

# NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2021

**HIGHGATE  
CEMETERY.**

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Ian Dungavell

## With thanks to

Martin Adeney, Penny Linnett, Robin Oakley, Stuart Orr, Nick Powell, John Shepperd.

The April 2022 issue will be posted on 18 March 2022. Contributions are due by 10 February 2022.

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## Cover photograph

Autumn at Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris. *Photo: Ian Dungavell*

## Chair's note



It's been a busy four months since our last Newsletter. While we have been arranging contract details with architects and selecting experts with the specialist skills to assist us with matters like planning and cost control, all the time our staff and volunteers have been running a working cemetery with marked success in a time of shifting regulation and uncertainty.

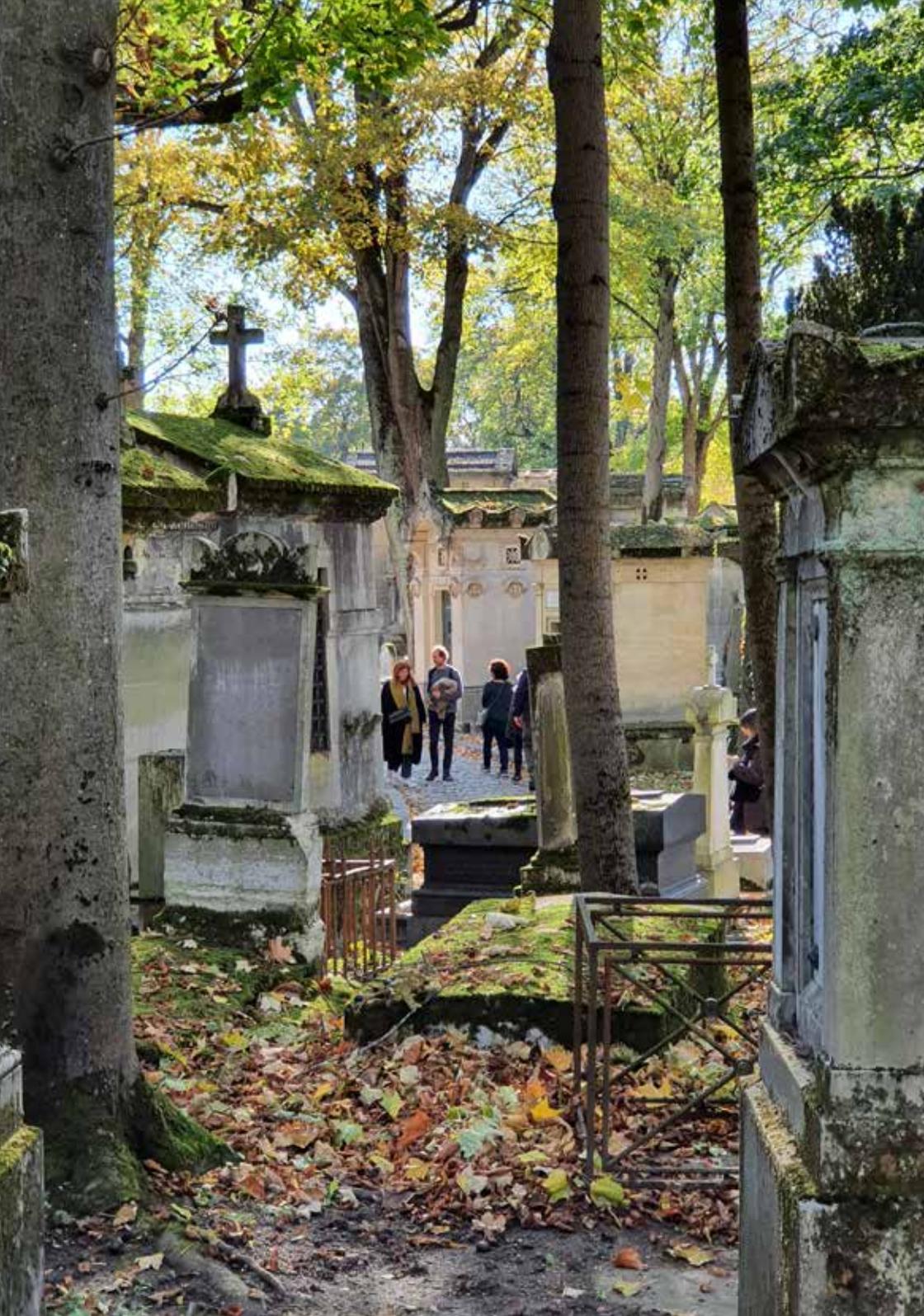
The stand-out achievement has been the introduction of self-guided visiting in the West Cemetery. It started as an experiment but has been hugely popular with visitors as well as with many of our volunteers who have enjoyed acting as 'floating greeters', on hand to answer questions and explain. And on the whole, visitor behaviour has been properly respectful. As a result the Trustees decided in September to make it a permanent fixture alongside our regular tours and subject to careful monitoring and recognition of concerns raised by one or two grave-owners.

The result of the experiment has been that we have maintained a high, if still reduced, level of income, while we have noticed an apparent increase in the number of local people and families taking the opportunity to visit. More recently we have started to see the welcome return of some overseas visitors although nowhere like the numbers before Covid.

Those of us who volunteer are regularly touched by the sheer pleasure expressed by many of our visitors and their respect for this precious place. Indeed one enthusiastic French family, looking round the top of the Circle of Lebanon told me that they liked it much better than the Père Lachaise Cemetery featured in this edition!

And finally, a request. Our decision to open the West to self-guided visits depends on having enough volunteers available. That's a lot of people. So we are looking for more. We offer training, and I am sure that you will find it, as I do, immensely rewarding. And thank you to all those who have been volunteering already.

Martin Adeney, Chair



# ‘Something resembling Père Lachaise’

**IAN DUNGAPELL** looks at how cemetery developers in England were inspired by the French model

When an early plan of Highgate Cemetery was first exhibited in 1833, it was described as ‘something resembling that of Pere la Chaise,’ the cemetery in Paris founded in 1804 which is now one of the most-visited in the world.

It is not an exaggeration to say that nearly everybody would have known about Père Lachaise, but until the massive upsurge of continental tourism following the end of Napoleonic Wars few English people would have seen it for themselves. Then it started to appear in the guidebooks published for the intrepid traveller rediscovering Paris, and contemporary accounts recorded its popularity: ‘No one visits Paris without seeing this cemetery, which is crowded every day with English visitors,’ the *Court Magazine* told its readers in 1835.

The author of the 1843 guidebook to London’s Kensal Green Cemetery asked his readers: ‘Who has not heard of the long-renowned cemetery of Pere la Chaise, or what continental traveller neglects to pay a visit there, and to record in his note-book interesting memoranda connected with that beautiful spot?’

Accounts of Père Lachaise were hard to avoid. Newspapers printed reports of the funerals of famous military heroes, and periodicals carried illustrations as well as ‘letters’ from Paris which described the

cemetery or poems inspired by visits.

Commentators liked its rural appearance and the fact it was almost like a large country churchyard; it was a model suitable for importation. ‘We need scarcely remark that Pere la Chaise is a cemetery planted with natural as well as artificial memorials of the beloved dead,’ noted the *Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, ‘and that it is the description of burial ground which is in course of establishment for many large towns of our own country.’ The *Gentleman’s Magazine* was ‘glad to see a partial adoption in this country of the ornamental cemeteries of our neighbours’.

It also became part of popular entertainments. In December 1834 the Panorama in Leicester Square, London, featured *A view of the Cemetery of Père La Chaise including a distant view of the city of Paris and the surrounding country* painted from his own drawings by Robert Burford, its proprietor, who had visited in the summer that year. The scene was taken from a position not too high up in the cemetery so as to show not only some of the well-known monuments but also some of the sights of Paris.

Another spectacle gave people outside the metropolis the opportunity to experience this famous cemetery without the expense of coming to London or crossing the Channel. From May 1826, a

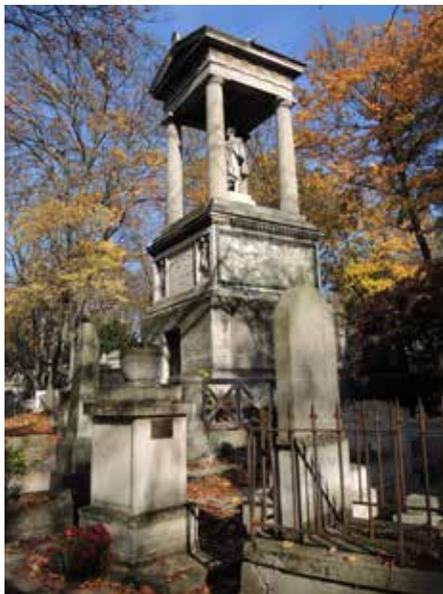
**Left** A city of the dead? Some have suggested that mausolea manifest the same desire to proclaim social status as the homes the deceased came from

model of Père Lachaise toured England, Scotland and Ireland alongside large model of Paris. The Cemetery model was 12 feet by 9 feet, at a scale of 12 feet to a mile, and sat on a platform 3 feet off the floor. It included twenty-six thousand monuments and was said to have taken five years to complete. Strong magnifying glasses enabled visitors to see details close up.

The Cemetery was 'well represented for its hilly situation, monuments, tombstones, roads and gardens,' according to the *Morning Post*; 'the Author has not spared any pains for its correctness.' He was Eugène Choffin, an engineer, who claimed to have made models of several of the principal cities of Europe which had been bought by Napoleon and placed in the national collection at the Invalides.

The models then toured for the next eleven years, stopping in most major cities and many minor ones: Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cheltenham, Chester, Clonmel, Dublin, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Portsmouth, Preston, Salisbury, Sheffield, Taunton, Waterford, Winchester, Worcester and York. No doubt more venues will come to light.

In smaller places they might have lasted a couple of weeks; in cities the models could stay for months. In Dublin, for example, they were shown for the first six months of 1828 and then they returned, updated, for another eight months from October 1830 to June 1831. Then, after an outing in Manchester in April 1837, nothing is heard of them for almost twenty years until 1855, when they again went to Liverpool, London and Glasgow. Choffin was jailed for bankruptcy early the following year. The models have disappeared without trace.



A sixteen-page booklet, *References to the model of Paris*, accompanied the exhibition, including a couple of pages on the model of Père Lachaise. It gave a brief history of the cemetery, a list of 73 points of interest within, and a few lines on the Jewish section. There was also a paragraph describing the three types of graves which may be had – communal, temporary, and perpetual – and giving their prices.

The booklet told visitors that 'the advantageous situation of this spot, upon the slope of a hill... and commanding a view of the picturesque and glowing landscape has occasioned it to be chosen by the most distinguished personages as the place of their interment; consequently no Parisian cemetery can vie with that of Pere la Chaise in the number and beauty of its Monuments.'

What did visitors make of all this? Editorial coverage in the newspapers which



also advertised the models must be treated with suspicion: it is uniformly positive, and the same phrases appeared in different newspapers several years apart. Yet for the models to have been on tour for so long many people must have paid to see them. In Bristol for three months they were ‘a fashionable resort’, according to the *Bristol Mirror*. In Liverpool the *Mercury* claimed they had attracted ‘a great portion of the population’. Many more would have seen the advertisements and editorial coverage (and there were no-doubt also handbills widely distributed which have not survived).

Some of Choffin’s advertisements emphasised the modernity of the whole enterprise: ‘New, cheap, incredibly expeditious and safe Travelling, surpassing the wonderful velocity of Steam Coaches, even when propelled on a Railway ... you become suddenly transported from the most

distant parts of the CITY OF DUBLIN, in less than twenty minutes, to the midst of the renowned and celebrated CITY OF PARIS, And the celebrated BURIAL GROUND of PERE LA CHAISE ... In short, so completely has [M. Choffin], by means of this noble invention, overcome the great obstacles to our intercourse with distant and foreign countries, as fairly to annihilate both time and space, by re-transporting you in an instant back to Dublin.’

If looking at models was akin to time travel, cemeteries were clearly part of the steam age. They were part of the same transformation of infrastructure in the early nineteenth-century. We know people saw it that way, too: for example, when George Carden had a site on Bayswater Road placarded with the name of his abortive new ‘Great Western Cemetery’, a witty vandal wrote underneath: ‘N.B. – New graves warmed by steam!’

**Left** The monument to General Foy today and **Above**, shown in a view of Père Lachaise looking towards Paris by Christophe Civeton, 1829. Bibliothèque nationale de France.



**Left** Sculptural profusion where the Chemin d'Ornano joins Avenue Circulaire. The cylindrical domed monument was designed by the architect of the Beer Mausoleum at Highgate.

And in England, the steam age was the age of private enterprise. These would not be public projects, as in Paris. Advertisements seeking investment in the new cemetery companies appeared on the very same pages in the newspapers as those promoting the new railway companies. In many cases the visit of the model preceded the formation of new cemeteries, and it would have been useful promotion of the desirability of the garden cemetery.

We should remember that not everybody liked the modern cemetery. Sometimes the collision of commerce and commemoration struck contemporaries rather too strongly. One wrote: 'As mercantile concerns, these cemeteries are of course managed with that business-like nicety which governs all such things in the great city.' For him, reading a Highgate Cemetery pricelist brought an 'odd association of commercial and sepulchral ideas' which invited parody.

The editor of the *John Bull* newspaper fulminated in 1839 that he 'frequently had occasion to notice the extraordinary indecency and profaneness of advertisements and notices connected with the new-fangled joint-stock company burying-grounds in the neighbourhood of London.' Note that he called cemeteries 'new-fangled'. He added: 'We presume these places are under the control of our Bishop.'

They might have been, in part, if they were consecrated, but many were not: freedom from the established Church had been part of their attraction. Consecration gave private cemeteries respectability but at a cost. In addition to having to pay fees to compensate clergy for lost income, the separation of people of different faiths after death brought frequent controversies.

By contrast, the British press often

remarked that Père Lachaise was open to all faiths. 'Here rest friend and foe — citizen and alien — the soldier and the scholar, in one common asylum from the cares of life, Protestant, Catholic, and even Jew, alike!', noted the *Morning Post* approvingly in 1820. Not like the English churchyard.

Père Lachaise became the burial ground gold standard and all the most ambitious cemeteries made no secret of taking it as their inspiration. John Strang, the leading proponent of the Glasgow Necropolis, had been strongly influenced by it, as had George Carden at Kensal Green in London, whose company even included in its 1830 prospectus, '*A brief description of the celebrated Cemetery of Pere la Chaise, near Paris, and of the general effect produced upon the minds of Travellers upon beholding it*'.

The architect Francis Goodwin went one better: when promoting his 'National Cemetery' in London in 1830 he boasted that it was to have been 'similar to [Père Lachaise], but on a much more magnificent scale.' All that was needed was four hundred thousand pounds.

Such ambition having defeated him, it is not surprising that Goodwin's Highgate project a couple of years later was altogether more realistic: 'something resembling that of Pere la Chaise'. Just twenty thousand pounds would be sufficient to buy and enclose the land and build the two chapels and other buildings required. ■

*In a new short film directed by Stéfan Cornic and produced by Année Zéro and the Pavillon de l'Arsenal, French writer Camille Laurens explains why she loves Père Lachaise, the cemetery on her doorstep. See it at <https://www.pavillon-arsenal.com/fr/actualite/le-grand-paris-des-ecrivains/12232-camille-laurens.html>*

# Path renewal at Père Lachaise

## Every cemetery must find its own answer to the problem of paths

On a steeply-sloping site east of the centre of Paris, Père Lachaise Cemetery faces similar problems with its paths as does Highgate. It is a working cemetery and also heavily visited by tourists.

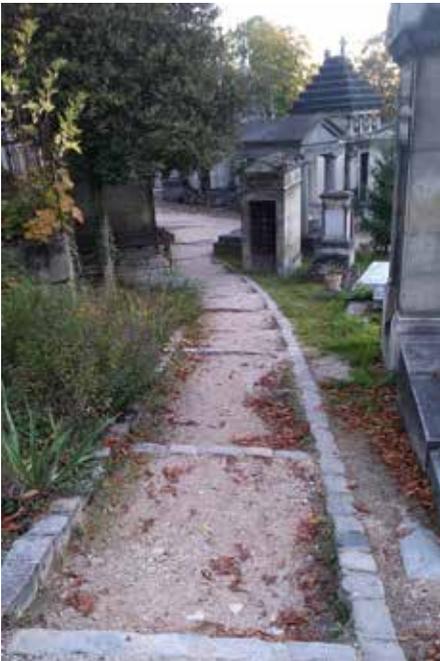
The steep slope makes softer surfaces prone to erosion, and whatever material is chosen must not detract from the historic environment while also being suitable for people of reduced mobility.

Most roads in Père Lachaise are cobbled, while the pedestrian paths and verges might be cobble, stabilized soil or earth. Heritage regulations forbid the use of asphalt. The pictures above show 'stabilized

soil', made up of a mixture of sand, gravel and cement. This is more durable than gravel alone, less muddy than a dirt road, and not as ugly as asphalt. But it must be regularly maintained, especially if on a slope, because of the erosion caused by heavy rain.

There is also a programme of grassing over paths (*engazonnement*) to avoid the need to use herbicides such as glyphosate and to promote biodiversity. ■

Thanks to 'Une vie au Père Lachaise' on Twitter (@unevieauPL). See tweets by @benoit\_gallot and also <https://www.paris.fr/pages/cimetiere-du-pere-lachaise-la-faune-et-la-flore-17467>.



Photos: @unevieauPL on Twitter

**Above** Before and after pictures showing the repair of the Chemin Laplace, leading down towards the graves of Molière and Lafontaine



Autumnal color is more of a feature in the East cemetery with a higher proportion of ornamental species.

## Conservation project update

### MARTIN ADENEY reports on progress

Earlier this year we announced the appointment of two sets of architects to lead the conservation project: Gustafson, Porter + Bowman for the Landscape Plan and Hopkins Architects to look at historic structures and the possibilities for building some better facilities for staff and visitors.

We are still at the first important stage of understanding the site and its opportunities and constraints. We are making contacts with the planning authority and Historic England to gather their thoughts on what might, or might not, be possible. Tree, topographical, services and monument surveys are completed or underway.

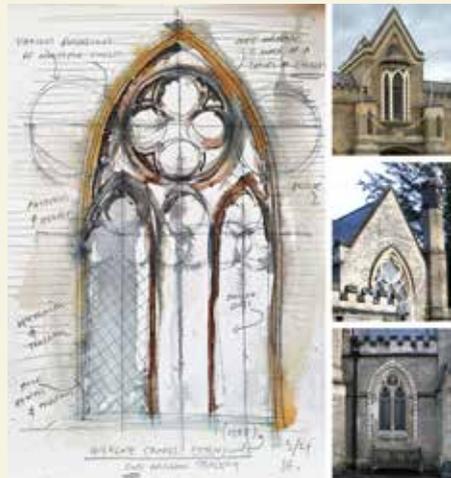
We will be having conversations with the National Lottery Heritage Fund early in 2022 following our 'Expression of Interest' in the hope that this will lead to a bid for funding. We will also be exploring other funding opportunities.

Any submission for planning consent is a long way off yet – probably in 2023. This will allow time for members to discuss the project principles with us and the architects, and such feedback will be

**Top** Gustafson Porter + Bowman's study of seasonality will inform the choice of planting in the East Cemetery

integral to the development of any plans.

One of the first visible developments is likely to be some sort of temporary or transitional structure on the edge of the courtyard for ticketing and the café facilities which visitors so often ask about. It may also provide a space for us to explain the conservation project in more detail as it proceeds. ■



**Above** Hopkins Architects studies of the existing buildings will make sure any new ones are firmly rooted in the place



## The first burial in prestigious Highgate was a bootmaker's wife

**ROBIN OAKLEY** took up the challenge of finding out more about Highgate's first client

In May 1839 Elizabeth Jackson was the first person to be buried in Highgate Cemetery. Her gravestone records that she lived in Soho in what was then Little Windmill Street (now part of Lexington Street) and that she was joined in the grave by her husband George and his second wife Grace. They died within a few days of each other in the cholera epidemic of 1854.

But how did George, a bootmaker by trade, living in a poorer part of London, come to bury his wife in the new garden cemetery at Highgate?

George Jackson was born in 1801 in far-off Cumberland, the son of a bootmaker, and must have come to London as a young man to practise the trade he would have learned from his father. Initially he would have worked for an established 'master

bootmaker', before marrying and setting up on his own. A street directory for 1830 lists him as a bootmaker at 11 Giltspur Street, by St Bartholomew's Church in Smithfield. From 1832 onwards he is recorded in rate books and street directories at 25 Little Windmill Street in Soho, and likewise in the 1841 and 1851 censuses, either as a 'bootmaker' or 'grindery dealer', the latter meaning a supplier of tools for use in the leather and boot trades.

By the mid-nineteenth century many of Soho's wealthier residents had moved out — its most fashionable era was the Georgian period — but we should not think because of this that George and Elizabeth were living in poverty. During the 1830s when George would have been establishing himself there, Soho would still have been

**Above** Elizabeth Jackson's grave is framed by spotted laurel

a very respectable location to run a boot-making business.

Significantly, George is the only person listed for this address in the directories, indicating that he would have owned the business operating there, and that he was probably also the leaseholder. Other adult male bootmakers were also recorded there in the census so, rather than being a case of multi-occupancy and poverty, the domestic arrangements reflect the way small businesses in the boot-making trade were organised. Workers and apprentices would live in rented rooms in the same house as the master, though where appropriate as separate households.

The Jacksons no doubt thought of themselves as respectable members of the artisan small-business class. Their terraced premises in Soho would have had a spacious front room with full-height windows on the ground floor (their 'shop') where they would have received customers and

displayed examples of their craft. George, unusually styled 'Mr' George Jackson on his gravestone, was admitted to the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers in 1841.

Less is known of Elizabeth's background. Her father was a 'grinder' who supplied the boot and shoe trade. She was born in Holborn in 1800, the daughter of James and Elizabeth Sadler. Parish records reveal that she married George at St Lawrence Jewry Church in the City in 1825.

Tragically, all three of their children died very young, followed not long after by Elizabeth. The two executors named in George's Will were both bootmakers with businesses in the City of London and homes in suburban Hackney. I imagine that a nice suburban villa would have been precisely where Elizabeth and George would have dreamed of finishing up as well. ■

*With thanks to Stuart Orr whose article in the August 2018 Newsletter prompted my research*





## Last WW1 centenary commemorated

Since 2014, we have been remembering the centenaries of all those people who died while serving in the First World War and who are buried at Highgate. Their names have been flagged up with a memorial poppy on our website, and a small wooden cross has been placed on their grave or, if they are buried in a common grave, on the war memorial in the Courtyard.

The last of these was Lt Alfred M Mattman, Royal Field Artillery, of Canonbury, who died on 22 July 1921. He is buried in a family plot, just off the Neurath path in the West Cemetery, marked with a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The next war grave centenary in the Cemetery will be in 2040. ■

**Above** Stuart Orr, Judith Orr, Claire Wellings and Nick Powell marking the centenary of the death of Lieutenant Mattman on 22 July 2021.

## News roundup

### Jean Simmons: Cricklewood, Hollywood and beyond: an online talk



Jean Simmons made her name in some of the best British films of the 1940s before transferring to Hollywood in the 1950s, aged only 21. There she starred in such classics as *Spartacus*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Big Country* and the great film noir, *Angel Face*. Although she will always be remembered for her youthful roles, she continued working right up until her death in 2010. In this online talk, *Pamela Hutchinson* will examine the life, career and celebrity of an actress of remarkable talent. Thursday 20 January 2022 at 7pm. Book at [highgatecemetery.org/events](http://highgatecemetery.org/events).

### The Victorian Funeral: an online talk

So many people believe that the Victorian funeral was one of a multitude of sable plumes and a cavalcade of horse-drawn vehicles when, in reality, the majority were very simple affairs. This talk, by the funerary historian *Dr Julian Litten*, will explain how that myth came to be and what comprised the real Victorian funeral. Thursday 15 February 2022 at 7pm. Book at [highgatecemetery.org/events](http://highgatecemetery.org/events).

### Victorian cemeteries and the suburbs of London: a new book

This new book by FOHCT member Gian Luca Amadei explores how Victorian cemeteries were not only a solution for overcrowded graveyards, they also acted as 'urban generators' in the formation of London's suburbs in the nineteenth century. Included are chapters on Kensal Green, Highgate and Brookwood. ISBN 9781032015163 Routledge. 194pp 69 b/w illustrations. £120.



### December EGM and next AGM

Thanks to all members who voted in the Extraordinary General Meeting in December. We are pleased to say that both resolutions passed and we once again have a workable set of Articles of Association. The AGM will be held in May 2022 and any member wishing to stand for election is invited to contact the office for information.

### When Eternity Fades: a new book on London's garden cemeteries

To judge by the pictures (the text is in German) this is the best book in print on London's garden cemeteries. Let's hope for an English edition soon!

*Wenn Ewigkeit vergänglich wird* by Georgia Rauer. ISBN 978-3-9820807-3-4 16pp, 232 illustrations, €25. The publisher's website has preview pages: <https://www.editionfroelich.de/produkt/wenn-ewigkeit-vergaenglich-wird/> ■



# Historic cemeteries news

## What's on at our sister cemeteries



Veteran ash tree at Abney Park, damaged by fire, providing a diverse habitat

### **ABNEY PARK**

History tour on the first Sunday of every month. £7. See [www.abneypark.org](http://www.abneypark.org)

### **BROMPTON**

Guided tours on 9, 23 January, and 6, 20 February and then every Sunday from 6 March to 26 June. £8.  
See [brompton-cemetery.org.uk](http://brompton-cemetery.org.uk).

### **BROOKWOOD CEMETERY**

See [www.tbcs.org.uk/walks.HTM](http://www.tbcs.org.uk/walks.HTM). £5 booking required

### **KENSAL GREEN**

Tours 2pm Sundays fortnightly to February; weekly from March. £12. Booking essential.  
[www.kensalgreen.co.uk](http://www.kensalgreen.co.uk)

### **WEST NORWOOD**

First Sunday of the month: 2.30pm April to October; 11am November to March. See [www.fownc.org](http://www.fownc.org).

### **NUNHEAD**

Tour programme for 2022 to be announced. See [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk).

### **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. Booking essential. £5 donation suggested.  
[www.willesdenjewishcemetery.org.uk](http://www.willesdenjewishcemetery.org.uk)