. Squeezed tightly between memorials, the base of its trunk had become rotten but, thankfully, its fall was gradual and our gardening team was able to intervene before any damage was done.

New admission and tour prices

New prices will be introduced from 1 April. East Cemetery admission will now be £4.50 for adults and 50p for children 8 to 17 years. West Cemetery tours will be £14 for adults and £7 for children. This is due to inflation since they last went up in 2013! ■

Historic cemeteries news

What's on at our sister cemeteries

ABNEY PARK

5 April 2pm History tour with Sam Perrin
19 April 5.45am Dawn Chorus Bird Walk
19 April 9am Spring Birdsong Walk
Tours and special events are advertised on their website. Details: www.abneypark.org

BROMPTON

Regular **guided tours** start 2pm in the Meeting Place, North Lodge. £8 donation. 12, 26 April; then every Sunday from May to August.
19 July Open Day, including tours of the catacombs and much more. Full details see brompton-cemetery.org.uk.

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY

Guided tours first Sunday of every month from March to November at 2pm leaving from the Society lodge adjacent to the Cemetery Office. £4 donation requested. www.tbccs.org.uk

KENSAL GREEN

Guided tours normally at 2pm every Sunday afternoon from March to October; first and third Sunday of the month from November to February. Tours begin at the Anglican Chapel in the centre of the grounds, and finish around two hours later at the Dissenters' Chapel, £7 suggested donation. No need to book. **Other events** still to be announced. www.kensalgreen.co.uk

WEST NORWOOD

Guided tours first Sunday of the month at 2.30pm from April to October. Tours start at the Cemetery Main Gate, Norwood Road, SE27 and last about 90 minutes.

Talks start at 2.30pm at the Old Library, 14-16 Knights Hill, SE27. Note new venue! Date for your diary: Sat 17 October 2020 AGM and Lecture: *In Pursuit of Special Interest – Identifying the stars of cemetery memorials* by Roger Bowdler www.fownc.org

NUNHEAD

Guided tours last Sunday of the month at 2pm for up to two hours. Free.
8 April 2pm Cemetery symbols tour
10 May 2pm WWII Commemoration walk
16 May 11am to 5pm: Annual Open Day
24 May 2pm Chapel Crypt tour
Full programme see www.fonc.org.uk.

TOWER HAMLETS

Guided tours third Sunday of the month at 2pm. Free. Many other events relate to nature, such as birds, insects, and trees.
4 July 2020, 12pm to 5pm: Summer Fair
For the full programme see www.fothcp.org

In all cases it would be worth checking the website before travelling to see if events have been cancelled due to the coronavirus emergency.