

# NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2021



**HIGHGATE  
CEMETERY.**

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## With thanks to

Martin Adeney, Penny Linnett, Robin Oakley, Stuart Orr, Brian Parsons, John Shepperd.

The December 2021 issue will be posted on 19 November 2021. Contributions are due by 14 October 2021.

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## Cover photograph

Phyllida Barlow, *act*, 2021, Installation view at Highgate Cemetery. A Studio Voltaire commission. Image courtesy of the artist, Studio Voltaire and Hauser & Wirth. *Photo: Benedict Johnson*

## Chair's note



It is going to be a fascinating and formative few months for the Cemetery. As you will have read, we have chosen two world class architectural practices to help us draw up a plan for our landscape, safeguard our architectural heritage and also to suggest discreet additions to improve our facilities.

At the same time our Parliamentary Bill has completed its crucial Second Reading in the House of Commons with only minor amendments and we are hopeful that it could become law this year.

At the Cemetery, we have resumed tours, for up to ten people. While visitor numbers are still considerably down, our takings are holding up better as a result of free-range visiting in the West. Down just 14 percent so far on the pre-Covid year. It is a great achievement but we still need more volunteers.

Meanwhile the courtyard will be invigorated until the end of August by the art installation by Dame Phyllida Barlow which is drawing lots of interest and helping some of us reflect on the nature of commemoration. Do come and see.

We are delighted with the sympathetic approach of the two architectural practices we have chosen — Gustafson Porter + Bowman for the Landscape Plan and Hopkins Architects for the architectural and monumental side. We believe they will work with the grain of the Cemetery. We have already exhibited some of Gustafson's preliminary ideas and they are on the website. The next step is for us to consult in detail with the two practices, sharing ideas and working out exactly what we are going to do together.

So a word of caution. You won't be seeing anything in the very near future — plans or construction — although investigation work has begun. But as soon as we can, we will share ideas for comment and, no doubt, refinement.

**Martin Adeney**, Chair



## Stacked, bound and balanced

**A temporary installation by sculptor Phyllida Barlow has been unveiled at Highgate Cemetery**

The five-metre tall sculpture, entitled *act*, is dramatically-sited in the courtyard. This is a rare opportunity to encounter large-scale work by this leading international artist in an extraordinary location.

'A tower of fabric wrapped poles is enclosed within a commanding structure of sombre, concrete screed panels flecked with colourful paint,' according to Studio

Voltaire, the not-for-profit arts organisation which commissioned the work.

'Knitted together, these bulwarks of material create an imposing, sepulchral form. However, their exposed supporting frameworks reveal stage-set properties, undermining any initial appearance of monumentality.'

'Barlow's structures of stacked, bound



and balanced materials have an imposing physical presence and yet often appear at the edge of collapse. Her assemblages are formed of inexpensive industrial or everyday materials — cardboard, fabric, timber, polystyrene, plaster, scrim and cement — painted in vibrant colours, the seams of their construction at times left visible.’

‘Tensions in Barlow’s work between transformation, entropy and precarity resonate strongly with the chosen site’s character and surrounding monuments. Her commission is both a dramatic and contemplative response to the elaborate, melancholic funerary architecture of the cemetery, and will bring audiences into unexpected dialogues with a landmark site.’

The sculpture is formed around a freestanding steel frame which is weighted by ballast. A column of timber poles, bound with scrim dipped in cement and poly cotton, is fixed within a wider structure clad in plywood sheets, rendered with a flecked cement screed.



In a career stretching over fifty years, Barlow has worked with inexpensive, everyday materials to create large sculptural installations such as timber, metal, polystyrene, canvas, cardboard and rope. Barlow enjoys juxtaposing familiar objects with abstract sculptural forms, playfully challenging audiences to explore their own understanding of sculpture.

This year Barlow was awarded a damehood in the Queen’s birthday honours list. Although she has long been respected among British artists, having taught at the Slade School in London for many years, she came to international prominence relatively late in her career. She became a Royal Academician in 2011 and was awarded a CBE for her services to the arts in 2015. In 2017, she represented the United Kingdom at the Venice Biennale. ■

*The installation will be open from 10am to 5pm every day until 30 August 2021. Entrance is free but tickets are required to visit the rest of the Cemetery.*


  
 IN THE  
 DEAR MEMORY OF  
 MY HUSBAND  
**GABRIELE ROSSETTI.**  
 BORN AT VASTO ABRUZZO  
 IN THE KINGDOM OF NAPLES  
 23<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 1783  
 DIED IN LONDON 35<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 1836.  
 ALSO OF  
**FRANCES MARY LAVINIA,**  
 BORN APRIL 27<sup>TH</sup> 1800 DIED APRIL 20<sup>TH</sup> 1886.

ALSO OF  
**WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI.**  
 SON OF THE ABOVE  
 BORN 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER 1827.  
 DIED 3<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 1912.  
 KING-SEEK THE RECALIBRATION OF ITALIAN UNITY

**HAROLD FORD  
 ROSSETTI**  
 1921-1909 TO 07.1936

**GEOFFREY WILLIAM ROSSETTI**  
 BORN 15 OCT 1902. DIED 28 DEC 1983  
 LOVE NEVER FAILS  
 AND OF  
**DORA BRANDRETH**  
 WIFE OF  
**CAROL ARTHUR ROSSETTI**


  
 THE BODY OF  
 MARY ANN  
 WIFE OF  
 JOHN ANN  
 BORN 1780  
 DIED 1840

# Lizzie Siddal's moving epitaph

**STUART ORR discovers that monuments can evolve in unexpected ways**

The Rossetti grave at Highgate attracts a steady stream of visitors interested in the activities and achievements of this notable family, and perhaps also curious to see the site of the fabled exhumation. Family correspondence now gives us a useful insight into how they managed the complexities of commemoration.

In 1854 the first burial in the grave was the patriarch of the family, Gabriele Rossetti. His son, Dante Gabriel, seems to have been charged with the design of the monument, writing to his younger brother, William, shortly afterwards, 'Tell Mama I have been thinking about the Tombstone, but I have not been able yet to invent anything that satisfies me. I shall not forget it.' But this is the only indication to suggest his authorship.

Rossetti's monument took the form of a headstone with angled shoulders topped with a quatrefoil containing the sacred monogram, IHS. The inscription began, 'To the Dear Memory of My Husband, Gabriele Rossetti', suggesting that his wife's epitaph would follow in the space underneath in due course.

However when Dante's wife Elizabeth (Lizzie Siddal) died unexpectedly in 1862 and was buried in the Rossetti grave, it was her epitaph which took the space originally intended for that of Dante's mother, Frances. As transcribed by Frederick

Cansick in 1872 it directly refers to Gabriel above:

Also to the memory of  
Elizabeth Eleanor  
Wife of D.G. Rossetti  
(Eldest son of the above)

Who departed on the 11th February, 1862,  
Aged 30

When Dante Rossetti himself died twenty years later, he was buried at Birchington, where he died, rather than in the family plot. So it was not until 1884 when his mother died that the grave received its next occupant, and the family had to deal with the problem of how to commemorate her on the memorial.

Christina Rossetti wrote to her brother William to seek his views, including a sketch showing that the epitaphs of her father and of Lizzie filled the headstone. As both wanted to keep the original stone in some form, Christina suggested two options.

One was to place a 'semi-recumbent slab' in front, on which presumably would be placed the inscription to their mother. The other was more involved: '... I dare say the surface might be cut away from just above where the present inscription begins, and replaced with stone on which the whole could be recut and the fresh words added in due proportion and order: I should in this case make it run Papa, Mama, Lizzie'.



**Below** Christina sets out her first thoughts on options for the family grave. University of British Columbia (Rare Books and Special Collections)

I don't seem to have much more to say. On Thursday I have some hopes of getting to Highgate and taking in hand my painful pleasure there. If I remember at all accurately the limits of the actual inscription, I think it is something thus: perhaps it might be possible to add a semi-recumbent slab if you can make out what I mean. Or else I dare say the surface might be cut away from just above where the present inscription begins, and refaced with stone on



which the whole could be recut and the fresh words added in due proportion and order: I should in this case make it run Papa Mamma Lizzie: - perhaps the stonemason may have something to suggest.

She included a sketch showing the headstone and the proposed angled slab. Some weeks later, Christina visited the grave with the manager of Daniel's, the stonemasons. He too had thought of adding a slab but 'quite a new idea' had come up of replacing the headstone with a gabled granite monument ornamented with a large

**Below** Daniel's proposal for a new granite slab. University of British Columbia (Rare Books and Special Collections)

If all this I should do away with the actual stone, and have the entire grave covered by polished granite in that sort of shape,



cross which would cover the entire surface of the grave. Christina included a rough sketch of the design in a letter to William.

It would cost £20 to alter the present headstone and add a slab, while the granite monument would cost £50. However, the new stone would need no maintenance, according to Daniels, and save the annual charge of 7s 6d for care of the 'garden' (and providing an endowment to cover this for in perpetuity would have cost £70).

'I incline to think this would on the whole be my wisest choice, but I want your opinion before coming to any decision,' she wrote to William. 'I, like you, should cling to the old original stone, were it not that I fear it might not prove adequately enduring even after my effort at endowment, — besides, the difference in cost is not immaterial.'

In the end they decided to keep the original stone but, without sufficient room for three inscriptions, it had to be supplemented by an angled slab in front. The question for Christina was the 'due proportion and order' of the names. With her husband buried elsewhere, Lizzie's prominence on the grave may now have seemed inappropriate.

The stone was recut with Frances Rossetti's epitaph in its rightful place on the headstone beneath that of her husband. Lizzie's was moved to the angled stone and subtly changed to reflect that fact that now Frances was recorded above her:



**Below** The Rossetti and Madox Brown graves in 1908. From *Untrodden English Ways* by Henry C. Shelley



Also to the memory of  
Elizabeth Eleanor  
Wife of their eldest son  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti  
Who died February 11th, 1862  
Aged 30 Years

After Christina died in 1894 her epitaph was added on the angled stone below that of Lizzie. But when William Rossetti died in 1919, that was not good enough for him. The original Rossetti headstone was heightened by the insertion of a new piece of stone with space just large enough

to commemorate him, the last surviving member of the direct family.

Other smaller changes have taken place over the years. When Mackenzie Bell, Christina's biographer, visited in 1896 he noted that the stone was painted white; a photograph of 1908 shows the words picked out in dark paint. In 1904 a bronze portrait medallion of Gabriele was added on the fiftieth anniversary of his death (since disappeared). But, most oddly, later recutting has mistakenly altered his birth year from 1854 to 1851. ■



## Competitions update

**The winning teams have been announced, reports MARTIN ADENEY**

Highgate Cemetery has chosen Gustafson Porter + Bowman (GP+B) and Hopkins Architects to work with us on a long-term plan that will ensure the Cemetery is fit for the twenty-first century. Both practices demonstrated a level of sensitivity and respect for the Cemetery which is fundamental to the success of any plans. They appreciate the long-term nature of the project, whilst also bringing the experience and the technical expertise we need.

The project will be led by the landscape and its needs, and the architectural requirements will ensure listed monuments and historic buildings are well cared for, as well as exploring how to get the most out of the site and, where required, providing improved facilities. We will now work on more detailed plans, and will keep you updated on them. There will be opportunities for everyone to comment as the plans take shape. ■





**Top** GP+B's competition submission envisaged reopening some of the historic vistas towards central London.

**Above** The Hopkins proposals will take into account the underlying geometry of the Cemetery in order to enhance its special quality.

# The forgotten Pankhurst boys

**ROBIN OAKLEY** discovers a Highgate link with one of the most important women of her time



**Above** Emmeline Pankhurst's grave in Brompton Cemetery

Emmeline Pankhurst, the tireless campaigner for women's rights, died in 1928, just three weeks before the passing of the law giving women over twenty-one the right to vote. Her grave in Brompton Cemetery must be one of its most visited. Surprisingly, her two sons, who both died young, are buried far from their mother at Highgate Cemetery.

Their forgotten grave, in the north-east corner of the East Cemetery, is not easy to find. The stone has fallen over, is broken and extremely worn. It is only with difficulty that the names of the two boys, Frank and Harry, can be made out along with the rest of the inscription identifying them as 'the beloved sons of Richard Marsden Pankhurst LL.D. and Emmeline Pankhurst'.

Their parents were married in 1879 in Manchester, Emmeline's native city, where Richard worked as a lawyer. He was then aged 45; she only 21. Both came from radical families with a strong commitment to women's suffrage. Their first four children were born in Manchester: Christabel (1880-1958); Sylvia (1882-1960), Henry Francis Robert, known as Frank (1884-8), and Adela (1885-1961).

In 1886 they moved to London to live in Hampstead Road. Richard became increasingly involved in politics and Emmeline opened a small 'fancy goods' shop to try to make ends meet. Two years later Frank, aged four, contracted diphtheria and died; faulty drainage at the house was blamed. His parents were devastated and could not bear to erect a



memorial over his grave.

The family then moved to Russell Square. Emmeline became pregnant again and a second son was born in 1889. He was given the same formal names – Henry Francis – in honour of his brother Frank, but within the family was known as Harry. Described as a gentle child, Harry grew up in the shadow of his three older sisters, and, being seen as the reincarnation of his older brother, was the apple of both parents' eyes.

In 1893 they moved back to Manchester where Emmeline became increasingly involved in suffrage and other political work. But in 1898 Richard became ill and died, leaving Emmeline an impoverished single mother with four children. She remained in Manchester until 1907, but then moved back to London, using it as her base for extensive travelling in pursuit of the suffrage cause.

Harry, the youngest, did not do well at school. Emmeline made several attempts to apprentice him to a trade, but he much preferred being involved in suffrage and similar activities. In 1909 he was apprenticed to a farm in Essex, but was taken ill with symptoms of poliomyelitis, which left him paralysed from the waist



**Above** Emmeline Pankhurst with Harry, c.1890  
(Image: LSE Library)

**Below** The grave of the Pankhurst boys in the East Cemetery (Photo: Robin Oakley)



down. Emmeline was desolate, but felt she had to press on with her work, not least to raise money for medical fees.

However, Harry did not recover, and died on 5 January 1910 with his mother at his bedside. Three days later, he was buried alongside Frank. Emmeline asked Sylvia to arrange a memorial for her brother and to choose the wording for the inscription, while she distracted herself from her grief with her busy schedule of suffragist work.

But Emmeline was clear where she herself wanted to be buried: 'Sylvia,' she said, 'remember, when my time comes, I want to be put with my two boys.' How was it then that she ended up in Brompton Cemetery? By that time estranged from her mother, it may have been that Sylvia did not pass her wishes on. I have been unable to find out.

At least the boys ended up closer to their mother than their father or any of their siblings: Richard was buried in Manchester; Sylvia in Addis Abbaba, Ethiopia; Christabel in Santa Monica, California, and Adela in Sydney, Australia. ■



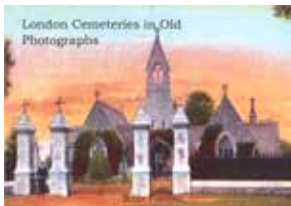
## Historic pictures of London cemeteries



*London Cemeteries in Old Photographs* is a new limited-edition book by Brian Parsons. It draws together a large number of many previously unseen images depicting cemetery buildings and landscapes that have changed, completely disappeared or occasionally remained the same. Of course there are several very interesting images of Highgate Cemetery included.

It has been published to complement the new sixth edition of *London Cemeteries: An Illustrated Guide and Gazetteer* by Hugh Meller and Brian Parsons which is due in November 2021.

*London Cemeteries in Old Photographs* is available for £12 from the Highgate Cemetery shop or online direct from the author at [www.brianparsons.co.uk](http://www.brianparsons.co.uk). ■



**Top** The entrance to Highgate Cemetery East in the 1960s. **Centre** Cheylesmore mausoleum in 1956. (Both images © Brian Parsons)

# News roundup



## New trustees

We are very pleased to welcome three new trustees to the board of the Charity. *Liz Fuller* (left) is a grave owner who worked as a solicitor for almost twenty years before starting a new career in building conservation. *John Robinson* (centre) has extensive experience as a finance director in both businesses and charities, and also as a trustee. *Stephen Smith* (right) has forty years of experience as a professional horticulturalist as well as teaching garden history and garden conservation.

Such skills and experience will be invaluable to the board as we move forward with our plans to look after the Cemetery.

## Updated Articles of Association

At the AGM members voted to update the Charity's Articles of Association. Some largely minor statutory and procedural changes were made, as well as the removal of the role of the Protectors.

This change was fully supported by the incumbent Protectors, who wrote that: 'The Cemetery is now well set, with the Private Bill, the Conservation Plan, the

Project Director, and the landscape and architectural competitions. We believe that a professional management team, guided strategically by properly elected and appointed Trustees accountable to the members, is the best way forward for the Cemetery.'

## And thanks are due

At the AGM in July we also bid farewell to three trustees, April Cameron, Charles Essex and Lucy Lelliott. We are grateful for their many and varied contributions during their terms of office. We would also like to thank Dr Tye Blackshaw, Richard Morris and Philip Williams who stood down as Protectors following the adoption of our new Articles of Association.

## Dead: The East Cemetery Companion

Written by volunteers, this 36-page booklet provides potted biographies and grave locations for over fifty permanent residents of the East Cemetery, keenly-priced at £3.50. Who's in and who's not will no doubt be controversial, but volunteers are already keen to produce a second volume. ■

# Historic cemeteries news

## What's on at our sister cemeteries



Sheffield General Cemetery

### **ABNEY PARK**

The visitor centre has reopened and in-person events have restarted. See [www.abneypark.org](http://www.abneypark.org)

### **BROMPTON**

Guided tours 2pm every Sunday in August; then 12, 26 September; 10, 24 October; 7, 21 November. £8.

See [brompton-cemetery.org.uk](http://brompton-cemetery.org.uk).

### **BROOKWOOD CEMETERY**

Sun 5 Sep and 3 Oct at 2pm: choose from 'Indian subcontinent', 'Mausoleum walk', South Cemetery, 'Artists Walk', 'Prominent Women' and introductory walk' See [www.tbcs.org.uk/walks.HTM](http://www.tbcs.org.uk/walks.HTM). £4 booking required

### **KENSAL GREEN**

Tours 2pm Sundays until 31 October; fortnightly November to February. £12. Booking essential. [www.kensalgreen.co.uk](http://www.kensalgreen.co.uk)

### **WEST NORWOOD**

Tours have resumed and now require booking. First Sunday of the month: 2.30pm April to October; 11am November to March. See [www.fownc.org](http://www.fownc.org).

### **NUNHEAD**

A programme of monthly walks has been published, but places are limited to 5 and booking is essential. 4 Sep: Open Day, 11am to 5pm. See [www.fonc.org.uk/guided-tours-2021.html](http://www.fonc.org.uk/guided-tours-2021.html).

### **TOWER HAMLETS**

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park events are listed online at Ticket Tailor. See their website at [www.fothcp.org](http://www.fothcp.org) for details.

### **WILLESDEN JEWISH CEMETERY**

Guided walks are offered Sundays and Mondays in August. Booking essential. £5 donation suggested. [www.willesdenjewishcemetery.org.uk](http://www.willesdenjewishcemetery.org.uk)